

# Is Anyone Better Off?

## A Conversation about Food System Outcomes, Indicators & Metrics



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# Your Hosts For Today's Webinar:



**Julia Freedgood**

*Assistant Vice President  
Of Programs*



**Ellen Kahler**

*Executive Director*



Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund



**Martha Sullins**

*Small Farm Agribusiness  
Management Specialist*



# Glossary

- **Outcome:** identification and evaluation of the **end result** of an activity, plan, process, program or policy
- **Output:** the quantity or amount of **deliverables** produced
- **Indicator:** a tool, variable or **instrument used to measure change** in key factors or conditions
- **Metric:** a standard or **unit to measure or assess performance**, progress, or quality of a plan, policy, product, program or project
- **Benchmark:** standards used as **point of reference** for measuring progress or quality along the way to the outcome.
- **Dashboard:** **a visual display, to tell you quickly how things are going**; like an executive summary of information to help decision-makers

# Data should be ...

- **Reliable** - sources are good, regularly available
- **Valid** - assumptions behind data collection are valid
- **Relevant** - the right data is used for the task
- **Credible** - credentials of data collectors and analyzers
- **Practical** - can be easily gathered on a regular basis

# Impact Measurement Systems

## EXAMPLES

- Results Based Accountability
  - Fiscal Policy Studies Institute  
[www.resultsaccountability.com](http://www.resultsaccountability.com)
- You Get What You Measure
  - Yellowwood Associates [www.yellowwood.org](http://www.yellowwood.org)
- Whole Measures
  - Center for Whole Communities [www.measuresofhealth.net/](http://www.measuresofhealth.net/)
- Others?

# DEFINITIONS

Population

## RESULT or OUTCOME

A condition of well-being for children, adults, families or communities.

## INDICATOR or BENCHMARK

A measure which helps quantify the achievement of a result.

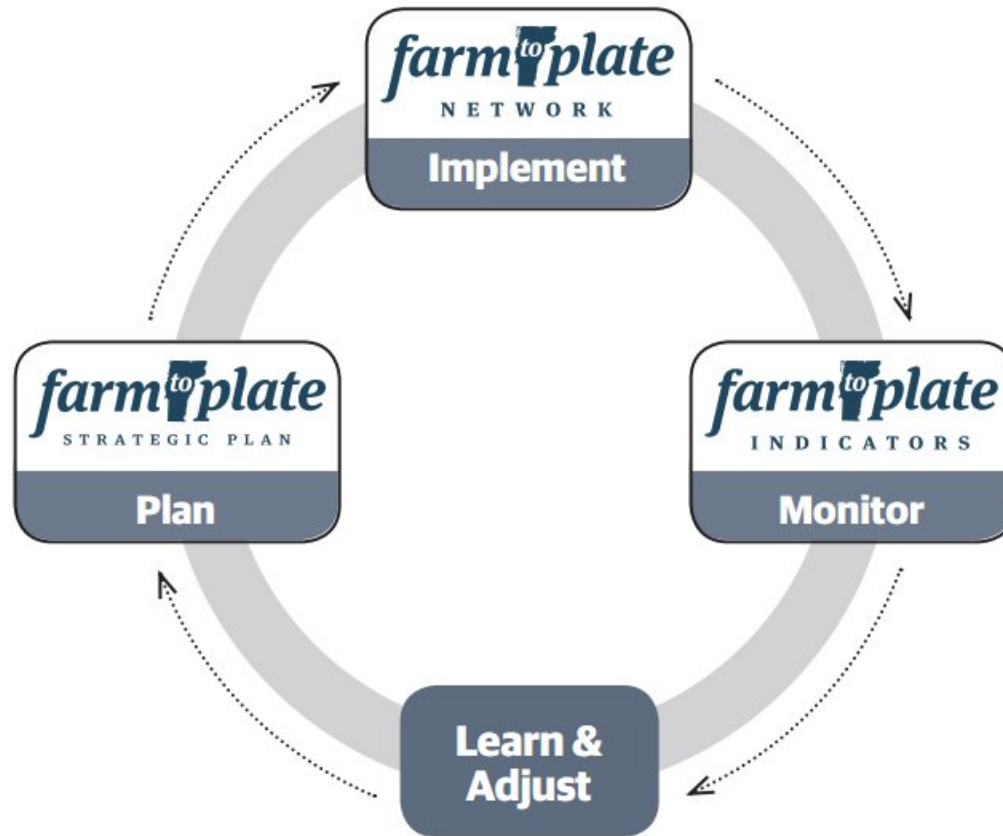
Performance

## PERFORMANCE MEASURE

A measure of how well a program, agency or service system is working.

- Three types:
1. How much did we do?
  2. How well did we do it? = Customer Results
  3. Is anyone better off ?

# Population Level Measures: The Vermont Story



# POPULATION ACCOUNTABILITY EXAMPLES

## Outcomes for All People: of a State, County, Community

The Farm to Plate Investment Act is meant to achieve 3 Outcomes over a 10 year period...

