



# THE WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE: SUPPORTING VERMONT'S WORKING LANDSCAPE



*Tucker Riggs of LSF Forest Products (photo by Erica Houskeeper),  
Becca Knouss of The Goat Project, and Ananda Gardens*

**FISCAL YEAR 2024 IMPACT REPORT**



## About the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI)

It is deeply satisfying to see the impact of WLEI. In twelve years, WLEI has directly invested \$18.8 million in 555 farm, food, and forestry projects and leveraged an additional \$30.9 million in matching funds.

In 2012, the Vermont Legislature and Governor Shumlin created the Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF), which was tasked with investing in Vermont's working lands enterprises to strengthen our economy, advance job creation, sustain our environment, and keep Vermont beautiful. The Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) was tasked with administering the program and is made up of 20 members throughout the supply chains of agriculture and forestry, and staff from the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets; Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation; Agency of Commerce & Community Development; Vermont Housing & Conservation Board; Vermont Economic Development Authority, and Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

*“Investing in our rural communities is critical to Vermont’s future. The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative grows our economy while making it more affordable for those who are making a living off the land. These annual investments are important because they support Vermont’s forest and food economy. For more than a decade, we have seen businesses grow, create jobs, and produce quality products because of the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative.”*

– Anson Tebbetts  
Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets



# WLEI Strategically Invests in Businesses and Service Provider Organizations

**Business Grants:** Strategic investments in working lands businesses that influence their value chain, create jobs, boost sales, support worker wellbeing, adapt to climate change, increase production, or preserve or increase working lands acreage.

**Service Provider Grants and Contracts:** Investments in business and technical assistance service providers who work directly with working lands enterprises to support them as they grow, pivot, and adapt to an ever-changing marketplace, or prepare for new capital investment or an intergenerational transfer.

**Producer Association Grants:** Investments in the organizational development of VT-based producer associations supporting their members with technical assistance, marketing, research, and development.

**Trade Show Assistance Grants:** Investments in agriculture and forestry businesses to market and promote products at out-of-state trade shows.

Fiscal Year	Appropriation	Total Funding Requests
2024	\$3,150,000	\$16,187,156
2023	\$2,000,000	\$10,575,516
2022	\$5,594,000	\$10,109,747
2021	\$594,000	\$2,043,716
2020	\$1,594,000	\$5,015,147
2019	\$700,000	\$1,178,287
2018	\$694,000	\$1,902,316

Until 2023, the annual base appropriation for WLEF was \$594,000. In 2023, the annual base appropriation increased to \$1,000,000. Funds available beyond these base amounts came from special appropriations to WLEF.

# Program Impact

## 2012–2024

Funded **555** projects

Distributed **\$18.8M** in Working Lands funds

Leveraged **\$30.9M** in matching funds

Benefitted **14** counties

*Northeastern Vine Supply*



In 2024, the Working Lands Enterprise Board updated the program's priorities and developed a new roadmap for measuring program impact.

Job creation has been and remains a key metric of program success. But, given the current labor context, the WLEB is now also prioritizing project impacts on labor efficiencies, workforce development, and worker/owner wellbeing.

Similarly, WLEB has always prioritized project impact on increased acreage in production, and WLEB now will also prioritize project impact on land management and climate adaptation.

WLEB has also added a new impact category focused on equity, engagement, and equality. Applicants can describe how their project will reach or impact engagement, historically underserved and/or marginalized communities, such as people living below the poverty threshold and/or facing food insecurity or homelessness, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, people of color, people with disabilities, veterans, and women.

The projected impact on increased product output and sales have been, and remain, important priorities for the board.

***The updated roadmap includes four strategies that respond to the legislative intent behind WLEI's mission:***

1. Strengthen working lands business viability and resiliency by providing access to capital.
2. Increase working lands business's knowledge, skills, and profitability by investing in an array of business support services.
3. Increase investments and business supports to historically underserved and/or marginalized communities by reducing barriers to submitting successful grant applications.
4. Improve the operating environment for Vermont's agriculture and forestry businesses by serving as a credible and trusted voice to raise awareness and collaborate with partners about laws, regulations, and policies that impact working lands businesses.

