

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between the
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
And the
VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE
With regard to implementation of
6 V.S.A. Chapter 209. Sustainable Agriculture
Section 4701. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

August 2007

Introduction

This memorandum of understanding updates and replaces a previous MOU signed in 2004 that describes the protocol for activities of the Sustainable Agriculture Council, which was established in statute by the Vermont legislature in 1990. *The purpose of the Council is to facilitate coordination and identify priorities for research, education and policies that support economically, socially and ecologically sustainable agricultural practices in Vermont.* The Council will take a forward-looking approach to supporting the long-term viability and vitality of Vermont's food and farming systems.

- 1) The Council will provide coordination among groups supporting stewardship of Vermont's farms and sustainable agriculture to identify clear roles and avoid duplication of efforts concerning research or education on themes that are relevant across member organizations.
- 2) The Council members will identify strategic priorities for the development of sustainable agriculture in Vermont.
- 3) The Council requires consistent and engaged leadership and management to maintain member commitment and focus. Whereas the mission of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, created in 1994, largely mirrors the purpose of 6 VSA Chapter 209 Section 4701, it is agreed that the Center will provide the day-to-day leadership and management of the Council, working closely with the members of the Council and the leadership required by statute.
- 4) The Council will facilitate activities that meet the Council's objectives. Toward that end, in furtherance of Section 4701 part C, the Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets may have the Council secure grants, gifts, or state allocations. Funds may be used for services and activities provided by organizations or individuals, either Council members or external collaborators, according to procedures to be developed by the Council. Activities that may be funded through the Council shall be conducted by member's organizations of the Council, and not directly by the Council itself.

5) The Council needs a minimum level of resources committed to its management, information needs, staff support and operating expenses. Whereas UVM Extension commits to covering the salary of the Center's Director and partial operating costs of the Center, the Center's director and staff shall be responsible for arranging Council meetings, preparing meeting documents, taking and distributing meeting minutes, publishing and distributing reports, and following up on Council requests for information. In addition, the Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Agency each agree to fund annual operating support, from existing resources, to the Council in the amount of \$7,500, for a total operating budget of \$15,000 to be deposited annually by October 1 into a UVM account holding only Council funds.

Structure of the Council

The Council will consist of the following standing members: the Secretary of Agriculture, the Dean of UVM Extension, the Dean of UVM-CALS, and the Director of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture. In addition, there will be a representative from the Department of Education, Vermont Technical College, NOFA-VT, the USDA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, other USDA agencies(s), farmers representing commodity or marketing associations, and representatives of non-governmental agricultural organizations. Individual members will be nominated and approved by the Council and appointed by the Secretary.

To maintain continuity of effort and streamline management of the Council, the Secretary of the Agency, or their designee and the Director of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture shall be responsible for co-chairing the Council. The Council will be staffed by the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, which will work with council members to: set meeting dates, develop meeting agenda, draft annual reports, and conduct public relations and outreach activities. The Center will arrange for meeting rooms, meals, audio visual equipment and other logistics as necessary. The Center will maintain the Council's records, including minutes of meetings, annual reports, and the membership mailing list. It will communicate with members in a timely fashion about Council activities and procedures.

A subset of the Council shall serve as the Council's operational committee and shall have the purpose of setting the Council's direction and themes for meetings. The committee will be nominated by the Co-chairs.

Regular member terms will be three years, staggered so that one-third of the Council rotates off every year.

Any member of the Council may nominate individuals to serve. Annually, the entire Council will vote in new members from the slate of nominees, with recommendations being forwarded to the Secretary for confirmation.

Members will serve on a volunteer basis and be subject to all customary terms and conditions of service of volunteer boards in the State of Vermont. Upon request, the Center will reimburse members for auto mileage at UVM rates.

Activities and Responsibilities of the Council

The Council will meet at least twice per year. Ad-hoc committees may be established that meet more frequently. The Council will review documents, publications and request presentations as it deems necessary to familiarize itself with issues, trends and existing programs.

The Council will develop a plan which sets priorities for the long term sustainability of Vermont's farms and their changing needs. The Council will establish and maintain a list of sustainable agriculture priorities with specific recommendations for action, to be reviewed annually and revised as necessary.

The Council may serve as an advisory body to member organizations with regard to sustainable agriculture research.

An annual report will be prepared by the Council and submitted by 15 January to the Vermont Legislature, the University of Vermont, and Council members, as required by statute. Specific issues may be selected for focus and elaboration in the annual report, with the goal of informing and advising the legislature, the public and the agricultural community.

This MOU will be reviewed by the Council, the Agency of Agriculture, the Center for Sustainable Agriculture, The University of Vermont College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and University of Vermont Extension every five years to determine it's effectiveness at meeting the intent of the authorizing legislation.

Signed

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Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

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