



Growing Greener Pastures: Planting Innovation and Raising Opportunity on Virginia's Working Lands

Agriculture and forestry are the heart of Virginia's thriving economy, producing over \$90 billion in economic impact annually and 440,000 jobs throughout the Commonwealth.¹ As Virginia's largest private industry, agricultural and forestry businesses support rural economies across Virginia and provide quality products to families in the Commonwealth and all over the world.^{2,3} About 90% of Virginia's farms are owned and operated by individuals or families, and every agriculture job supports 1.7 jobs elsewhere in Virginia's economy.⁴ However, Virginia farms and forests will face a variety of serious challenges, from declining crop and livestock productivity caused by climate change to a lack of infrastructure needed to support operations.⁵ In Virginia, a majority of farms lose money from their operations and many are not able to rely entirely on their farms for income.⁶ The Commonwealth must do more to lift up agriculture and forestry and revitalize opportunities available to Virginia businesses.

One of Terry's first acts as governor was to sign a law that created more economic opportunities in agriculture and forestry and cut red tape holding back Virginia's family farms.⁷ The bipartisan law created new markets for selling locally-produced goods, ushered in cooperative sales partnerships between small farms, and enabled more agritourism. When agriculture in particular was hit hard by the pandemic, Terry supported President Biden's American Rescue Plan, which provided Virginians in agriculture, forestry and related industries with \$190,000,000 in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and funding for the USDA to address food supply chain disruptions, helping farms keep

¹ Blackwell, John Reid. (2017, July 18). State officials: Economic impact of agriculture and forestry rose 30 percent to \$91 billion from 2013 to 2016. Retrieved from: Richmond.com.

² Blackwell, John Reid. (2017, July 18). State officials: Economic impact of agriculture and forestry rose 30 percent to \$91 billion from 2013 to 2016. Retrieved from: Richmond.com.

³ Virginia Farm Bureau. (n.d.). Virginia Farm Bureau Agriculture Facts. Retrieved from: www.vafb.com

⁴ Virginia Farm Bureau. (n.d.). Virginia Farm Bureau Agriculture Facts. Retrieved from: www.vafb.com

⁵ Environmental Protection Agency. (08/16). What Climate Change Means for Virginia. Retrieved from: nepis.epa.gov; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. (05/2017). The Economic Impact of Virginia's Agriculture and Forest Industries. Retrieved from: ceps.coopercenter.org

⁶ USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Services. 2017. Retrieved from: nass.usda.gov

⁷ Hartke, Kimberly. 03/10/2014. Precedent Setting Agriculture Bill Signed by Governor Terry McAuliffe. Retrieved from: globenewswire.com

their workforces employed during the pandemic.^{8,9} Still, Glenn Youngkin calls the American Rescue Plan “unnecessary.” Meanwhile, Terry will build on the progress he made as Virginia’s 72nd Governor, when he grew the agriculture and forestry industries by 30% during the first half of his administration,¹⁰ and cut unemployment in every city and county, including by nearly 50% in most rural counties.

Terry believes the Commonwealth must do a better job working with Virginia agriculture and forestry stakeholders to unlock economic opportunity. Just as he did during his first term, Terry will take a comprehensive approach to strengthening the agricultural and forestry economy by growing demand for Virginia agricultural products, facilitating innovation to expand supply, and supporting Virginia farmers and foresters. He will expand state matching funds for efforts to invest in agricultural best management practices and support the transition to more sustainable practices. As Virginia’s next governor, Terry will establish Virginia agriculture as a model for upward mobility and growth by focusing on investing in the farmers and workers who are critical to Virginia’s economic future. Terry will:

Grow Demand for Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Products

While agriculture and forestry industries remain the Commonwealth’s largest private sector industries, we must take strong action to bring Virginia made agriculture and forestry products to new markets. Virginia exports nearly \$3 billion in agricultural and forestry products every year and it will be up to Virginia’s next governor to accelerate the Commonwealth’s agricultural and forestry exports to meet domestic and global demand.¹¹ Terry knows we can get there because under his leadership as governor, Virginia became the second-largest agricultural and forestry exporter on the East Coast.¹² However, only one in nine farm jobs are dependent on international exports and expanding trade in local and domestic markets remains vital to these industries.¹³ As Virginia’s next governor, Terry will continue to seek out new opportunities for Virginia farmers and foresters in the Commonwealth and beyond. Terry’s plan will:

- **Continue to invest in the Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) fund.** AFID is an important fund that provides grants designed to attract and expand agriculture and forestry processing and value added facilities that must process at least 30% Virginia grown agricultural or forestry products.¹⁴ As governor, Terry nearly doubled funding for the AFID fund to \$4 million in 2016.¹⁵ Projects this grant has supported include a nearly \$1 million aquaponics facility growing lettuce using fish waste, a local direct-to-

⁸ News Leader. (n.d.). Who in Virginia got Paycheck Protection Program loans during the pandemic? Retrieved from: data.newsleader.com

⁹ USDA Press. (06/08/2021). USDA to Invest More Than \$4 Billion to Strengthen Food System. Retrieved from: usda.gov

¹⁰ Blackwell, John Reid. (2017, July 18). State officials: Economic impact of agriculture and forestry rose 30 percent to \$91 billion from 2013 to 2016. Retrieved from: Richmond.com.

¹¹ Urenko, C. (04/01/21). Governor Announces Goal to Double Virginia’s Farm Exports by 2035. Retrieved from: www.whsv.com

¹² Sabbath, Jessica. (03/09/2015). Virginia’s agricultural exports reach another all-time high. Retrieved from: virginiabusiness.com

¹³ Rephann, Terance. (05/2017). The Economic Impact of Virginia’s Agriculture and Forest Industries. Retrieved from: insidetheisle.com

¹⁴ Virginia Economic Development Partnership. (n.d.). Agriculture & Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID). Retrieved from: www.vedp.org

¹⁵ Simkiss, Ceillie; Denice Thibodeau. (04/23/2019). Governor announces expansion of ag funding in visit to Chatham. Retrieved from: newsadvance.com

consumers online marketplace for Loudoun County farmers and agriculture-based businesses, and a new sustainability center at Virginia Tech to provide resources and technical assistance to Virginia foresters, and many others.¹⁶ As Virginia's next governor, Terry will work to provide additional funding to the AFID fund. This will strengthen the Commonwealth's agriculture and forestry industries by recruiting new businesses to Virginia and developing creative projects which help existing businesses expand into new products and markets.

- **Grow access to local foods.** Agriculture is Virginia's largest private sector industry, but nearly 800,000 of our fellow Virginians struggled with food insecurity prior to the pandemic.¹⁷ All indications suggest that number has only gone up in the past year. As Virginia's 72nd Governor and First Lady, Terry and Dorothy McAuliffe stood as champions for initiatives that tackle hunger and promote access to healthy, nutritious meals. As the next Governor and First Lady of Virginia, Terry and Dorothy will continue their mission to end hunger in Virginia. Terry has released his plan for [Combating Food Insecurity](#) and will ensure that Virginia farmers are supported in their efforts to play a critical role in this initiative. As governor, Terry will pursue a comprehensive "Virginia Food for Virginia Families" agenda to connect some of the world's highest quality agricultural products to more families in need. These initiatives will promote the health and wellbeing of our families by improving access to nutritious foods while supporting the bottom lines of our hardworking farmers and strengthening our regional food system. Terry's administration will prioritize the growth of local agriculture markets by supporting Virginia's Farm to School initiative, the Virginia Agriculture Food Assistance program through our food banks, and WIC and Senior Farmers Market programs. He will also work with his good friend President Biden to grow SNAP incentive programs.
- **Establish Virginia as a major supplier of specialty crops, particularly specialty grains used in craft beverage and wine production.** Virginia has a strong history of agricultural excellence and is well-positioned to serve as a national leader in the production of specialty crops, grains and grapes. Virginia's craft beverage and wine industries continue to grow and blossom, ranking as the 7th largest wine producing state and 12th in the nation for the number of craft breweries.¹⁸ Unfortunately, Virginia continues to import much of the specialty grains and malt needed to produce craft beer and distilled spirits from other states and internationally. As a state as rich in natural resources as we are, Virginia should not be relying so heavily on other states for these grains. In fact, Virginia should be a major supplier to craft beverage industries around the nation. As governor, Terry will work with local farmers to build this industry. He will support local and regional initiatives by providing new revenue opportunities to small and family farms, create the next generation of farmers, and reduce food miles. He will also support locally-driven initiatives to identify and protect land for farming, partner with community colleges to create additional career

