

A Call to Farms!

A Mid-Decade Look at Connecticut's Agricultural Lands 2005



Prepared by:



www.workinglandsalliance.org

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About Working Lands Alliance:

Established in 1999, Working Lands Alliance (WLA) is a growing coalition working to increase the state's commitment to farmland preservation. WLA's 140 organizational members include Audubon CT, The Nature Conservancy, CT Farm Bureau, CT State Grange, CT Forest and Park Association, Very Alive, End Hunger Connecticut, and All Aboard. WLA's individual members include farmers, conservationists, sportsmen, food advocates, planners, and municipal leaders. WLA is a project of Hartford Food System, located at 191 Franklin Avenue, Hartford, CT 06114. For more information or to request a copy of this report, call 860-296-9325, or go to www.workinglandsalliance.org

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Spring 2005

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the steering committee, staff, and coalition members of the Working Lands Alliance, we are pleased to present you with this mid-decade "A Call To Farms!" report on farmland preservation policy in Connecticut.

A Call To Farms!

"Farming is about faith and a sense of optimism. One of my crops is Christmas trees. Two hundred acres of fragrant evergreens thrive on rocky hillsides and provide opportunities for family harvest adventures each December. My family and I grow our trees from seed. Recently, my father, Philip, my son, Jamie, and I sowed seeds for trees that will be harvested around the year 2020. Sifting the tiny seeds into the rich soil of our seedbeds, I thought about our faith in tomorrow. When today's sprouting seeds are ready to harvest, Philip will be 101. The high school student workers who are planting with us this spring will be bringing their children to our farm for their Christmas harvest.

Today I want to share with you a farmer's vision for Connecticut. It is a vision tempered by a lifetime of patiently coaxing trees, vines and bushes to bear fruit and bring happiness to families that visit us. It is cradled in the tradition of my family's love for the land. Will the same green and healthy environment be there for Connecticut's residents in two generations?

These are the opening lines of "A Call to Farms!" as they appeared in my Earth Day 2004 op-ed for The Hartford Courant.

Progress on the frontline continues. Governor Rell and legislative leadership are attentive. The media is 'at the ready.' Our citizens are increasingly dismayed as our productive farmland falls under siege to the onslaught of asphalt, houses and malls.

Think of this document as our 'intelligence report,' both from the battlefield and behind the lines. Use it to create strategy. We will succeed only if we march forward, together, to ensure Connecticut grows wisely with a healthy measure of balance and diversity and with respect toward our agricultural heritage.

Sound the alarm for protecting precious farmland and ensuring viability for our agricultural community.

A Call to Farms!

Sincerely,

Terry Jones
Jones Family Farm, Shelton
Chairman, Working Lands Alliance

The state of Connecticut has reached a critical point: we can watch as our farmland disappears under subdivisions and strip malls or we can make farmland protection a priority thereby allowing for the growth of agricultural businesses, local food production, and the protection of our environmental and cultural heritage. Our window of opportunity to protect prime farmland is rapidly closing. Between 1997 and 2002, Connecticut lost over 12% of its land in farms, *the highest percentage loss of any state in the U.S.*¹

Although there are many challenges to viable farming operations today, access to high quality land for future and existing farmers is one of the most important. Once lost to development, it is gone forever. We no longer have the luxury of time to plan for incremental farmland preservation. Now is the time to dramatically commit to protecting Connecticut's remaining farmland as a vital investment in our agricultural economy, long-term food security, watershed protection, air quality, wildlife diversity, and tourism.

Farmland Is An Asset

Farmland is the backbone of the farming industry, which pays taxes, wages, and generates state revenue. In Connecticut's rural communities, agriculture and agriculture-related jobs directly account for 15.8% of all jobs.² In addition the state's 4191 farms bring in \$469 million dollars in cash receipts that farmers reinvest in the local economy.³ Farming is input intensive -- farmers buy fuel, tires, equipment, feed, insurance, banking services, and marketing services while farm products often require processing, packaging, and transporting. Additionally, farmland plays an important role in balancing local town budgets. Owners of farmland and forests pay more in local taxes than it costs local governments to service their properties. In contrast, it costs local governments more to provide services (i.e.,

police and fire protection, education) to homeowners than they pay in property taxes.

Farmland is also an integral part of Connecticut's living landscape. Well-managed farms provide habitat for wildlife, filter drinking water, help reduce flooding events, and offset carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Local farms enhance community food security both under the present conditions of food availability and during periods of relative scarcity due to dependence on out-of-state producers. A local supply of food can be both cheaper and more reliable in the long run.

Losing Ground

Connecticut is rapidly becoming a 'wall-to-wall' urban and suburban environment where once rural and agricultural lands abounded. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, there are 357,000 acres of land in farms remaining in Connecticut.⁴ Of this, 170,000 acres is cropland. Thus far, the state has protected *only* 30,000 acres--less than 10% of all agricultural land--leaving 90% unprotected.

Connecticut's farmland loss is not occurring in a vacuum. It is a national issue. Although complex and multifaceted it is partly a function of an aging farmer population, changing and unpredictable farm prices and markets, and, not least of all, increased development pressure.

*Currently Connecticut loses 7,000-9,000 acres of land in farms to non-agricultural uses every year.*⁵ At this rate, we will have no farmland left to preserve by 2040. Between 1997-2002 the greatest percentage of farmland losses occurred in Middlesex (-22%) and New London (-23%) counties. During the same period, the greatest acreage losses occurred in Litchfield (-7,601 acres), Hartford (-8,910 acres), and Tolland (-17,336 acres) counties.⁶

Rising Land Prices

Development pressure in Connecticut has fueled rising land prices and has hastened the loss of farms and farmland in the state. Even with property tax abatements under Public Act 490, farming is an increasingly challenging business. The farm real estate value per acre (the value of the land and buildings only) has increased steadily in the past decade. In 2004 the average farm real estate value per acre was \$10,200-- up from \$6,567 in 1995.⁷ Rising land prices have been accompanied by increases in property taxes. Between 1997 and 2002 the average property tax paid per farm increased 44 %, the second highest increase in the northeast region for that period of time.⁸ As of 2002, the average property tax paid per farm was \$4,523. At these rates, most farmers can't afford to buy land to start a farm or to add to their existing acreage; debt service payments and property taxes on new land often outweighs potential farm income.

Uncertainty of Leasing Farmland

Farmers in search of new or additional acreage are increasingly forced to lease farmland. The long-term availability of rental land is uncertain given the current rate of farmland loss and rising land values. Given the shrinking agricultural land base, it is reasonable to expect that the cost of rental land will continue to rise in the future. Nationally, the average cost of rental land increased 4.8% since last year alone.⁹

In Connecticut, 31% of farmers rent land for their operation – 350 of these farms operate entirely on rented land.¹⁰ Farmers who rent land today express concern about the availability of quality farmland in the future:

“Land prices are escalating, housing prices have gone mad- which is going to put pressure no us because we rent a lot of land from elderly who want to keep their land in farming. But will the next generation have the same feeling?”— Robin Chesmer, Graywall Farm, Lebanon¹¹

Retired farmers own a large percentage of rental farmland in Connecticut. Oftentimes the children of retired farmers or estate beneficiaries choose to sell inherited farmland for development.¹² As more and more farmers retire without farming heirs, the transfer of farmland to individuals who want to farm will become more difficult. This highlights additional concerns about the long-term productivity of rented land because farmers who operate rental land have less incentive to maintain and improve that land for the future.¹³

Changing Land Use

Concern over Connecticut's rapidly changing land use patterns has sparked a number of recent reports including:

- *2003 Blue Ribbon Commission on Property Tax Burdens and Smart Growth Incentives.* State of Connecticut Blue Ribbon Commission on Smart Growth (2003)
- *Connecticut: Economic Vitality & Land Use.* The Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century (2003)
- *Connecticut Metropatterns: A Regional Agenda for Community and Prosperity in Connecticut,* CenterEdge Coalition (2003)
- *Connecticut's Changing Landscape.* University of Connecticut's Center for Land use Education and Research (2004)

All of these studies consider the fate of Connecticut's changing landscape given current growth patterns, suggesting the need to improve our decision-making process in order to preserve natural resources while permitting business and residential development.

