At the heart of Vermont’s future, Rural Vermont is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to building a prosperous rural life.

Rural Vermont supports a rural economic policy for Vermont that recognizes the importance of agriculture and natural resource based industries, support for small rural businesses, along with good jobs, fair wages, and decent health care, housing and transportation for all rural citizens. We are committed to broad based sustainable agriculture in harmony with the needs of family, community, and the environment for future generations.

**Article I.  Purpose**
The purpose of Rural Vermont Inc. is:
1) To promote and effect a broad based sustainable agriculture through education, research, charitable and technical assistance;
2) To promote the economic and social well being of family farms;
3) To promote the service of a dynamic center of informational resources for individuals, communities, organizations, and government agencies;
4) To invent and design programs to sustain a strong rural economy in Vermont for future generations.

1) **Vision Statement**
Rural Vermont envisions a just and equitable world rooted in reverence for the earth and dignity for all. This abundant and generous way of life celebrates our diversity and interdependence, in which communities of microorganisms, animals, plants, and humans tend one another and nurture generations to come.

2) **Mission Statement**
Rural Vermont organizes, educates and advocates in collaboration with local and global movements to strengthen the social, ecological and economic health of the agrarian communities that connect us all.

**Article II.  Membership**
1) This organization is made up of household and organizational individual members and supporting organizational members.
2) There will be one class of voting membership. An individual Membership entitles the member to one vote in the affairs of the organization.
3) Membership is open to all individuals who support the activities of this organization corporation and pay (in cash or in-kind) the annual membership fee fixed from time to time by the Board of Directors. Rural Vermont may also offer complimentary memberships at their discretion.

**Article III.  Board of Directors**
1) Rural Vermont strives to be led by members of the agrarian community.
2) The number of Directors shall be no fewer than seven and no more than fifteen.
3) The Board shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the membership.
4) The term of office for Directors shall be two or three years, and may be renewed by reelection at the Annual Meeting of the membership. Directors may serve a maximum of six consecutive years, and may be reelected to the Board after a minimum two year hiatus. The current Officers have discretion to adjust term lengths to achieve balanced timing of Director additions and departures.
5) Any Director who misses three or more duly warned consecutive Board meetings without reasonable cause may be removed by the Directors. Directors with the Board’s consent.
6) If, due to resignation, removal, or other reason, the number of Directors becomes less than seven, the Board shall forthwith elect a Director to serve the remainder of the term of the absent Director.

Article IV. Meetings of the Board of Directors
1) Regular meetings of the Board shall be held a minimum of four times annually.
2) Special meetings may be called at anytime by any three or more Directors.
   All Directors must be notified of date, time, place, and purpose.
3) Written notice of each regular or special meeting stating the date, time, place, and agenda shall be delivered to each Director, either personally or through postal or electronic mail, at least five days before the meeting.
4) All Directors’ meetings will operate using a consensus decision-making process. On any proposal or question that comes before the Board for a vote, each Director or couple Directorship shall be entitled to cast one vote. Consensus is achieved when there are no objections to the proposal. If consensus cannot be reached, a two-thirds majority vote shall be sufficient to transact business.
5) The presence of a majority of the Directors shall constitute a quorum.

Article V. Annual Meeting
1) The Annual Meeting of the membership shall be held once each calendar year on a date, time and place specified by the Board.
2) A notice stating the date, time, and place, and agenda for the Annual Meeting shall be sent to all voting members of Rural Vermont by electronic or postal mail, so that it is received at least 10 days prior.
3) An election of the Board of Directors will be conducted at the Annual Meeting by a vote of members present at the Annual Meeting.

Article VI. Officers
1) The Officers of the Corporation shall be the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers shall be members of the Board of Directors and selected by the second Board meeting following the Annual Meeting.
2) The Chair shall ensure cultivation of prospective Directors, and provide support to incoming and current Directors preside at the meetings and may designate a facilitator. The Chair will maintain the Board’s focus on ensuring the organization stays true to its mission and vision, and also have all the powers and duties which are usually vested in the office of the Chair, including the executing of contracts and other instruments which may be required for the proper and necessary transaction of the business of the corporation.
3) The Vice-Chair shall facilitate meetings, and in the absence of the Chair, exercise the powers and perform the duties of the Chair.
4) The Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring the recording and sharing of all the proceedings of the Board, providing advance notice for the meetings, handling the general correspondence of the Board and performing other duties incident to the office.
5) The Treasurer shall be the overseer of the finances of the corporation; shall review financial reports, contribute to and support the drafting of operational budgets, work closely with staff to ensure the organization’s fiscal health, shall have the authority, with the chair, to open bank accounts in the name of the corporation; shall have the authority, with the chair to sign checks, drafts and other papers requiring the payment of money; shall, with the chair, cause all debts and obligations to be paid when due; shall keep an account of all the receipts and
disbursements open to the Board of Directors and auditors at all times and shall provide financial statements, report quarterly to the board and perform other duties as may be authorized and directed by the Board.

**Article VII. Committees**
1) The board may constitute and empower additional committees as may be deemed necessary. Each committee shall at all times be subject to the direction of the board of directors.

**Article VII. Sociocratic Governance Structure**
1) Rural Vermont operates under a Sociocratic governance structure. This horizontal leadership model rests upon principles such as equivalence, effectiveness, and transparency and utilizes a set of tools to ensure shared power.
2) Our work is structured by interconnected committees we call “Circles”, and most are comprised of both staff and Board. Each Circle maintains agency and accountability over a distinct realm of operations (i.e. Policy, Financials, Staff, etc.).
3) The Core Circle establishes personnel policies and organizational best practices, and connects and supports the functioning of the other Circles. As such, the Core Circle will determine if a decision rises above the authority of a Circle and needs to be brought to the Board.
4) The Board may constitute and empower fewer or additional Circles as may be deemed necessary. Each Circle shall at all times be subject to the direction of the Board of Directors.

**Article VIII. Executive Staff**
1) The Board of Directors may hire an executive director to perform daily duties of the Corporation; draft policies for board action; organize a staff for the purpose of implementing goals of the Corporation; pursue additional sources of funding; prepare an annual budget; and to represent the Corporation when dealing with other agencies and units of government. Staff, in consultation with the Core, may fill positions.
2) Staff duties, authority and responsibilities shall be delegated per the Sociocratic governance structure.

**Article IX. Amendments**
1) Any voting member of Rural Vermont may propose to alter, amend, or repeal these by-laws. Such proposed changes must be ratified by a majority of voting members present at the Annual Meeting.

**Article X. Chapters**
1) Chapters may be organized at the discretion of the Board, on a regional level, including one or more counties. They will abide by their own set of by-laws and accept the mission of Rural Vermont in their work. The chairperson of each chapter or an elected designee shall serve as a member of the Board of Rural Vermont.

**Article XI. Anti-Racism Policy**
1) Rural Vermont commits to identify, acknowledge, and eliminate all forms of racism within the organization through its Anti-Racism Policy and subsequent procedures. These documents aim to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion through a culture of anti-racism while addressing disparities in agriculture and are supported by Rural Vermont’s beliefs outlined in our Affirmation of Solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives. Through this reference in these bylaws, Rural Vermont staff, board members, and interns are accountable to adhere to the Anti-Racism Policy and subsequent procedures.