



AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

Transition Document Executive Summary

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Foods and Markets is involved in all aspects of agriculture in the state. The Agency regulates, develops and promotes agriculture and agricultural products in Vermont. The agency currently has 112 classified employees, 4 exempts and 24 paid temps and interns.

Offices:

- Our main office is located at 116 State Street in Montpelier
- Our Business Office is located on the third floor at 100 State Street in Montpelier
- Our Water Quality team is stationed at the 94 Harvest Lane Office in Williston
- We also have temporary* laboratory facilities in Berlin at 322 Industrial Lane, and in the Hills Building, 105 Carrigan Drive on the University of Vermont campus.

**Temporary lab has been in place since the flood of the Waterbury lab complex in 2011 – new lab facilities anticipated in 2018. More details under “Major and Evolving issues”*

Agency Divisions

Administration includes the Secretary and Deputy as well as the Business Office, IT Department, Communications Function, Executive Assistant, and Administrative staff. Responsible for operations, finance, and overall Agency management. Budget portion \$2.0 million

Ag Resource Management and Laboratory – Managed by division director and deputy director. Regulates pesticides, plants, feed, seed and fertilizers, and administers the state’s agricultural water quality. It also provides technical assistance and cost share assistance for farmers to insure compliance, eliminate discharges and improve water quality. Budget portion \$7.0 million plus State Clean Water Fund \$1.943 million & Ag Clean Water Fund \$0.841 million

Food Safety and Consumer Protection – Managed by a division director who is also the state veterinarian, and a deputy director, also a veterinarian. Responsible for protecting public health, maintaining and improving the integrity of Vermont agricultural products, ensuring equity in commerce, animal health, meat inspection, dairy inspection of farms and processing facilities and weights and measures inspections. Budget Portion \$7.1 million

Ag Development – Lead by Deputy Secretary and three Section Chiefs- responsible for development of agricultural enterprises, promotion of agricultural products, increased use of Vermont produced food in schools and institutions, land conservation and stewardship and the 9(b) provisions of ACT 250 that determine prime agricultural soils. Budget portion \$3.2 million.

Agency Major and Evolving Issues

- Clean Water: The scope of work associated with implementing the Clean Water Act has been a massive undertaking for VAAFM. Since the bill was signed into law in 2015, the Agency has either added or reassigned 12 new staff members to Water Quality Section of the Ag Resource Management Division. There has been significant interest in this issue from the media, the public, and agricultural and environmental stakeholders. The rule is currently in review by LCAR.
- Dairy issues: Dairy accounts for over 70% of Vermont agricultural sales, and 80% of our total farm land. In 2014, we released a report called Milk Matters, which highlights the critical role dairy plays in Vermont’s economy and landscape. The industry brings \$2.2 billion to our state annually. And yet the industry is in a time of crisis due to low conventional milk prices, which do not cover the cost of production. Price forecasts predict another difficult year in 2017.
- Farm and Food Economy: Agricultural Development plays a critical role in our agency which is over 75% regulatory. “Ag Dev” is essential to supporting Vermont agriculture, which is a major driver of Vermont’s economy and critical to preserving our state’s working landscape and way of

life. Over the past six years, Vermont has added more than 5100 jobs in the farm, food, and forest sectors. Vermont's Farm to Plate Network, coordinated by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, has been instrumental in facilitating this growth. The Agency has engaged in a meaningful partnership with Farm to Plate to meet its goals of increasing economic development and jobs in the farm and food sector, and to improving access to healthy local food for all Vermonters.

- Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Lab: In September 2011, the Agency's laboratory, part of the Waterbury Complex, was destroyed by Hurricane Irene. Since then, the Agency of Agriculture and the VT Department of Environmental Conservation have coordinated to construct a new joint facility on the campus of Vermont Technical College. Buildings and General Services (BGS) is managing this project. Funding has been secured through the Capital Bill in FY '16, '17; the remaining \$8+ million will be requested in the FY '18/'19 capital bill. Groundbreaking has not yet happened due to permitting challenges – Local permit under appeal and Act 250 process still underway.
- FSMA: In 2018, the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety rules will come into effect, which will require a significant shift in practices for Vermont's fruit and vegetable farmers. Until then, the Agency will be engaged in significant education and outreach to this farming program to support FSMA regulations. community, and will work to build an internal
- Working Lands: Since it was formed by the legislature in 2012, the Working Lands Enterprise and Board (WLEB) has been instrumental in supporting Vermont's Working Landscape by investing in farm, food, and forestry businesses. During the past four years the initiative has expanded to accept private sector donations to further leverage state funds; it has also evolved to include financing support through established lenders (Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation and the Vermont Community Loan Fund).
 - Critical cross-state Agency partnership includes Agencies of Ag, Commerce, and Department of Forests, Park, and Recreation. Critical NGO partnership provided by Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB), Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, and Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA). VHCB leads the Farm and Forest Viability Program, key to working lands business success; VHCB's leadership on statewide conservation is also paramount to the success of the working lands economy. Together, VHCB provides the technical assistance, and VEDA provides the financial assistance, critical to the success of Vermont's working lands businesses.
- VT brand marketing: The state must continue to coordinate, market, and brand Vermont. This is the means to continue to grow the sales of agricultural products. The Agency would like to propose to the new administration a marketing budget of \$100,000 to continue and expand all the work we do within Agricultural Development, Working Lands, partnership with VDTM and CMO on all domestic export.
- Farm to School: Since 2007 the Vermont Farm to School Grant Program, administered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF), has invested over \$1.5 million in Farm to School Programs in over 30% of Vermont's schools, impacting over 30,000 students. Vermont's Farm to School program provides healthy foods for school children and economic opportunity for local producers. For every \$1 spent on FTS in Vermont, the economic return to Vermont communities is \$1.60. In 2014, local food purchases by VT schools contributed \$1.4 million to Vermont's economy.
- Other ongoing issues: on-farm slaughter, concerns from the public regarding pesticide application, treated articles, agricultural exemptions from sales and use tax, section 248 and primary agricultural soils, hemp farming, on-farm enterprises, pollinator protection.



VERMONT

AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS



2016 Transition Document

www.Agriculture.Vermont.Gov

2016 Transition Document

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Agency Mission: VAAFM facilitates, supports and encourages the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while protecting the working landscape, human health, animal health, plant health, consumers and the environment.

A Message From The Secretary

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets for the past six years. We may be small when compared to other state agencies, but the scope of our work is wide and deep, and the role we play is critical. Agriculture is at the heart of Vermont's landscape, economy, and communities. It is an integral part of our heritage, and I believe it will continue to be essential to Vermont's future.

Creating Economic Opportunity

In just six years, Vermont has added more than 5100 new jobs* in the farm and food sectors. Our Agency has supported this growth through key initiatives, from working with institutional food purveyors to add local food to the menu at our colleges and in our correctional facilities, to furnishing technical assistance to dramatically increase the number of in-state meat and dairy processing facilities. We have provided grants and guidance to open new markets for local business, created networks for best practice sharing among producer organizations, and built infrastructure for Farm-to-School programming for the next generation of Vermonters.

Regulation + Promotion

As an Agency, we are frequently asked how one entity can be responsible for both regulating and promoting agriculture. We strongly believe these two functions serve the same end – a strong regulatory program supports Vermont's reputation for the highest quality agricultural products, thereby ensuring the integrity of our brand.

Building a Stronger Organization

Over the past six years, within the Agency, we have honed and refined systems, increased efficiency, and strengthened our organization from the inside out. When we suffered the loss of our Waterbury laboratory during Hurricane Irene, we turned that loss into an opportunity by merging our lab with the Department of Environmental Conservation, and charting a course for the construction of a new lab on the campus of Vermont Technical College. In the meantime, we've stood up temporary lab spaces in Burlington and Berlin to provide service continuity. Our main office in Montpelier has been completely renovated and historically restored. This spring, we opened a new office in Williston to accommodate the additional staff hired to implement the Clean Water Act, and reorganized the division to maximize efficiency and service delivery. We also hired a new business manager and a new IT manager, who have created new systems which make us more efficient, accountable, and service-oriented. We have implemented new safety protocols, to ensure our employees are safe and secure in the workplace. We've also invested in our people, by implementing career ladders, to provide staff with the opportunity to grow in their roles. Finally, we've provided management training so our team leaders have the skills they need to support employees and drive results.

It has been a successful and rewarding six years. We have an outstanding team, dedicated to a truly important cause – Vermont agriculture. I have no doubt the future of this Agency will be very bright.

*Source: [Vermont Farm to Plate 2015 Annual Report](#)



Chuck Ross, Secretary

Critical Issues

As we look towards 2017, and beyond, the list of issues below will be critical to the on-going success of the Agency

- Clean Water Act: The scope of work associated with implementing the Clean Water Act has been a massive undertaking for VAAFM. Since the bill was signed into law in 2015, the Agency has either added or reassigned 12 new staff members to Water Quality Section of the Ag Resource Management Division. There has been significant interest in this issue from the media, the public, and agricultural and environmental stakeholders. With the Required Ag Practices now filed with LCAR, the next phase will be implementation of these new laws to govern agriculture in Vermont.
- Dairy issues: Dairy accounts for over 70% of Vermont agricultural sales, and 80% of our total farm land. In 2014, we released a report called Milk Matters, which highlights the critical role dairy plays in Vermont's economy and landscape. The industry brings \$2.2 billion to our state annually. And yet the industry is in a time of crisis due to low conventional milk prices, which do not cover the cost of production. With price forecasts predicting another difficult year in 2017, state officials, dairy cooperative leadership, lenders, Extension, and technical service providers need to step up and offer farmers a more robust support network to navigate these turbulent times.
- Agricultural Development: Development plays a critical role in our agency which is over 75% regulatory. "Ag Dev" is essential to supporting Vermont agriculture, which is a major driver of Vermont's economy and critical to preserving our state's working landscape and way of life.
- Education First: We uphold a philosophy of technical assistance before regulation. Our goal is to educate and bring producers into compliance, before leveling fines and penalties.
- Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Lab: In September 2011, the Agency's laboratory, part of the Waterbury Complex, was destroyed by Hurricane Irene. Since then, the Agency of Agriculture and the VT Department of Environmental Conservation have developed and implemented a plan to combine their respective laboratories, which has been accomplished, and construct a new facility on the campus of Vermont Technical College. Buildings and General Services (BGS) is managing this project. Funding has been secured through the Capital Bill in FY '16, '17; the remaining \$8+ million will be requested in the FY '18/'19 capital bill. Groundbreaking has not yet happened due to permitting challenges – Local permit under appeal and Act 250 process still underway.
- FSMA: In 2018, the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety rules will come into effect, which will require a significant shift in practices for Vermont's fruit and vegetable farmers. Until then, the Agency will be engaged in significant education and outreach to this farming community, and will work to build an internal program to support FSMA regulations.
- Working Lands: Since it was formed by the legislature in 2012, the Working Lands Enterprise and Board (WLEB) has been instrumental in supporting Vermont's Working Landscape by investing in farm, food, and forestry businesses. During the past four years the initiative has expanded to accept private sector donations to further leverage state funds; it has also evolved to include financing support through established lenders (Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation and the

Vermont Community Loan Fund). A combination of direct investment in working lands enterprises to create jobs, increase gross income and increase output, as well as provide technical assistance for business and market development, the WLEB continues to respond to the needs of working lands businesses which enrich our communities and ensure that Vermont's farms and forests remain active and viable.

- On-going pesticide application challenges: Public concern regarding pesticides continues to grow. The Agency is responsible for permitting pesticide application. Fears about the impact of chemical applications seem to be increasing, perhaps in part due to the sharing of information via social media. The Agency has had to grapple with increasing pushback from the public related to health concerns related to pesticides.
- Public records requests: The volume and frequency of public records requests continues to grow. The Agency is responsible for responding to public records requests in accordance with state law. This diverts critical staff away from their core duties and creates bottlenecks across the Agency.

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Staff:

The Agency currently has...

- 112 classified employees
- 4 exempts (Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Attorney General, Executive Assistant)
- +/- 24 paid temps & interns.

