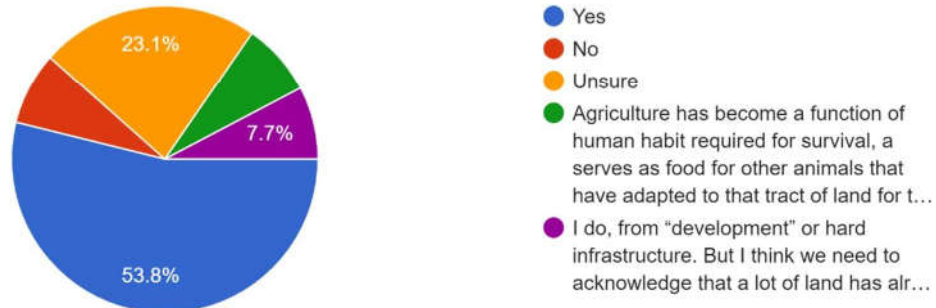


## VCSI Ag Working Group - Baseline Survey 1-23-24 - Results

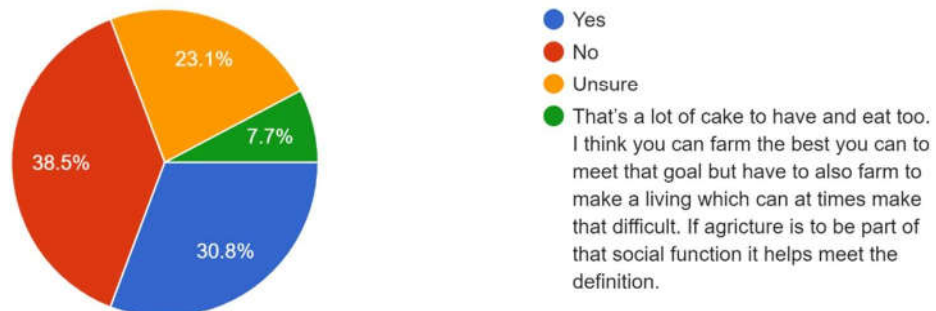
1. Do you feel that agricultural easements permanently protect the majority of the conserved area from conversion, as defined by Act 59? ["Convers...natural form and function of ecosystem services."]

13 responses



2. Do you feel that conserved agricultural lands ensure sustainable land management, as defined by Act 59? ["Sustainable land management" is define..., and that does not degrade ecosystem function.】

13 responses



3. In the first meeting we covered easements and how we currently keep track of conserved agricultural land. What other key topics or questions would you like to see us cover in the next meetings to be able to answer the criteria questions? (provide 2 or 3) 13 responses

- Parcel size
- Current use program current and potential for sustainable land management and to permanently conserve and count all agricultural land that's projected to meet the agricultural development goals and needs of farmland for farmers, local food production and regional self reliance; policy discussion of what the vision to "support working farms" could mean;
- Conversion and the relationship of ag lands and biodiversity retention

## VCSI Ag Working Group - Baseline Survey 1-23-24 - Results

- How do strict vs lean requirements help hinder or meet the goal, we're does payment fall in that discussion
- How can this work be done without imposing additional regulations on farmers?
- Interpretation of conversion definition
- What metrics will be adopted or developed to determine if a farm is meeting the long term sustainable management and biodiversity goals? 2) Would it make sense to have the 14 Conservation Districts (or 11 Regional Planning Districts) serve as micro-units within each of which the 30 x 30 goal would be achieved? 3) Could reforms of the UVA Tax Abatement (Current Use) programs be an effective tool for leveraging more farmland into permanent conservation?
- Are there Conservation practices required with an easement. What types of easements and land uses have been conserved
- What does Vermont's land use change look like over time - what are the current rates of loss and gain of different natural and working lands.
- The questions raised 1/10 are good. I worry about easements that aren't flexible enough to change if the future demands it. We can't assume that we know what's best in the future based on what we think now.
- Are the amount of lands in easements increasing or decreasing annually?
- Info about the number of farms with ag easements who have actually converted forest to open land, a primer on the definition and key practices of organic agriculture
- understanding of how other states are addressing in their 30x30 design and implementation

### 4. How are you currently thinking about answering the question: "What criteria do you think should be used to determine the types of agricultural lands that will qualify?" 13 responses