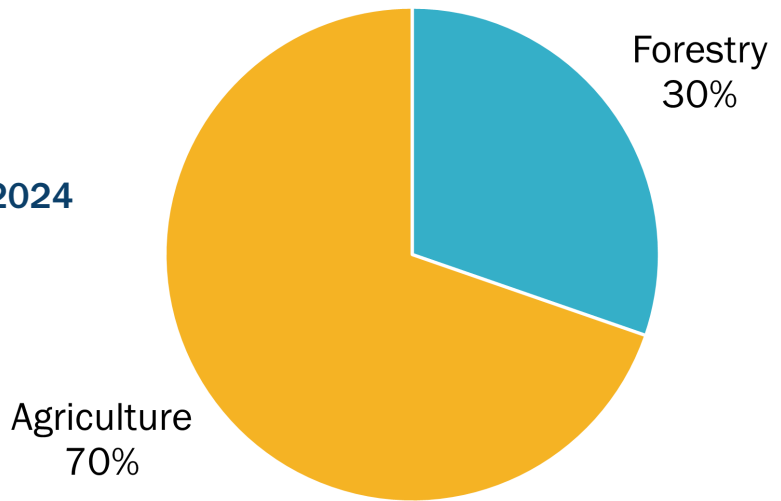
Triple J Pastures



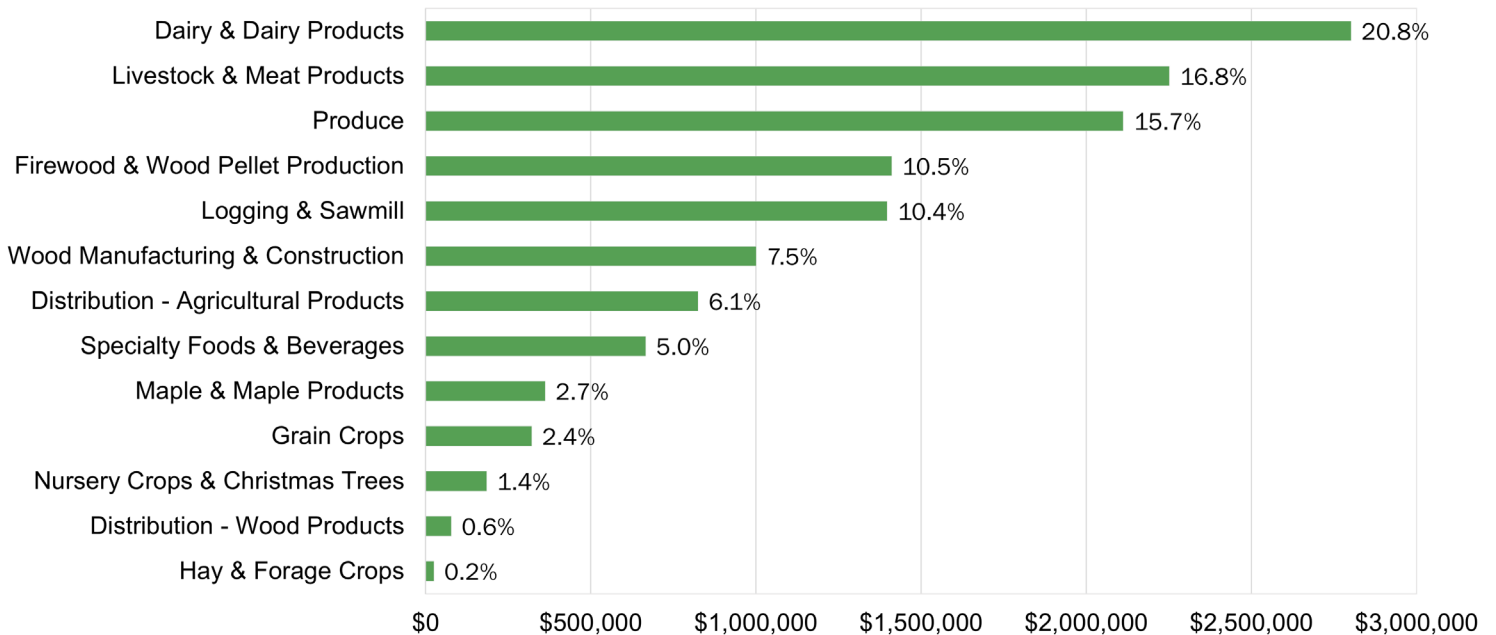
# What Business Sectors Receive Working Lands Grants?

From 2012 to 2024, WLEB has awarded over \$13.4 million dollars directly to working lands businesses. WLEB is committed to strategically investing in both the agricultural and forestry sectors of Vermont.

