

# DAIRY THAT TASTES BETTER BECAUSE IT'S MADE BETTER.



## In 2019 we celebrated 35 years of crafting artisan cheese and cultured butter in the Green Mountains of Vermont.

When I joined the company seventeen years ago as a cheesemaker from France, I could have only dreamed about the impact our Creamery would have. It is with deep pride for the dedication of our team of **Bettermakers** – who truly work toward something bigger and more positive every day – that we share this report.

In 2019, we set the pace for accelerated, conscious growth. We answered the increased demand for our award-winning products by stretching the limits of what we had previously thought was possible for our ambitious little Creamery.

#### With growth comes the responsibility to use each business decision as an opportunity to make an impact.

This past year we broke ground on an expansion that created more jobs for Vermonters; we increased our starting wage for the third year in a row and added progressive family-friendly benefits for our employees; we offered growth and educational opportunities in our community and beyond; and we convened with partners who share our vision to bolster the health and prosperity of the Vermont dairy industry.

In this report you'll read about our achievements in 2019 as well as the foundation we laid for 2020. This coming year will look radically different than any of us anticipated, and our commitment to running our business for the greater good of our

people and community is a charge that has taken on even more meaning. Expect more from us this year, as we expect more from ourselves. Through both our immediate actions and long-term investments we are committed to helping our communities, continuing to support the development of an inclusive and regenerative economy for this next chapter, and protecting the planet for future generations.

We are part of a larger movement to bring food to tables in a responsible way. Our mission is to make dairy that tastes better because it's made better, and we will never compromise on the values that underpin this commitment.

We're proud to present our progress in this report and humbled by the chance to work together to build upon this work in 2020.

With gratitude,

Ideline

President, Vermont Creamery



## 2019











## At the heart of our business is a deep care for each other and our communities.

This responsibility to each other's best interest has been embedded into our business since its founding 35 years ago, yet each year provides us the chance to deepen our commitment and bring it life in newly relevant ways. Our company's mission has never been more germane than the present, as we navigate the current complexities with our employees' and our communities' good as our primary motive.

This past year we took the time to pause and be intentional about the future of our social mission. We spent the year evaluating our goals for our business, recognizing where we can make the most impact, and committing to four distinct pillars of work. This work is not new, but this

year we've focused our energy to maximize our impact on our people (our hands); our community (our roots); our earth; and our supplies (the value chain supporting our business).

We're so proud of the hard work this past year to provide a rapidly growing workforce with even better benefits, higher pay, and an open and active year-long conversation as a company about what benefits matter most to our employees. We're pleased to have the chance to make environmentally responsible decisions in our construction, to use our voice to support the health of the Vermont dairy industry, to invest in the education of our employees and our fellow cheesemakers, and to celebrate our fifth year as a Certified B Corp.

Last year was an incredible year; we feel very fortunate. We're committed to taking that momentum into the coming year as we seek to use our business as a force for good. I hope you'll Join me in celebrating our 2019 milestones as we embark on the next chapter.

Truly,

Eliza Leeper
Mission Manager, Vermont Creamery



#### OUR MISSION APPROACH

True sustainability in business goes beyond just financial performance. We treat our business like a living growing enterprise, responsible for helping to build an inclusive and regenerative ecosystem that supports our people, community, and planet.

# OUR

We are building a healthy workplace and culture where our employees thrive both on the job and in their personal lives.









# OUR

We strive to be sustainable makers and stewards of our delicate planet. We seek to minimize harm, embrace progress, and actively preserve our ecosystem for future generations.

## OUR SUPPLIES

We believe in fostering a transparent and responsible supply chain from farm to fork.

# OUR ROOTS

a force for good, and this comes to life first in the communities in which we

## OUR HANDS



Vermont Creamery is better when we work towards a structure where each person thrives both personally and professionally. This year, our focus was on growth: hiring new Bettermakers, developing our current team, and increasing our wages and benefits to provide support for individuals and families.



11 INTERAL PROMOTIONS

— TO —

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS









# Supporting Families During the Childcare Crisis ———

Partnering with Let's Grow Kids to Pilot a Family-First Program



Working parents with small children face a set of challenges that can feel insurmountable to many; it's often difficult or impossible to find childcare that they can trust for the care of their children and that they can afford. At Vermont Creamery we have many parents in our workforce and are committed to helping them meet their needs.

In 2019 Vermont Creamery joined the Let's Grow Kids business pilot program to try to make headway against this challenge. Let's Grow Kids is a non-profit organization working to ensure affordable access to high-quality childcare for all Vermont families by 2025. Let's Grow Kids and Vermont

Creamery both believe that businesses play a key role in solutions for the childcare crisis. Together we recognize that by meeting employees' childcare needs we will find a solution that both works for families and businesses.

This year we partnered to do a deep dive into our current policies and understand more fully what best serves our families in the future. Let's Grow Kids facilitated an internal focus group and surveyed employees to understand the need for benefits, family arrangements, and the success of current policies. In 2020, we will use this valuable insight to implement the most supportive benefits possible for the families in our workforce.

As we work to ensure that every Vermont family has access to high-quality childcare, the business community is a crucial voice and partner in this effort. Vermont doesn't work without childcare. We know that access to childcare supports the current workforce and high-quality care is key to building the next generation of Vermonters. We are proud to partner with Vermont Creamery as they investigate benefits that will support their own employees' childcare needs today and advocate for a system of high-quality childcare that will support all of Vermont's children.

