

Agriculture Stakeholder Input

Meeting held on September 14, 2021

Context, Equity and Other Products

THE BIGGER STORY

- Larger macro economy is missing from overall strategies: Vermont is not alone: others' actions, global commodity prices, etc.

EQUITY

- Scale: don't forget the smaller farmers. Equity concern.
- Equity with TA, access to programs, and strong outreach
- Access to all programs including even non-commercial farmers

PRODUCTS AND POLLINATORS

- Don't forgot product like fiber (hemp and wool), honey and maple as part of the focus
- Consider ag materials as building materials that store carbon (straw bales)
- Consider pollination, allowing planting of native species that ensure pollinators

Local Food and Markets

- Must maintain local production
- New and different markets, kinds of farms, and ways of farming are all diversification for becoming more resilient
- Investing in local slaughterhouses allows more regenerative farming to arise – farming and markets are linked
- Prices have historically been so low forcing aggressive and intensive in use. This set's farmers up against nature. When farmers farm more in balance with nature this might decrease yields, so . . .
- Support more local food hubs, institutional purchases of local food
- What about food waste?
- Agriculture is part of the solution so we have to create a more farmer-friendly environment in VT
- Shifting some policies such as those on on-farm slaughter, to create conditions for farmers to diversify and provide more local food security. Creating a program that links every family in Vermont to a local diverse farm so that when disasters happen

Actions to Take

IMPORTANT FOCUS

- Soil health (also cools by reducing ground level radiation)
- Support and expand regenerative agriculture

PRACTICES

- Keep going on practices that work: cover crops, buffer strips
- Become more sophisticated with existing practices like grazing & cover cropping
- Broader uptake of crop insurance and tie crop insurance to better climate practices
- Consider moving away from govt. funded practices that are not climate friendly
- Manage incentives for buffers with loss of crop land that has unintended effects
- Has Act 148 been discussed as part of this? organics diversion from landfill (GHG reductions) - composting to support farmland fertility, erosion control
- It would be good to take an approach like the one in Drawdown by Paul Hawken that calculates (or estimates) GHG reductions/sequestration for each specific practice,

OUTCOMES

- Create PES programs

Actions to Take

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- More technical assistance like students helping with PSN tests, as just one example
- Farmer to farmer learning; teach farmers by farmers: farmer climate corps
- Full funding of TA: UVM extension and other

MONEY

- Wetlands programs pay too little to be used
- How long will actions that require long-term commitment actually be funded?
- Actions have to have monetary benefit: farms are businesses: need access to capital
- Universal basic income for the climate friendly farmer

PROGRAMS

- Programs have to be flexible and inclusive; programs have to be easy to use
- Getting credit for first movers and early adopters

NEW AREAS/WAYS

- Explore new approaches like: *Common Land model*. <https://www.commonland.com/>
- Flooding and uplands soil health management
- Agroforestry

LAND CONSERVATION

- Can we take marginal farmland and help convert it back to other natural functions
- How are you addressing land grabs as Vermont becomes a climate refuge?
- Can we increase public lands across Vermont that everyone can co-manage and learn from?

OTHER CONCERNS

- Lack of attention to GMOs, pesticides, and herbicides
- Should we be disturbing the soil at all and funding such?
- Conventional farming: should this plan support it?
- Don't pit ag against itself
- More focus on reducing fossil fuels including plastic
- Has subsidization of the transition from diesel to electric implements been considered
- Most Vermonters our generations removed from farming – need consumer education