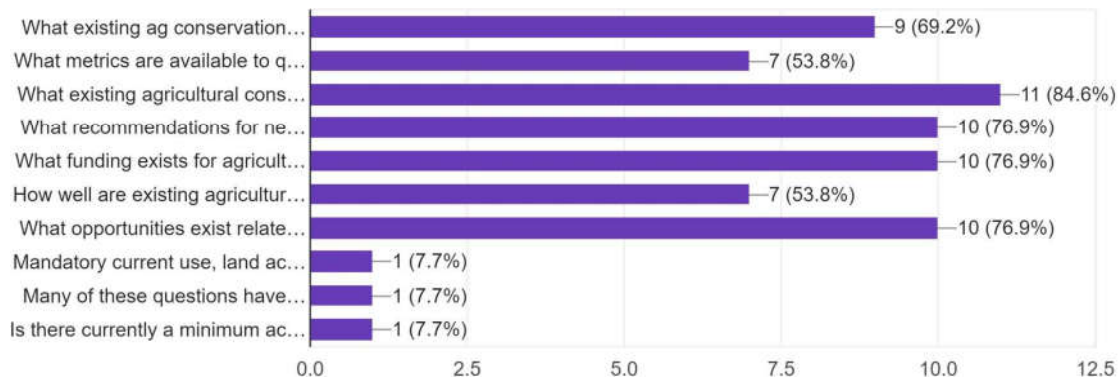
- Parcel size
- Act 59 (2023) > natural reserve areas as designated in the conservation plan > new conservation categories include agricultural land protected for agricultural use from development > applying the negative understanding in compliance w. def. Sustainable land management that absence from development in permanence already satisfies this as a baseline. RAP amendment process will be able to raise the bar of practices through including soil health principles (VAAFJ jurisdiction and beyond planning law) > link current use with permanence, fix that it benefits land owners who don't farm the acres they own by crediting those potential tax savings to a land access fund > fix that OPAV doesn't benefit farmers and subsidize land access for farmers with the land access fund > find regulatory incentives at a low life cycle cost point that strategically benefit and incentivize more sustainable land management like giving organic farmers a higher property tax break for their current use > count the acres in agriculture > live the vision that Act 59 supports farmers & make that all agriculture counts
- Agricultural lands might need a separate category that reflects the essential nature of producing food as part of Vermont's conserved land matrix.
- Still deciding.
- Land managed according to a Comprehensive Conservation Plan
- Those that maximize biodiversity and contribute to statewide diversity in ways that other lands do not

## VCSI Ag Working Group - Baseline Survey 1-23-24 - Results

- My current thinking is that all Ag land currently held within a permanent conservation easement should qualify --- with the caveat that we explore and recommend incentives be set in place to transition such farms through NRCS (or equivalent) Soil Health Management Systems.
- Do the lands provide an ecological or social benefit that should be conserved
- All conserved agricultural lands should count towards the conservation goals of Act 59 of 2023.
- Regenerative agriculture is really aspirational in nature; there most likely isn't an end point or stasis or "success" we can point to. Especially not given the current state of science. I think we need to accommodate for some kind of progress or movement towards whatever definition of our goals.
- All agricultural lands should qualify!!
- I think we need to separate land conservation for food production and conservation that protects and enhances biodiversity as they are not mutually exclusive. I am currently thinking that we should start by counting all land that is certified organic and then build a system that will incentivize the adoption of practices that will support biodiversity, then be able to gradually count that land.
- I am struggling on this one. On one hand, one can make the argument that all conserved ag land is supporting biodiversity because it's preventing development. However, when you get into the definitions in the legislation concerning conversion and sustainable management, the answer is less clear to me.

5. Beyond the primary question of determining criteria which, if any, of the following questions should be addressed in the inventory report? [select all that apply.]

13 responses



## VCSI Ag Working Group - Baseline Survey 1-23-24 - Results

6. Where do you still have questions that you'd like the Ag Working Group to explore? [this is a place to expand upon anything you mentioned above, or to share another concern/idea.]

OPTIONAL 6 responses

- Decision of the group to build upon the conclusions of the PES & Soil Health working group and vote against Act59 being in any way instrumentalized to profit emission trading schemes and to craft a brief statement to recommend to the legislature for Vermont to divest from allowing net zero to build upon sustainable land management in Vermont
- I am sure I'll have more moving forward, still catching on to the task at this time
- The other options in question 5 belong in phase II of Act59 planning
- Would incorporating the NRCS soil health principles into the RAPS be an effective way to moving all our farmland closer to the sustainable management goals (coupled with increased incentives for adoption of soil health practices)? 2) What role if any, could state-wide land use planning and VT Conservation Design play in setting priorities for identifying areas or regions where conservation is needed to meet critical habitat goals?
- How conserved land is monitored to ensure ecological and social benefits.
- Not sure I'm ready to expand on thoughts yet, but think we all have a lot to think about here and appreciate the way you r approached the conversation so far - that we're working through this together and the conversation can evolve.