



The University of Vermont

Northeast SARE
University of Vermont
140 Kennedy Drive, Suite 202
South Burlington, VT 05403

April 6, 2021

Dear Diane Abruzzini, Project Leader,

I'm writing to express my support for the grant proposal from Rigorous, LLC, titled "High Tunnel Gantry Grant". The innovations proposed in this grant address the emerging needs of farmers growing in high tunnels.

I own and operate a farm with my husband in Orwell, Vermont, where the bulk of our production is in eight individual high tunnels. Like many small-scale farmers in Vermont and New England, our business has grown incrementally, with the addition of single tunnels over the span of more than a decade. With the more recent addition of three new tunnels, our farm has expanded beyond our capacity to manage production details in a reasonable amount of time and with the level of accuracy that our production requires. As a result, we have turned our attention to efficiency improvements such as automated ventilation and radiant heat. Surprisingly, there is very little technology already developed that suits our farm scale and budget, so many of our systems are pieced together as we go, with little design expertise supporting our improvements. Companies like Rigorous fill a critical need in our industry, providing high quality design and efficient technologies. Discovering that they are working to help farmers adopt the exact type of technology that we seek for our farm is exciting to us. However, we know that they need outside funding from organizations dedicated to sustainable agriculture, like SARE, to develop their projects so farms like ours can adopt them.

I also have a broader awareness of the needs of high tunnel growers through my work with vegetable farmers for UVM Extension. High tunnels have rapidly become an important part of the diversified crop industry; an informal survey we conducted suggests that there are at least 700 tunnels used by vegetable growers statewide, with an estimated 2 million square feet in production, which represents a potential crop value between \$4 million and \$12+ million gross sales, depending on the crops grown. Efficiency improvements like the proposed projects by Rigorous have the potential to help the industry thrive and expand local food production.

I'm looking forward to supporting this exciting project by serving on the Farmer Design Review Board. I will provide direct feedback at least two times during the year. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

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