¹⁶ Company to grow lettuce in Virginia using fish waste. (10/16/2017). Retrieved from: [apnews.com](#); Tinsman, Brian. (08/28/2020). Loudoun Bolsters Online Farm Marketplace with \$20,000 Virginia AFID Grant. Retrieved from: [biz.loudoun.gov](#); Irby, Sarah. (12/10/2020). Pulaski, Roanoke counties to receive grant for local forestry and agriculture initiatives. Retrieved from: [wdbj7.com](#).

¹⁷ Feeding America. (n.d.). Hunger in Virginia. Retrieved from: [feedingamerica.org](#)

¹⁸ Wine Vines Analytics. (n.d.) Retrieved from: [winesvinesanalytics.com](#); Brewers Association. (2020). State Craft Beer Sales & Production Statistics, 2020. Retrieved from: [brewerassociation.org](#).

pathways in agriculture through new course offerings and certifications, and market Virginia products around the globe.

- **Increase Virginia agricultural and forestry exports.** In addition to increasing the productive capacity of Virginia agriculture and forestry, it will be critical to build the processing, transportation, and storage infrastructure. Under Terry's leadership as the 72nd Governor of Virginia, Terry successfully turned the Port of Virginia—which in the previous five years had lost \$120 million—into a profitable enterprise for the first time since 2008.¹⁹ In 2016, Terry secured \$1.4 billion for the Atlantic Gateway Project to increase capacity at the port by nearly 50% and build transportation infrastructure to facilitate the port's growth.²⁰ Terry also promoted Virginia's top notch agriculture and forestry industry at every opportunity, including during his 35 international trade missions. As Virginia's next governor, Terry will continue to aggressively promote Virginia's strategic advantages in agriculture and forestry and our port both domestically and abroad and will work with President Biden to pursue trade relationships that will increase demand for Virginia agriculture.

Advance Innovative Solutions to Meet Growing Demand for Agriculture

The global demand for agriculture is rapidly growing. By 2050, demand for food is expected to expand by as much as 98% and it is important that Virginia plays a key role in that future.²¹

Meeting this demand head on will require innovative solutions to increase the productive capacity of agriculture in the Commonwealth. Virginia is home to some of the best research institutions in the country, and they will be a key resource in spurring the agricultural innovation that will lead Virginia's farmers into the future and ahead of their competition. Terry's plan will:

- **Expand the Virginia Cooperative Extension.** The Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is a critical force that helps to keep the Commonwealth's agriculture industry competitive, increase profitability for businesses and inform more sustainable practices. A collaboration between Virginia Tech, Virginia State University and their hundreds of public and private partners, VCE has provided agricultural resources and education through their 11 agricultural research and extension centers and offices located in every county in the Commonwealth. Efforts by the Virginia Cooperative Extension supported by our land-grant universities deserve greater investment from the Commonwealth in order to better serve the needs of Virginia agriculture. Terry will work with the General Assembly to fund additional VCE agents, equipment needs and positions to ensure that Virginia agricultural businesses are getting the support they need to grow and sustain their operations.
- **Cultivate next-generation smart farming through universal broadband.** In order to meet the growing demand for agricultural and forestry products in Virginia, we must invest in strategies that allow business owners to streamline their work, improve efficiency and increase production. Unfortunately, many of the technologies that can aid in these efforts require access to high-speed broadband, which nearly one-third of census blocks in rural

¹⁹ Zullo, R. (05/14/17). Up for Sale Four Years Ago, Virginia's Port Posting Year-Over-Year Profits and Growth. Retrieved from: richmond.com

