



# CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROGRAM

## Farm Teams

### FACT SHEET

#### Overview

The objective of the Farm Teams program is to support farmers' decision making and service delivery while increasing farm viability and adoption of on-farm conservation practices.

Farm Teams are formed to coordinate agricultural services for farmers who work with multiple service providers (i.e., NRCS, UVM Extension, grazing specialists, VT Agency of Agriculture, the VT Land Trust, business planners, nutrient management planners, NOFA, seed/fertilizer consultants).

The Farm Teams concept is a management strategy for Vermont farms, employing a team approach to problem solving. A Farm Team can take a holistic, long-term approach to multiple dimensions of the farm, or can tackle a more short-term, specific need.

Farmers in the Farm Team program work with their District facilitator to identify their goals and bring together professionals who provide advice, technical and financial assistance, information to address farm management priorities, and to implement farm plans such as conservation, grazing, business, succession, and nutrient management plans.

The farmer and the members of their Farm Team work with the District facilitator who coordinates with service providers, scheduling farm team meetings at strategic times throughout the year, taking notes, and monitoring progress of the Farm Team objectives.



VAAFM, NRCS, NOFA staff and the farmer at a NRCD initiated Farm Teams conservation planning meeting.

*“Working with the NRCD Farm Teams facilitator was seamless. I was very pleased with the professionalism of the assistance provided to our family organic dairy that is positioned to improve the watershed.”*

#### Team Members

A Farm Team is an advisory group of 4-8 members, group that meets periodically, lead by a District facilitator. The Farm Team includes a farmer's most trusted advisors and consultants, service providers, and agency personnel who coordinate financial support and provide technical assistance to improve environmental conditions, conservation efforts and overall farm viability. Additional participants may be invited to attend in a meeting to help address some specific problem or issue.

#### Team Meetings

- ⇒ Regular, scheduled meetings, usually 1-1.5hrs
- ⇒ Structured format
- ⇒ Written, shared agenda
- ⇒ Developed action or “to do” list and follow up
- ⇒ Focused, productive and facilitated discussion

#### Benefits of Farm Teams

- ⇒ Streamlined work flow
- ⇒ Meeting coordination
- ⇒ One point of contact for farm and partner liaison
- ⇒ Successful outcomes
- ⇒ No cost to the producer to participate

## Current NRCDFarm Teams Program Priorities:

- ◇ Please contact your local NRCDF to learn about local program priorities by visiting [www.vacd.org](http://www.vacd.org).

## NRCDFarm Team Services may include:

- ◇ Goal setting, natural resources site assessments, project and need prioritization, and funding plans
- ◇ Streamlined, wrap around coordination of resources from a variety of service providers to provide more useful assistance to farmers!
- ◇ Advocating to meet the farm conservation plan and farmers goals
- ◇ Functioning as a liaison for farmers and partners
- ◇ Interpretation of bureaucracy
- ◇ Communications to help keep efforts moving forward and to track progress
- ◇ Supporting program applications and grant management
- ◇ Project management
- ◇ Creating systems for monitoring progress

## When is Farm Teams a good fit for a farm?

- ◇ More support is needed beyond general program navigation services.
- ◇ More than one funding source is being accessed for a project.
- ◇ Overlapping program requirements and/or overlapping agencies involved in a farm scenario.
- ◇ When there are too many regulations and/or agency staff and service providers to coordinate and keep up-to-date on farm operations, becoming burdensome and too time consuming for the producer.
- ◇ The farm could benefit from learning about outside programs available to choose best options for support.
- ◇ The farm is considering changes to their enterprise, such as diversification, expansion, transition, or succession planning, field management practices or modifications requiring significant capital.
- ◇ The farm wants to take a more comprehensive approach to managing the farm enterprise.

## What is the role of the farmer?

- ◇ Clearly present farm goals, needs and challenges, and willing to make decisions on the best course of action to move forward with their plans.
- ◇ Demonstrate a commitment to Farm Team engagement, follow-through, and active communication.
- ◇ Shows a commitment to conservation practices and strives for feasible improvement to soil and water quality

## What is the role of the partners?

- ◇ Commitment to open communication and working with the District facilitator and the Team.
- ◇ Understand how their agency's program services fit within the available resources being coordinated to best serve the needs of the farm.
- ◇ Effectively and efficiently deliver services to work toward shared goals.
- ◇ Work together as a team to make things clear to the farmer.
- ◇ Avoid duplication of efforts and miscommunications.

*"The Farm Teams program is an invaluable resource for connecting farms and service providers in Vermont. The coordination the Districts facilitate is critical for implementing conservation practices on farms in ways that both meet our conservation goals and that work for our family farms. The Team approach allows specialists like myself to focus on what we do best, while ensuring that the farm's needs are considered and that no available resources are left on the table. The Farm Team is where the rubber meets the road and the actual work of conservation gets done!"*

- VAAFM Partner Staff

Funded by:



Your local NRCDF contact information can be found at [vacd.org](http://vacd.org)