Tools for Protecting Farmland

The state's best tool for permanently protecting productive farmland is the Connecticut **Farmland Preservation Program** (also known as the Purchase of Development Rights, or **PDR Program**). This program reduces the conversion of farmland to development by authorizing the state to purchase agricultural conservation easements on qualifying farmland from willing

sellers, preserving that land for agricultural use in perpetuity. In exchange for accepting a deed restriction on their property that permanently limits its non-agricultural uses, participating landowners are paid an amount up to the difference between the land's fair market value and its restricted value. In 1986, the program was extended to include the **Joint Town-State Farmland Preservation Program** "to promote and encourage towns to establish local farmland preservation programs to limit conversion of their prime farmlands to nonagricultural uses."¹⁴

Setting Goals

- In 1974, the Governors' Task Force for the Preservation of Agricultural Land concluded that: "to maintain her characteristic quality of life and provide about a third of her food, Connecticut should purchase development rights in agricultural reserves...to ensure the preservation of about 325 thousand fertile acres."¹⁵ The estimated cost of this program would have been \$500 million.
- A subsequent 1979 study provided further analysis of land needs for future food self-sufficiency, asserting "the purchase of development rights on approximately 85,000 acres of superior cropland should be a goal by the year 2000."¹⁶
- Since cropland represents about 60% of the acreage of the average Connecticut farm, the CT Department of Agriculture has long used the goal of protecting 130,000 acres of farmland.
- As of 2004, the state has protected *only* 30,000 acres.

Benefits of the PDR Program

1. Land is the biggest barrier to entry into farming – especially in Connecticut where land prices are high. By restricting its future use, the PDR program helps create a pool of affordable farmland. This provides opportunities for new farm operators to get established, and helps existing farmers who want to expand their crop production.

2. The PDR program facilitates intergenerational transfer of the farmland and provides a way for retiring farmers to finance their family needs. Through the sale of development rights, a farmer can liquidate an important farm family asset, providing income to reinvest in non-land assets that are readily inheritable or to provide for retirement or medical needs.
3. The PDR program is an important agricultural economic development tool. For participating farmers, proceeds from the sale of development rights can provide an invaluable source of capital for expanding or diversifying a farm operation. Studies have found that the program encourages investment in agriculture, because farmers who enroll land in the program or farm enrolled land feel that their land base is secure and are comfortable investing in their farm operations.
4. In recent years the PDR program has been able to double its purchasing capacity by matching federal funding through the USDA Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program.
5. Some municipalities have used the PDR program to facilitate land use planning with an eye toward economic development. In a state like Connecticut where there is considerable financial pressure on undeveloped land, zoning officials and conservation commissions must work together to balance housing and business growth while keeping their community an attractive place to live and work. Shelton and Suffield are two exemplary towns that have partnered with the PDR Program as part of a strategic vision for long-term agricultural activity.

Evaluating the PDR Program

Since 1978, the Farmland Preservation Program has protected 30,087 acres on 213 farms at a cost of approximately \$86 million.¹⁷ The program has fallen 100,000 acres short of its modest 130,000 acre goal. And as the rate of farmland

loss is increasing, the rate of funding for the program has declined. From program authorizations of \$8-10 million annually in the last 1980s and early 1990s, the program has spent just \$10.5 million over the past nine years.¹⁸

Compared to other Northeast states, Connecticut's commitment to its PDR program has lagged. Since the program's inception, CT has spent a cumulative total of approximately \$24.20 per capita on the Farmland Preservation Program. In comparison, NJ, whose program began after Connecticut's, in 1985, has spent a cumulative total of approximately \$43.26 per capita and Pennsylvania, whose program was established in 1988, a total of \$33.63 per capita. In the past nine years, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland have all outspent Connecticut.

Without adequate funding for the PDR program and administrative changes to the program to increase its effectiveness, Connecticut will continue to lose farmland at a breakneck pace. Farmland preservation as part of an overall land use planning effort has come of age in Connecticut. There is momentum to improve land use planning from state leadership down to local municipalities.

Conclusion

Agriculture is a vibrant industry in Connecticut, generating over \$500 million in direct farm cash receipts and far more in total economic output. The industry's continued trend toward direct marketing and value-added products is steadily improving farm product value; the average market value of production per farm increased 27 percent from 1997 to 2002, to \$112,297. Given Connecticut's location in the middle of the northeast economic corridor, or "New Atlantic Triangle," the potential for additional industry growth is substantial.

The future viability of the state's agriculture industry, however, depends on its land base. *And*

farmland is a finite resource. As more and more retirement-age farmers, whose farmland is their primary asset, seek to liquidate that asset to finance retirement, health care and other family needs, escalating real estate values are driving that land out of the reach of neighboring and new farmers and into the hands of homebuilders and developers. The result: farmland is being converted at an escalating rate, young farmers are finding it tough to establish a farm operation, and a crisis of transition—from the current to the next generation of farmers—is looming.

In the summer of 2004, the Farmland Preservation Task Force, convened by Senators Don Williams and Len Fasano, spent several weeks developing recommendations to address the critical problem of farmland loss and farm transition. The Task Force's recommendations focused on five broad areas.

Five Broad Recommendations of 2004 Farmland Preservation Task Force

1. Reduce barriers to the success of existing farmland protection programs, including lack of state financial commitment;
2. Revisit state planning goals for farmland protection;
3. Create new tools and incentives for *municipalities* to preserve farmland;
4. Create new tools and incentives for *individuals* to preserve farmland;
5. Provide new support to increase the marketing of CT-grown products.

These recommendations have focused leaders on several pieces of legislation in the 2005 Legislative Session that would create significant new financing mechanisms for farmland preservation, improve the efficiency of the PDR program, promote estate planning, and develop new state and local farmland protection and farm viability tools. We look with renewed hope and optimism to the Office of the Governor and the General Assembly to take up this *Call To Farms* and enact legislation to ensure a future for farms and farmland in Connecticut.

**SECTION I
THE LAY OF THE LAND**

Connecticut is blessed with some of the most fertile soil in the world.¹ Eighty percent of farmland in the Connecticut River Valley is classified as prime and important- meaning that the physical and chemical characteristics of the soil are best suited to productive agriculture.² These soils, combined with very favorable climatic conditions, are the foundation on which Connecticut’s long-recognized agricultural industry rests. See Map #1 at back.