**INVESTMENTS TO AGRICULTURE VS. FORESTRY BUSINESSES, 2012-2024**

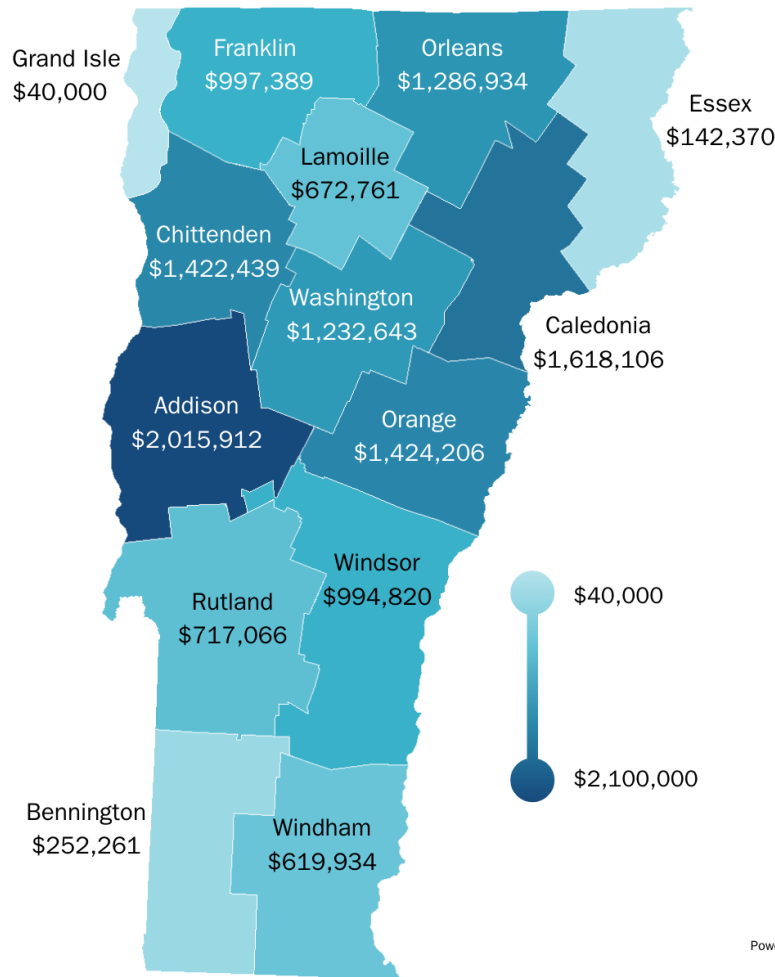


**DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT FUNDS TO BUSINESSES PER SECTOR, 2012-2024**



## Where Do Working Lands Grants Go?

WLEI business grantees come from all across Vermont. Staff and Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) members, from businesses and organizations throughout the supply chains of agriculture and forestry, work to promote the program and connect applicants to needed support.



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*Business grant totals displayed here do not include Trade Show Assistance Grants.*



## Fiscal Year 2024 Program Overview

In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), demand for grants reached its highest point yet, with a staggering \$16,187,156 in requests for \$3,031,672 in available funds. In FY24, 30% of funds supported the agriculture sector with 70% invested in the forestry sector.

In FY24, WLEF was appropriated \$2 million. WLEF also carried over \$812,991 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that were appropriated in FY23. The legislature created a one-time \$150,000 pool for Small Farm Diversification & Transition Grants. This meant the total pool of funds available for FY24 was just over \$3 million.

The ARPA funds were specifically for primary agricultural and forestry businesses. WLEB used the ARPA funds to make awards ranging from \$50,000-\$250,000. The Supply Chain Impact Grant was also offered for projects in that same range. The Business Enhancement Grant continued with a new funding range of \$15,000-\$50,000 to account for increased costs for businesses. The Small Farm Diversification & Transition grants offered up to \$15,000 to small farms executing diversification and/or transition activities.

*Kylie and Sam Rossier of Sunday Bell Farm*





Total funds awarded **\$3,021,672**

Number of awards made **65**

Matching funds leveraged **\$6,347,006**

Counties benefited **14**

Total funds requested **\$16,187,156**

Number of applicants **345**



SS Forestry Solutions

## Service Provider Investments

### Center for Women & Enterprise

\$20,000 for business planning for women-owned working lands businesses

### Intervale Center

\$23,800 for upgrading Vermont Land Link website to accelerate farmland access

### Northeast Forests Vermont Forest Business School

\$75,000 for training and business coaching program

### Northern Forest Center

Northern Forest Center: \$19,987 for supporting adaptation and growth for Vermont wood products businesses through 1:1 technical assistance, peer-peer learning, and marketing assistance

### Northwest Regional Planning Commission

\$12,005 for sale and marketing technical assistance and updates to Northwest Vermont Grown website

### Paul, Frank & Collins

\$55,800 for building executive business skills training program in labor and HR management

### Rival Brands

\$33,250 for marketing assistance to build beliefs and brands of Vermont's business owners

### Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

\$99,065 for building resilience in the agricultural sector through executive business and marketing skills

### Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

\$99,986 for expanding access to business and technical assistance to foster a resilient forest economy

### Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

\$100,000 for developing a supply chain for beef-on-dairy terminal crossbred animals

### Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

\$56,430 for Vermont Forest Industry Network Summit

## Producer Association Grants

### Vermont Cheese Council

\$24,888 for expanding organizational and board development for member impact

### Vermont Vegetable & Berry Growers' Association

\$12,000 for maintaining and improving the VVBGA web site

### Vermont Woodlands Association

\$20,000 for marketing activities to amplifying the role of private woodland owner stewardship



*Stoni Tomson of New Tradition Farm*

## Business Grants

### 802 Logging, Craftsbury

\$50,000 for feller buncher to increase efficiency and safety and to minimize environmental impact during harvesting

### Agrigorial LLC, Jeffersonville

\$35,100 for The Farm Between value-added processing kitchen

### Ananda Gardens, Montpelier

\$62,595 for building an accessible farmstand in the Montpelier area

### Belter Family Partnership, South Burlington

\$250,000 for purchase and installation of GEA 9500 milking robots

### Bear Island Maple, Bolton

\$16,650 for establishing maple sap collection

### Calabash Gardens, Wells River

\$10,300 for certified kitchen build out for value-added production

### Carman Brook Orchard, Swanton

\$15,000 for sustainable cider orchard transition with wild apple varieties

### Chamberlin's Farm, Underhill

\$14,737 for farm store refrigeration

### Champlain Valley Grain Center, Ferrisburgh

\$150,000 for still system for processing local grain day of harvest

### David White Trucking, Lemington

\$67,370 for expanding logging equipment system

### Ezili's Respite Farm & Sanctuary, Groton

\$15,000 for goat dairy handling & processing facilities

### FinAllie Ferments, Townshend

\$50,000 for improving efficiency and storage capacity

### Goodridge Lumber, Albany

\$225,789 for converting from diesel to electric-generated three-phase power

### Grateful Morning Dairy, Shaftsbury

\$15,000 for establishing an on-farm creamery for value-added dairy

### Hackett's Orchard, South Hero

\$25,000 for Honeycrisp storage expansion

**Hillside Farm, Albany**

\$11,253 to establish on-farm poultry parting

**Howmars Farm, Franklin**

\$8,600 for increasing organic potato production

**Last Resort Farm, Bristol**

\$74,565 for building new hay storage and renovating dairy barn hay loft for storing and curing high-value crops

