

VEGETABLE AND BERRY FARMS AND WATER QUALITY



Vermont vegetable and berry growers who meet the thresholds to qualify as farms under the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) must take measures to protect water quality in the state and are subject to regulation and/or certification by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM). Vermont farms are also eligible for technical and financial assistance through VAAFAM. For more information visit agriculture.vermont.gov.

Required Agricultural Practice (RAP) Minimum Thresholds

RAPs apply to all farm operations which meet any of the following thresholds:

- farm 4.0 contiguous acres or more;
- have an annual gross income of over \$2,000 from the sale of agricultural products; or
- have filed a 1040(F) in the past 2 years

What are the RAPs?

The Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) are required practices for agricultural operations that aim to reduce non-point source pollution from agriculture to surface waters of Vermont. The RAPs include restrictions on agricultural activities that might impact state waters, including manure spreading, buffers from surface water and ditches, and the zoning of farm structures.

Do the RAPs apply to me?

The RAPs apply to all farms, including vegetable and berry operations, that meet the minimum thresholds. On the next page you can find some of the RAPs that are particularly relevant to vegetable growers, but note that additional RAPs may apply. You can find the complete list of requirements at agriculture.vermont.gov/rap.





Additional Requirements:

Farms with more than 50 acres of annual crops, including vegetables and berries, are required to certify annually as Certified Small Farm Operations (CSFOs) and have additional requirements under the RAPs. Larger farms that qualify as Medium Farm Operations (MFOs) and Large Farm Operations (LFOs) also have additional regulations. To learn more visit agriculture.vermont.gov/rap.

What RAPs should I be aware of?

1. Discharges and Runoff

All farms must use management strategies to prevent the discharge, runoff or leaching of agricultural waste to surface or groundwater or across property boundaries.

2. Perennial Buffers

Farmers must maintain a buffer of perennial vegetation between their croplands and the top of the bank of adjoining surface waters and ditches. You may not spread fertilizer or herbicide in buffers except for establishment and maintenance.

Required Buffers:

Cropland must have buffers of **10 ft** from ditches and **25 ft** from surface waters and open drains.

3. Soil Health, Nutrients and Cover Crops

Croplands must be cultivated to promote soil health and minimize erosion. Annual croplands subject to frequent flooding are required to plant cover crops every fall. Nutrient applications should be only as necessary and recorded. Farms which apply fertilizer mechanically must take soil samples of fields at least once every five years.

4. Farm Structures

The construction of farm structures, including greenhouses, is regulated by VAAFM. Local fees and permits may not apply for farm structures, although you are required to meet local and state setbacks. Contact VAAFM or your town zoning administrator to learn more.

NOTE: These selected RAPs are included due to their relevance to vegetable and berry operations of any size. For the full list of RAPs, visit agriculture.vermont.gov/rap.