²⁰ Hutchins, R. (07/20/16). Major Investment to Bring Much-Needed Capacity to Virginia Port. Retrieved from: www.joc.com

²¹ Elferink, M. & Schierhorn, F. (04/07/16). Global Demand for Food Is Rising. Can We Meet It? Retrieved from: hbr.org

Virginia lack.²² In 2017, Terry convened and hosted the first Governor’s Smart Farm Summit in Virginia. The purpose of this summit was to convene agricultural leaders including producers, academics, lenders, students and technology representatives to advance technologies to solidify Virginia’s position as a leader in agriculture innovation.^{23 24} Another example of Virginia’s continued leadership in agricultural innovation is Virginia Tech’s recently launched SmartFarm Innovation Network that will have 120 locations throughout the Commonwealth and help farmers build the farms of the future by tapping into recent agricultural and technological innovations.²⁵ Earlier this year, Terry pledged to deliver Virginians universal broadband in his plan to create a [flourishing rural economy](#). Since that announcement, Governor Northam announced his plan to achieve universal broadband by 2024 through a \$700 million investment of federal funds provided by President Biden’s American Rescue Plan.²⁶ Terry recognizes that access to broadband is vital to success in a 21st century economy, especially for farmers and foresters, and that is why he will ensure the federal dollars invested are utilized wisely and that every Virginian receives access to affordable broadband.

- **Expand agricultural and forestry career pathways within higher education.** As innovation continues to transform the agricultural and forestry industries, we must expand access to higher education opportunities in order to train the next generation of workers with the skill set and knowledge to step into these jobs. In 2019, Governor Northam announced a \$310,000 grant to Mountain Empire Community College to create new courses and credentials for smart farming.²⁷ As governor, Terry will build on his plan to [transform higher education in the Commonwealth](#) by expanding agricultural and forestry career pathways to meet industry demands for skills in advanced agriculture, forestry and supporting industries such as processing and veterinary medicine for farms. He will work closely with industries, community colleges and institutions of higher education to identify needs and quickly establish new career pathways and training programs to address them. Terry will also work to pursue federal grants from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s newly established Education and Workforce Development (EWD) program to support this initiative.²⁸ Terry will build an educational pipeline that will grow a highly skilled workforce that will lead Virginia into a more productive, sustainable, and profitable future.

²² Friedenberger, A. (01/13/20). ‘We’re in Another World’: Coronavirus Lays Bare Digital Divide in Rural Virginia. Retrieved from: [roanoke.com](#)

²³ Powell, A. (12/12/17). Governor Terry McAuliffe Visits JMU for Farming Summit. Retrieved from: [www.whsv.com](#)

²⁴ Morning Ag Clips. (12/20/2017). McAuliffe hosts Governor’s Smart Farm Summit. Retrieved from: [morningagclips.com](#)

²⁵ Commonwealth Connect. (n.d.). Commonwealth Connect Report. Retrieved from: [virginiainteactive.org](#)

²⁶ Feiner, L. (7/16/21). Virginia Gov. Northam announces \$700 million plan for universal broadband by 2024. Retrieved from [cnbc.com](#)

²⁷ Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. (03/13/2019). Governor Northam Announces Over \$6.7 million in GO Virginia grants. Retrieved from: [dhcd.virginia.gov](#)

²⁸ NIFA. (n.d.). AFRI Education and Workforce Development. Retrieved from: [nifa.usda.gov](#)

Increase Opportunities for Virginia Farmers and Foresters

One of Terry's first acts as governor in 2014 was to sign a law creating more economic opportunities and cutting red tape for family farms.²⁹ He boosted consumer access to locally produced food, gave farmers access to new markets, and launched the Virginia Grown--Homegrown By Heroes program to support military veteran farmers. Healthy ecosystems are the backbone of Virginia's rural economy, and Terry's support for Virginia farmers has meant leading the way on conserving our natural resources, including as chair of the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Council.³⁰ Terry's plan will:

- **Saving family farms and helping create new ones.** Virginia should be the best place in the nation for small, new farms to succeed and grow. Unfortunately there may be significant barriers preventing people from entering the industry and being successful. The Virginia Farm Link program provides retiring farmers and other interested sellers information on selling their properties and connects them to new, independent farmers.³¹ The program also supports these new farmers by providing them with critical information necessary to start a farm such as business and farming practices.³² As governor, Terry will lead the way on initiatives to provide new farmers with even more information and market programs such as the federal [microloan program](#) for beginning farmers and the USDA's [farm ownership and operating loans](#) that help cover improvements, family expenses and other costs. Terry will also pursue state opportunities to support these efforts by reducing the barriers to starting a new farm, coordinating across agencies to reduce the burden of red tape in all state and local procedures, forms, licenses, and permits, as well as creating easy-to-read online guides and a single list of all requirements to start a business. He will also explore offering student loan forgiveness to entrepreneurs starting new farms in rural areas in Virginia.
- **Fully fund the Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) Cost-Share Program by 2026.** Voluntary efforts by Virginia's farmers to implement pollution control practices have not only led to tremendous progress towards reaching Virginia's water quality goals, especially as they relate to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan, but have also produced tremendous economic impacts. For every \$1 investment in Chesapeake Bay restoration, \$4 is generated as a result.³³ To build on this success, Virginia must increase funding for BMPs through the agricultural cost-share program. This program currently provides farmers with up to \$100,000 per year for conservation practices including the technical assistance they need to implement the practices and capture essential information on their efforts.³⁴ Examples of projects that the BMP program has supported are stream fencing, alternative watering systems, composting systems, and more.³⁵ The Department of Conservation and Recreation's needs assessment calls for \$100 million per year for

²⁹ Farm To Consumer Legal Defense Fund. (3/10/2014). Precedent Setting Agriculture Bill Signed by Governor Terry McAuliffe. Retrieved from: globenewswire.com

³⁰ Daily Press. (12/13/14). Gov. Terry McAuliffe chosen to head Chesapeake Bay restoration council. Retrieved from: dailypress.com

³¹ National Conference of State Legislators. (n.d.). Virginia. Retrieved from: www.ncsl.org

³² National Conference of State Legislators. (n.d.). Virginia. Retrieved from: www.ncsl.org

³³ Chesapeake Bay Foundation. (n.d.). The Facts About the Clean Water Blueprint. Retrieved from: www.cbf.org

³⁴ Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. (n.d.). Agricultural BMP Cost-Share (VACS) Program. Retrieved from: www.dcr.virginia.gov

³⁵ Department of Environmental Quality. (n.d.). Agricultural BMP: One-Page Flier. Retrieved from: www.deq.virginia.gov

agricultural BMPs, but Virginia currently falls short of that goal.³⁶ As a result of the top five most cost-effective practices this program supports, farms could reduce nitrogen pollution in the Chesapeake Bay by up to 60%.³⁷ As the next Governor of Virginia, Terry will fight to fully fund the agricultural BMPs needed to reach the Commonwealth's 2025 goals for the Bay.

- **Recruit a state-of-the-art meat processing facility and increase capacity for small-volume processing.** The COVID-19 pandemic brought the meat industry's supply chain to a breaking point, and there now remains a very dire need for meat processing plants across the nation. Red meat processing increased by 19% nationally between 2000 and 2020, while Virginia processing dropped by 26%.³⁸ Most meat processing facilities are located in Northern Virginia, making such facilities less accessible to farmers in other parts of the state, and some facilities are booked a year in advance.³⁹ In response, the USDA has allocated \$500 million in American Rescue Plan funding for meat processing.⁴⁰ As Governor, Terry will work with farmers and the meat processing industry to open a new meat processing facility in Virginia. A new, state-of-the-art meat processing facility will increase processing capacity, stabilize the meat processing industry for potential future shocks, encourage competition, and expand markets, helping farmers while boosting Virginia's economy and making quality meat more accessible to consumers.
- **Recruit more sawmills and a cross laminated timber (CLT) manufacturer.** CLT is revolutionizing the construction and housing industry. The material is stronger, quicker to assemble, and more cost effective, energy efficient, environmentally friendly and safer than traditional building materials.⁴¹ Because of these advantages, CLT is the perfect material for the growing industry manufacturing Modular Housing Units (MHUs) that create homes and buildings which are faster to assemble and cost less than traditional homes.⁴² MHU manufactures will play an increasingly important role in meeting the demand for affordable housing. As governor, Terry will work to recruit sawmills and CLT manufacturers in Southwest Virginia needed to support this industry. Terry will also work with stakeholders to ensure building codes allow for more buildings to be constructed using this material. Finally, Terry will invest in the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) program, helping landowners plant pines and ensure that our forestry industry remains sustainable for years to come.⁴³ These initiatives will create new demand for Virginia's forestry products while increasing the supply for affordable housing.