**LSF Forest Products, Fletcher**

\$250,000 for sawmill expansion to increase production

**Machia Brothers Dairy, Franklin**

\$50,000 for farmworker housing replacement project

**Maple Valley Farm, Bridgewater**

\$15,000 for establishing a farmstand

**Martin Family Farm, Williamstown**

\$6,042 for hay wagon to improve hay sales capability

**Milkweed Farm, Westminster West**

\$15,000 for farm store display cooler

**Myers Produce, Craftsbury**

\$45,000 for digital infrastructure to support regional sales and transportation of Vermont food

**New Tradition Farm, Huntington**

\$14,900 for diversifying with fruit and nut trees

**Northeastern Vine Supply, West Pawlet**

\$50,000 for vineyard expansion and value-added wine production

**Severy Farm, Cornwall**

\$185,829 for new livestock facilities for profitability

**Slopeside Syrup, Williston**

\$50,000 for purchase and installation of high-output packaging machine for single-serve bottles

**SS Forestry Solutions, Williston**

\$15,000 for Valmet forwarder rehab

**Sunday Bell Farm, Danville**

\$50,000 for new milking parlor and milking equipment

**Sweetland Farm, Norwich**

\$190,002 for fossil-free winter crop storage and production facility

**The Goat Project, Bennington**

\$50,000 for creamery construction

**Top Rankin, Johnson**

\$48,485 for organic raw milk dairy infrastructure development

**Triple J Pastures, Irasburg**

\$18,108 for mobile chicken house

**Union Brook Farm, Northfield**

\$9,168 for equipment to expand on-farm poultry processing

**Vermont Bees, Swanton**

\$50,000 for honey extraction equipment upgrade

**Vermont Cider Lab, Essex**

\$50,000 for processing equipment and furthering farm partnerships

**Vermont Farmers Food Center, Rutland**

\$50,000 for Heart of Vermont Agriculture Food Center



David White of David White Trucking

**Trade Show Assistance Grants**

Eden Ice Cider Company, Newport – \$4,980

Grand Isle Ice Cream Company, Williston – \$5,000

La Garagista, Bethel – \$5,000

Ledgenear Farm, West Glover – \$5,000

Maple Landmark Woodcraft, Middlebury – \$4,750

NOURISH (the Planet), St. Albans – \$5,000

Northeastern Vine Supply, West Pawlet – \$4,090

Sawyer Made, Woodbury – \$4,935

Tavernier Chocolates, Brattleboro – \$2,950

Treeline Terrains, Burlington – \$5,000

Trenchers Farmhouse, Lyndonville – \$4,975

UnTapped, Richmond – \$5,000

vonTrapp Farmstead, Waitsfield – \$3,288

# Goodridge Lumber

## From Diesel to Electric: A Vermont Sawmill Cuts Emissions, Costs, and Time

In 1974, what started as a passion project to mill wood for a family log cabin in Albany, Vermont, evolved into Goodridge Lumber, a family-owned sawmill that recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. The business now employs seven people and annually processes over one million board feet of wood sourced within a 75-mile radius.

For the Goodridge family, operating a sawmill means more than producing lumber. It's about sustaining a network of local landowners, loggers, truckers, and foresters who rely on the mill as a vital link in Vermont's forest economy.

"Every part of the local supply chain benefits when a mill like ours stays operational," explained Colleen Goodridge, who owns the mill with her three sons, Brian, Mark, and Doug. "If a logger can truck a load 75 miles instead of five hours away, that makes a big difference. It means more money in the pockets of landowners, loggers, and truckers—and that's what we need for this wood products industry to remain viable and grow."

Their specialization in white cedar has also insulated the mill from the volatility of global commodity markets. "Because we deal in a specialty product here in New England, we can set our pricing to some extent," Colleen said.

However, Goodridge Lumber is not immune to the challenges facing Vermont's forestry sector. The state has lost 84% of its sawmills since 1983, with only 39 remaining, according to the Vermont Forest Resource 2022 Harvest Report.

Warm winters and wet summers have reduced the logging season for species like white cedar, which requires frozen ground for harvesting. Sawlog and veneer log harvests have dropped 50 percent in the past decade. This poses a significant threat to the state's forest economy, which contributes \$1.4 billion annually and supports 9,000 jobs.

To address environmental and operational challenges, the Goodridge family recently transitioned their mill from diesel-powered generators to a three-phase electric system. The identification of this project came about with help from The Northern Forest Center. In 2024, Goodridge Lumber was one of 20 forestry businesses in Vermont to take part in a WLEI-funded Technical Assistance program. Colleen says the business support they received helped them strengthen their business plan.

The switch to electric will save an estimated 13,000 gallons of diesel annually, cutting costs, reducing emissions, and saving time. Colleen says that without the grant, they faced time-consuming patchwork repairs on their old generators because the smallest replacement generator they could find that met emissions requirements was three times the size they needed.

