

**Agriculture and Chittenden County Communities:  
A Listening Forum for Farmers and Local Decisionmakers**  
*Topic: What is Needed for Agriculture to be Successful in Chittenden County?*  
April 20, 2005

**SUMMARY REPORT**

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission  
30 Kimball Avenue, Suite 206  
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May 20, 2005



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**Introduction**

Growth and development put pressures on Vermont agriculture. This is especially true in Chittenden County. Although new developments consume land that was previously farmed, agriculture continues to play an important role in the region's character and economy. In order to understand local agricultural decisions, it is important to understand farmers' perceptions of how the community, as well as the economy, impacts them.

As part of a larger study on agriculture in Chittenden County, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) and the Vermont Planners Association (VPA) sponsored a public forum entitled Agriculture and Chittenden County Communities: A Listening Forum for Farmers and Local Decisionmakers on April 20, 2005 at the Williston Town Hall. The purpose of this forum was to gather information from persons directly involved in agriculture about critical factors for agricultural enterprises in Chittenden County. The forum's intent was to gain insight into local agricultural issues, based on input from a variety of active agricultural enterprises. The forum was not designed to debate or prioritize the issues raised.

The purpose of this summary report is to accurately document the forum and the views expressed by the individual participants. The first half of the report discusses the background, planning and structure of the forum. The report then summarizes comments from the participants, organized into themes. Two appendices provide a list of participants and notes from the forum discussion groups.

**Forum Background**

In response to a request from local members of VPA, CCRPC agreed to undertake a study of agriculture in Chittenden County. This study has two key objectives:

1. Gather information and document trends related to the current state of agriculture in Chittenden County
2. Identify public policies that support or hinder agriculture in Chittenden County.

The study will result in a final project report defining policy measures to support agricultural activity that local, county and state representatives can consider as they plan for the future of towns in Chittenden County.

This "listening forum" was planned as an early element in the study, seeking to obtain input from persons actively involved in agriculture in Chittenden County about the factors enabling an

agricultural enterprise to be successful, and those that create obstacles. The results of this forum will feed directly into the subsequent data collection and public policy analysis components of the study.

In preparing for the forum, CCRPC project staff met with key personnel from several organizations in order to gain an understanding of relevant agricultural issues and information sources:

Vermont Agency of Agriculture	Center for Rural Studies
USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA)	UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service	Vermont Land Trust
Vermont Farm Bureau	The Intervale
Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA-VT)	Shelburne Farms

The listening forum was open to the public, however, CCRPC focused outreach on two target audiences: persons actively involved in agriculture in the county; and selected local decisionmakers. Because participation from the agricultural community was critical to the forum's success, special efforts were made to identify and invite individuals engaged in agricultural enterprises. CCRPC also utilized agricultural organizations' newsletters. Vermont Agency of Agriculture and the Farm Services Agency county office offered to publish articles on the forum in their newsletters. Vermont Farm Bureau and NOFA-VT agreed to provide announcement information on the forum in their member publications.

Individual invitations were mailed to:

- Agricultural Community Members – 160-person mail list compiled from publicly available Internet sources (e.g., online marketing lists and agricultural association directories)
- Local Decisionmakers - Selectboard Chairs, Council and Trustee Presidents, Mayors, and CCRPC Natural Resources Committee members

## **Forum Structure**

After opening remarks and an overview of the forum and the larger study by CCRPC staff, the forum broke into small discussion groups. This structure was chosen to encourage participation and information sharing by the target audiences.

Each small group consisted of four to seven participants with a facilitator. Local decisionmakers were scattered among the small groups. VPA and CCRPC provided the facilitators, who helped foster discussion and recorded information on flip charts.

Each small group was asked to address the following questions:

1. What types of agriculture are represented in this group?
2. What makes it possible for your farm to be successful in Chittenden County?
3. What makes it difficult for your farm to be successful in Chittenden County?

Although federal policies are important to agriculture, participants were requested to stay focused on factors that could be addressed at a local, regional or state level.

After one hour, each small group was asked to have a volunteer provide highlights of the group's discussion to share with the entire group. At the end of the forum, CCRPC staff summarized some of the emerging themes from the discussions and discussed how the information from the forum would be used.

## **Forum Participation**

The forum drew 32 participants – 24 representing agricultural enterprises and eight decisionmakers.