³⁶ Holmes, Dan. (02/24/2021). Take Action to Support Conservation Funding. Retrieved from: pecva.org

³⁷ Chesapeake Bay Foundation. (n.d). Best Management Practices. Retrieved from: cbf.org

³⁸ The Farmville Herald. (11/21/2020). More meat processors needed in Virginia. Retrieved from: farmvilleherald.com

³⁹ The Farmville Herald. (11/21/2020). More meat processors needed in Virginia. Retrieved from: farmvilleherald.com

⁴⁰ USDA Press. (07/09/2021). USDA Announces \$500 Million for Expanded Meat & Poultry Processing Capacity as Part of Efforts to Increase Competition, Level the Playing Field for Family Farmers and Ranchers, and Build a Better Food System. Retrieved from: usda.gov

⁴¹ Wood Works. (n.d.). Solid Advantages. Retrieved from: woodworks.org

⁴² Fresh Home. (11/10/2020). Modular Homes: Everything You Need to Know. Retrieved from: mymove.com

⁴³ Virginia Department of Forestry. (n.d.) Reforestation. Retrieved from: dof.virginia.gov

- **Attract large-scale dairy processing plants.** Virginia is home to the most licensed dairy herds in the Southeast, producing about 1.7 billion pounds of milk.⁴⁴ However, dairy farms in Virginia are closing at an alarming rate of almost one every week because of declining demand and fluctuating costs for milk and the lack of large-scale dairy processing plants capable of meeting increasing demand for other dairy products like cheese, yogurt, and butter.⁴⁵ As governor, Terry will continue to support Virginia’s dairy industry by attracting a large-scale dairy processing plant capable of processing these in-demand dairy products. Pursuing a deal to relocate one of these plants to Virginia, Terry will market Virginia’s competitive advantages, world-class workforce development pipeline, abundant resources, incentives and infrastructure.⁴⁷ In fact, Virginia Tech produces the most masters degrees and the third most bachelor's degrees in dairy science in the U.S.⁴⁸ Additionally, Terry will pursue a new Virginia Dairy for Virginia Schools initiative as part of the Virginia Farm-to-School program to support Virginia’s dairy farmers by connecting dairy products produced in the Commonwealth to our students. Terry will seek federal funding from the USDA’s Farm to School grant program to help establish this initiative.⁴⁹ As Virginia’s next governor, Terry will tirelessly work to make Virginia one of the top producers of dairy products in the nation.

⁴⁴ Virginia Economic Development Partnership. (2018). Virginia’s Dairy Industry. Retrieved from: augustavabuiness.com

⁴⁵ Oliver, Ned. (12/18/2018). Virginia’s losing one dairy farm a week. Can cheese save the industry? Retrieved from: nbc12.com

⁴⁶ Hood, J. (01/02/20). Dairy Farms Continue to Decline at the End of 2019. Retrieved from: www.whsv.com

⁴⁷ Virginia Economic Development Partnership. (2018). Virginia’s Dairy Industry. Retrieved from: augustavabuiness.com

⁴⁸ Virginia Economic Development Partnership. (2018). Virginia’s Dairy Industry. Retrieved from: augustavabuiness.com

⁴⁹ USDA. (07/15/2021). Farm to School Grant Program. Retrieved from: fns.usda.gov