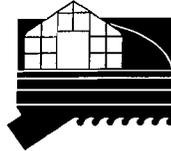




**Connecticut
Florists
Association**



**CONNECTICUT
GREENHOUSE
GROWERS
ASSOCIATION**



Statement of
Bob Heffernan
Executive Director
Connecticut Green Industries Coalition
before the
Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Supporting SB 1061 • Increasing Vocational Agriculture School Funding

February 13, 2007

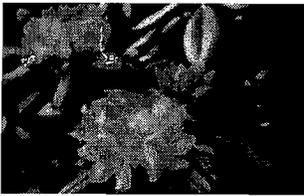
There are over 3,000 companies growing, selling, installing flowers, plants, and landscaping in Connecticut that need a strong workforce. The vo-ag high schools are the only education system training young teenage persons for the 48,000 jobs in our green industry. We make up more than half of all of agriculture in the state with \$1.1 billion in sales.

We have even more positions to fill in Connecticut — 7,600 more jobs went unfilled in the green industry in 2005 because we couldn't find the labor. At the same time, hundreds of high school students that wanted to go to a regional vo-ag high school to prepare for careers in the green industry could not because of budget constraints.

Connecticut pays towns around \$800 per student to send them to vo-ag centers, yet the state also pays about \$11,000 per student for vo-tech high schools. This artificially low ceiling has prevented towns and local school boards from having any enthusiasm for perpetuating the vo-ag program. The object of a local school district is to increase revenue, not pay it out. So, when they see it will cost them big bucks to send a student off to a regional vo-ag center, they often balk and resist.

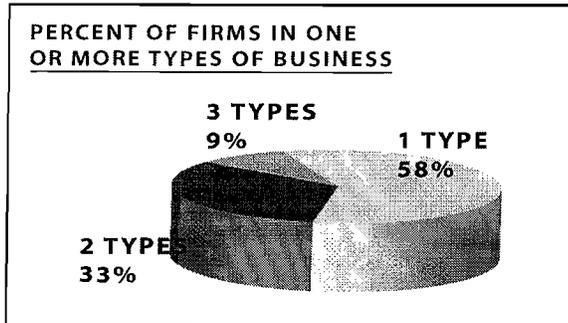
This is basically an economic development issue. Connecticut has become a powerhouse in the nation for producing flowers, plants, trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals. Where will the labor come from the support that growth? Sadly, many of our companies have been forced to turn to immigrant labor programs. But with a stronger state commitment to vocational agriculture high schools, we could be training hundreds more young people—Connecticut residents—for these jobs.

The bill seeks a modest increase in the state contribution up to \$2500 per student. This investment will pay back the state exponentially over the years ahead in salaries and taxes. Further, it will also help reverse the flow of young people out of our state by training them for thousands of agricultural jobs that go unfilled each year.



Connecticut... \$1.1B

Environmental Horticulture is a major sector of agriculture in Connecticut. There are **more than 3,020** firms in this industry.



These firms are involved in:

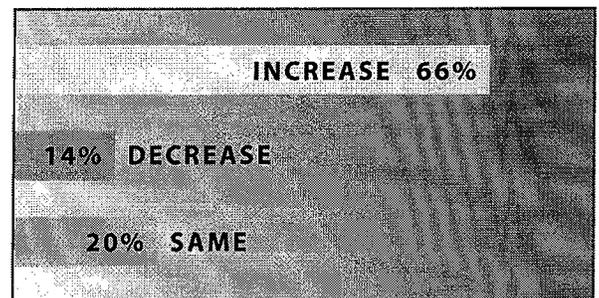
- ⊙ **production:** nurseries, greenhouses, herbs, cut flowers, turfgrass.
- ⊙ **retail:** garden centers, florists.
- ⊙ **landscape services:** landscape design, installation, maintenance, lawn care, tree care.

Many firms are involved in more than one of these types of business.

The **Environmental Horticulture** industry **produces income**. The estimated value in Connecticut for 2004 is **\$1.1 billion** gross income.

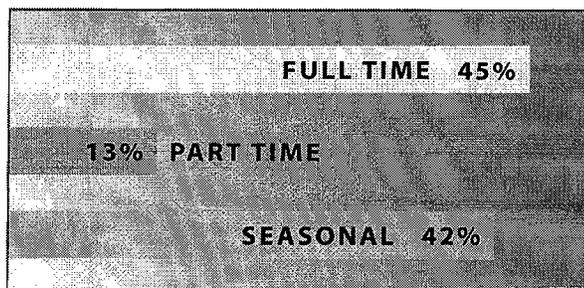
- ⊙ Overall industry income has grown since the last survey in 2001.
- ⊙ Over a three year period, between 2001 and 2004, more than **1,990 firms increased their income**. The average increase per firm was 26 percent.
- ⊙ Many additional firms, not counted in this survey, derive at least partial income from this industry. These include seasonal outlets such as roadside markets, hardware stores, mass market stores and property maintenance firms.

INCOME OF FIRMS SURVEYED



Environmental Horticulture provides **MANY jobs**. At least **48,000** people are employed in this industry. An additional 7,600 are needed.

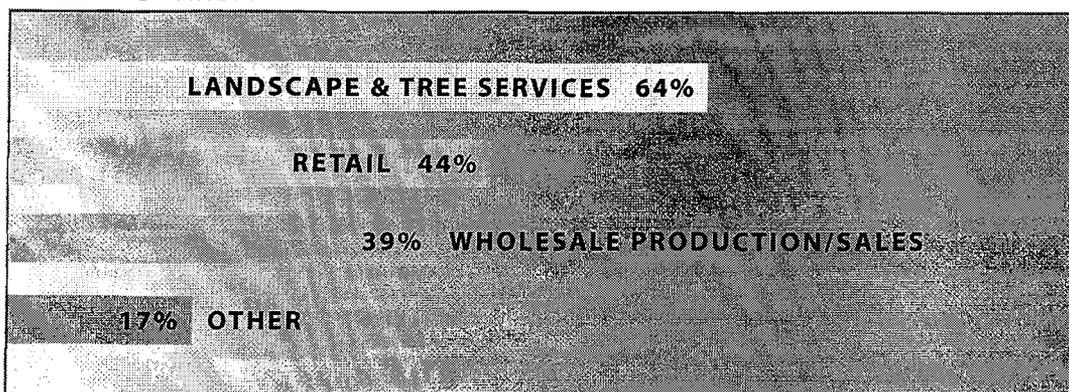
PEOPLE EMPLOYED BY BUSINESSES



- ⊙ An estimated **22,000 jobs are full time**.
- ⊙ This industry paid an estimated **\$632 million to employees** in 2004.
- ⊙ More than half the businesses reported an increase in the cost of labor. The average increase per firm was 26 percent.

Environmental Horticulture is diverse.

TYPES OF BUSINESS



Almost two-thirds of firms provide, and derive income from, landscape and tree services.

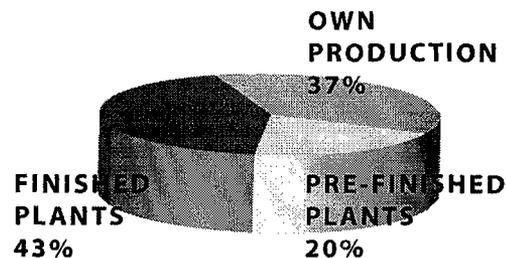
Plant production and sales are a significant part of the **Environmental Horticulture** industry. Plant sales generate an estimated **\$656 million**.

This includes:

- ⊙ \$243 million from plants produced totally by the seller.
- ⊙ \$131 million from young plants grown further ("pre-finished") prior to selling.
- ⊙ \$282 million from "finished" plants bought for resale, either wholesale or retail.

Plant production generates **\$374 million**. A majority of firms (79 percent) sold plants.

INCOME FROM PLANT SALES



More Facts on Environmental Horticulture in Connecticut

- ⊙ This industry is keeping more than 42,000 acres in agriculture, of which 56 percent is open space and 30 percent is in a land preservation program.
- ⊙ Over two-thirds of income (67 percent) comes from in-state sales and services.
- ⊙ Businesses in this industry paid almost \$154 million in taxes in 2004. Taxes increased for nearly half the firms. The average increase per firm was 25 percent.

