



Gov. Scott Sees Link Between Dairy And Demographic Crisis In Vermont

- Robin Smith, Apr 2, 2019

JAY — Vermont Gov. Phil Scott urged dairy farmers and those supporting dairy on Monday to take a clear-eyed view of how to save the dairy industry.

“We are all committed to our dairy industry,” Scott said at the Northern Tier Dairy Summit at Jay Peak Resort.

“This summit is a perfect opportunity to listen to and learn from one another and discuss how we can strengthen the industry together.”

“I know each of you is up to the challenge, which means being honest about what the industry is facing, taking a fresh look at how we do things and developing clear achievable steps,” Scott said.

“Because we will only get through this if we work along those lines and we work together.”

Scott linked the crisis in the dairy industry to the “demographic crisis” in Vermont.

The state's labor force lost 15,000 workers since 2009, Scott said, which contributed to the reduction in the state's bond rating.

"If we want a better future for our kids, farms and forests, we must focus on our demographics and growing our population."

Scott said every county in the state has lost workers except Chittenden County.

The loss of students is like a "canary in a coal mine," Scott said, warning of more decline in population to come.

The loss of younger workers will be painfully evident within 10 years, he said.

"The average age of construction workers in Vermont right now is about 56 years old," Scott said.

"Think of that. In 10 years when you are looking for a electrician, or a plumber or a carpenter or an automotive technician, we are not going to have them."

He said he wants to make Vermont more affordable, to encourage new young workers to come to the state and to have families here, indicating that the ways to save Vermont family farms will dovetail with the state's need to increase its population and grow the economy.