

## A2: Accelerate the permanent conservation of Vermont's agricultural lands as working farms

Objective A2



Although 21.6% of Vermont's agricultural land is now conserved, the remainder is at risk of being lost, potentially permanently, to development or alternative land uses in the near future. Farmland conservation is one of the best ways to protect Vermont farmland from development, keep it in production, benefit from its ecological services, ensure local food production capacity, and maintain a thriving agricultural sector.

Conservation practices include a variety of pathways to keep land in active and sustainable production, including innovative models beyond traditional easement programs. Land conservation can also serve equity and justice if it is paired with removing barriers to land access for priority populations. The [2023 Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act](#) directs the state to conserve 50% of the state's total land area by 2050. The resulting Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative will help set targets for conservation of agriculturally significant lands and refine land conservation strategies. Conservation objectives must be guided by the findings of the Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the recommendations of the Land Access and Opportunity Board (LAOB).

### Keep in Mind

Strategies to remove barriers to farm ownership, provide direct payments to farmers, and update our food supply chain infrastructure must go together with land conservation.

## Strategies


### STRATEGY A2.1

Using the baseline inventory of land conservation from Phase 1 of the Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative, assess the current state of agricultural conservation in Vermont in relation to the locations of primary agricultural soils, floodplains, areas of compact settlement, and other political and ecological zones important to climate resilience and food security.

### STRATEGY A2.2

Based on the data from the Conservation Initiative and related research, set appropriate and ambitious targets for agricultural conservation and quantify the funding needed from all sources. Collaboration among farmland owners, land trusts, the LAOB, and agricultural organizations should determine conservation targets and may go beyond those set by the Conservation Initiative.

### STRATEGY A2.3

Dramatically expand federal, state, and philanthropic funding for traditional and innovative farmland conservation programs in order to achieve conservation targets. Robust and flexible funding is needed to accelerate the complex, time-consuming, and costly land conservation process. 

## VOICES OF VERMONTERS

“We need to recognize food security depends on local food production. Protect and support local producers. There is a triangle between local producers, local distribution, and local consumption, and that is the key.”

“If we can find a way to feed people healthfully and affordably and keep their dollars in Vermont that would be the gold standard.”

“The [Land Access and Opportunity] Board exists because [...]historical barriers [to access for housing, land and land-based enterprise] continue to exist within systems of legal oppression and exclusion, economic domination, and exploitation of land, creating ongoing, pervasive challenges for historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities, and all those living at the intersections of marginalization, to access land, home security and welcoming communities.”

Initial Report of Land Access and Opportunity Board