Temps currently play an important role in our organization. In many cases, temps are critical to the performance of essential Agency duties.

Please see the attached organizational chart.

The Agency has a FY2017 budget of \$22 million. *Please see the attached budget document.*

The Agency is comprised of four divisions.

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Agency Major and Evolving Issues

Below is a list of Agency duties and priorities, with an emphasis on topics of heightened urgency or interest to the public

Administrative issues

- Systems and efficiency: deliberate effort toward streamlining systems, maximizing efficiency, and enhancing customer service. Key initiatives to this end include online license renewals and the Agency-wide grants management system.

Animal Health & Consumer Protection Issues

- Animal disease response and preparedness: raise awareness, develop capabilities, and enhance the coordinated response to an animal disease outbreak.
- Slaughter laws: regulation of on-farm and commercial animal processing in order to protect human and animal health.
- Dairy Processing: on-going support and regulation of Vermont’s growing dairy processing facilities. Today there are more than 135 processing facilities in Vermont. In 2015 alone, a total of 30 new plants came on-line.
- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA): implementation of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), signed into law by President Obama on January 4, 2011, which aims to ensure the U.S. food supply is safe by shifting the focus of federal regulators from responding to contamination to preventing it. In September 2016, VAAFM received notification of \$3.625 Million award (\$500,000 for year 1) from FDA for development of a 5-year strategic plan to create a Food Safety Program for Vermont.

Agricultural Resource Management Issues

- The Clean Water Act: As a result of Act 64—the Vermont Clean Water Act—signed into law in July 2015, the Agency of Agriculture was tasked with updating the Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAPs) to further reduce the impact of agriculture on water quality across the state. The RAPs are an updated version of the Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAPs), the rules which regulate farms in order to protect water quality, re-written to a higher level of performance. Rules were filed with the LCAR on September 14, 2016.
- Pollinator Protection: There is increasing concern, both nationally and here in Vermont, about the health of pollinator populations. In 2016, the Vermont legislature passed a bill (Act 83) creating a Pollinator Protection Committee, to be overseen by VAAFM. On this Committee, beekeepers, ecologists, government officials, researchers and the farming community are working together to conserve & improve pollinator health in Vermont.
- Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Lab: In September 2011, the Agency's laboratory, part of the Waterbury Complex, was destroyed by Hurricane Irene. Since then, Agency of Agriculture and the Agency of Natural Resources have developed a proposed plan to combine their respective laboratories and construct a new facility on the campus of Vermont Technical College. Buildings and General Services (BGS) is managing this project. Funding has been secured through the Capital Bill in Fy '16, '17. Remaining \$8+ million will be requested in FY '18 capital bill. Groundbreaking has not yet happened due to permitting challenges – Local permit under appeal and Act 250 process still underway.
- Mosquito Control: VAAFM coordinates a mosquito monitoring program, and partners with the Department of Health to mitigate the impact of vector-borne disease on human health
- Cannabis: There is an on-going public conversation regarding the legalization of marijuana, and the role the Agency should play in supporting hemp farmers

Agricultural Development Issues

- Farm and Food Economy: Agricultural Development plays a critical role in our agency which is over 75% regulatory. "Ag Dev" is essential to supporting Vermont agriculture, which is a major driver of Vermont's economy and critical to preserving our state's working landscape and way of life. Over the past six years, Vermont has added more than 5100 jobs in the farm, food, and forest sectors. Vermont's Farm to Plate Network, coordinated by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, has been instrumental in facilitating this growth. The Agency has engaged in a meaningful partnership with Farm to Plate to meet its goals of increasing economic development and jobs in the farm and food sector, and to improving access to healthy local food for all Vermonters.
- Farm to School: Continued support for Vermont's Farm to School program, which provides healthy foods for school children and economic opportunity for local producers. For every \$1 spent on FTS in Vermont, the economic return to Vermont communities is \$1.60. In 2014, local food purchases by VT schools contributed \$1.4 million to Vermont's economy. Since 2007 the Vermont Farm to School Grant Program, administered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM), has invested over \$1.5 million in Farm to School Programs in over 30% of Vermont's schools, impacting over 30,000 students.

