

LT. GOVERNOR ZUCKERMAN NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2, 2019

Agriculture has always played a central role in the state of Vermont. Farming not only puts food on our tables, it shapes our values, our landscapes, our communities and our economy. Agricultural work teaches both individualism and cooperation. Additionally, it instills a strong work ethic and fosters creative problem solving; beneficial skills for our youth and workforce.

Unfortunately, hardworking Vermont farmers currently face threats to their livelihood due to commodity prices and climate change. As a farmer, I understand these difficulties and have joined others in working hard to find innovative solutions. Together, we must continue to find ways to make our food production system more economically sustainable and environmentally responsible. We must also engage agriculture as a means of addressing some of the major socio-economic issues facing our state. Vermont branding, carbon sequestration and other options should be part of these solutions. Please send me your creative ideas for this sector.

Farming is inherently linked to almost everything in our state and it is the strong foundation for Vermont's past and future success. As we face our current challenges and move into the future, we must recognize and support the important roles that all agriculture plays.

Thank you for staying connected.



MOTHER-UP VISITS THE STATE HOUSE

On February 14th Mother Up! held its third Annual Action Day. Parents and families from across Vermont came together to speak to legislators about climate change, which is their top priority. They were joined by Lt. Gov. David Zuckerman for a press conference, presented to the Climate Solutions Caucus, and delivered "Love Letters to Mother Earth" to all 180 Vermont legislators calling for bold climate action now.

"Parents are powerful voices in fighting for the health and safety of our collective future. Over the last three years, Mother Up! families have learned that when we speak up about what is important to us, legislators listen," said Mother Up! Coordinator Abby Mnookin.

Géraldine Vatan, an organizer with Mother Up!, said that "As parents, our commitment [to climate action and justice] comes from looking into the eyes of our children and knowing deep in our bones, that we are responsible for the world we will leave to them."

Learn more about Mother Up!: Families Rise Up for Climate Action here. <https://350vermont.org/mother-up/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 7

7:00AM – Live with Pete and Sarah in the morning. WVMP
620AM

2:30PM – Meet and Greet with Lt. Gov. and Great Falls Chamber. 17 Depot St., Bellows Falls

6:00PM – Economy for All Town Hall Meeting. Masonic Temple, 61 Westminster St., Bellows Falls

March 8 6:30PM

'Reinventing Power' movie. First Universalist Parish Hall, 112 Main St., Derby Line

March 10 1:00PM

Economy for All Town Hall Meeting. Unitarian Church, 117 West St., Rutland

March 12 6:00PM

Economy for All Town Hall Meeting. St. Albans Museum, 9 Church St., St. Albans

For a complete list of events please visit the calendar on our website:

www.LTGov.vermont.gov

AGRICULTURE AND A CHANGING CLIMATE

By: Matt Lacey, Intern, Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Is increased precipitation and a longer growing season good for agriculture in Vermont? The answer is complex and far-reaching, but climate change will likely have mixed effects on livestock and crop production in Vermont, according to a 2013 USDA Climate Report. Climatic change causes increases in winter and spring rainfall intensity, a shorter cold season, a longer transition out of winter and into the growing season, and more extreme weather events. Many of these impacts are already being felt by farmers. According to the USDA, wet springs have caused delayed planting and harvest dates and reduced yields; the maple syrup season arrives earlier, is shorter and we are seeing reduced yields; and excessive moisture is a leading cause of crop loss in the region.

The dairy industry, which contributes close to 70% of Vermont's farm sales, is also suffering because dairy cows are particularly sensitive to heat stress. In 2010, heat stress was estimated to have reduced annual U.S. dairy production by \$1.2 billion. Though agriculture has been considered a major contributor to climate change and environmental degradation, it only makes up 9% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, the USDA Report notes. While increased precipitation can raise the risk of surface runoff, soil erosion, and the loss of soil carbon, good management practices can reduce these impacts.

Agriculture must be part of the solution to our climate crisis shared Heather Darby, an agronomic and soils specialist for the University of Vermont Extension. Sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions can be achieved by better manure management, rotational grazing, installing grassed waterways, utilizing cover crops, implementing organic practices, or employing conservation tillage practices. In Vermont, Darby reports that widespread adoption of cover cropping could sequester up to 240,000 tons of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of removing 51,200 passenger vehicles from the road each year. Farmers manage over 80% of Vermont's open land and have a tremendous opportunity to significantly reduce our impact on global climate change. We should support our agricultural community as they lead us into a more sustainable future.

AGRICULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

By Liam O'Sullivan, University of Vermont student and Intern, Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Agriculture can help mitigate the climate crisis and also alleviate some of the major socio-economic issues Vermont has faced for the last few decades. With the dairy industry alone contributing \$1.3 billion in sales annually, there is great potential for increasing employment and economic opportunity.

As one example of many, Salvation Farms employs folks who were previously incarcerated, struggling with mental illness, fighting drug addiction, and facing financial shortcomings. Not only does the program assist marginalized Vermonters in acquiring economic and social stability, a large percentage of the food grown and/or gleaned by Salvation Farms goes to support individuals who are food insecure. According to a United States Department of Agriculture report, Americans waste 133 billion pounds of food a year, that means 253 million pounds in Vermont. The Salvation Farms program alone has reduced their own food waste from 11,000 lbs to 400 lbs.