

Supporting and Managing Rural Enterprises: Tips for Town Officials

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Agriculture Then



Agriculture Now



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Questions

- Does the plan or bylaw contain an agricultural only district?
- Does your plan include data on farms and farmland? Income or occupations from farming or other demographic data?
- Does the bylaw have standards that require the DRB or ZBA to evaluate impacts of a project on agriculture operations or farmland soils on the subject parcel or in the vicinity?

Questions

- Are retail based farm businesses, such as aggregators of farm products and associated sales, allowed in Rural/Agricultural zoning districts?
- Farm Stay/B &B?
- Brewery or distillery?

challenges

- 91% of Vermont's 2,076 senior farmers are working without a younger generation. They manage 297,813 acres of land in farm use.*
- Regulatory Climate
 - New water regulations coming into effect – new fees, new programs
 - New federal food safety regulations under the Federal Food Safety Modernization Act
- Competing land uses
- New farm operations means a changing landscape
- Fluctuation in prices and yields make it difficult

* Gaining Access Project, Land for Good

opportunities

- Increase in women farmers and those aged 22-34 years of age
- Robust Farm to School program
- Increase in agricultural product processing facilities
- Award winning cheeses and specialty food products
- New and innovative farm business models

benefits of on-farm business

- Alternative income stream/Year round income
- Supports agricultural industry
- Promotes agricultural education
- Provides employment opportunities
- Draws people to rural areas – possible economic impacts shared by all businesses
- Protects farmland and agricultural soils
- Builds Vermont's Brand

benefits of on-farm businesses

- “Economists at the Economic Research Service (ERS) have found that farmers who market goods directly to consumers are more likely to remain in business than those who market only through traditional channels” - <http://blogs.usda.gov/2016/04/28/farms-that-sell-directly-to-consumers-may-stay-in-business-longer/>

Benefits of on-farm businesses

- “2015 Was Another Banner Year for Food and Farming in Vermont”
<http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/Agriview%20-2016%20for%20web.pdf>
- “Vermont dairy farms have \$2.2 Billion economic impact”
<http://vtdigger.org/2015/02/02/report-vermont-dairy-farms-2-2b-economic-impact/> and www.vermontdairy.com

new on farm business models

- *Farm stay* – Liberty Hill Farm Rochester; Amazing Planet! Farm outside Brattleboro; Longest Acres Farm, Chelsea; and Trevin Farms, Sudbury; Fat Sheep Farm, Hartland
- *On farm Events*- Fable Farm, Dummerston; Sandiwood Farm, Wolcott; Isham Family Farm, Williston
- *On farm Education*- Hildene, Manchester; Fairmont Farms, East Montpelier; Hartshorns; Waitsfield
- *On-farm processing*- Jasper Hill Farm, Greensboro Bend, Ploughgate Creamery, Fayston



new on-farm business models

- *Farmstands/On- Farm Farmers' Market*-Clear Brook Farm, Shaftsbury; Fable Farm, Dummerston; My Farmers Market, South Ryegate, Trillium Hill Farm, Hinesburg; Pebble Brook Farm, Braintree
- *Community gathering spaces*- Earth Sky Time Farm, Manchester; Owl's Head, Jericho; Bread and Butter Farm, Shelburne



Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive Planning

- Outreach and Engagement
- Develop a regional food systems plan- Northeast Kingdom, Farm to Plate
- Create a Food Systems advisory committee to assist with planning, 24 V.S.A. §4433
- Create an Agricultural (and forestry) only district
- Understand the acres required to feed the region/town and set a goal for acres under production.

Data - Comprehensive Planning

- National Agricultural Statistics Service, demographic, income and land rental data
- Inventory existing agricultural infrastructure (buildings, barns, etc)
- GIS Data
 - Conserved land
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service Agricultural Soils ratings
 - Onsite mitigation data
- Ground truth and include currently farmed land

Land Use Regulations

Supportive Zoning

Shelburne, VT -Integrated Agriculture- Conditional Use

- Limited to on the farm, but excludes slaughter
- Focus is on agriculture related businesses
- preparation and processing of crops or produce not principally produced on the farm;
- The storage and sale of crops or produce not principally produced on the farm or the resulting products from such crops or produce;
- The sampling and tasting of crops and produce not principally produced on the farm or the resulting products from such crops or produce; and/or
- Agricultural education opportunities in the form of tours, but not classes

Supportive Zoning

Hyde Park, VT- Agricultural Enterprise- permitted in Rural Districts

- Limited to on the farm
- The use is not necessarily related to agriculture (events, breweries, distilleries, composting)
- On-site processing, storage, sampling and tasting, and sales of crops or farm products not principally produced on the farm
- Educational programming including, but not limited to, classes, day camps, petting zoos

Supportive Zoning

Hyde Park, VT- Agricultural Enterprise- permitted in Rural Districts

- Ag machinery repair
- Veterinary clinics principally servicing livestock and poultry.
- Slaughter facilities

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Supportive Zoning

Randolph, VT – Temporary Events - Always Exempt

- General provision for all land uses
- Allow for Temporary events (such as weddings, church suppers, fairs, concerts, festivals, cultural events, trade and antique shows, etc.)
- Limited to 4 consecutive days, 4 times a calendar year
- With adequate off-street parking and circulation, sanitary and trash collection facilities, and
- Temporary structures used in association with temporary events ...

Supportive Zoning

Randolph, VT – Agri-preneurial Farming – Conditional Use Review

- Open to owner or lessee
- importation of other ag products for processing, restaurant,
- Festivals and events based on harvest of crops from the farm
- Tours of agricultural features
- Private special events limited to a particular guest list
- Limitations on the construction of new buildings

Signs

- Crafting appropriate regulations that allow for signage that doesn't interrupt the landscape
- Addressing multiple business on a single property (cooperative farming on a large parcel)
- Permitting temporary signs to announce when a on farm business is open, when the hours could be variable based on the agricultural operation needs

Supportive Subdivision

- Provide standards of review for residential development that protect NRCS rated soils
- Provide standards that require buffers from agricultural land uses
- Require that common land be set aside specifically for agricultural use, by all residents or a lease holder.

Recap and Other tools

- Home occupation
- Adaptive Re-use
- Setbacks- lot size
- Accessory Uses
- Temporary Uses (seasonal or otherwise limited to so many days/calendar year)
- Event Ordinances (under a Selectboard's police power)

resources

- “Supporting and Managing Rural Enterprises in Your Community”,
“Supporting and Managing Rural Enterprises in Your Community”,
<https://nofavt.org/resources/rural-enterprises-information>
- Understanding Land Use Regulations for Farm Businesses”,
<https://nofavt.org/resources/rural-enterprises-information>
- Farm to Plate Agricultural Planning Modules,
<http://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/features/sustaining-agriculture-land-use-planning-modules#.WbqKqmtSyCo>
- “NASS, <https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/>
- “Regional Food Systems Plan for Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom”,
<http://www.nvda.net/files/Final.Online.pdf>

Your community is a resource!

- Setting the tone in support of agriculture
- Gathering and using data
- Convening farm operators
- Sharing the good work you do with towns
- Promoting your town as farm and Agritourism and Value added processing ready

Thank You!

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SHELBURNE FARMS

Educating for a Sustainable Future



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AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS