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STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
STATE OFFICE BLDG., / 116 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VERMONT 05602

MEMORANDUM

March 10, 1976

TO: Governor Thomas P. Salmon
FROM: Robert J. Branon, *RJB* Commissioner of Agriculture
SUBJ: Implementation of Food Commission Recommendations

The Department of Agriculture should assume a leadership role in the development and promotion of agriculture. The public, as indicated in the Food Commission Report, is searching for a group to implement and provide philosophical support to the agricultural development efforts within the state. The role naturally falls within the department's sphere of concern. The following suggestions are submitted for your consideration:

Food Policy. House Bill 476, if passed, establishes a food policy for the state. The department does not recommend the appointment of a special committee to draft a food and agriculture policy for the state if the above bill fails to pass. Such a committee would most probably develop a policy devoid of a method of implementation. If H.476 is defeated, the department recommends that the Governor identify certain recommendations to be implemented and indicate to the public that he has charged certain agencies with the implementation of those recommendations. Such action would actually constitute the implementation of an agricultural policy within the state.

Input/Output Model. The department recommends that the Governor appoint a special task force to review the feasibility of developing a state input/output model. Such a model would show the inter-relationship between various sectors of the economy and would assist in the efficient allocation of the state's resources. For example, the model would indicate the importance of the agricultural segment to Vermont's economy and the effect of a demise of that segment.

Department of Agriculture and Food. The department does not recommend the redesignation of the department to the Department of Agriculture and Food. The word "food" implies that the department is carrying out consumer nutrition activities and other food quality programs. The department feels that the redesignation should take place after a restructuring of the department's activities.

Vermont Logo. The department presently has authority to develop a seal for Vermont quality products. Certain producer groups have already indicated an interest in such a program. The logo would only be used on those products which meet quality standards. The department proposes that the logo be developed through a statewide art contest.

Dehydration Plant. The department would assist the Agency of Development and Community Affairs in the feasibility study of a dehydration facility. One of the department's main concerns is the effect of such a facility on the existing market for certain agricultural products.

Grain Storage. The department is presently participating in the development of a grain storage study. The department should assume a primary role in the analysis of and the possible development of the facilities for the state and should work closely with the College of Agriculture at the University of Vermont. Preliminary estimates indicate that railroad reorganization will mean a \$1,900.00 increase in the cost of grain to a 50-cow dairy farmer in 1986.

Farmers Markets-Food Processing Facilities. The department should take an active part in the development of a successful farmers market in Burlington or Rutland. The Development Division within the department would assume a leadership role in this area. The division would work with the organizers in identifying growers of selected crops and other methods of ensuring the public of a constant supply of quality products.

Composting. The department recognizes that composting is an efficient method of disposing of certain wastes and that certain composts have a high market value as a plant starter material. The department would work with the Agency of Environmental Conservation in identifying uses for such materials and the potential markets.

State and Municipal Lands - Gardening. The department would work with towns and organizations in the development of community gardens. The department would assist in the identification of state and municipal lands which might be suitable for community gardening projects. BOR funding is available for community gardens through the Agency of Environmental Conservation.

Division of Food and Nutrition. The department would evaluate the need for a Division of Food and Nutrition. The evaluation would consist of a review of existing activities within the state in an attempt to identify what needs are not presently served which could be met through the creation of such a division.

Food Preservation and Quality. The Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the Extension Service, would discuss certain food preservation techniques. For example, the department has the expertise to lead workshops on food storage and the proper handling of meat and meat products. The Markets Division could lead a consumer workshop on apples, berries, and maple syrup. The Dairy Division could lead a workshop on milk quality and the concerns of the consuming public.

Farm Tourist Program. The department would assist the Agency of Development and Community Affairs in the continuation of the Farm Host Program and would expand the Farm Vacation Program.

Farm Loans. The department would identify the need for farm real estate and operating loans. The results of the needs study would be submitted to the legislature together with a proposal to provide state farm financing.

Implementation of the above recommendations is heavily dependent upon creation of a strong Agricultural Development Division within the department. A division now exists, but due to the elimination of federal matching funds and a reduction of state funding, only one position is presently filled in that division. The department is relying on the passage of H. 476 or the resumption of federal funding in order to properly carry out the above recommendations. Approximately \$50,000.00 is necessary to fund such a division.

RJB/raa