

### Do I qualify for this program?

Minimum qualifications require candidates to have 3 to 5 years of commercial farming experience, strong agricultural references, plans to develop an agricultural enterprise that would gross \$100,000 per year within 5 years of start up, and sufficient financial resources (or the ability to be financed) for start-up expenses. Our primary focus is on farms producing food and fiber that would use at least 25 acres of productive land.

### Has VLT done this before?

In the late 1990s the Landon Farm in South Hero was slated for development. VLT purchased the farm with the help of the South Hero Land Trust and the Lake Champlain Land Trust, and with funding from the local community, VHCB, and the Freeman Foundation. VLT then advertised the farm to diversified farmers at an affordable price. After fielding dozens of inquiries, VLT conserved and sold the farm to Eric Wells and Annette Burger who now produce beef, chicken, and other diversified products on the farm.



Vermont Land Trust  
CONSERVING LAND FOR THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

8 Bailey Avenue  
Montpelier, VT 05602

# Farmland Access Program



Photo Courtesy of Lee Krohn

Vermont Land Trust  
8 Bailey Avenue  
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Phone: 802/223-5234 or 800/639-1709  
Fax: 802/223-4223  
Web: [www.vlt.org](http://www.vlt.org)

# Helping Farmers Gain Access to Quality, Affordable Farmland

Over the past five years, land values in Vermont have increased dramatically, making it more difficult for farmers to gain access to productive and affordable farmland. At the same time, farm ownership has changed, as more farmers have decided to retire or pursue something else. This combination of forces creates a looming crisis in agriculture. When a farm goes on the market, will it be purchased by another farmer? Will that farm remain in agricultural use? The future of farming depends upon skilled, entrepreneurial farmers and their access to high quality, affordable farmland.

## What is the goal?

Our goal is to provide qualified diversified farmers with access to good agricultural land and to assist with the start up or expansion of commercial agricultural businesses. Land conservation, business planning, and long term productive use of farmland are key components of this program. VLT hopes to facilitate the creation of new farm enterprises and greater diversification within Vermont agriculture.



## Why has VLT started this program?

VLT continues to support conventional dairy farms through its conservation programs and existing tools. In an effort to help diversify Vermont's farm economy and to support new farmers, we believe a different set of tools is needed to serve smaller farms.



## What help does VLT offer?

Depending upon farmers' needs and qualifications, VLT:

1. Works with Land Link Vermont, a program of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, to enroll farmers in a "farm seller – farm seeker" database. VLT also maintains relationships with highly qualified farm seekers.
2. Assists farm seekers in securing business planning services through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Farm Viability Program, or through Working Landscapes, a Massachusetts nonprofit.
3. Offers to assist in farm purchases when seekers locate farms. We also examine whether farmland conser-

vation tools (typically a purchase of development rights) can facilitate a farm purchase.

4. Searches for farms in Vermont that are suitable for diversified farm operations; purchases those farms; conserves them with farmland easements; and sells them at affordable prices to qualified seekers.
5. Occasionally uses new tools to help farmers step into farm ownership. Examples include VLT ownership with a lease-purchase agreement with a farmer, or a long-term lease.
6. Communicates and collaborates with allied programs, such as VHCB's Farm Viability Program, The Intervale Foundation, NOFA, and Land Link.



**To enroll** as a "farm seeker" please fill out a Land Link application by visiting [www.uvm.edu/landlinkvt](http://www.uvm.edu/landlinkvt) or calling 802/656-0233.

**For more information** about the Farmland Access Program, contact Bob Baird, Agricultural Co-Director at [bob@vlt.org](mailto:bob@vlt.org) or 802/483-2467.