Agricultural participants came from 12 of the county's 19 municipalities (although it should be noted that mailing addresses do not always reflect the physical location of the participant's agricultural activities). Towns with the greatest agricultural participation were: Shelburne (20% of total); Colchester (17%); and Williston (13%).

Participants reflected the diversity of agriculture in Chittenden County. The two highest agricultural sectors represented were dairy (36%) and organic vegetables (21%), however other participants' activities included beef/livestock, nurseries, berries, maple, horses and hay.

Decisionmaker participants included elected and staff officials from two towns, CCRPC commissioners, a representative from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, staff from the federal Farm Services Agency, and a representative from a land trust in South Hero.

## **Forum Results**

The small-group discussion format was successful in generating lively discussion and productive information. Interestingly, the discussion made clear that, depending on circumstances, many of the themes could be either a success factor or a difficulty. Major themes are summarized below; notes from each small group are included in Appendix B.

### Management

*Success Factors* – Two of the dairy enterprises identified good farm management as being a critical factor in their success. In both cases, these are farms able to assemble key skills from family members or employees. Both are also willing to utilize new technologies to improve efficiency.

### Agricultural Resources/Networks

*Success Factors* – Several of the participants noted the importance of agricultural resources and networks to provide information and assistance. Specifically, UVM Extension and the Center for Sustainable Agriculture were identified as being valuable resources, as were the agricultural associations, conservation commissions and local land trusts. The Intervale was noted as being an important incubator for new farmers. Vermont Agency of Agriculture support was also identified as being useful, but sometimes uneven.

### General Public Awareness

*Success Factors* – Multiple participants commented on the importance of Vermont’s positive public image, buy local initiatives, and the link between food and health. These perceptions help strengthen the market for local agricultural products. Tourism was noted as having a symbiotic relationship with agriculture; agriculture helps keep Vermont looking like Vermont, and tourists coming to Vermont are a potential market for agricultural products.

*Difficulties* – The increase in population relative to the smaller number of producers creates a disconnect between consumers and agricultural products and producers. Increasingly, people don’t know where their food comes from or how it is produced. Participants felt that this disconnect reduces public support for agricultural operations.

### Community Awareness

*Success Factors* – Several participants identified supportive neighbors as being a factor important to their success; they also noted that this support has been carefully cultivated through communication, outreach and cooperation.

*Difficulties* – Neighbor conflicts were repeatedly identified as difficulties. As residential development moves into farming areas, new neighbors are frequently unfamiliar with accepted agricultural practices and complain about manure spreading, pesticide application, movement of farm equipment and livestock, noise, odors, flies, etc. Additionally, communities frequently blame farms for environmental pollution, even though required practices and controls are in place. Some participants felt that their communities lacked an understanding of the complexity of farming as a business, and looked down on farmers as “dummies.” One participant identified the need to be able to post property to exclude use by ATVs.

### Markets

*Success Factors* – Nearly all participants flagged markets as being a critical success factor – it is difficult to stay in business without a customer for your products. Dairy farmers noted the importance of the dairy cooperatives as a market for fluid milk. Non-dairy participants repeatedly identified proximity to the metropolitan Burlington market as critical to success. The increasing population provides a growing market for ornamental plant sales. For some specialty producers, such as organic vegetable growers, the metropolitan area provides the restaurants and consumers willing to purchase high-value, perishable produce –direct from the producer, at farmers markets, or from natural food retailers. Proximity to a population center is important for horse stables whose business depends on horse boarding and riding lessons. Similarly, hay producers rely on horse owners, breeders and stables as their customers. Some of the maple product producers noted an increase in direct Internet sales.

*Difficulties* – Several participants noted that farmers markets are critical to their success, but also indicated that the current farmers markets are crowded and the Burlington Farmers Market is not accepting new vendors. A livestock producer noted that it is difficult to market regionally (e.g., to the Northeast).

### Land and Land Costs

*Success Factors* – Access to land (owned or leased) with prime agricultural or other good soils was repeatedly identified by participants as a success factor.