"Without generator duties, we're looking at saving 100 hours per year, and we can repurpose this time for production activities; we'll be sawing instead of working on the generator. With the time savings, the goal is to increase production," Colleen said. The upgrade also opens doors for the business to expand. With electric power running to the site, the mill can diversify its product line to include red and white pine and the required kiln for drying the lumber, which they don't have now because white cedar is air-dried.

"It's not only going to start helping today. But it's going to give us more options as we go forward." Colleen said.

Looking ahead, Colleen says supporting Vermont's forest economy is critical. "We're lucky to live in a state that's 76% forested, with more trees growing than being harvested," Colleen said. "It's our job to keep this industry viable—not just for lumber, but for clean air, water, wildlife habitat, and recreation."

- **Grant Award:** \$225,789
- **Applicant Match:** \$225,789
- **Project:** Investment in three-phase electric system to increase sawmill profitability and achieve an estimated savings of 12,807 gallons of diesel fuel and 180,347 pounds of carbon emissions per year



*“Without generator duties, we’re looking at saving 100 hours per year, and we can repurpose this time for production activities; we’ll be sawing instead of working on the generator. With the time savings, the goal is to increase production.”*



## Vermont Bees

### New Machinery Streamlines Honey Harvest and Increases Production at Vermont Bees



Adam Collins and Bianca Braman of Vermont Bees

It's a sunny day in early October in a barn in Swanton where the apiarists of Vermont Bees—Bianca Braman, Adam Collins, and Bruce Collins—are busy. “Normally, we’d be done harvesting by now, but we aren’t worried about being behind this year because it’s so much faster than before,” says Bianca.

Honey extraction is faster this season thanks to the new Cowen 28 Frame Honey Extraction System that gleams in the center of the room. Vermont Bees purchased the machine thanks to a \$50,000 Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) Business Enhancement Grant in 2024.

This state-of-the-art piece of equipment has been life changing for the business. Fourteen frames at a time are loaded onto the machine and scraped of honey and wax. Then, the machine can spin twenty-eight frames at once in a centrifuge that extracts honey from the combs.

Meanwhile, the scraped wax gets funneled to another part of the machine that further removes honey, leaving a dry wax that will be rendered and used for candles. The honey squeezed from the wax gets funneled back into the main honey tank with the honey harvested from the centrifuge.

Father-and-son pair Bruce and Adam started the business in 2015, and Bianca joined the business in 2020. The business has grown since its early days, and the Working Lands grant came at a perfect time to help Vermont Bees reach a new period of growth.

The new machine is a far cry from their previous system, which required moving individual frames into the extractor. It also takes about six minutes to extract honey in the centrifuge, while the previous system took half an hour. Under the previous system, each person could extract about 400 pounds of honey in an eight-hour day. With the new machine, a person can do 1000 pounds per day – and they expect to get to 3000 pounds per day in the future as they gain more practice on the machine.



Knowing the new machine would be far more efficient, Vermont Bees also increased their colony numbers this season from 75 to 180. Bianca and Adam had anticipated that the new machine and increased colony numbers could increase their production from 5,000 pounds of honey in 2023 to 10,000 pounds in 2024. The reality was even better than they hoped—the 2024 harvest clocked in at 18,000 pounds.

The harvesting room smells sweetly of honey, and a large clear tube funnels honey overhead from the extraction machine to the holding tank. Many Vermonters are familiar with maple sap tubing and tanks of maple syrup, but honey like this isn’t something you see every day. Vermont Bees is here to change that by creating a viable business model that can produce Vermont honey at scale while pollinating land across Northwest Vermont. The label on a Vermont Bees honey jar proclaims that each pound of honey results from over two million bee visits. It’s a magical thing to see the trillions of bee visits and the care that Bianca, Adam, and Bruce put into the honey harvest come together in this barn full of liquid gold.

- **Grant Award:** \$50,000
- **Applicant Match:** \$8,145
- **Project:** Purchase and installation of Cowen 28 Frame Honey Extraction System to increase efficiency and production and improve worker wellbeing



*“With the new machine, a person can do 1,000 pounds per day – and they expect to get to 3,000 pounds per day in the future...”*

## Hillside Farm

### New Legislation Allows Hillside Farm to Expand Poultry Processing



Hannah Pearce of Hillside Farm

A recent change in Vermont law has created new opportunities for small-scale poultry farms processing under the Vermont Poultry Exemptions from Inspection Program. Previously, these producers were limited to processing only whole birds for sale directly to consumers. Now, chickens can be processed into parts on farms, too. To help these farms take advantage of this new opportunity, the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) lost no time. In Fiscal Year 2024, WLEI strategically invested in two poultry businesses, including Hillside Farm in East Albany, so they could quickly take advantage of this new market opportunity.

“Our customers really appreciate that we sell whole birds because it makes it way more affordable for them,” said Hannah Pearce, co-owner of Hillside Farm, which was founded by her father, Bill Pearce, in 2012. “But they have to learn how to either cut up their own bird or roast a chicken and have it not go to waste, and not everyone can do that.”

To sell chicken parts, the farm was previously required to send birds to an off-site USDA facility, a process that was both logistically and financially challenging. “The cost of getting them slaughtered and cut up at an outside facility was really expensive,” Hannah explained. “I would sell out every year on the popular cuts, and the margin wasn’t great, but it brought people to my farm stand, which was great.”

