

## Vermont Adds More Than 2K Food Jobs

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LISA RATHKE, Associated Press



In this 2013 photo provided by Vermont Smoke and Cure, Jim Kilpeck stuffs meat snack sticks at the company's plant in Hinesburg, Vt. Food entrepreneurs in the state have added at least 2,162 new jobs and 199 new businesses since 2009, according to a 2013 annual report of Farm to Plate, an initiative to boost the food and farm economy in Vermont. The report says food manufacturing grew the most. (AP Photo/Vermont Smoke and Cure)

HINESBURG, Vt. (AP) — Vermont Smoke and Cure was growing so fast that the makers of sausage, bacon, ham and other smoked meats moved from Barre into a former cheese factory in Hinesburg two years ago because it had run out of space.

Now in a 21,000-square-foot space, nearly triple the size of what it had before, the company isn't slowing down. Vermont Smoke and Cure had \$6.4 million in revenue last year compared to \$330,000 in 2006 and its workforce has more than quadrupled in the same span.

"We're continuing to grow and have been adding people certainly every year and probably every quarter and we have quite a bit more room to grow before we do any actual physical expansion here," said CEO Christopher Bailey.

Vermont Smoke and Cure isn't alone in its growth. Recent statistics show that the state's food entrepreneurs have added at least 2,162 new jobs and 199 new businesses since 2009, according to the 2013 annual report of Farm to Plate, an initiative to boost the food and farm economy in Vermont. Food manufacturing grew the most, with an increase from 4,628 jobs to 6,121, the report said.

"These numbers demonstrate how the working landscape is also an essential component of Vermont's economy. Farm to Plate and Vermont's agricultural and food entrepreneurs are helping to advance Vermont's community-based agriculture, and creating jobs, cultivating opportunity, and preserving our landscape in the process," said Vermont Agriculture Secretary Chuck Ross.

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The state needed just 4 ½ years to surpass the project's 10-year goal of 1,700 jobs, said Ellen Kahler, executive director of Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, which tracks the progress of the Farm to Plate goals.

"It validates what we're seeing in the marketplace, which is that consumer demand for locally sourced food is increasing," she said.

Kahler said the latest agriculture census figures released this week are expected to translate into even more food jobs. The figures show that the number of Vermont farms has increased by 5 percent between 2007 and 2012, from 6,984 to 7,338.

Officials won't know what type of farms have been added until more detailed figures are released. Vermont lost an estimated 33 dairy farms last year, ending with 939.

"I think the numbers are definitely trending in the right direction, Kahler said.

"We're very happy about the total number of new farms — and even though we've lost a number of dairy farms over that 5-year time period, the fact that the net grew as much as it did indicates that there are shifts going on within the farm economy."

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