— ALY RICHARDS, CEO LET'S GROW KIDS

### OUR ROOTS



Without the web of support provided by our communities, our conscious growth would be hard fought. Vermonters are neighbors first, and we bring that spirit to our local community with volunteerism and product donations, to our cheese community by fostering the future of the craft, and to our fellow B Corp Certified businesses who are using business to make positive change. The collaboration and care that supports our shared values is the seed for continued growth.















#### \$35k Donated in Our 35th Year

Supporting the Future of our Cheesemaking Craft

As we reflect on our 35 years in business, we cannot overlook the significance of our cheese community that has supported and fostered our growth since our founding in 1984. As makers, we are passionate about cultivating relationships with the mongers, our heroes on the front lines, who educate future artisan cheese lovers from behind

the counter. It takes a village, but the cheese community is growing and there is room for everybody. To commemorate our 35-year milestone, we donated \$35,000 to the American Cheese Education Foundation (ACEF) with the hope of empowering the development and growth of future cheesemakers, cheesemongers, and community members.

The sense of community in the cheese industry is palpable. It is through the leadership and generosity of our partner organizations like Vermont Creamery that the ACE Foundation is able to experience growth in carrying out our mission to provide educational resources and networking opportunities for the cheese community. Because of this generous donation, the Foundation will be able to provide more scholarships to the ACS Annual Conference, support industry research, and continue to provide access to year-round education.



- MICHELLE LEE, ACEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

#### Celebrating Five Years as a B Corp



Using our Business as a Force for Good

Vermont Creamery is celebrating five years as a Certified B Corp. We choose to be a Certified B Corp because we believe that business can have a great impact on people's lives, and it is our obligation to use that impact as a force for good.

The certification holds us to a high standard, requiring us to consider the impact of our decisions on workers, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment. The measurement and scoring of these factors against rigorous standards not only help us operate with transparency, but it also provides us with a road map for the continuous improvement our business practices. We are proud to be among a burgeoning contingent of 36 Certified B Corps here in Vermont, and in the good company of five fellow B Corp cheesemakers. It's a great time to do good, especially in Vermont.

## OUR EARTH



We consider ourselves stewards of the planet and strive to do business that is as environmentally sustainable as possible. As we scale our manufacturing operations this year, we're making environmentally friendly construction choices, and will continue to incorporate best practices as we build. Our mission to minimize impact extends to packaging; we reduced our cup packaging which will decrease our plastic resin use by 30 tons over the next five years.









#### **Protecting our Water Systems**

Making Environmentally friendly Investments as we Expand Operations

While we are busy expanding our facility to increase our capacity, we are being as mindful of our environmental impact as possible. As we expand our physical footprint, we're committed to ensuring the health of surrounding environment.

Included in our expansion is a green stormwater mitigation initiative and an upgrade to our existing stormwater management plan; this helps us balance the increase in impervious surfaces that is inherent to expansion. Our new gravel wetland stormwater management facility includes a new bioretention system that relies on natural processes to remove harmful pollutants in stormwater, while improving habitats on our growing campus. Clean water is a big issue around the world, and Vermont is no exception. Doing our part to build proactive stormwater management helps us protect local water systems, prevent erosion, and limit damaging runoff.

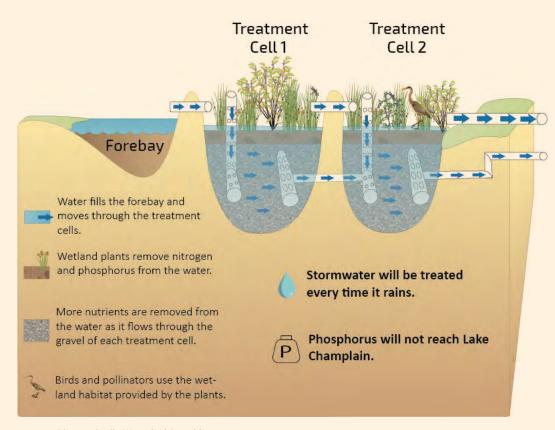


Diagram Credit: Watershed Consulting

#### **OUR SUPPLIES**



Our dairy tastes better because it's made better, and to deliver on that mission we are focused on sourcing only the highest quality ingredients, supporting our local farms with a fair price for their cream and milk, and building transparency into our supply chain. The dairy industry is core to Vermont, and our business plays a key role in ensuring the future prosperity of this important agricultural system. We are working to uplift the dairy goat industry in Vermont by inspiring the next generation of goat farmers, an effort we hope will create a prosperous, sustainable model for all.











#### **Investing in Vermont's Goat Farms**

Building Coalitions to Build the Future of the Goat Dairy Industry

At a time when dairy farmers are struggling nationwide, Vermont Creamery is invested in the success of our state's goat dairy industry with the goal of helping farms stay in business and maintaining the diverse agricultural landscape for which Vermont is so well-known. Vermont goat farms have helped put artisanal goat cheese on the map nationwide in the past 40 years, and there are a dozen goat cheese brands that support a network of goat farms in Vermont. We purchase our goat milk as locally possible and are actively working to fortify and grow Vermont's dairy goat industry. We believe the opportunity to diversify our agricultural system supports and strengthens the whole of Vermont agriculture.

To that end, Vermont Creamery founded the nation's first demonstration goat dairy in 2012 to highlight the viability of goat dairies in Vermont and develop a roster of best practices; Vermont now has fourteen goat dairies statewide. In 2019, the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) selected goats (dairying and meat production) as one the strategic opportunities to strengthen Vermont's food system. We're fortunate to be partnering with VSJF, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM), and local farms to work towards a more prosperous dairy industry in Vermont.

**ESTD 1984** 

#### VERMONT CREAMERY®