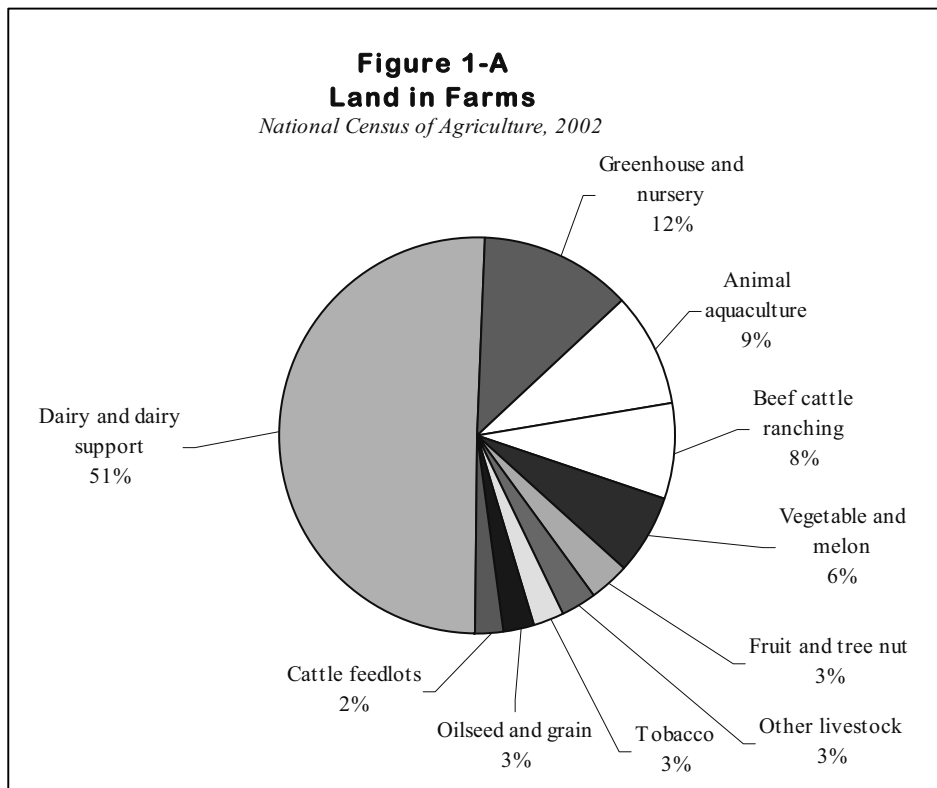
During the Revolutionary War Connecticut was nicknamed “The Provision State” because it supplied the Continental forces with most of their food.³ Today Connecticut is building a reputation for vineyards, cheese and ornamental plants instead of tobacco and milk, and visits to pick-you-own Christmas tree farms and orchards have become traditions for many families. Connecticut now boasts 68 farmers markets and 21 Community Supported Agriculture farm enterprises.

Connecticut Farmland Today

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, land in farms now accounts for 357,000 of the state’s total 3.1 million acres – or approximately 11% of the state’s land base. Of the 357,000 acres of land in farms, only 170,000 acres are cropland; the rest consists of forested land, wetlands and pastures, all of which are found on the typical Connecticut farm. Dairies and dairy support farms, which grow grass, corn, and/or hay to supplement dairy farms, account for 51% of Connecticut’s land in farms.⁴ The average support farm is 109 acres, while the average dairy farm is 365 acres.⁵ Greenhouse and nursery operations account for 12% of the land in farms (second behind dairy and dairy support), with nurseries averaging 50 acres per operation.⁶ See Figure 1-A.

In response to changing economic realities the scale and size of Connecticut farm operations have also changed. Since 1997, the number of large farms, between 500 and 999 acres has increased while the number of smaller operations has declined. However, in keeping with New

England’s scale of agriculture, over half of Connecticut’s 4,191 farms are still under 50 acres in size.⁷



Losing Ground in Connecticut

As with the entire Northeast region, Connecticut agriculture has undergone several decades of dramatic transformation. Since the end of World War II, Connecticut has lost 17,809 farms—from 22,000 to 4,191. A majority of these farms were dairy operations. Farmland acreage declined during the same time period, from 50% of the state’s total land area to 11%.

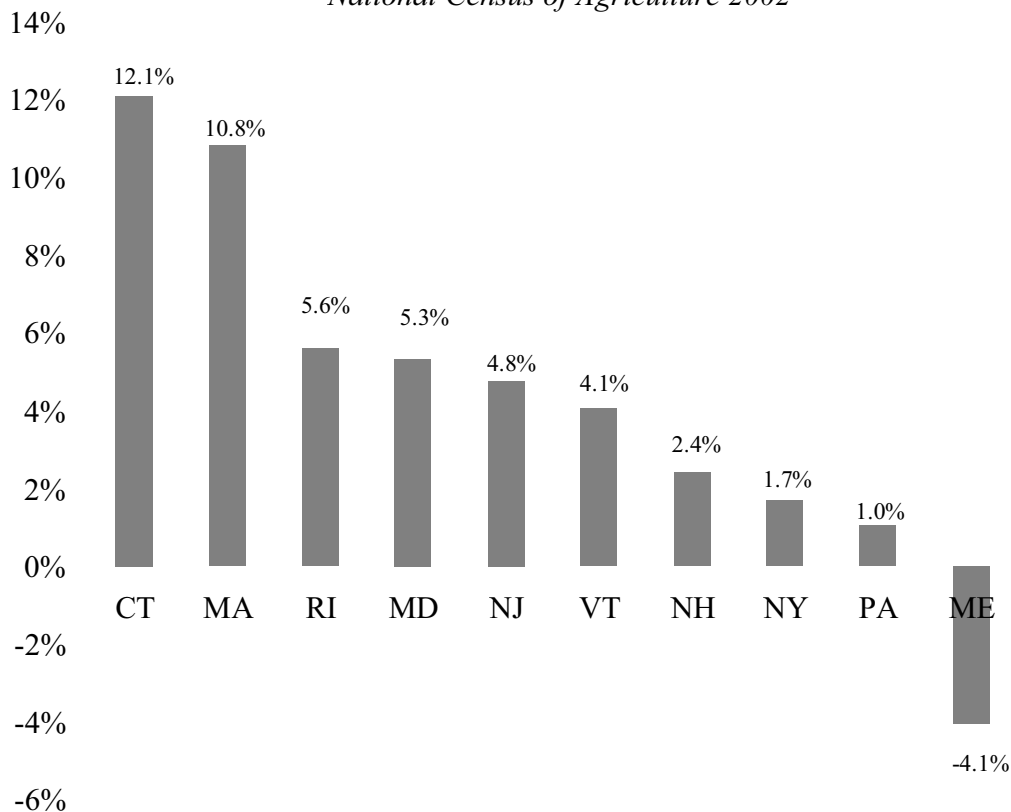
SECTION I – THE LAY OF THE LAND

Combined data sources indicate that *Connecticut loses an average of 7000-9000 acres of land in farms each year.*⁸ Between 1997 and 2002 alone, the federal Census of Agriculture calculated a loss of 49,068 acres of land in farms.⁹ Not only is Connecticut losing agricultural land, but it is also disappearing at a faster rate than ever before. The Census of Agriculture shows that between 1997 and 2002 Connecticut lost the highest percentage of land in agricultural use, 12.08%, than during any previous five-year period since 1982. Its rate of farmland loss is now higher than that of any other state in the U.S.¹⁰ See [Figures 1-B and Figure 1-C](#).