*Difficulties* – Several participants identified lack of access to land with good soils, whether due to cost or loss to development, as a difficulty. Some participants also noted that owners of leased fields are increasingly restrictive about agricultural practices such as pesticide use. Several participants also expressed concern that the high cost of land makes it difficult for new or emerging farmers to get established in agriculture. One participant with deeded use rights to neighboring properties reported ongoing conflicts over access and use, for which he had been unable to find governmental support or recourse other than the courts.

#### Property Taxes

*Success Factors* – Although most participants complained about property taxes, many noted that the state’s current use program (and earlier local tax stabilization programs) were important factors in controlling costs. Several participants also identified that their work with land trusts to place a portion of their land under conservation easements had been successful in helping reduce the property tax burden.

*Difficulties* – With land values escalating rapidly, some participants commented that their property taxes were still high, even after the purchase of development rights. As a result, money that they felt should have been available for the business was still being spent in property taxes. One participant, after converting from a dairy operation to horse stables, feared losing the current use exemption because the stable was not producing an agricultural “product.”

#### Labor and Labor-related Costs

*Success Factors* – Good employees were frequently cited as a success factor. Several participants identified the importance of apprentice programs and UVM students as sources of affordable and motivated labor. One farm noted that they have been successful in hiring and training employees with no prior agricultural experience.

*Difficulties* – Many participants commented on the tight labor market. There is competition for apprentices and “legal” farm labor, consequently labor wages are perceived as being high. Additionally, many participants noted the high cost of labor-related expenses, such as farm housing, workers compensation insurance and employer liability insurance. Medical costs were also cited as being a difficulty.

#### Transportation Systems

*Success Factors* – Several dairy farmers noted that proximity to I-89 was a factor in their successful operation. Access to good highways facilitates receipt of bulk supplies, as well as getting product to the processors. Many of the participants, including the nursery, pick-your-own produce, and direct-to-consumer producers commented that the road system provides both customer visibility and access.

*Difficulties* – Busy roadways and traffic were repeatedly identified as problems for the participants. Farmers often need to move equipment and livestock along or across roadways. This is dangerous on roads with busy traffic moving at higher speeds, particularly when vehicle drivers become impatient. Participants identified commuters as being the least tolerant drivers. Speed limits on Routes 116 (50 mph) and 2A (35 mph) in St. George were specifically identified as being a concern for farm operators. Road congestion at Taft Corners and Five Corners creates bottlenecks for farm-related transportation. Several participants identified local bridges as problems; low weight limits require extensive detours for trucks, and bridge widths are often inadequate for farm vehicles and equipment. Local road maintenance, specifically delayed snow

plowing, was identified as a problem by a participant. Another participant commented that the status of “ancient roads” needed to be clarified, so that these corridors can be used to access agricultural property.

### Public Policy

*Success Factors* – A Huntington participant observed that the town plan supports farming and has made it a high priority.

*Difficulties* – Several participants noted that local decisionmaking bodies, such as Selectboards and Planning Commissions, lack members with an understanding of agriculture. Consequently, these bodies may not understand the impacts of their decisions on agriculture in their communities.

### Regulations

*Success Factors* – A few participants reported positive experiences with local zoning and permitting processes supportive of agricultural operations (e.g., Huntington and Williston).

*Difficulties* – Multiple participants raised concerns about the complexity, cost and time involved in obtaining permits and complying with regulations. The Act 250 permit process, and state air and water quality regulations were specifically identified as being difficult. One participant cited the state law for labeling maple products as being a problem. Local regulations were also identified as creating difficulties for agricultural operations. One participant expressed concern that zoning precluded local availability of equipment suppliers and services. Local zoning’s inflexibility in allowing accessory activities was identified as a concern by a participant (and also directly communicated to CCRPC by someone unable to attend the forum). These commenters indicated that directly-related agricultural activities (e.g., product processing, marketing and direct sales of products and related items) or compatible indoor recreational activities were being blocked by local zoning bylaws. Another participant noted that state and local conservation restrictions (e.g., deer yards, conservation districts) restrict agricultural development that would allow agricultural diversification.

Participants also commented on the process for developing and mitigating primary agricultural soils under the Act 250 process. Several participants expressed concern that proposed statutory changes would make it too easy to develop primary agricultural soils and that these soils would then be lost forever to agricultural use. Other participants indicated that mitigation should stay within the municipality where development occurs, rather than occur elsewhere in Vermont.

### Suppliers and Services

*Success Factors* – Several participants noted that although Chittenden County no longer has major agricultural equipment dealers, the proximity to suppliers in Addison and Franklin Counties is adequate. One participant commented that overnight delivery helps offset the increasing distance to equipment suppliers.

*Difficulties* – Participants were generally concerned about the increasing shortage of, or distance to, necessary farm suppliers and services. One participant noted that dairy farmers require the services of veterinarians. There are fewer large animal veterinarians in the area, and there is concern about what will happen when these veterinarians retire. The lack of value-added processing facilities in the area was also identified as a significant need. Several participants noted the distance to suppliers able to service farm equipment as a concern.

## Farm Transition

*Success Factors* – Participants noted that the region has good resources for training new farmers. Specifically identified successes include: UVM Animal Science program, Vermont Farms 2+2 scholarship program with Vermont Tech and UVM, farm apprentice programs, and farm incubator resources with the Intervale.

*Difficulties* – Several participants expressed concerns related to the ability to transition a farm to family members or a new owner. At issue are the complexities and expense of transferring farm ownership to the next generation (“It is easier to sell off part of the farm.”). Similarly, the high cost of land (with or without development rights) creates a significant barrier to new farmers.

Some of the small groups identified specific opportunities that they felt should be pursued. These include:

- Create more suburban farmers markets
- Include covered farm stands as part of large subdivisions
- Educate the public about farming
- Include more farmers on town boards
- Increase funding for the current use program
- Involve dairy farmers in new programs to improve water quality (e.g., pay farmers for buffer strips for stormwater management)
- Public policy to support agricultural processing infrastructure, not just agricultural production

## **Next Steps**

The forum generated considerable information related to success factors and difficulties as perceived by the agricultural community. This information will be utilized in the following ways:

- In May 2005, CCRPC will forward this report to forum participants, municipalities, CCRPC, Chittenden County legislators, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, the Natural Resources Board, and other agencies and organizations involved in agriculture in Chittenden County.
- CCRPC will use the issues identified in this report to focus research and data collection through the summer as part of the Chittenden County Agriculture Project.
- These issues will also feed directly into a second forum, planned for Fall 2005, dealing with policies and programs that can be used by municipalities to support agriculture in their communities.

## **Contact Information**

Additional information about this forum or the Chittenden County Agriculture Project can be obtained from:

Julie Potter, Senior Planner, or Greg Brown, Executive Director  
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission  
30 Kimball Avenue, Suite 206  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
(802) 846-4490  
[info@ccrpevt.org](mailto:info@ccrpevt.org)

## Appendix A: Forum Participants

Lisa Dillon Beliveau	St. George
Mark Canella	Shelburne
Deb and David Conant	Richmond
Pat Fitzgerald	Colchester
Kerstin Foley and Mike Fontaine	Williston
Chris Gordon	South Hero Land Trust, South Hero
Gary Grzywna	Richmond
Bernie and Joanne Guillemette	Shelburne
Brenda Green	Director of Planning & Zoning, Colchester
Bob Hill	CCRPC Agriculture Commissioner, Jericho
Clark W. Hinsdale, Jr.	Charlotte
Marty Illick	CCRPC Commissioner, Charlotte
Jim Kleptz	Shelburne
Claude E. Lapierre	Shelburne
Polly Whitcomb McEwing	Essex Junction
Sean Murphy	CCRPC Conservation Commissioner, South Burlington
Wendy Ordway	Hinesburg
Ron Paquette	Williston
Bradford Parker	Farm Service Agency, St. Albans
Lawrence Parker	Hinesburg
Rick Parizo	Milton
Hazel Prindle	Charlotte
Will Rapp	Shelburne
Jeff Senesac	Colchester
Rick Sharp and Ruth Masters	Colchester
Bruce A. Smith	Essex Junction
Tim Taft	Huntington
Normand Thibault	Colchester
Dave Tilton	Selectboard, Westford
Al Voegele	Town Manager, Colchester
Louise Waterman	Agency of Agriculture, Montpelier
Mary Whitcomb	Williston