- Local Foods: Efforts advancing market access opportunities for Vermont businesses to offer local food products in state government and other institutions. Currently 6.9% of State of Vermont institutional food procurement is local – goal is 10% by 2020.
- Working Lands: Since it was formed by the legislature in 2012, the Working Lands Enterprise and Board (WLEB) has been instrumental in supporting Vermont’s Working Landscape by investing in farm, food, and forestry businesses. During the past four years the initiative has expanded to accept private sector donations to further leverage state funds; it has also evolved to include financing support through established lenders (Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation and the Vermont Community Loan Fund). A combination of direct investment in working lands enterprises to create jobs, increase gross income and increase output, as well as provide technical assistance for business and market development, the WLEB continues to respond to the needs of working lands businesses which enrich our communities and ensure that Vermont’s farms and forests remain active and viable.
 - Critical cross-state Agency partnership includes Agencies of Ag, Commerce, and Department of Forests, Park, and Recreation. Critical NGO partnership provided by Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB), Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, and Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA). VHCB leads the Farm and Forest Viability Program, key to working lands business success; VHCB’s leadership on statewide conservation is also paramount to the success of the working lands economy. Together, VHCB provides the technical assistance, and VEDA provides the financial assistance, critical to the success of Vermont’s working lands businesses.
- Business Development: On-going support for Vermont producers to expand their market both domestically and internationally. Efforts include the Vermont Building at the Eastern States Exposition, The Summer Fancy Food Show, Vermont booth at the Boston Public Market, Trade Show grants, and a 2016 trade mission to Japan. The Agency has secured a \$92,000 Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant to support an analysis of market opportunities to expand Vermont branding efforts.
- Dairy Promotion: Coordination of statewide dairy promotion efforts, funded by the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council and the dairy check-off program.
- Prime Ag Soils: New statewide review authority evaluating impacts to “primary agricultural soils” under Section 248 (30 V.S.A. §248) and assigned responsibility in Act 174 as it relates to regional plan review in accordance with standards established in November 2016.
 - Addressing capacity issues to enable review (temp position and AAG support)
 - Developing database to capture applicant information
 - Drafting and implementing bill back protocol for temp and legal counsel
- Farmland Conservation
 - Completing changes to Agency’s role in farmland conservation
 - Revising the Memo of Understanding between all three co-holders
 - Entering into an agreement with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) to act as steward on behalf of the VAAFM
 - Working with (VHCB) to execute Grants of Executory Interests on all previously conserved land where the VAAFM is currently a co-holder
- On-Farm Enterprises: Evolving work to revise Chapter 117 to promote on farm enterprises (establish a level municipal regulatory field for diverse enterprises on farms) including

agritourism ventures, and continued technical assistance to municipalities and farm operators of the regulatory arena.

- Branding and Marketing Initiatives: The Agency was awarded a Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant to explore opportunities for a “made in Vermont” branding program. Further resources are needed. The Agency would like to propose to the new administration a marketing budget of \$100,000 to continue and expand all the work we do within Agricultural Development, Working Lands, partnership with VDTM and CMO on all domestic export.

Inter-Agency Issues

Within State Government, we most closely collaborate with the following partners

Agency of Natural Resources

- Implementation of the Clean Water Act/Clean Water Fund
 - Department of Fish & Wildlife
 - Cervid health program
 - Department of Environmental Conservation
 - Water Quality Enforcement and Technical Assistance
 - Governance of the Ag-DEC laboratory and construction of the new lab complex
 - Invasive Species Management
 - Pesticides
 - Universal Recycling
 - Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor review for Construction of Farm Structures
 - Act 250
 - Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
 - Working Lands Enterprise Initiative/Board

Agency of Transportation (AOT)

- Statewide parcel mapping
- Clean Water Fund

Agency of Human Services

- Department of Corrections
 - Local Foods Procurement
- Department of Health (DOH)
 - Farm to School
 - Food Safety and Inspection
 - Mosquitos surveillance and control
 - Disease management

Agency of Commerce & Community Development (ACCD)

