

The background image is a scenic landscape of a Vermont farm. In the foreground, a rustic wooden fence made of weathered planks runs across a lush green field. Beyond the fence, several cows are grazing in the field. In the distance, rolling mountains are visible under a sky with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

# **Summary of Draft Recommendations Agriculture Task Group of the Vermont Climate Council**



# Agriculture Task Group

1. Abbie Corse, Dairy Farmer
2. Alex DePillis, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
3. David Mears, Audubon Vermont
4. John Roberts, Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition
5. Ryan Patch, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
6. Alissa White, University of Vermont
7. Marli Rupe, Agency of Natural Resources
8. Judson Peck, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

# Key Themes

Keep farms as farms -- optimize the carbon storage and sequestration potential of agricultural lands

Enhance contribution of farms to climate change mitigation, as well as adaptation and resilience

Innovate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from farms

Amplify and build on the important work occurring on farms already

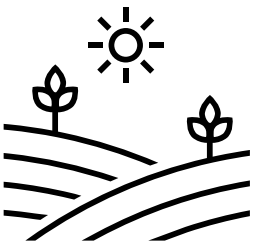
# Important Note Regarding Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Agriculture



- Need to ensure proper accounting of gross and net emissions in order for our recommendations to count towards Global Warming Solutions Act targets
- In plain English: if we do not account for the ability of agricultural lands (and forest lands) to reduce emissions, store and sequester carbon, then we are missing the most important part of the equation

Support and empower Vermont's farmers, foresters, and land workers to:

# Sustain and increase carbon sequestration

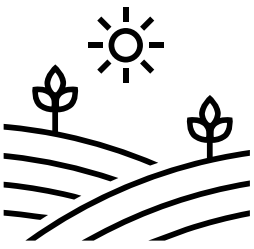


- Increase adoption of **agronomic and grazing practices** that increase soil carbon content such as
  - no-till and reduce tillage,
  - cover cropping,
  - rotational grazing
  - Agroforestry
  - Edge-of-field buffers
- Leverage, expand, fully fund and adapt **existing programs**
- Develop and implement new programs for healthy soils and carbon sequestration, such as a **Payment for Ecosystem Services Program**



Support and empower Vermont's farmers, foresters, and land workers to:

## Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

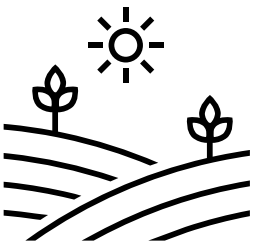


- Leverage, expand, and adapt existing programs that support **agricultural GHG emission reduction**, including:
  - **Solid manure** management where appropriate
  - **Roofs, covers or methane capture** and energy generation
  - Development of a climate **feed management** program
  - **Grazing and agronomic practices**
  - **Efficient fertilizer application** and incorporation techniques
- Provide greater support and capacity for **responsible energy transformation**.



Support and empower Vermont's farmers, foresters, and land workers to:

# Enhance climate resilience and adaptation

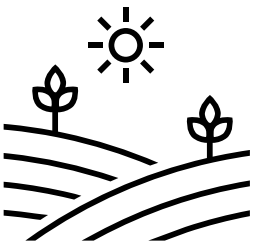


- Develop & fund **climate adaptation planning, training and technical assistance** for all farmers and foresters
- Support **farmer-to-farmer** learning
- Support farmers in learning about and enhancing **soil health & soil sponge**
- Develop dedicated funding to support **climate-smart whole farm water resource management**
- Enhance resources for **farm viability** planning



Support and empower Vermont's farmers, foresters, and land workers to:

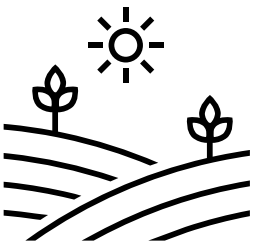
# Enhance climate resilience and adaptation



- **Build resilience funds** to support the financial capacity of land managers to respond and adapt to natural hazard and climate impacts
- **Update crop insurance** for diversified Vermont-scale farms and emergency recovery following extreme weather events
- Develop **new agricultural lending programs** for farms adopting climate smart practices
- Add a **climate lens** to existing funding and support programs
- Ensure **equitable access** of FA, TA, research, and resources to all farmers



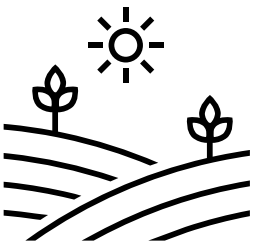
Equitably support, grow and connect :  
**Local food systems, rural economy and farmer livelihoods**



- Develop, expand, and **sustain local markets specifically for food, agricultural, and forest products**, including investment in infrastructure, distribution, and market development
- Support proven ways to **alleviate food insecurity** and support low-income consumers in purchasing or accessing more local food
- Ensure and increase **equitable access** for people who are historically underserved/disadvantaged
- Expand **locally grown, carbon friendly, and equitable access** to food supply and sources
- Fully **fund Vermont's Farm 2 Plate** plan



Create and support accessible research, partnerships, and education to:  
**Shape land use for a sustainable and equitable future**



- Expand funding and incentives to **protect farmland** from development
- **Elevate the role traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)** plays in climate adaptation and resilience and incorporate TEK into state-led climate assessments, planning efforts, and prioritization frameworks (e.g. agroforestry)
- Enhance **education, outreach, and technical assistance** programming to support farmer learning and adoption of **climate smart agricultural practices** and ensure equitable access.
- **Coordinate with federal NRCS cost-share programs** to elevate climate mitigation practices in Vermont (e.g. silvopasture)
- Create an **interagency Office of Climate Change**



# Issues and Questions



- A. What is the right balance between the use of regulatory, technical assistance, public funding, and market-based strategies to support the contribution of agriculture to Vermont's climate goals?
- B. How do we employ policy and funding tools to support a transition to a climate smart agricultural system in ways that are also equitable and inclusive?
- C. What should our land use targets be for housing, commercial development, farms and forests, and how should we make those decisions?