Squeezing Farmers

Connecticut is not just losing farmland; it is losing farmers. According to the Census of Agriculture, in 2002 Connecticut had 714 fewer farms than in 1997 – an average loss of 142 farm businesses per year.¹¹ The loss of neighboring farm operations can have repercussions for those farm operations that remain. In many rural areas, farmers share equipment, trade farm products, and support local service providers, such as feed stores, equipment dealers and veterinarians. When farms go out of business, this agricultural infrastructure becomes harder to maintain and farm-related services and input can become more costly. In addition, the conversion of a neighboring farm to a residential subdivision often brings with it the threat of nuisance complaints from new neighbors who are

Figure 1-B
Percent of Farmland Loss (1997-2002)
National Census of Agriculture 2002



SECTION I – THE LAY OF THE LAND

unfamiliar with the odors and noise typical of commercial farm operations.¹²

Figure 1-C
Farmland Changes Between 1997-2002
2002 National Census of Agriculture, USDA

	1997	2002
Farms	4,905	4,191
Land in Farms (acres)	406,222	357,154
Total Cropland (acres)	200,586	170,673
Leased Land (acres)	116,967	102,826
Avg. value per acre	\$6,270	\$9,491

With every farm that is sold for non-agricultural uses, contiguous tracts of farmland are fragmented, creating a domino effect that only hastens the sale of adjoining farmland. The crop of new homes and buildings demands new infrastructure as well (e.g. roads, driveways), converting many more acres that once served as buffer land around farms.

Rising Land Prices

Development pressure in Connecticut has fueled rising land prices and has hastened the loss of farms and farmland in the state. Farm real estate value per acre (land and buildings) has increased steadily in the past decade. In 2004 the average per acre farm real estate value was \$10,200-- up significantly from \$6,567 in 1995.¹³ Rising land prices have been accompanied by increases in property taxes, even with property tax abatements under Public Act 490. Between 1997 and 2002 the average property tax paid per farm increased 44 %, the second highest increase in the northeast region for that period of time.¹⁴ As of 2002, the average property tax paid per farm was \$4,523. At these rates, most farmers can't afford to buy land to start a farm or to add to their existing acreage; payments and property taxes on new land often outweighs potential farm income. Debt payments for New England farmers are among the highest in the nation.¹⁵

Uncertainty of Leased Farmland

Farmers in search of new or additional acreage are increasingly forced to lease farmland. The long-term availability of rental land is uncertain given the current rate of farmland loss and rising land values. Given the shrinking agricultural land base, it is reasonable to expect that the cost of rental land will continue to rise in the future. Nationally, the average cost of rental land increased 4.8% last year alone.¹⁶

In Connecticut, 31% of farmers rent land for their operation – 350 of these farms operate entirely on rented land.¹⁷ Farmers who rent land today express concern about the availability of quality farmland in the future:

“Land prices are escalating, housing prices have gone mad- which is going to put pressure on us because we rent a lot of land from elderly landowners who want to keep their land in farming. But will the next generation have the same feeling?”—Robin Chesmer, Graywall Farm, Lebanon¹⁸

Farm Succession

Farmland represents, on average, 79% of the value of a farm enterprise.¹⁹ For many farmers their land is the principal asset in their investment portfolio, to be used, as needed, to finance their retirement, medical or other family needs. Among Connecticut's full-time farms, there is a 1 in 3 chance that the primary operator is over the age of 65.²⁰

The fate of much of the state's farmland, both leased and owner-operated, will be decided over the next decade, as an unprecedented number of Connecticut farmers reach retirement age and make decisions about the future of their land.²¹ As these farmers retire—particularly those without a child planning to take over the farm operation—their land is far more likely to be sold for development than to a neighboring or new farmer, given the escalating value of developable land.

SECTION I – THE LAY OF THE LAND

Often the inheritance tax on farmland is so high that estates are forced to sell off land to maximize their inheritance.²² For large farms, with over \$1 million in assets, the estate tax can be crippling: every dollar over \$1 million is taxed at 50%.²³ At the time of transfer, farms can often be assessed at lower values if both the decedent and the heir choose to farm the land (and other strict qualifications are met), however, this reduction is capped at an additional \$850,000.²⁴ With land prices rising, farms valued at over \$1.85 million will become more and more common.²⁵

Outgrowing Ourselves

Development in Connecticut has outstripped population growth. Since 1995, the New York metropolitan region (including most of CT) has “experienced a 117 percent increase in urbanized land area, while population grew by 8 percent.”²⁶ The result has been an increase in traffic congestion, reduction in available affordable housing and loss of farmland and open space. Since 1988, the Connecticut Regional Institute estimates an average of 8 acres of agricultural land per capita have been developed.²⁷

A host of research released in the past five years documents the state’s sprawling growth patterns and the causes and effects of such growth. All of these studies consider the fate of Connecticut’s changing landscape given current growth patterns, suggesting the need to improve our decision-making process in order to balance the preservation of natural resources while permitting continued business and residential development.

The diversity of report authors and sponsoring organizations from regional quasi-governmental organizations to academics to businesses coalitions—demonstrates the wide spread concern about land use planning in general and its impacts on farmland in particular. It also reveals a general consensus that farmland protection is a fundamental component of state

and local efforts to maintain a livable Connecticut far into the future.

From the *2003 Blue Ribbon Commission on Property Tax Burdens and Smart Growth Incentives*:

“This over dependence on property taxes to fund local public services causes municipalities to engage in destructive competition for grand list growth that has resulted in bad land use decisions and costly and inefficient sprawl development. This sprawl means that development does not occur where the infrastructure to support it already exists but instead occurs in previously undisturbed areas where new roads, schools, sewers and other infrastructure must be built. The present system promotes disinvestments in our cities and urbanized towns. This adds to traffic woes, the loss of open space and disfigures the face of Connecticut.”

From *Connecticut: Economic Vitality & Land Use*. The Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century (2003):²⁸

“When development is not steered to places where the infrastructure to support it already exists, but instead occurs in previously undisturbed areas where new roads, schools, sewers and other infrastructure must be built, sprawl occurs. It promotes disinvestments in our cities and urbanized towns. This is inefficient, adds to transportation woes, and is disfiguring the face of Connecticut.”

From *Connecticut Metropatterns: A Regional Agenda for Community and Prosperity in Connecticut*, CenterEdge Coalition (2003):²⁹

“Unmanaged growth threatens air and water quality, natural habitat and valuable farmland. In the Connecticut River Valley near Hartford, new development often replaces farmland. In Fairfield County, it often replaces forests. Loss of forest and

farmland means loss of wildlife habitat and fragmentation of essential breeding areas of songbirds. ... The state's \$2 billion a year agricultural industry is also feeling the squeeze. Between 1987 and 1997, the state lost 39,087 acres of farmland, nearly a 10 percent drop. The loss of farmland is important for many reasons. Farms are a valuable part of the state's tourism industry. In addition, owners of farmland and forests pay more in local taxes than it costs local government to service their properties."

About *Connecticut's Changing Landscape*, University of Connecticut's Center for Land use Education and Research (2004), summarized by Mike Swift in the Hartford Courant, January 4, 2004.