- Working Lands Enterprise Initiative/Board

- Marketing and branding programs (International & Domestic Export, Eastern States, VT Council of Ag Associations)

Agency of Administration

- **Building & General Services**
 - Lab Construction
 - The Vermont Building at The Big E – restoration and facilities management
 - Local Procurement

Agency of Education

- Local Foods Procurement
- Farm to School programming

Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

- Emergency preparedness and response

Department of Taxes

- Use Value Appraisal Program
- Sales Tax exemptions for farmers

Public Service Department

- Renewable Energy Issues – Shared Employee for Agricultural Renewable Energy
- Consultation on Municipal plans for energy siting
- Public Service Board appearances on renewable energy siting

Attorney General's Office

- Legal Services (enforcement pipeline)

We most closely interact with the following federal partners...

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS): Livestock and Poultry Health, Plant and Pest Disease Programs
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Water quality and environmental stewardship
- Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS): Monitoring of local foods pricing, Specialty Crop Block Grants

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)
- Dairy food safety issues

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- Human health issues

- Zika mitigation grant

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- Environmental issues

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

- Water Quality
- Pesticide regulation
- Invasive species control

Key Decision Dates

Key Dates	Milestone
12/31/2016	Estimated RAP Final Rule Effective Date
1/15/2016	Submit VAAFM Annual Report to Legislature
2017 – ongoing	Outreach and education to farm community in preparation for 2018 FSMA Produce Safety Compliance deadline
1/15/2017	Tile Drain Final Report due to Legislature
1/29-2/1/2017	NASDA Winter Policy Conference
2/3/2017	Begin 1st year of Farm Assessments per Revised Secretary's Decision (CLF BMP Petition Settlement)
5/1/2017	Working Lands grant recipients announced
6/12-15/2017	NEASDA Annual Meeting (Cooperstown, NY)
7/1/2017	RAP Small Farm Certification Program to commence
9/11-14/2017	NASDA Annual Conference (New Orleans)
10/1/2017	Working Lands grant application period opens
10/1/2017	Estimated finalization date of Large Farm Operations Rule revision

11/1/2017	Working Lands grant applications due
1/15/2018	Amend the RAPs to include requirements for reducing nutrient contribution to waters of the State from subsurface tile drainage

Legislation

Summary of Ag Issues taken up during the 2016 Legislative Session

Triennially, the legislature revisits its fee schedule, which is based on regulatory program administration and the associated cost with collecting and processing fees. As a result, the Agency is also required to develop a proposal for fees for its small farm certification program [\[Act 149\]](#). Technical corrections to Act 64, the 2015 water quality bill, were enacted in [Act 105](#). It included extending the date to file a final proposal to amend the Required Agricultural Practice Rules to September 15, 2016, and making some needed changes that would allow siting of waste storage facilities for the best water quality outcomes.

Two bills that include components addressing pesticide were passed in 2016. One establishes a Pollinator Protection Committee that will conduct research and outreach, follow current national guidance on development of a plan to protect pollinators, and opens up the conversation about pollinator health in Vermont to a larger audience [\[Act 83\]](#). Another gives the Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture the authority to regulate treated articles [\[Act 99\]](#). “Treated Articles” are items that are treated with a pesticide prior to coming into the state. The purpose of the treatment is to protect that item from pests (e.g. pressure treated wood). While this bill does not mandate regulation by the Agency, it is a grant of authority to do so in instances of possible environmental and health risks from these articles.

The Legislature revised the requirements for farmers to allow others to perform on-farm livestock slaughter on their farm. To provide some history, in 2013 a law went into effect that allowed an individual to purchase livestock from a farmer, and to slaughter it themselves on the same property where the animal was raised. This had a sunset date of July 1, 2016. House bill 860 [\[Act 98\]](#) extends the sunset date to July 1, 2019, increases the allowable numbers of animals or live weight of livestock that may be sold by a farmer and slaughtered on their farm per year, and includes a farmer registration component in addition to the reducing reporting requirements to quarterly. It clarifies that animals can only have one owner, may only be halved or quartered by the purchaser for the purpose of transport, and the meat products are not eligible to be sold. It also directs the Agency to conduct outreach and education on the availability of and the requirements for on farm livestock slaughter. The Agency offers an [FAQ](#) on its website to help farmers understand “On-Farm” Personal Use Exemption.

