

VERMONT BEEF PRODUCERS ASSOC.

AGRICULTURAL STABILIZATION

The current upheaval in the economy affects not only banks and corporations, but the agricultural community as well. Lack of credit, rising costs, and consumer uneasiness weigh heavily on our farms and their supporting infrastructure. Whether it's a beef, dairy, vegetable, poultry, swine, sheep, goat, or other farm, we are all in this together. When any farm ceases to exist, it no longer supports the essential infrastructure that supports us all. As the farmers and farmland disappear, so does the rural character of Vermont and its effect on tourism. Our farms also provide a very basic, yet essential, component to life in Vermont - food - raised by and for our neighbors and friends. Food grown in a safe, environmentally conscious way. These are but a few of the many benefits of agriculture to the state of Vermont.

With these thoughts in mind we have come up with a few proposals which we feel could help agriculture in Vermont. Most of these ideas are not necessarily "beef" specific and could be applied to almost all of agriculture as a whole in the state.

- 1. Revolving fund with low or no interest to:**
 - Expand existing processing facilities
 - Build new processing facilities
 - Repair essential infrastructure of existing processing facilities
 - Implement energy conservation and generation on farm and at processing facilities
- 2. Implement Beef Quality Assurance protocols**
 - Help raise consumer confidence in beef products
 - Potential to raise farm gate prices for market animals [beef and dairy]
- 3. State purchase of market animals [beef and dairy] for school meal programs**
 - Increase demand for market animals
 - Provide local meat for schools
 - If acquired during processor "slow" season will even out their work load and cash flow
 - Be cost competitive with commodity products
- 4. Make monies available to the University of Vermont contingent on the retention of at least one full time Livestock Specialist in Extension**
- 5. Continue the same level of support to the beef industry from the Agency of Agriculture**
- 6. Provide funding as a safety net for all of agriculture as is done with dairy**
 - Safety nets such as the herd reduction help dairy at the expense of beef producers by flooding the market with cattle
- 7. Continue funding for non-government related environmental programs to curb agricultural impacts on waterways**