## Appendix B: Forum Notes

**Agriculture and Chittenden County Communities:  
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**FORUM NOTES**

Group	Agricultural Activity	Success Factors	Difficulties	Comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organic vegetables, flowers, fruit -</b> Jericho</li> <li>• 8 years</li> <li>• 12 acres tilled</li> <li>• 4 employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in organic food - Vermont draws people interested in organic food</li> <li>• Proximity/access to Burlington market</li> <li>• Wholesale to natural foods markets and high-end restaurants</li> <li>• CSA – customers come to producer</li> <li>• Customer base allows for high-end, perishable, specialty products</li> <li>• Prime agricultural soil</li> <li>• Current use program</li> <li>• Sense of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burlington Farmers Market not accepting new farmers</li> <li>• Dry years require irrigation</li> <li>• Need more opportunities for direct marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for more suburban farmers markets</li> <li>• Supplies not a problem</li> <li>• Could use covered farm stand as part of large subdivisions</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy -</b> Williston, Essex Jct.</li> <li>• 125 yrs family farm</li> <li>• 700 acres tilled, 300 acres forest products</li> <li>• 12 full-time employees, 2-4 part-time</li> <li>• Customer is Agrimark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to interstate highway provides access to market</li> <li>• Superior management</li> <li>• Supplemental income activities (pumpkins, cornstalks, gourds, composted manure)</li> <li>• Good neighbors</li> <li>• Current use program helps now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access blocked by Five Corners traffic</li> <li>• Expense of switching from spring to well water</li> <li>• No equipment suppliers in Chittenden County</li> <li>• Limited number of veterinarians</li> <li>• Concerned about current use for estate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circ highway would improve access</li> <li>• Suppliers not a problem with overnight delivery and on-site inventory</li> <li>• Have to work at maintaining supportive neighbors</li> </ul>

Group	Agricultural Activity	Success Factors	Difficulties	Comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy, berries, maple</b> – Charlotte</li> <li>• 25 years</li> <li>• D: 1500 acres tilled, 1000 acres other</li> <li>• B: 600 acres</li> <li>• M: 300 trees</li> <li>• 7 full-time employees, 3-5 part-time</li> <li>• Customer is Dairy Farms of America, sells to Agrimark or Cabot</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taxes &amp; land trust work</li> <li>• Rte 7 location for berry customers</li> <li>• Soils face south – good for berries</li> <li>• Manure digester – more efficient and improves water quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding legal farm labor</li> <li>• Neighbors and “concerned citizens” worried about manure, dust, flies</li> <li>• Availability of capital at a reasonable price</li> <li>• Increasing regulations</li> <li>• Taxes</li> <li>• Distance to suppliers</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Greenhouse/nursery;</b> specialized ornamentals - Williston</li> <li>• 10 years</li> <li>• 6 acres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population increase increases ornamental sales</li> <li>• Good location – sufficiently rural</li> <li>• Support and tech. advice – VT Hort Assn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased business in wet weather</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Depot is different market and hasn’t hurt business</li> <li>• No problems with local zoning for greenhouse</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Horse stables</b></li> <li>• Colchester</li> <li>• 200 acres; 5 acres with farm buildings</li> <li>• grow wheat for straw</li> <li>• self-serve farm stand and PYO strawberries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Converted to stables 2 yrs ago; previously dairy and hay</li> <li>• Population growth and college students create demand for horse boarding</li> <li>• UVM Extension a good resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May lose current use exemption because stable not “producing product”</li> <li>• High taxes</li> <li>• Act 250 permit process for stable was lengthy and confusing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ag soil mitigation should stay with local govt., not go to state</li> </ul>

Group	Agricultural Activity	Success Factors	Difficulties	Comments
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dairy; maple - Huntington</li> <li>• 370 acres; 200 acres non-crop</li> <li>• 350 head</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good river bottom land</li> <li>• Strong, long-term partnerships with landlords (10-15 yr leases)</li> <li>• All land within 2 miles</li> <li>• Town plan supports farming – high priority</li> <li>• Current use program</li> <li>• Educate neighbors on farm practices/schedule</li> <li>• Close to metro market for syrup sales</li> <li>• Internet sales for maple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridges too narrow for ag trucks and equipment</li> <li>• Narrow valley with prime soils means ag too close to residential neighbors</li> <li>• Distance to service equipment</li> <li>• Labeling law for maple syrup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People love maple sugaring – builds awareness about farming in general</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dairy (see also #1)</li> <li>• Williston, Essex Jct.</li> <li>• 550 head</li> <li>• 400 acres EJ; 300 acres Williston, Essex, Jericho (some leased)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good soils</li> <li>• Lots of skills in family</li> <li>• Strong local labor pool; farm trains</li> <li>• Don't have to provide housing or insurance for workers</li> <li>• Selling corn silage, pumpkins, compost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic</li> <li>• Road maintenance</li> <li>• Bridge weight limits too low for ag trucks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to cultivate good relations with community</li> <li>• Don't spread manure on Sundays and weddings</li> <li>• "Spreadsheets" informing neighbors of manure spreading schedule</li> <li>• Transfer to next generation is very complex and expensive – easier to sell part of the farm</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>General discussion</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuters complain about farm traffic</li> <li>• Prime ag soil left from development is often inaccessible to the farmer</li> <li>• Land use planning doesn't think enough about farm needs (e.g., rec. paths)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortage of people who can afford to farm (vs. who want to farm)</li> </ul>

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agricultural Activity</b>	<b>Success Factors</b>	<b>Difficulties</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy, veggies</b> - Richmond</li> <li>• <b>Beef</b> – Shelburne</li> <li>• <b>Blueberries</b> – Essex</li> <li>• <b>Rhubarb</b> - Charlotte</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct market for beef at City Market, fairgrounds</li> <li>• Farmers market</li> <li>• State current use program</li> <li>• Information on VtAg website</li> <li>• Public perception of VT ag products Quality Seal program</li> <li>• Tax exemption for farm buildings</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• UVM resources</li> <li>• Dairy 2+2 scholarship program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of farm pollution</li> <li>• Traffic</li> <li>• Signage for truck routes</li> <li>• Bridge weight limits</li> <li>• Perception of farmers as “dummies”</li> <li>• Incompatibility with residential development</li> <li>• Crowded farm markets</li> <li>• Hard to find labor</li> <li>• High labor wages</li> <li>• Low farm incomes</li> <li>• Lack of connection to farming in education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farms have net positive impact on quality of life</li> <li>• Usefulness of VHCB depends on situation</li> <li>• Ag in classroom is useful</li> </ul>

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agricultural Activity</b>	<b>Success Factors</b>	<b>Difficulties</b>	<b>Comments</b>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy, beef, swine</b> – Milton</li> <li>• <b>Dairy</b> – Williston</li> <li>• <b>Organic vegetables</b> – Hinesburg</li> <li>• <b>Maple</b> - Richmond</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sale of development rights</li> <li>• Local tax stabilization</li> <li>• Agency of Ag support (but uneven)</li> <li>• Good local markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict with neighbor over deed rights; courts only recourse</li> <li>• No processing facilities</li> <li>• State regs on dairy for air and water quality are expensive</li> <li>• Tight labor supply</li> <li>• High labor costs</li> <li>• High insurance and workers comp costs</li> <li>• Medical costs</li> <li>• Property taxes</li> <li>• Concentration of land ownership</li> <li>• Wildlife conservation areas/districts restrict ag development/diversification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taxes still high after Purchase of Development Rights</li> <li>• Local policies should be more sensitive to needs of farmers</li> <li>• Educate public about farming</li> <li>• Clarify “ancient roads” issue for land access</li> <li>• Need more farmers on town boards</li> <li>• Need to create farmer/local government alliance</li> </ul>

Group	Agricultural Activity	Success Factors	Difficulties	Comments
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Christmas tree, maple, recreation</b> – Milton</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Near population center good for business</li> <li>• Combination of ag and recreation are good business model – use recreation to draw customers</li> <li>• Current use program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor soil</li> <li>• Need water</li> <li>• High cost of land</li> <li>• High taxes, even with current use</li> <li>• Need right to post property for motorized vehicles (ATVs)</li> <li>• Zoning doesn't allow indoor recreation facilities</li> <li>• State ag exemptions don't include accessory uses needed to subsidize agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ag keeps open space and creates sense of place</li> <li>• Need more flexibility for diversification</li> <li>• “Ag doesn't make it by itself”</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Beef , feeder calves, hay</b> - Hinesburg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular local customers</li> <li>• Current use program</li> <li>• Can lease land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor</li> <li>• Equipment suppliers</li> <li>• Difficult to market regionally</li> <li>• Expensive regulations</li> <li>• Road traffic/farm equipment conflict</li> <li>• Rude drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More funding for current use program</li> </ul>