The Legislature passed [Act 104](#), a bill that will enable the Vermont Agency of Agriculture to enforce FDA’s Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing, and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption, a rule under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) commonly known as the “Produce Safety Rule.”

The Agency applied for, and received, federal funding to build a Vermont State Produce Safety and Market Access Program, which will provide funds for outreach and education on the Produce Safety Rule as well as on-farm inspections. Vermont produce growers have expressed their support for the [Agency of Agriculture](#) to be the primary regulatory presence for Produce Safety Rule enforcement on Vermont farms.

Universal Meals is a new component of the Vermont Farm to School grant program funded by Vermont's Legislature in 2016. Schools are eligible to participate when they move into the USDA-administered Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which provides reimbursement for schools providing free meals for all students, regardless of socio-economic status. The goal of the Universal Meals component is to provide grantee schools the financial and technical assistance tools necessary to enter the CEP program, while leveraging as many resources as possible to ensure a smooth and viable transition into offering free meals for all students. Institutions with farm to school programs are highly encouraged to apply, as there is a strong local food procurement component to the program, providing Vermont producers further opportunity to sell their product to Vermont schools.

Additional legislative changes that may be of interest include:

- Agricultural Exemption from Sales and Use Tax, [Act 100](#)
- [Act 154](#) contains a requirement that applicants for state funded grants must certify they are in "good standing" relating to Vermont water quality standards issued by the State or any of its agencies or departments, and directs the Secretary of the Administration to amend the Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants, referred to as Attachment C to Administrative Bulletin 5, which requires applicants for a State-funded grant to certify, under penalty of perjury, that the applicant is in good standing with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.
- An energy siting bill, [Act 174](#), which requires increased participation by the Agency of Agriculture and review for potential impacts to "primary agricultural soils."

External Group and Organizations

Below is a summary of Agency board and committee membership

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Role</i>
Vermont Council on Rural Development	Deputy Secretary/Secretary	Serve on Board
Vermont Housing Conservation Board	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	On board – chair subgroup that helps staff prioritize ag projects
Farm Viability Enhancement Program	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	Chair of board
Vermont Economic Development Authority	Deputy Secretary/Secretary	Serve on Board
VT Ag Credit Corporation (part of VEDA)	Deputy Secretary/Secretary	Serve on Board
Sustainable Ag Council	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	Chair by statute

College of Ag and Life Sciences	Secretary	Serve on Board
VT Trade Commission	Deputy Secretary/Secretary	
VT Livestock Care Advisory Board	Deputy Secretary/Secretary	Chair
Farm to Plate	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	Steering Committee
NASDA – National Association of State Departments of Ag	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	VT Secretary served as President in 2014. VT hosted annual national conference
NEASDA – Northeast Association of State Departments of Ag	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	
Vermont Dairy Promotion Council	Deputy Secretary/Secretary	Chair
Lake Champlain Basin Program Executive Cmte	Deputy Secretary	member
LCBP Steering Cmte	Secretary	member
LCBP Technical Cmte	Deputy Director ARM Division	member
Livestock Advisory Council	Secretary	Chair
Eastern States Trustee	Secretary	member
Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund	Secretary	member
VT Milk commission	Secretary/Deputy Secretary	Chair
Governor's Climate Cabinet	Deputy Secretary	member
NRCC	Secretary	Voting member
Working Lands Enterprise Board	Secretary or Designee	Chair
VT Council of Ag Associations	Business Development Section Chief Coordinates, Secretary/Deputy Secretary chairs	Chair
Echo Clean Water Initiative	Secretary	member
Animal Cruelty Investigation	Secretary or Designee	member

General Information

Our Agency website is www.Agriculture.Vermont.Gov

We are on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as @VtAgencyofAg

Our facilities are locked during business hours, for the safety of our employees. For visitor information, please visit http://agriculture.vermont.gov/about_us/visitor_info

Please see attached budget and organizational charts