Hillside Farm is now processing chicken parts on the farm, thanks to a WLEI grant used to purchase essential equipment, including a vacuum sealer, refrigeration, and a stainless-steel worktable.

On-farm processing has improved margins while providing greater flexibility and responsiveness to customer preferences. “My customers already expected me to have cuts at the farmers market, but by doing it ourselves, we’re able to respond much better,” Hannah said. “For example, people don’t want whole legs, but they love thighs, so we’ll process more thighs...we can sell the excess drumsticks to a local restaurant for a fried chicken night.”

The new equipment also allowed Pearce to hire several part-time workers to assist with chores and processing. “The cutting makes us more agile in how we’re selling, and we always have stock,” Hannah added. “My cut sales now make up 20 percent of the business and are more than two and a half times what they were the year before, with the capacity to grow every year.”

In 2024, Hillside Farm processed over 700 birds on-site, up from 500 the previous year because of their ability to better meet customer needs. They hope to surpass 1,000 birds in 2025 to meet increasing demand at farmer’s markets and through their farm stand.

Thanks to the new grant-funded refrigeration units through the Center for an Agricultural Economy, the 150 to 200 visitors who come to the farm stand annually can now self-serve and grab cuts of other meats like pork, turkey, and lamb, which were previously only available at the farmer’s market.

Reflecting on the challenges and rewards of her work, Hannah said, “Being able to feed people is huge. It’s hard, frustrating, and sometimes really isolating. But I get to be on this land that I love, I get to feed people, and I think there’s extreme value in the work.”

- **Grant Award:** \$11,252
- **Applicant Match:** \$349
- **Project:** Increasing profit per bird through on farm poultry parting equipment





***“My cut sales now make up 20 percent of the business and are more than two and a half times what they were the year before, with the capacity to grow every year.”***

# Vermont Community Loan Fund SPROUT Loan Program

## Low-Interest Loan Kick-Starts Topsy Hop Farm



Topsy Hop Farm

In addition to awarding grants directly to working lands businesses, the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) has helped create financing tools to benefit more businesses with the available funds. One example is the SPROUT Loan Program, managed by the Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF). Since 2016, the SPROUT program has provided 52 loans to Vermont businesses, including 18 funded through the most recent grant cycle.

By subsidizing interest rates on loans to working lands businesses, WLEI and VCLF are helping early-stage and start-up enterprises that traditional lenders often overlook. Loans average \$30,000, and half of the beneficiaries to date are launching new businesses.

“These are people who want to leap into entrepreneurship,” said Executive Director of VCLF, Will Belongia. “They see a need in the

market, whether for vegetables, berries, hops, or wooden furniture, but may lack the track record that banks require to make a loan.”

WLEI’s most recent \$150,000 grant to VCLF subsidized interest rates from 6% down to 1%, freeing up cash flow for borrowers to focus on critical infrastructure, marketing, and inventory investments. VCLF also provided 220 hours of technical assistance through one-on-one business advising.

One recipient of the SPROUT program is Topsy Hop Farm, a BIPOC-owned farm in Danville. Owners Amy Robinson and Simeon Geigel, both business advisors by day, began farming in a community garden and have spent years developing their vision of a diversified farm, which came to life with their purchase of 20 acres in 2018. With their \$60,000 SPROUT loan, they are installing an artisan well and electrical systems to bring their vision of a farm stand and CSA to life. This year, they’ll begin offering fresh vegetables and flowers. Plans are also in the works for the construction of a building to be used as a production space and commercial kitchen.

Amy reflects on the importance of the loan: “I did a ton of research with a variety of lenders before deciding to use VCLF. It’s not just about taking out a loan—it’s about understanding how that impacts our longer-term goals...taking out a bigger loan was really scary, so this step was perfect and got our project continuing in a way that was affordable for us.”

Without the loan, Amy says their plans would have been delayed until they could find a viable financing option, “This loan also allowed us to get to the point where we can generate income through sales; if we had to go the more commercial route, I don’t think that would have happened as quickly. It also allowed us to upgrade the property, and when we do go for a larger loan in the future, we’ll have added value and leverage to borrow against.”

Overall, the SPROUT loan program is kindling the spark of entrepreneurship and sustaining meaningful work – while keeping working lands productive.

“On our property, from the very moment you step on it, it grounds you,” Amy said. “You can see the vision. The sun is shining, and we’re working in the high tunnels, and it’s where I find myself to be the happiest and most peaceful, doing what we want to do and thinking about our future.”

- **Contract Award:** \$150,000
- **Applicant Match:** \$0
- **Project:** Expanding access to no-cost and low-cost capital for start-up and early-stage working lands businesses



*“These are people who want to leap into entrepreneurship. They see a need in the market, whether for vegetables, berries, hops, or wooden furniture, but may lack the track record that banks require to make a loan.”*



## Agrigorial LLC

### Shared Kitchen and Farm Store in Jeffersonville Create Opportunities for Food Businesses



Holly and Angus Baldwin of Agrigorial LLC

Farming is a challenging business, and to succeed, many farms are sharing resources. For Angus and Holly Baldwin, the husband-and-wife team behind The Farm Between in Jeffersonville, Vermont, this approach is central to their mission.