"High density development – including buildings, parking lots and roads – covered an average of 12 acres of Connecticut each day since 1985, CLEAR's data show. ... The amount of high-density urban cover expanded by 119 square miles – an area 6½ times the size of city of Hartford. The state lost about 170 square miles of forest, an area roughly equivalent to two-thirds of the state forest system. The amount of land covered by roads and buildings grew by more than 30 percent in 10 towns, including several Hartford suburbs. Since 1995, however, the pace at which buildings and asphalt are covering the land has accelerated. And with a host of interests – environmentalists and even faith-based groups, including the Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford – saying Connecticut is sprawling too much, CLEAR's data are likely to become important in the evolving political debate over how Connecticut uses land."³⁰

SECTION II – FARMLAND IS IMPORTANT

SECTION II FARMLAND IS IMPORTANT

Connecticut's farmland is a key asset to both the state and local economies. It is the backbone of the agricultural industry, which generates jobs and revenues. It is the visual backdrop for Connecticut's rural towns, attracting businesses and tourism dollars and contributing to Connecticut's high quality of life. Working farmlands are also some of the state's most multi-functional natural resources, producing quality food and fiber while also providing wildlife habitat, water filtration, flood control, recreation opportunities and an offset for carbon emissions in the atmosphere.

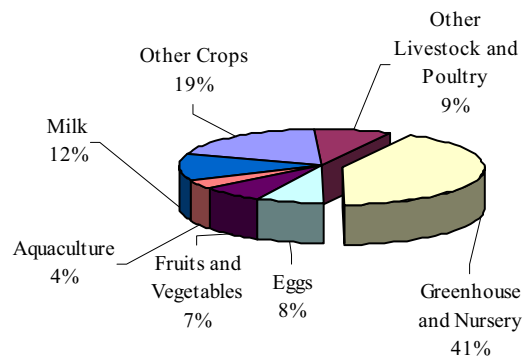
Farmland is Important to the State Economy

The agricultural industry contributes to Connecticut's economy both directly and indirectly. In addition to the cash receipts brought in by the state's 4191 farms, farmers provide jobs and inject money into the local economy. Farming is input intensive -- farmers buy fuel, tires, equipment, feed, insurance, banking services, and marketing services while farm products often require processing, packaging, and transporting.

In 2000, the agricultural industry generated \$502.5 million dollars in farm cash receipts, resulting in total economic output of \$841.3 million dollars, household earnings of \$188.8 million dollars and a total of 7,744 jobs.¹ And since 2000, Connecticut agricultural has grown compared to our neighbors: in 2002 Connecticut was second in the region (behind Vermont) in total farm cash receipts.² The average market value of production per farm has also increased dramatically from 1997 to 2002, up 27%, to \$112,297. The latest data demonstrate that the greenhouse and nursery industry was the strongest sector in Connecticut agriculture, with cash receipts of \$197.5 million, followed by the dairy industry with \$63.3 million in receipts.³ See Figure 2-A.

More specific data on the contribution of the green industry far exceeds USDA estimates. According to a recent University of Vermont study, "the production and sale of flowers and plants is the largest segment of Connecticut's agriculture sector, estimated at nearly one billion dollars (\$949 million). Altogether, the green industry is estimated to have over 2,500 companies, operating in every Connecticut town and 41,000 employees."⁴

Figure 2-A
Connecticut Cash Receipts - 2002



Connecticut is in the middle of the northeast economic corridor, sometimes referred to as the "New Atlantic Triangle."⁵ The five metropolitan regions included in this triangle support a large and diverse, predominantly urban population that makes up a huge potential market for Connecticut agricultural products. As the country's awareness of food and agricultural issues continues to rise, the demand for local agricultural products and value added products should also rise.⁶ Connecticut is in a unique position of meeting this demand throughout the northeast's New Atlantic Triangle. The Connecticut Agricultural Businesses Cluster's 2001 report, "Plan for Economic Growth," suggests that 90% of the regional agricultural

SECTION II – FARMLAND IS IMPORTANT

market (MA, RI, NYC etc.) is “available for growth” by Connecticut agricultural businesses.⁷

Farmland is Important for Town Budgets

Farmland plays an important role in balancing local town budgets. Like commercial and industrial properties, farmland and other open space typically generates a fiscal surplus, since it costs towns less to provide public infrastructure and services to this type of property than it generates in property tax revenues. Cost of community services studies conducted in more than 100 jurisdictions around the nation consistently show that farmland generates surplus tax revenues, while revenues generated by residential development fail to cover the costs of providing services to residents.⁸

The data from studies conducted in Connecticut in the mid 1990’s mirror this national data. Studies of six towns—Bolton, Durham, Farmington, Hebron, Litchfield and Pomfret—show that on average, for every \$1.00 of revenue generated by the residential sector, \$1.11 was required to service this land use, while for every \$1.00 of revenue generated by agricultural or forest land, the towns spent only \$0.45 in services.⁹ This was true even when farmland was assessed and taxed at its current agricultural use under Public Act 490.¹⁰ See [Figure 2-B](#).

Some local governments promote commercial and industrial development as a means to offset the costs of residential development. However, while commercial and/or industrial development

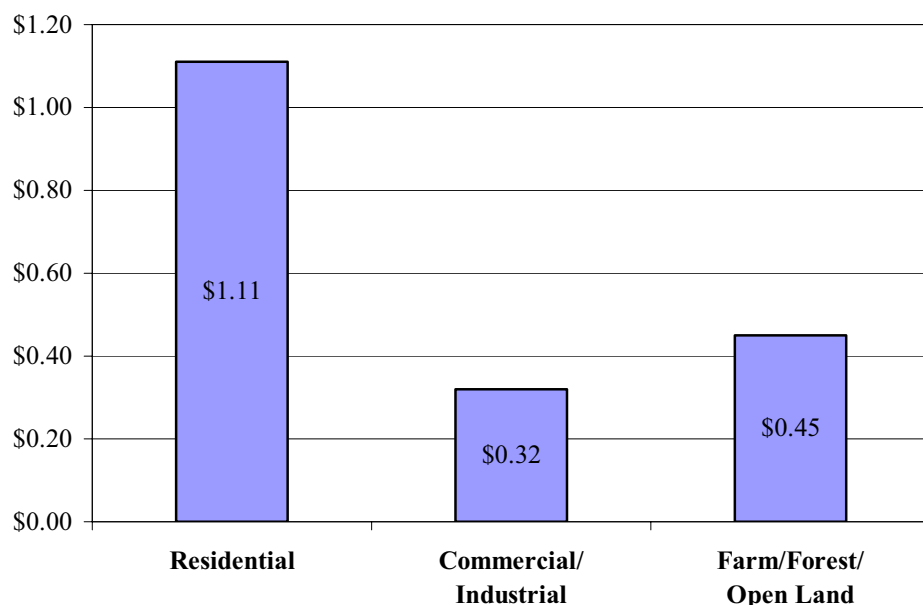
does generate surplus revenue in the short term, a study of 169 Connecticut towns found that tax bills are highest in towns with the most commercial and industrial activity.¹¹

The conclusion to be drawn from these studies is that local governments should plan carefully, recognizing that working lands help to offset the costs of residential development and that, while conversion of farmland to subdivisions may grow a town’s tax base, it will also grow its expenses. In certain circumstances, towns may find that it costs less to permanently protect farmland than it will cost to provide services to homes that are built on it.

Farmland is Important to Local Economies

Connecticut farmland and the farm businesses that it supports directly and indirectly contribute to the local economy. In Connecticut’s rural communities, agriculture and agriculture-related jobs directly account for 15.8% of all jobs.¹² Working farms spend money in their local communities, provide local products for purchase, and attract tourists to local businesses.

