

STATE OF VERMONT

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 03-21

[Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture]

WHEREAS, Vermont's iconic landscape of farms and pastoral open lands, forests and human communities and their associated dining, shopping, event and learning opportunities are major reasons why people visit and live in Vermont; and

WHEREAS, Vermont agriculture is a principal economic driver for our rural communities and is essential to feeding Vermont's residents, building Vermont's economy, employing Vermonters, and attracting visitors; and

WHEREAS, Vermont is known for its agriculture and its food—including maple, meat, apples, dairy, bountiful produce at farmers markets, cheese and ice cream—and Vermont products are synonymous with outstanding quality; and

WHEREAS, Vermont's agriculture and food system accounts for 64,000 direct jobs and its food system generates \$11.3 billion in annual economic output; and

WHEREAS, Vermont agriculture can play an important role in welcoming farmers, food processors and entrepreneurs, and offering opportunities to people who are black or indigenous or people of color; and

WHEREAS, Vermont agriculture plays an important role in caring for Vermont's most vulnerable, providing healthy, local and affordable food in settings ranging from school lunch programs, local food shelves, senior centers, local markets, health care facilities and kitchen tables; and

WHEREAS, our agricultural assets can and should be leveraged to sustain, grow and drive economic development in all sectors of Vermont's economy with particular attention to farm, dining and retail businesses that grow, use and sell the State's internationally recognized food; and

WHEREAS, agriculture must be wisely managed and strengthened, not only to grow the sector's economic development, but to sustain and enhance the value of the Vermont brand, the experience of visitors to Vermont and Vermonters' quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Vermont agriculture must simultaneously preserve its undeveloped lands, harmoniously operate within our ecosystem, continue producing high-quality food and be environmentally sustainable; and

WHEREAS, because Vermont's family farms and its local food system face many economic, environmental, regulatory and succession challenges, important work is necessary to preserve Vermont's agricultural assets, expand our capabilities, become more inclusive and diverse and improve access to healthy local food; and

WHEREAS, there exists a broad set of agriculture, business and environmental stakeholders but no platform for collective focus for developing a vision for the future of Vermont agriculture; and

WHEREAS, we must bring together State leaders, farmers, food and beverage producers, business, retail and distribution experts, and environmental and land use specialists to ensure a vibrant and stable future for Vermont food and agriculture.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Philip B. Scott, by the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Vermont, do hereby create the Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture as follows:

I. Composition and Appointments

The Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture shall be comprised of no more than 14 members to be appointed by the Governor from inside and outside of government in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets ("AAFM") and the Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development ("ACCD"). The State members shall include the Secretary of AAFM or designee and the Secretary of ACCD or designee who shall serve as Co-Chairs. Non-State members shall include: nine representatives from the industry sectors of beverages, dairy, maple, meat, produce, value added food, investor funding, retail and/or marketing, and supply chain and/or distribution; and three members with relevant policy or land use expertise to represent the areas of agriculture, education and/or the provision of business services; environmental conservation and/or climate change; and land use and/or succession planning.

The Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture may, in its discretion, establish working groups to support its mission, drawing membership from any agency or department of State government or private/non-profit entity. The Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture may, at its discretion, engage with private sector professionals to develop and implement the goals of this Executive Order.

The Commission shall receive administrative and staff support from AAFM and ACCD.

II. Commission Charge and Process

The Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture shall develop long and short-term strategies and specific action plans with measurable outcomes to, at minimum, address the following:

- A. Preserve and expand agricultural production and related economic, social, and ecological opportunities to help ensure that Vermont remains a vibrant agricultural State.
- B. Grow and develop Vermont agriculture and its related resources.
- C. Adopt and replicate efficiencies, partnerships and opportunities.

- D. Expand local producer, distributor, retail and marketing coordination.
- E. Create opportunities to expand the production, processing, market reach, availability, and sales of Vermont food.
- F. Preserve current agricultural businesses and facilitate sustained growth.
- G. Evaluate sustainable agriculture and production methods and consider how they may foster a more symbiotic relationship with the environment.
- H. Continue environmental progress.
- I. Make practices more affordable, increase production and grow local sales through better in-State coordination or better utilization of shared economies of scale.
- J. Connect farmers and producers with residents and visitors, to improve public perception, and to promote tourism and its connection to Vermont agriculture.
- K. Increase engagement with rural communities and next generation business owners, including New Americans and younger generations to encourage greater agricultural participation.
- L. Lower barriers to entry and facilitate greater inclusivity, access, equity, and diversity and augment positive trends.
- M. Examine and promote laws, policies and initiatives that support Vermont agriculture and its related resources.

The Commission shall be advisory to the Governor and shall report all findings and recommendations for an immediate action plan by November 15, 2021. The Commission shall also provide advice to the Governor as requested. The Commission shall measure and evaluate progress and submit a supplemental report to the Governor assessing the impact of its work and implemented strategies on or before November 15, 2022 and November 15, 2023.

The Co-Chairs shall call the Commission to its first meeting on or before April 1, 2021, and the Commission shall then meet as needed, but no less frequently than monthly. Meetings of the Commission shall be held electronically for the duration of the COVID-19-related state of emergency and for so long thereafter as the Commission deems practicable.

Each private member of the Commission shall be entitled to per diem compensation pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 1010.

III. Effective Date

This Executive Order shall take effect upon signing and shall continue in full force and effect until January 1, 2024 unless extended by the Governor.



WITNESS my name hereunto subscribed and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont hereunto affixed at Montpelier this 19th day of February 2021.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Philip B. Scott", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

By the Governor:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brittney L. Wilson", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and legible.

Brittney L. Wilson
Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs

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Date: February 19, 2021