- ✓ Increase economic development in Vermont's food and farm sector
- ✓ Create jobs in the food and farm economy
- ✓ Improve access to healthy local foods

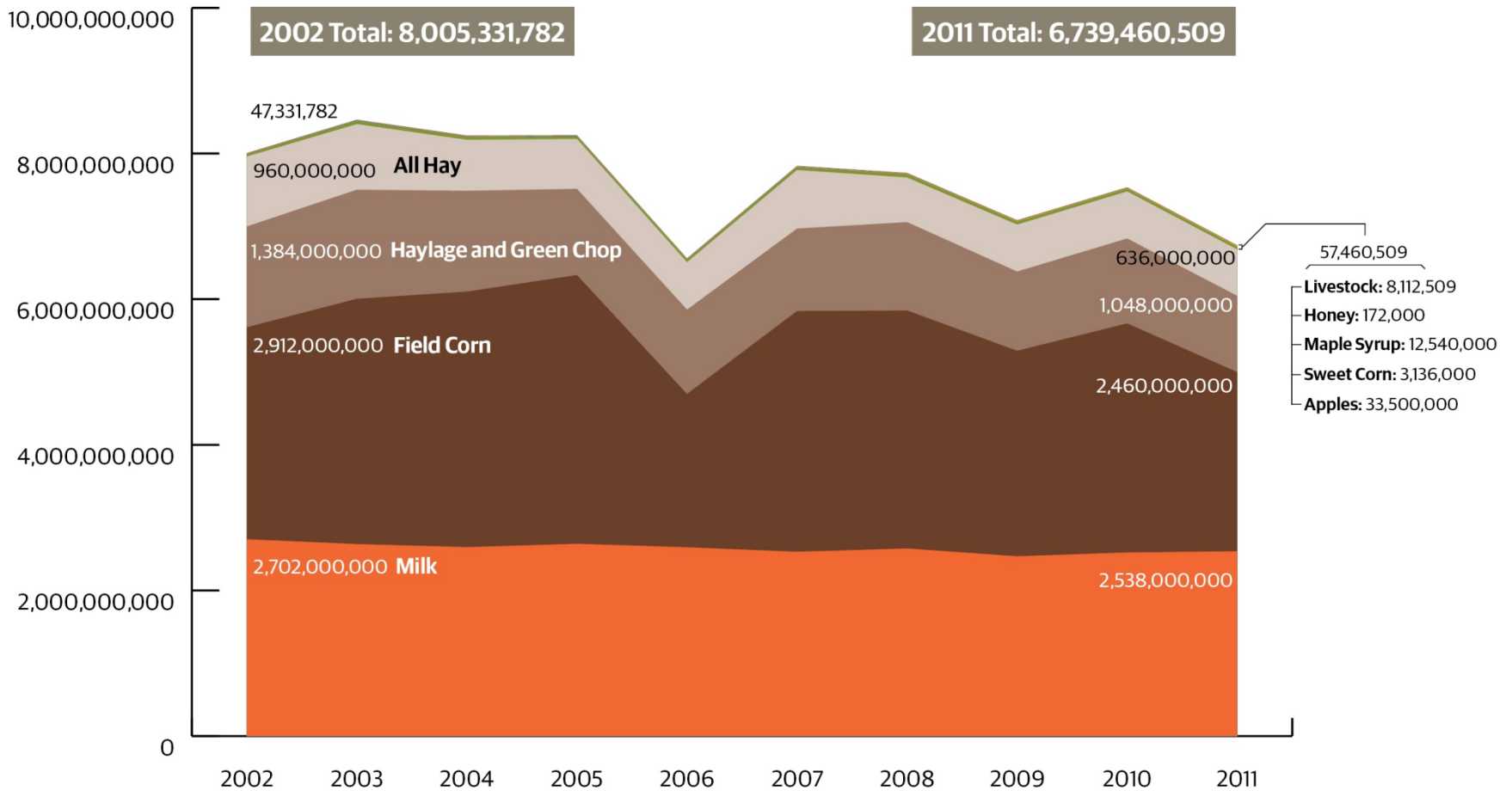


# Outcome: Increase economic development in VT's food and farm sector

## EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS

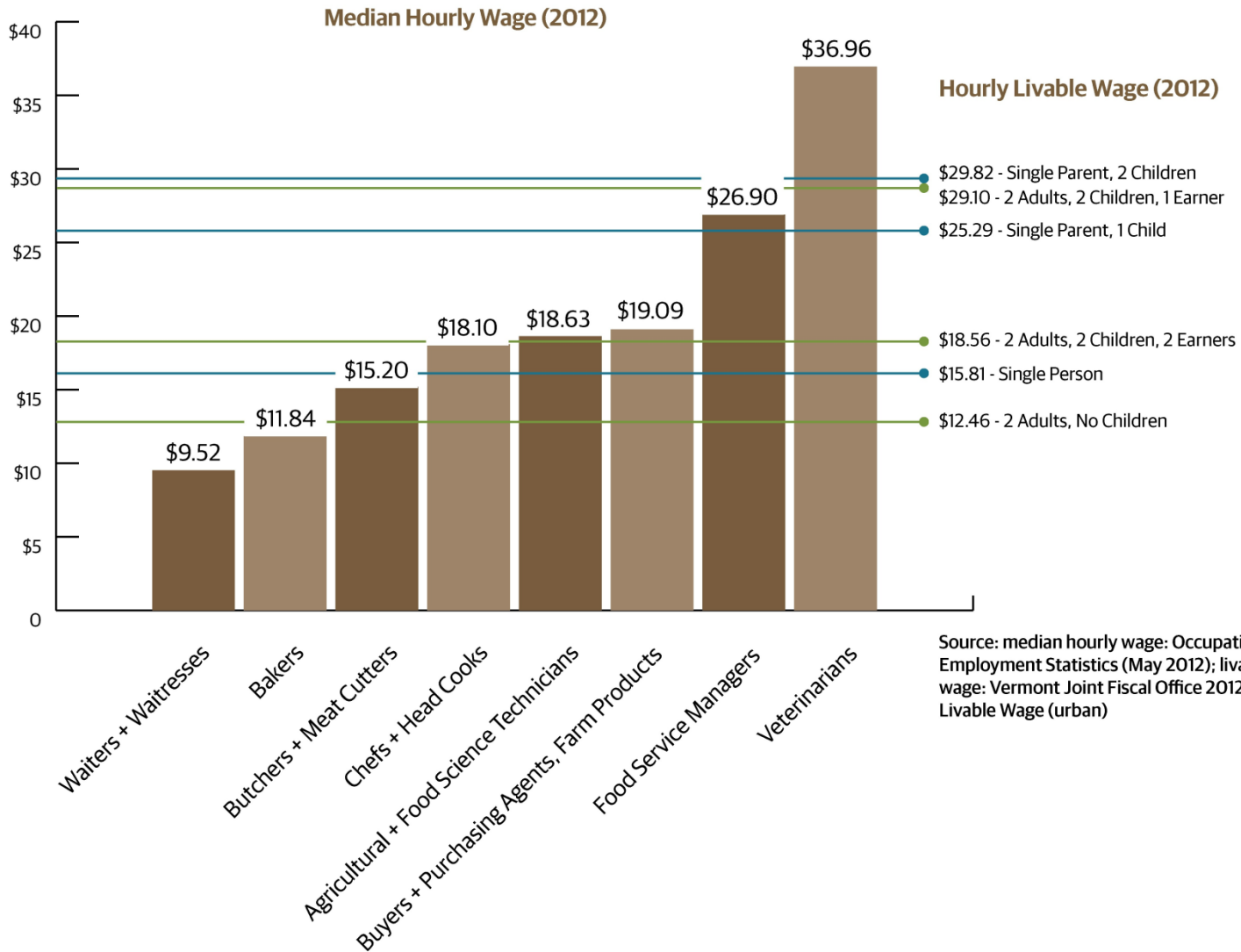
- **Pounds of agricultural crops produced**
- Pounds of value-added products produced
- Number of acres in active agricultural production
- The percentage of farms that have net positive farm incomes
- **Food system wages are livable wages**

# Pounds of Agricultural Crops Produced



Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, USDA NASS, multiple years. \*Note: fruit and vegetable production, other than apple and sweet corn production, are not included in this graphic due to small production values that would not be visible. Apple production, for example, which is represented by the small green line, accounts for 91% (3,547 acres) of noncitrus fruit orchard acres in Vermont. In comparison, berry farm production occurred on 705 acres, approximately 20% of the apple orchard acreage. Sweet corn production, which is barely visible on this graph, accounted for approximately 39% of all acreage in vegetable production in Vermont.

# Food System Wages are Livable Wages

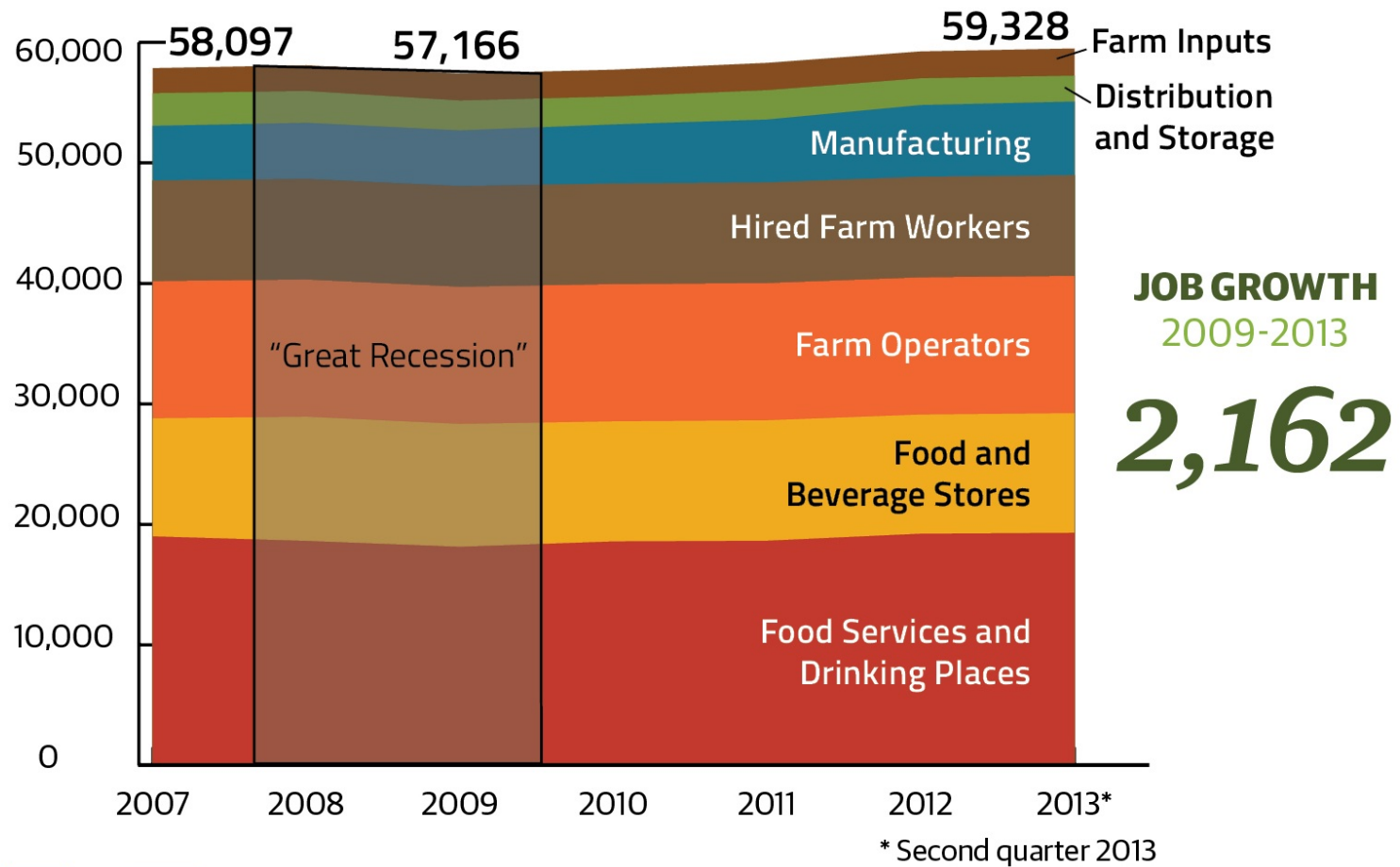


# Outcome: Create jobs in the food and farm economy

## EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS

- **Number of net new private sector jobs created between 2010 - 2020**
  - In 2009, more than 37,000 Vermonters are employed as cheese makers, brewers, bakers, butchers, grocery stockers, restaurateurs, chocolatiers, manufacturers, distribution drivers, vintners, and in other food related jobs.
  - By 2<sup>nd</sup> Q, 2013, 39,328 Vermonters are employed in these fields.
- **Number of net new farm operator and farm labor jobs created between 2007 – 2017**
  - In 2007, there were close to 20,000 Vermonters employed as farm operator or farm laborers
  - In 2012, there were ? **[waiting for the 2012 Census of Ag results]**

# 2,200 net new private sector jobs have been created between 2009 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Q 2013.



 +  = 2007 Census of Agriculture

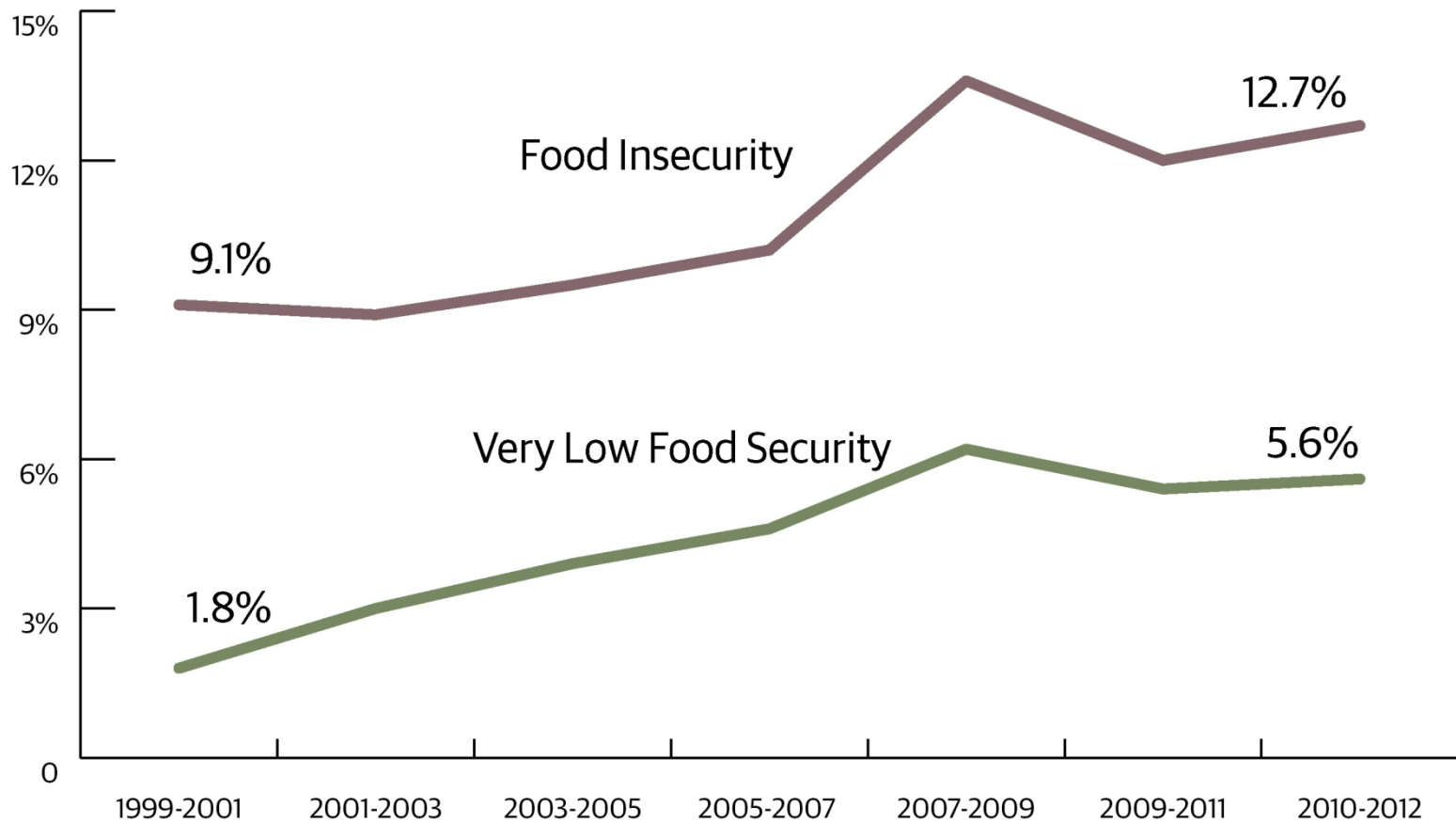
 +  +  +  +  = Vermont Department of Labor, 2007-2013; Nonemployer Statistics, 2007-2011

# Outcome: Improve access to healthy local foods

## EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS

- **Percent of households that are food insecure**
- Percent of children enrolled in schools with Farm-to-School programs
- Rate of eligible households using EBT cards or Farm to Family cards at Farmers Markets
- The number of Vermont market outlets that carry locally grown or raised fresh food.

# Percent of households that are food insecure



Source: USDA Economic Research Service, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/readings.aspx>.



# VERMONT

## FOOD SYSTEM ATLAS

LOG IN

COLLECTIONS

SUPPORT

— Get Connected —  
click here

Keyword, person, location

GO

SEARCH THE ATLAS

THE PLAN

THE NETWORK

GETTING TO 2020

THE ATLAS

STRATEGIC PLAN  
**CHAPTERS**

### CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan

### CHAPTER 2

Getting to 2020: Goals and Indicators for Strengthening Vermont's Food System

### CHAPTER 3

Analysis of Vermont's Food System

### CHAPTER 4

You Are Here: Strategic Plan > Chapter 2

[vtfoodatlas.com](http://vtfoodatlas.com)

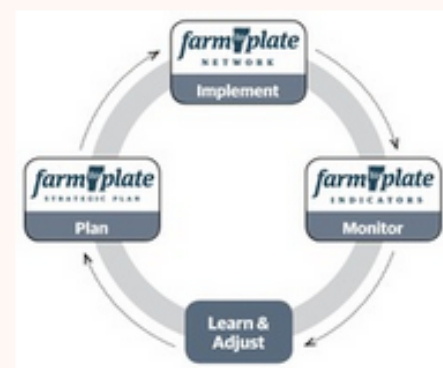
## CHAPTER 2: GETTING TO 2020: GOALS AND INDICATORS FOR STRENGTHENING VERMONT'S FOOD SYSTEM

View Goals for Getting to 2020

Download Chapter 2: Getting to 2020, [high res](#) [PDF, 9.78 MB], [low res](#) [PDF, 4.86 MB].

**Results-based Accountability** is a measurement framework that has increasingly gained traction. The RBA framework distinguishes between results for whole populations (i.e., *population indicators*) and results for particular programs, organizations, or services (i.e., *performance measurements*).

Throughout Chapter 2 we use quantitative and qualitative data to answer these questions, illustrate trends, and track progress toward accomplishing the 25 goals of the **Farm to Plate Strategic Plan**. For each goal we provide a brief synopsis—based on analyses provided in **Chapters 3 and 4**—that describes why the goal and associated strategies and actions are important. Each goal depicts population indicators that show the major trends that should accelerate up or bend down over time if our collective activities are impactful.





# Population/Community Focus: 7 Questions

## **1. What are the quality of life conditions we want?**

Vermonters have access to fresh, nutritious, affordable food

## **2. How will we recognize it?**

Children eat fresh, nutritious food in school lunches

## **3. How can we measure those conditions?**

Percent of children in schools with Farm to School programs

## **4. How are we doing now?**

Baseline and story behind the baseline

# Population/Community Focus: 7 Questions, cont.

## 5. Who are the partners?

Schools, VT FEED, VT Farm to School Network, farmers, food hubs, food service management companies, VT Agency of Agriculture, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Education...

## 6. What works to do better?

Committed school team, training, mentoring, planning time and resources, food preparation guidance, lesson plans, partnering with farms and distribution networks

## 7. What do we propose to do?

Vermont Farm to School Institute- 10 schools, June, 2013

# Performance Level Measures

## Building Farmers in the West



Building new farmer capacity within farm communities throughout the Western U.S.

# BFW business development program addresses:

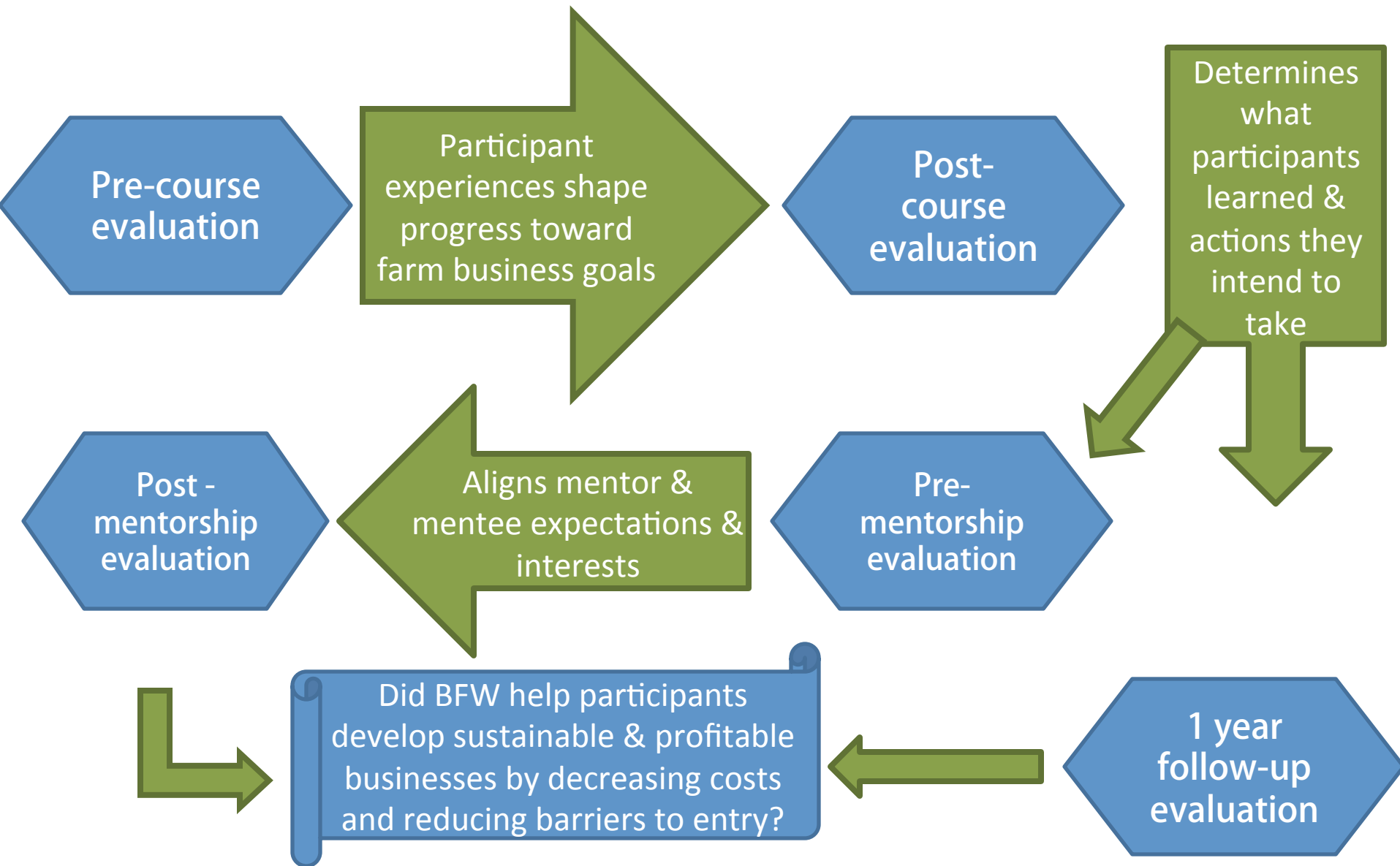
- Limited knowledge of strategic planning & management for ag businesses
- Few planning & budgeting tools for smaller-scale, fresh produce businesses
- Fewer production systems that align with consumer interest in new markets
- Emerging yet unfamiliar markets for high-value specialty crops
- Lack of information on entering new markets (price, consumer preference, packaging)

# Desired program outcomes for new and beginning farmers that translate into creating sustainable agricultural businesses

1. Decreased information & transaction costs
2. Reduced barriers to entry into new markets



# Program evaluation road map



# Outcome #1: Decrease information & transaction costs for new farmers

- A. Farmers have new knowledge to understand:
- Risks and opportunities associated with direct and targeted wholesale marketing
  - How to complete baseline records and budgets that link production & marketing decisions
- B. Farmers take actions based on that knowledge:
- Use strategic planning to develop their businesses (including marketing, financial and production planning)
  - Develop enterprise or whole farm budgets



# Measuring farmers' new knowledge of risk & opportunity in the marketplace and of appropriate planning & management tools

## Indicators:

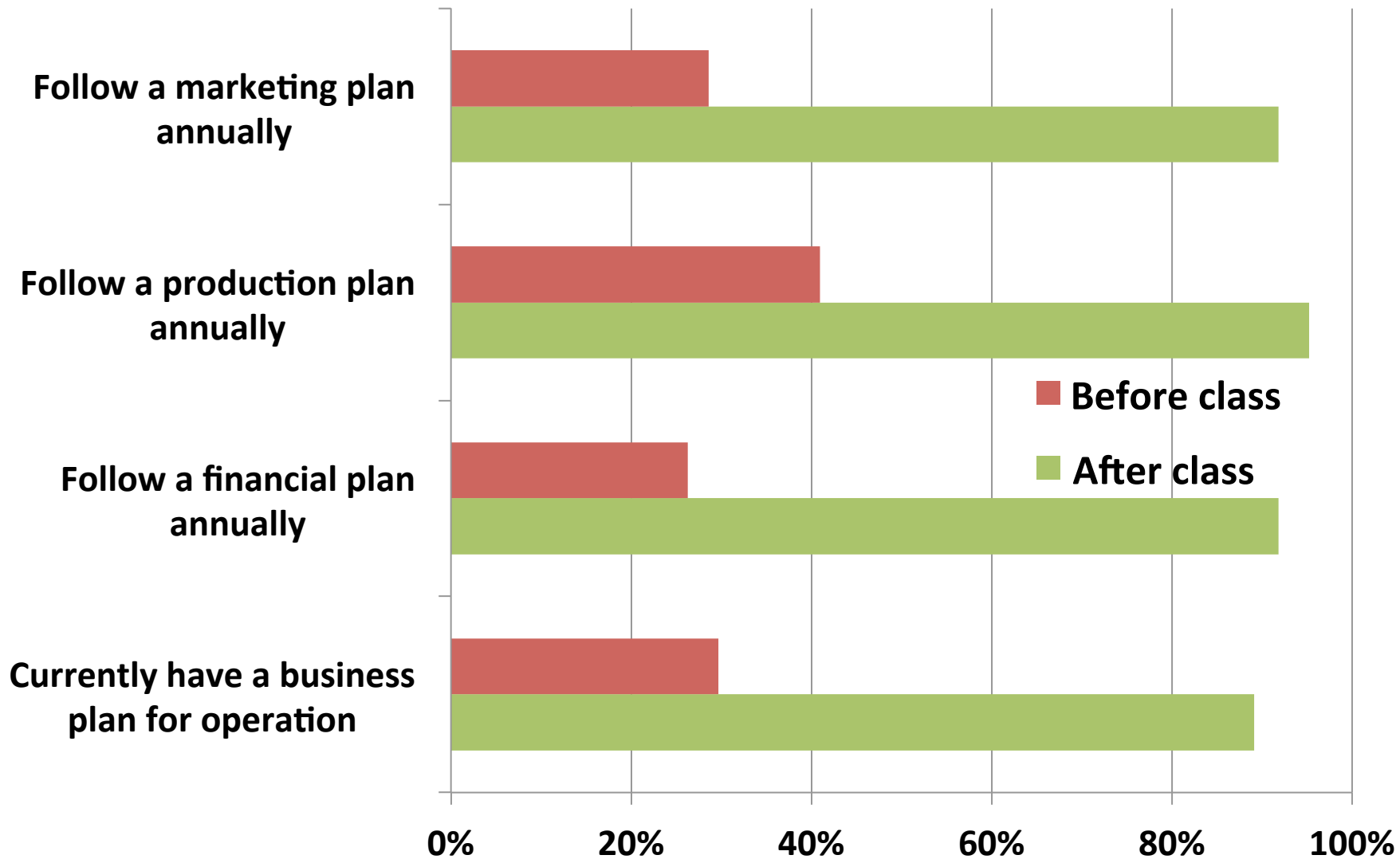
- understanding risk in direct and targeted markets,
- maintaining financial records,
- targeting viable customers,
- using cost-effective promotional strategies,
- assessing operation-specific taxes,
- managing labor force (including seasonal labor requirements),
- complying with regulatory issues, and
- accessing community resources.







# BFW participants reported their practices changed from taking the class



# Outcome #2: Reduce barriers to entry into new markets

## A. Farmers have new knowledge of:

- Community business contacts and how to use them
- Locating inputs to production (land, labor, water, etc.)

## B. Farmers take actions based on that knowledge:

- Assess seasonal labor requirements & better plan for labor-intensive produce crops
- Implement their business plans



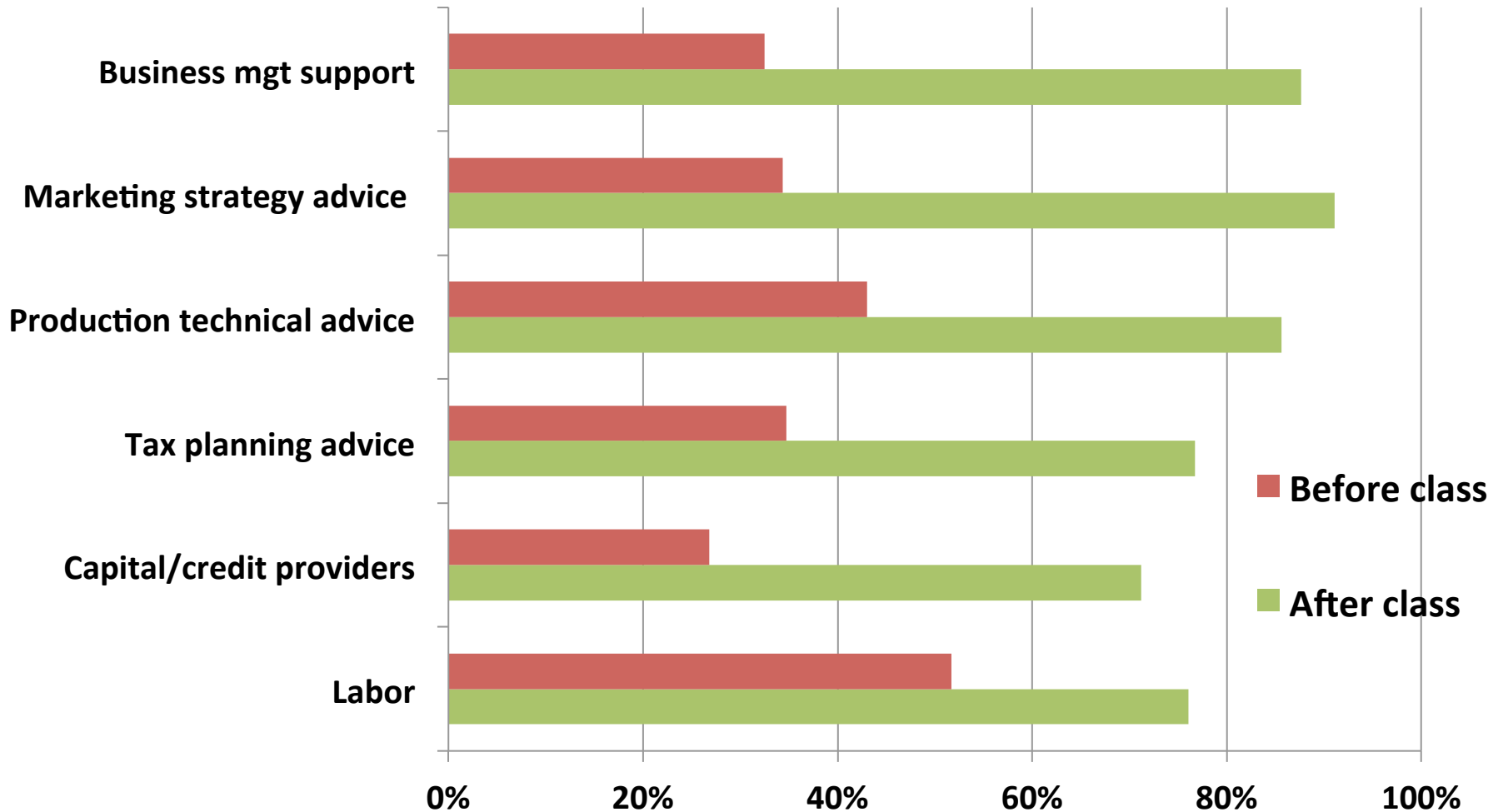
# Measuring farmers' knowledge of community resources

## Indicators – knowing where/how to locate:

- tax planning advice,
- crop/livestock production advice,
- marketing strategy advice,
- business management support,
- land, labor, and water,
- irrigation system equipment,
- capital and credit,
- pest and weed management information, and
- scale-appropriate equipment.



# BFW participants gained knowledge about community resources by taking the class



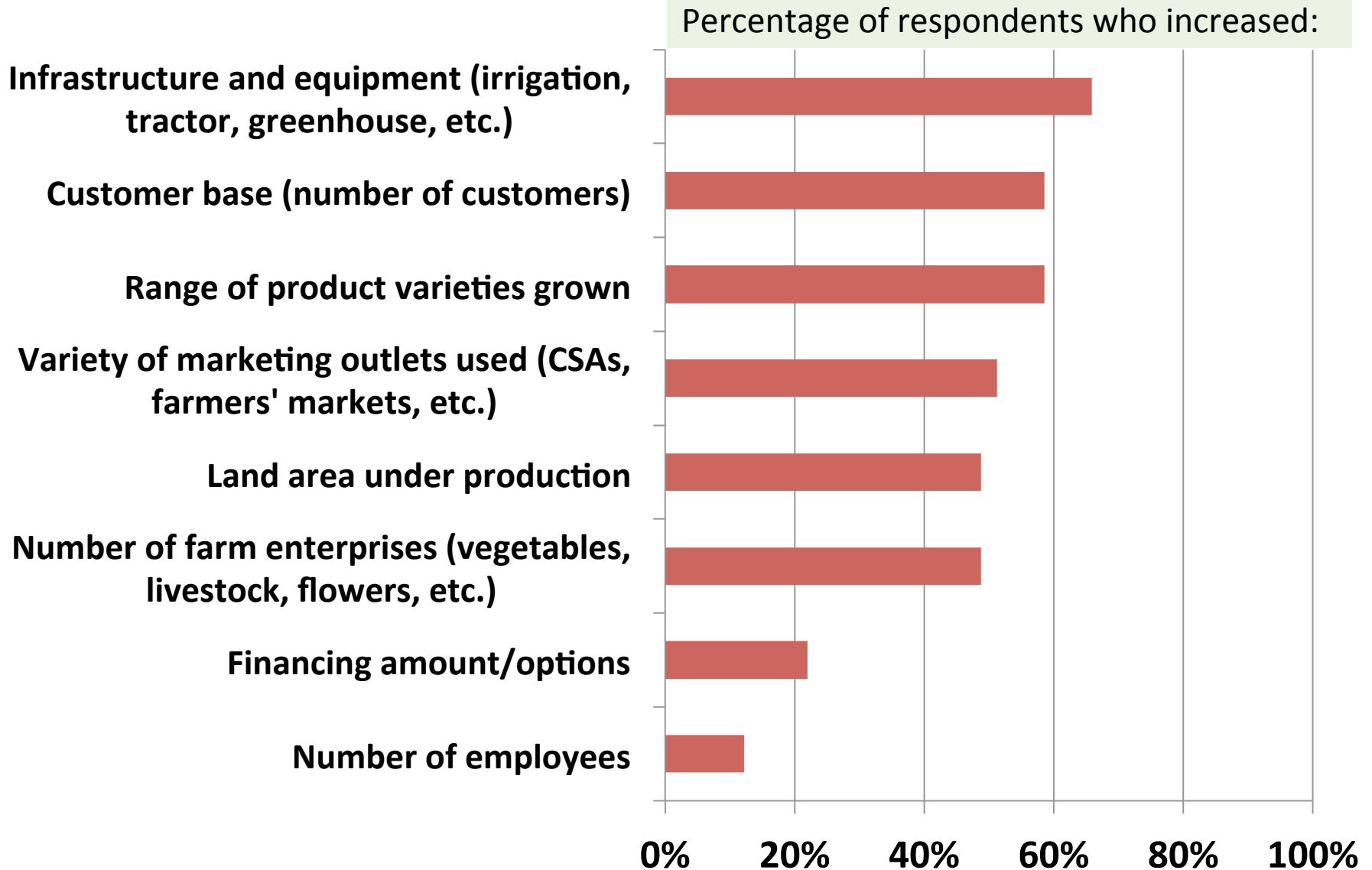
# Measuring farmers' use of community assets



Indicators that participants connect with specific community resources:

- applying for loan or grant program,
- using local technical support (NRCS, Extension),
- accessing mentorship and/or internship programs, and
- using other local resources (i.e., farm incubator programs).

# Direct business impacts—growth in on-farm investments or assets



# Building Farmers in the West: Program Performance Measures

## *How much?*

- 282 participants in 7 states
- 49% beginning farmers; 34% intermediate; 17% advanced
- 78% completed business plan

## *How well?*

- 98% recommend course to other new farmers
- 88% increased farmer network
- 80% course value > cost

## **Is anyone better off?**

- 83% said Building Farmers program improved their farming community
- 71% implemented new business management practices
- 51% said quality of life on farm improved



# Be aware of possible bias in performance measures



- Pre- to post-course assessment bias may occur
- Number of respondents falls over time
- Asking is different than observing
- Assessing participant knowledge acquired through mentorships is difficult—required that we use multiple instruments
- Progress toward stated outcomes may be based on many factors—our program is just one of them!

# What are your Questions?



# Contact Information:



**Julia Freedgood**

[jfreedgood@farmland.org](mailto:jfreedgood@farmland.org)



**Ellen Kahler**

[ellen@vsjf.org](mailto:ellen@vsjf.org)



**Martha Sullins**

[martha.sullins@colostate.edu](mailto:martha.sullins@colostate.edu)



Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