Figure 2-B
Avg Cost - Per Dollar of Revenue Raised- to Provide Public Services for Different Land Uses in Five Connecticut Towns



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Farms support local businesses such as veterinarians, graphic designers, equipment dealers and electricians. For example, the 14 dairies in Woodstock, CT generate annual gross revenue of approximately 6 million dollars. Agriculture in Woodstock is estimated to provide 103 full-time jobs and 80-90 part-time jobs.¹³

Farm stands, farmers markets, and grocery stores stocked with local farm produce provide opportunities for the community to keep money circulating locally. There are 68 farmers markets operating around the state, up from just 36 in 1994.¹⁴ Most are open one or two days a week and run from May or June through October or November. The state also has over 100 farm stands.¹⁵

Farms attract money to the community via tourism. In a recent survey, 76 percent of Connecticut respondents say that they have been to a pick-your own farm, farm stand or other on-farm activity – more people than had been to the state’s public beaches.¹⁶ A recent survey of Vermont farms found that the state’s income from agri-tourism related activities increased 87% between 2000 and 2002 to \$19.5 million.¹⁷ It also reveals that the majority of this income came from on-farm direct sales, and that smaller farms earned a higher percentage of their income through agri-tourism than large operations.¹⁸ Although, this study has not been replicated in Connecticut, agri-tourism is likely to play a similar role in the Connecticut economy as well.

By maintaining the rural and historical New England landscape that visitors to Connecticut find so attractive, working farms indirectly contribute tourism dollars to restaurants, retailers, and other destinations. In 2001 \$9.89 billion travel and tourism dollars were spent in Connecticut, accounting for 8.6% of the new jobs in Connecticut.¹⁹ There are over 12 million potential tourists within 2 hours of the state.

Indirectly, farmland contributes to a high quality of life that is influential in attracting new businesses to the area. In a 2000 survey, over half of the Connecticut residents who responded said that farmland loss has a negative impact on the quality of life in Connecticut.²⁰ Quality of life also scored second among a listing of reasons for locating their business in the Hartford MetroRegion.²¹

Farmland is Important to Regional Planning

Poorly planned growth, or “sprawl,” is increasingly recognized as both economically and environmentally costly to Connecticut communities. U.S. Census data show that residents and businesses are leaving Connecticut’s cities, such as Hartford, Bridgeport, and Stamford, while populations of Connecticut’s suburban and exurban towns are increasing.²² When people leave a city, the demand for goods and services provided by city businesses decreases and the tax base for funding city services shrinks. As a result, city merchants go out of business and quality of life in the city suffers. Increases in the distances Connecticut residents commute in automobiles leads to traffic congestion and increased fossil fuel combustion with accompanying atmospheric pollution.

Farmland protection is an integral aspect of sound land use planning and smart growth. As studies on sprawl in Connecticut have noted, the “continued manifestations of sprawl could threaten Connecticut’s attractiveness as a desirable place to live, work and visit.”²³ Sound planning can protect the assets of Connecticut, including the rural character and scenic vistas of our towns and the open space provided by farmland, while still allowing for growth.

Farmland is Ecologically Important

Farmland is an integral part of Connecticut’s living landscape. The typical Connecticut farm has only 40-60% of its acreage in actual production; the remainder consists of woodland,

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wetlands, and stream corridors. Farmland provides habitat for wildlife, filters drinking water, maintains base flows of aquifers, wetlands, and rivers, helps reduce flooding, and offsets carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Many farms serve as feeding, breeding, and wintering areas for local bird populations and provide stopovers for migrating birds. Farm pastures and grasslands provide particularly important habitat. These lands harbor 20% of Connecticut's listed endangered or "species of concern" birds, including savannah, Henslow's, grasshopper and vesper sparrows, barn owls, American kestrels, upland sandpipers, night hawks and horned larks.²⁴

Haphazard development leads to the fragmentation of habitat, resulting in relatively isolated islands of open space too small to support healthy populations of many species. Land use planning that incorporates farmland preservation, clustered development, and maintenance of farms as buffers between natural habitat and developed communities can greatly reduce the impact of development on wildlife, and biodiversity. A recent study links an increase in Lyme disease carriers (deer and mice) to large lot development. More invasive species and less biodiversity follow sprawl development patterns.

Open lands including farmland also play important roles in protecting water resources and preventing floods. In contrast to agricultural and open land, pavement and rooftops are impervious to water and collect pollutants from cars and other sources. Rainwater falling on these impervious surfaces mixes with contaminants and runs quickly into nearby waterways or flood prone areas. Studies show that when more than 10% of a watershed is impervious, then the water quality is 'at risk'.²⁵ In contrast, soils and vegetation absorb and filter water. These processes help remove pollutants from runoff, allow for the recharge of groundwater, and

reduce flooding by slowing the rate at which water runs off the land during rain events.²⁶

Farmland may also act as a carbon sink by sequestering carbon dioxide for extended periods of time, preventing the gas from reaching the atmosphere and contributing to global warming.²⁷ Farmland that remains in agriculture – especially in grassland and conservation tilled cropland – could help Connecticut balance its carbon dioxide budget.²⁸

While farming operations have been associated with environmental impacts as well as benefits, they are becoming increasingly well-managed. Recognizing the importance of farmers as stewards of the environment, the federal and state governments have developed programs to assist farmers' efforts to minimize negative environmental impacts that can be caused by farming, enhance the habitat value of their land, and preserve their land. The state Environmental Assistance Program, for example, cost shares with dairy and other livestock farmers on some of the costs of implementing an agricultural waste management plan, and is used, along with the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program, to help farmers address agricultural water quality concerns. The state Farmland Preservation Program requires that farmland protected through the program be farmed in accordance with an approved conservation plan. Other state and federal programs provide technical and financial assistance to farmers who manage their land for wildlife habitat, improve their energy efficiency, reduce water usage, and adopt forest stewardship plans. These programs help ensure that farming results in net gains for environmental quality.

Farmland is Important to Food Security

Local farms enhance community food security in a number of ways. Connecticut farmers donate a significant amount of food to local food banks. In 2003, Foodshare, the food bank serving Hartford and Tolland Counties, received over

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347,560 pounds of fruits and vegetables from Connecticut farmers.²⁹ The Connecticut Food Bank in New Haven received 52,746 pounds of produce from local farmers in 2003.³⁰ This food is helping meet the demand for emergency food in Connecticut. Nationwide surveys by the Second Harvest network indicate that one in ten Americans annually uses an emergency food source³¹ and the 2002 Household Food Security Survey found that 7.6% of Connecticut's population is food insecure.³² In addition, 70% Connecticut residents eat less than the recommended 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day.³³

Farmers' markets located in inner city neighborhoods provide access to high quality produce at affordable prices, where such access may otherwise be severely limited. For example, the City of Hartford has only one major supermarket, creating a burden on residents who are dependent on public transportation or unable to travel regularly to the supermarket to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

This problem is particularly pressing given the high incidence of diet-related disease in Connecticut's major cities. In Hartford for instance, 34% of Hartford residents are obese, 31% suffer from hypertension, and 13% have diabetes. These figures are higher than they were in 1997.³⁴ New England cities and older villages have a high concentration of children susceptible to lead exposure. Studies have shown that a diet high in fresh vegetables lessens the effects of lead poisoning.³⁵

Recognizing the need for improved fruit and vegetable consumption among low-income persons and the importance of the additional food source that farmers' markets can supply, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides nutritionally-at-risk individuals with coupons redeemable for produce at farmers' markets. The Program provides coupons to pregnant and nursing women eligible for federal Women,

Infants and Children benefits (WIC), low-income senior citizens, and clients of emergency food pantries. Farmers' markets, with help from the WIC and Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, increase the options for these residents to buy healthy food.

Connecticut's farms can also provide a buffer against food price increases and reduced availability due to events outside the state. Connecticut's food security can be affected by droughts in California, social unrest in food-exporting countries, disruptions in the food supply line, and national and international trends in food production. In the late 1970s, increased energy costs and truckers' strikes created a short-term shortage of food in Connecticut, while food prices increased nationwide by over 10% annually.³⁶ Today's food system is dependant on transportation as most meals travel an average of 1500-2500 miles from farm to plate.³⁷ Recent spikes in fuel costs mirror conditions in the late 1970s and could again contribute to unexpected food price increases. International trends indicate that world food security is decreasing due to environmental degradation and development of agricultural land worldwide.³⁸ Recent data on land use in the United States show that loss of farmland is a pressing national problem, and that some of the greatest losses have occurred in states where much of our food is produced particularly in Texas, Florida, and California.³⁹ A local supply of food can be both cheaper and more reliable in the long run.

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In Connecticut, the most common farmland protection tool is the agricultural conservation easement—a deed restriction that farmers and landowners voluntarily sell or donate to the state or a land conservation organization that restricts the non-agricultural uses of the farmland. Land protected with an agricultural conservation easement cannot be developed, even if ownership of the property changes. A state program that purchases agricultural conservation easements is often referred to as a “purchase of development rights,” or “PDR,” program.

Because an agricultural conservation easement restricts the future uses of farmland, it typically lowers the market value of the land protected. As a result, PDR programs create a pool of permanently protected farmland that is affordable to current and future farmers. PDR programs are the most common state-level farmland protection tools in use today, because they provide permanent protection and are popular among farmers. However, where land values are high, as in Connecticut, PDR program dollars do not stretch far. States that have successful farmland protection efforts have found dedicated funding sources for their PDR programs and developed a number of additional state and local farmland protection tools.

Introducing the CT Purchase of Development Rights Program

In 1974, the Governors' Task Force for the Preservation of Agricultural Land concluded that: "to maintain her characteristic quality of life and provide about a third of her food, Connecticut should purchase development rights in agricultural reserves...to ensure the preservation of about 325 thousand fertile acres."¹ The estimated cost of this program at the time was \$500 million. A subsequent 1979 study provided further analysis of land needs for future food self-sufficiency, asserting “the purchase of development rights on

approximately 85,000 acres of superior cropland should be a goal by the year 2000.”²

With this momentum, in 1978 Connecticut established the state Farmland Preservation Program (Conn. Gen. Stats. Section 22-26aa et. seq.). At the time, Connecticut was credited with creating one of the first programs in the country that relied on the purchase and acquisition of conservation easements to protect farmland. As articulated in 1979, the program’s goal is to preserve 130,000 acres of farmland, including 85,000 acres of cropland soils "that can be devoted to the local production of food products."³ The 85,000-acres of prime agricultural soils would "enable the local farm industry to meet 50% of the annual demand for fresh milk and 70% of the in-season demand for fresh fruits and vegetables."⁴

The Farmland Preservation Program authorizes the state to purchase agricultural conservation easements on qualifying farmland from willing sellers, preserving that land for agricultural use in perpetuity. In exchange for accepting a deed restriction on their property that permanently limits its non-agricultural uses, participating landowners are paid an amount up to the difference between the land’s fair market value and its restricted value. The values are determined by appraisal.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture administers the program. When evaluating applications, the Department must consider the following factors:

1. The probability that the land will be sold for non-agricultural purposes;
2. The current productivity of such land and the likelihood of continued productivity;
3. The suitability of the land as to soil classification and other criteria for agricultural use;
4. The degree to which such acquisition would contribute to the preservation of the agricultural potential for the state;
5. The cost of acquiring such rights;

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6. Any encumbrances on the land.

In 1986, the Joint State-Town Farmland Preservation Program (Conn. Gen. Stats. Section 22-26cc(2)) was established “as a means of extending the State Farmland Preservation Program to promote and encourage towns to establish local farmland preservation programs to limit conversion of their prime farmlands to nonagricultural uses.”⁵ This program is administered as part of the Farmland Preservation Program; it has no separate pool of state funding. The project eligibility requirements are the same for both programs: properties must be part of an active farm operation, contain a minimum of 30 acres of cropland or be adjacent to a larger farm parcel, and have some prime or important agricultural soils. In addition, participating municipalities must have a policy in support of farmland preservation and an agricultural land preservation fund.

Benefits of the CT Farmland Preservation Program:

On average, more than 75% of a farm family’s assets are locked up in their land.⁶ By offering farmers the opportunity to sell their development rights to the state, the PDR program provides them a means to tap the equity in their land without having to sell a portion of their farmland outright. For participating farmers, the proceeds from the sale of development rights provide an invaluable source of capital for: acquiring additional farmland; expanding or diversifying a farm business; modernizing farm operations, improving farm infrastructure; financing retirement; reducing debt; facilitating the transfer of the farm and assets to children. See Case Study 1 & 2

The PDR program is also instrumental in making farmland affordable for existing and future farmers. In parts of the state, development rights represent approximately 66% of a property’s fair market value.⁷ Depending on local markets,

farmers may be able to purchase land protected through the PDR program for one-quarter to one-third of its original fair market value. In a survey conducted by American Farmland Trust of participants in the Massachusetts PDR program, 62% of the farmers interviewed who purchased land protected through the program stated that the program had made it possible for them to purchase farmland at an affordable price.⁸

CASE STUDY 1:

Jones Family Farms, Shelton, CT

In 1985 the Jones family, fifth-generation Shelton farmers, bought a neighboring dairy farm at market price, outbidding several developers. But by the mid-1990’s, the mortgage payments on that land reached unbearable levels. Rather than selling the land outright, the Joneses negotiated a bargain PDR sale. They donated a one million dollar share of the development right value while the local, state and federal PDR programs pooled their money and partnered to make the ‘below market value’ purchase happen.

The sale helped the Joneses pay off their mortgage with enough left over to begin construction of a new winery enterprise. Sixth-generation Jones family member, Jamie Jones, runs the winery, which now purchases fruit from farms all over the state, including black currants, pears and apples. These supplement grapes, strawberries, blueberries and raspberries grown on their Shelton farm.

The Joneses also sold the development rights to 82 acres of the family’s original farm. They used the money gained from this PDR sale to purchase 50 acres for a buffer around part of their farm. Shelton, in southwestern Connecticut, is developing quickly, and several of the Jones’ fields are bordered by developments. So when a farm to the north sold to a developer, the Joneses were concerned about getting nuisance complaints from new suburban neighbors. As the saying goes, “good fences make good neighbors.” Terry Jones reports, “the additional acreage has been vital to a sustainable crop rotation plan and creates a critical mass of land so the farm isn’t completely hemmed in by houses.

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The American Farmland Trust (AFT) survey of the Massachusetts PDR program participants found another benefit of PDR program generally; namely, that PDR programs support investment in agriculture, because farmers who enroll land in the program feel secure in investing in their farm operations.

CASE STUDY 2: Graywall Farm, Lebanon, CT

Robin Chesmer and his son Lincoln operate a dairy farm in Lebanon, Connecticut with over 300 head of milk cows and over 700 acres of land. They have a state of the art operation with a new automatic milking parlor, breezy barns, and a manure injector (so the manure fertilizer incorporated into the soil where plants can use it and neighbors can't smell it). But all of this would not have been possible without the entrepreneurial spirit and the state's Farmland Preservation Program, known as the Purchase of Development Rights program (PDR).