Group	Agricultural Activity	Success Factors	Difficulties	Comments
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy</b> – St. George</li> <li>• 22 years</li> <li>• 340 head</li> <li>• Sell to Dairy Farmers of America</li> <li>• 450 acres owned, 500 acres leased</li> <li>• Maple sugaring</li> <li>• 4 FTEs; part-time bookkeeper</li> <li>• <b>Organic vegetables</b> – St. George</li> <li>• 300 acres; 40 acres leased for grazing</li> <li>• 8 acres vegetables; 20 acres Christmas trees; managed woodlot</li> <li>• 7,000 sq ft greenhouse</li> <li>• 1.5 FTE; 3 apprentices</li> <li>• <b>Organic vegetables; maple</b> – Shelburne</li> <li>• Non-profit farm, inn, ag education</li> <li>• 1,400 acres total; 3.5 acres mixed vegetables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to direct markets (VT Fresh Network, CSA)</li> <li>• Ag promotions (Dairy, VT Fresh Network, NOFA, buy local)</li> <li>• Links between ag and health/nutrition</li> <li>• Support networks (Land trusts, Conservation Commissions, UVM-Extension, VT Ag)</li> <li>• New barn strategically sited to eliminate cattle crossing road</li> <li>• Balancing supply and demand (dairy import/export)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imbalance and disconnect between ag products/producers and consumers</li> <li>• Loss of prime ag soils to development (lost access to leased fields, distance between fields for moving equipment and spreading manure)</li> <li>• Ag/residential conflicts (Encroaching development – expensive, large-lot homes; Complaints about odors, noise, farm equipment movement)</li> <li>• Transportation (road speeds on Rte 116 and 2A; Richmond bridge too low for farm equipment)</li> <li>• Property taxes and cost of land (increased costs and barriers to new/entering farmers)</li> <li>• Access to labor (restrictions on immigrants, competition for cheap labor/apprentices)</li> <li>• Insurance costs (health, liability)</li> <li>• Distance to suppliers – town limiting business diversity (e.g., furnace and tractor sales)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member of local Development Review Board</li> <li>• Proposed changes to Act 250 makes it easier to develop prime ag land. Helps developers and makes it harder for farmers.</li> <li>• Location on major road good for vegetables (markets), but not for dairy (operations)</li> </ul>

<b>Group</b>	<b>Agricultural Activity</b>	<b>Success Factors</b>	<b>Difficulties</b>	<b>Comments</b>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organic farming</b> – Burlington Intervale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervale land productive and not expensive (can't build on floodplain)</li> <li>• Farmers (willing, knowledgeable, can sell at a profit)</li> <li>• Direct access to market</li> <li>• Great spot for new farmers – incubator farming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need access to processing facilities (freezing, value-added processing)</li> <li>• Lack of good accounting for economic value added of agriculture</li> <li>• Barriers to new farmers – access to education; access to capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People in county who control economic policy and thinking don't understand the impact of food and agriculture</li> <li>• Involve dairy farmers in improving water quality – pay farmers for buffer strips</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy</b> (2 farms) - Colchester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River bottom land productive and not expensive</li> <li>• Markets – wholesale to East Coast</li> <li>• Location between Franklin and Addison Counties – a lot of accessories are available in Chittenden County</li> <li>• Access to interstate (transport product and supplies)</li> <li>• UVM students</li> <li>• Family support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic – conflicts with farm equipment</li> <li>• Road construction</li> <li>• Property taxes</li> <li>• Flooding due to development (Taft Corners all flows to Winooski)</li> <li>• Lack of communication and public knowledge of how dairy is run</li> <li>• Perception that ag is responsible for surface water pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need public policy to put infrastructure in place to create more value than just the product</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hay</b> – Shelburne</li> <li>• Haylage; cornsilage</li> <li>• Former dairy farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good soil</li> <li>• Good market for hay (for horses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic – amount and speed</li> <li>• Leased land – landlords don't want pesticides used, manure spread</li> <li>• Property taxes</li> <li>• Development pressure – increases land costs; limits availability of leased land</li> </ul>	