

February 3, 2023

Caroline Gordon
Legislative Director
Rural Vermont
46 E. State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Re: Modernizing the personal exemption in the FMIA

Dear Ms. Gordon,

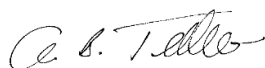
I write to thank you for working to update the personal exemption in the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) to meet the needs of today's farmers, consumers, and rural communities. As you know, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets supports the initiative to update the outdated statutory language to conform to current Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) guidance. We believe the statute should be amended to expressly enable the practices FSIS now permits. Specifically, we believe the language should clearly allow "owners" to slaughter their own animals for their personal use, regardless of whether the owners "raised" the animals. We also believe that more than one individual should be able to own an animal and that the owners should be permitted to retain their share of the animal's meat.

We believe farmers' ability to raise animals and sell them to members of their community for slaughter and consumption contributes to keeping farmland active and productive. We also think it creates a viable local market for farmers, provides fresh local food for our citizens, and supports our fragile economy in our rural communities.

Food safety is paramount and we understand that FSIS's knowledge and perspective is essential to any productive statutory change. But, with FSIS's insight, we believe a statutory update to the personal exemption might also incorporate an allowance for animal owners who are not proficient at slaughter to use a trained agent. FSIS previously approved the use of an "itinerant slaughterer" in Vermont. We believe that State statutory allowance opens new markets for farmers and consumers and enables safe and humane slaughter without the overhead costs that some participants cannot afford. While custom slaughter is the best path for many and we encourage its use, if properly developed, there appears to be room for trained professionals within the personal exemption.

Thank you so much for your interest and attention. We look forward to continuing the conversation.

Sincerely,



Anson Tebbetts
Secretary