“To maintain the tradition of agriculture in Vermont, one business doesn’t have to do everything,” Holly said. “Collaborating with other farms is really important to us because that helps them to also be viable.”

With the help of a Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) grant, the Baldwins recently built a community processing kitchen and expanded their farm store—designed to support their business as they shift focus from wholesale markets to higher-margin retail sales while also providing a home for neighboring producers’ products.

Under their Agrigorial LLC umbrella, the Baldwins

operate two businesses: The Farm Between, which focuses on retail nursery plants and fruit, and West Farm, which specializes in wholesale vegetables. The farm store and processing kitchen, located at The Farm Between, serve as a hub for direct-to-consumer sales of their products and their CSA program. They also offer offerings from local producers such as Trent’s Bread, Vermont Cranberry Company, Butterworks Farm, Vermont Honey Hive, and Hunger Moon Farm.

“We’re not going to be viable year-round as a retail enterprise just based on produce and other local commodities,” Angus explained. “It’s about generating rental income from the kitchen, creating new value-added products, and connecting more people to local food.”

Completed in January 2025, the Baldwins will use the processing kitchen to create new fruit syrups and other value-added products while also making the space available for rent to neighboring producers.

The Baldwins plan to collaborate with Nasturtium Kitchen of Cambridge to host pre-ordered weekly dinners and with The Baker Beth of Lowell to host a bread CSA. A fellow 2024 WLEI grant recipient, Top Rankin Dairy of Johnson, hopes to use the kitchen to produce value-added dairy products once equipped with a pasteurizer, and The Farm Between also hosts Top Rankin Dairy’s raw milk CSA at the farm store. Holly’s business, Three Crows Farm & Ferments, will rent the space for its sauerkraut production. The Spa at Sterling Ridge in Jeffersonville has also expressed interest in holding cooking workshops on the farm.

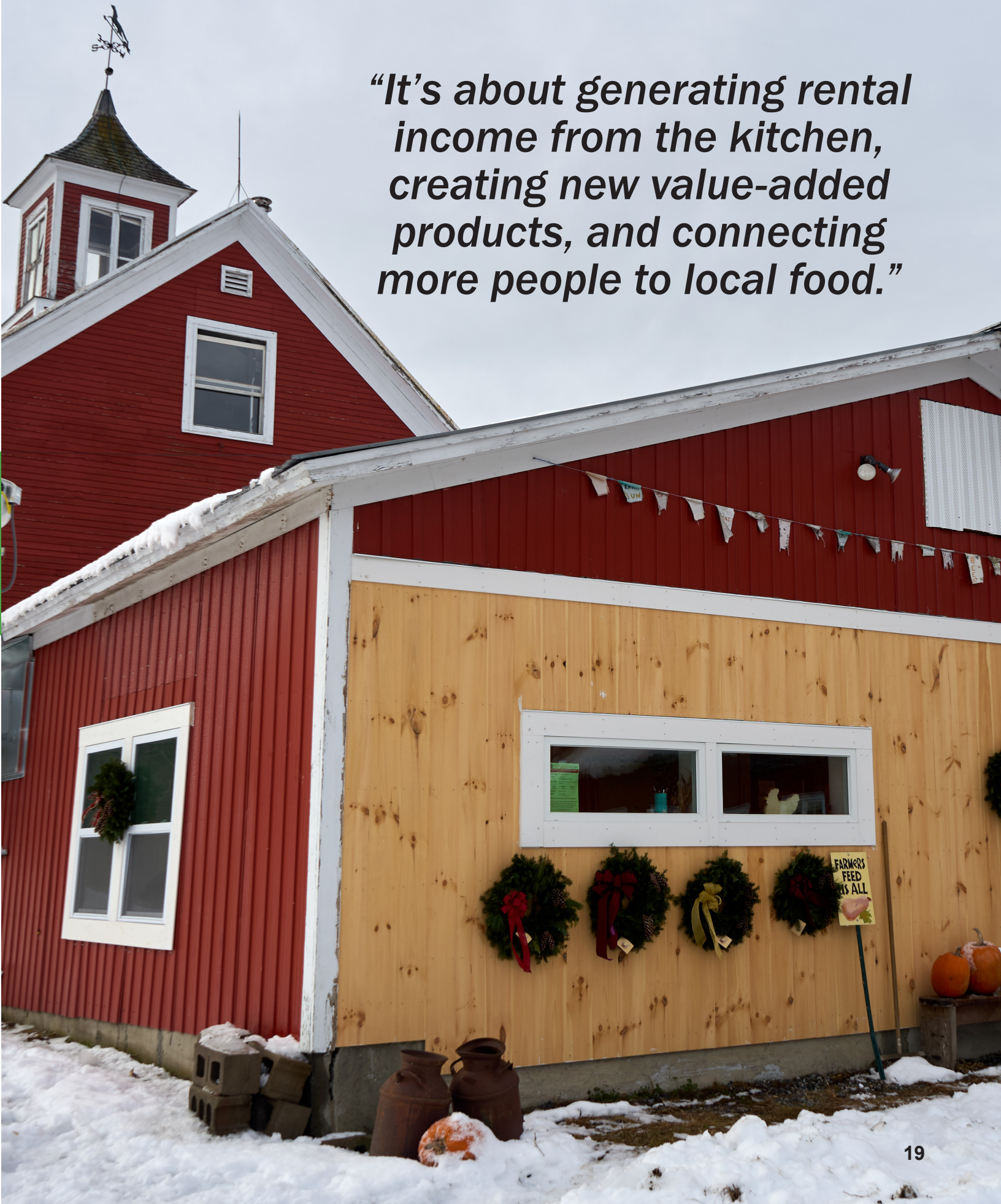
The Baldwins are also renovating a historic corn crib, a structure once used to store cow feed when the property operated as a dairy farm. Funded in part by a State Historic Barn Preservation grant, the space will become an event venue for workshops, meetings, and gatherings of up to 20 people. Completion is expected in February 2025.

The Farm Between and West Farm highlight the changing face of Vermont agriculture. Both properties were once dairy farms before transitioning to diversified agriculture—and are now morphing into something new again.

“We hope this becomes a place where the community feels nourished. Agrigorial means being connected to the land and coming together,” Holly said. “One of our broad goals is to reconnect people to the magic of the land.”

- **Grant Award:** \$35,100
- **Applicant Match:** \$56,700
- **Project:** Increasing profitability by constructing a processing kitchen for producing jams and fruit syrups and for rental clients

***“It’s about generating rental income from the kitchen, creating new value-added products, and connecting more people to local food.”***





The Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) is a cross-sector network of partners: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets; Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation; Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development; many designated board members from the agriculture and forest sectors, and non-voting members from the Vermont Economic Development Authority, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

**Anson Tebbetts**, Secretary of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (Chair)

**Alyson Eastman**, Deputy Secretary of Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (designee for Anson Tebbetts)

**Danielle Fitzko**, Commissioner of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

**Oliver Pierson**, Director of Forests, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation (designee for Danielle Fitzko)

**Tayt Brooks**, Deputy Secretary of Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development

**Elisabeth Nance**, Grant Programs Manager, Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development (Designee for Tayt Brooks)

**Alex Barrett**, Long View Forest, Hartland - Member representing the forest industry who is a forester

**Will Belongia**, Vermont Community Loan Fund, Montpelier - Member who is an agriculture and forestry enterprise funder

**Alan Calfee**, Calfee Woodland Management, Rupert - Member who is a representative of a membership-based forestland owner organization

**Chris Castano**, Maine Hardwoods, Williston - Member who is actively engaged in primary wood processing or logging



**Megan Cowles Camp**, Shelburne Farms, Shelburne - Member who is an employee of a Vermont institution engaged in agriculture or forestry education, training, or research

**David Hubbard**, GMC Hardwoods, Norwich - Member actively engaged in wood products manufacturing

**Bob Lesnikoski**, Vermont Cranberry Company, East Fairfield - Member who is actively engaged in on-farm value-added processing

**Alison Low**, Northeastern Vermont Development Association - Member with expertise in rural economic development

**Tyler Miller**, Vermont Land Trust, Montpelier - Member with expertise in land planning and conservation efforts that support Vermont's working landscape

**Kathy Murphy-Moriarty**, Middlesex - Member with expertise in sales, marketing, or market development

**Jon Ramsay**, Center for an Agricultural Economy, Hardwick - Member who is actively engaged in manufacturing or distribution of Vermont agricultural products

**Alisha Utter** (Vice Chair), Arbor Farmstead, Grand Isle - Member involved in production agriculture whose primary enterprise is not fluid milk

**Donna Young**, Judd's Wayeeses Farms, Morgan - Member who is actively engaged in commodity maple production

### **Ex-officio, Non-voting Members:**

**Sarah Isham** (designee for Cassie Polhemus), Vermont Economic Development Authority

**Liz Gleason**, (designee for Gus Seelig), Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

**Ellen Kahler**, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund



**Elizabeth Sipple**  
Program Manager



**Clare Salerno**  
Program Coordinator



**Lily Bradburn**  
Grants & Contracts Specialist

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Additional staff leadership and support from Abbey Willard, Trevor Lowell, and Laura Ginsburg at the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets and Katharine Servidio at the Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation



## Further Contributors to this Report

Laura Hardie, Red Barn Writer  
Robbie Blanchard, Freelance Designer

## Thank you to former Working Lands Enterprise Board members who served in 2024

**Charlie Hancock (Vice Chair), Northwoods Forestry, Montgomery**  
*Member representing the Vermont forest industry who is a forester*

**Brooke Gladstone, Newmont Farm, Bradford**  
*Member representing Vermont's dairy industry who is a dairy farmer*

**Marisa Mauro, Ploughgate Creamery, Fayston**  
*Member with expertise in sales, marketing, or market development*

Vermont Cheese Council



## Why is Vermont's Working Lands Enterprise Initiative so important?

“In Fiscal Year 2024, logging and sawmill businesses benefited from over \$600,000 in WLEI grants, providing crucial support to help them adapt to the challenges of climate change. Beyond this, the program has also made significant investments in forestry-focused service providers, which are vital to maintaining the health and sustainability of Vermont's working lands economy”.

Danielle Fitzko

*Commissioner of the Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation  
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources*



*Northern Forest Center/Built By Newport, and Ethan Tapper of Bear Island Maple*



Clockwise from top: Chamberlin's Farm, Chris Line of Vermont Cider Lab, Sweetland Farm



Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets  
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation  
Agency of Commerce & Community Development

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*Lucas Martin of Martin Family Farm*