In 1989 Robin entered the dairy industry when he bought 80 dairy cows and got a lease/option on a 185-acre dairy farm from a neighboring farmer who sold the development rights (PDR) during the lease/option period that then allowed Robin to purchase the farm at its agricultural value. Since then, the PDR program has allowed the Chesmers to purchase another neighboring farm whose elderly owners had started the process of selling the development rights. Unfortunately, one of the brothers passed away during the process. Robin was able to purchase the farm from the estate and continued with the process of selling the development rights. The Chesmers have also been able to purchase 200 acres of vital cropland that was already protected by the PDR program.

Today, Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Program protects over 500 acres of the Chesmers' farmland. In New London County, where they farm, access to land is one of the bigger challenges in today's dairy operations (besides as Robin notes, maintaining the health of the cows and getting the crops to grow). Currently the Chesmers rent almost 400 acres of land from neighbors, most of whom are retired farmers in their 80's. Robin worries that when this rental land gets passed on to the next generation it will be sold for development, and he'll have an even harder time finding cropland. Without better estate planning and more money for farmland preservation, his fears may come true.

AFT refers to this as a psychological "permanence syndrome." This investment in turn makes it more likely that PDR farms will be economically successful in the future.

The Joint Town-State PDR Program provides other benefits. First, it requires that towns take at least two active steps in support of farmland protection. Second, by leveraging local funding, it stretches state PDR funding. Additionally, once towns are involved in preserving farmland, they are more likely to actively search for additional funding for PDR purchases through the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and other state and federal programs, or directly with land trusts.

Benefits of the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program

- The program prioritizes farms that have a high percentage of prime farmland soils.
- The program selects applicants who own active farms in established farm communities, thus reducing fragmentation of farmland.
- Protected land remains privately owned and farmers continue to pay taxes on it.
- The program provides farmers with access to capital that can enhance the economic viability of farming operations. The proceeds from the sale of development rights may be used to retire farm debt, expand or modernize farm operations, or buy additional land.
- The reduced market value of the protected farmland reduces estate taxes, thus facilitating the transfer of farmland from farmers to their children.
- The program provides farmers with a means of financing their retirement while ensuring that their land remains in farming for generations to come.
- The reduced market value of the protected farmland also makes the land more

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affordable to new farmers or others who want to buy it for agricultural purposes.

- The farmer's reinvestment of the sale proceeds stimulates local economies.

Evaluating the PDR Program

Since 1978, the Farmland Preservation Program has protected 30,087 acres on 213 farms at a cost of approximately \$86 million.⁹ See [Map #2 at back](#). At 30,000 acres, the program has protected just 1100 acres a year in its 25-year acquisition history, falling 100,000 acres short of its modest 130,000-acre goal. During this same time period, Connecticut's farmland base has shrunk from about 500,000 acres to approximately 360,000 acres. And while the rate of farmland loss is increasing, the rate of funding for the program has declined. From four years of annual bond authorizations of at least \$8 million in the late 1980s, program spending has fallen steadily. Over the past nine years, the program has spent just \$10.5 million.¹⁰ See [Figure 3-A](#).

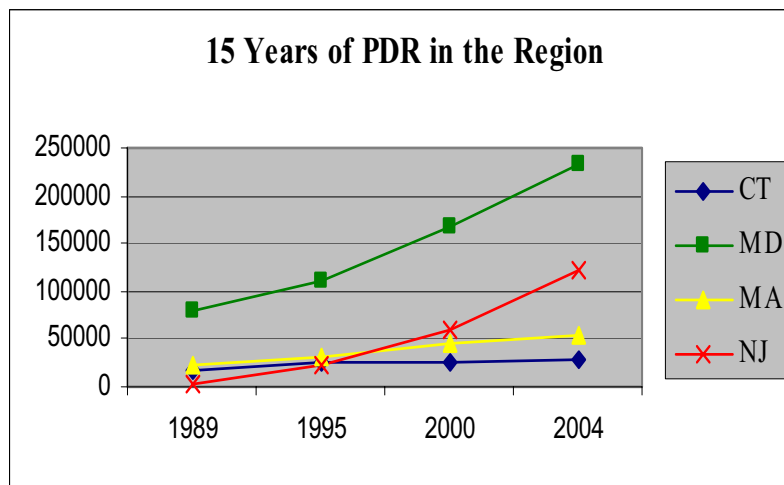
Figure 3-A
CT Farmland Preservation Program*

<u>Program Summary (1978-2004)</u>	
Number of Farms Protected	213
Number of Acres Protected	30,087
Bond Funding Authorized	\$89,750,000
<u>Ten-Year Summary (1995-2004)</u>	
Number of Farms Protected	44 farms
Number of Acres Protected	5,901
Bond Funding Allocated	\$16,323,141
* data accurate as of January 1, 2005	

Compared to other Northeast states, Connecticut's commitment to its PDR program has lagged. Since the program's inception, CT has spent a cumulative total of approximately \$24.20 per capita on the Farmland Preservation Program. In comparison, NJ, whose program began after Connecticut's, in 1985, has spent a cumulative total of approximately \$43.26 per capita and Pennsylvania, whose program was established in 1988, a total of \$33.63 per capita. In the past nine years, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland have all outspent

Connecticut. In the face of rising land

Figure 3-B




 American Farmland Trust
 SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

prices and increased development pressure, states in the region have increased their PDR program expenditures and many have instituted local match requirements. Connecticut however, has provided only minimal and sporadic funding to the program despite some of the highest real estate values of the region. See [Figure 3-B](#).

In addition to inadequate funding, the Farmland Preservation Program has suffered from a lengthy and unpredictable bond commission process and a shortage of staff to administer the program. Unlike many states, Connecticut requires that each individual acquisition through the PDR program be submitted to and approved in advance by the State Bond Commission. This process has resulted in lengthy delays in projects being approved. As a result, a number of PDR projects have been lost and farmland developed in the interim, as applicants have passed away or grown tired of waiting for the project to be put on the Bond Commission agenda.

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This problem has been exacerbated by a shortage of staff to initiate, negotiate and close acquisition projects and remain in contact with anxious landowners, as well as to monitor land that is already enrolled in the program.

Other concerns that have been raised about the program include the lack of opportunity for land trusts to participate in the program, the Department's lack of authority to purchase land in fee (which would allow, for example, the Department to buy a farm from a retiring farmer, place an agricultural conservation easement on the farmland, and sell the restricted farmland to an existing or new farmer), the program's per-acre cap of \$10,000, and concerns about estate buyers and the continued affordability of land enrolled in the program. Additionally, some farmers complain that the program is difficult to access,¹¹ compromises their long-term financial security or simply doesn't pay enough.

USDA Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program *(corrected 4/1/05)*

Since 1996, the state Farmland Preservation Program has leveraged federal funds available through the Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP). Administered by USDA, the FRPP Program provides up to a 50% cost share match to eligible entities in Connecticut to purchase the development rights to farmland.

To date, the FRPP has helped to permanently protect 45 farms in Connecticut, leveraging \$9.5 million in federal farmland protection funding. While other entities (e.g. municipalities, land trusts) may apply to FRPP, the CT Department of Agriculture has been the program's principal partner. [See Figure 3-C.](#)

CT Open Space Grant Program

Another state program that has been used to protect farmland is the Department of Environmental Protection's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

(Public Act 98-157). The DEP Open Space Grant program was established in 1998 to help towns, land trusts and water companies permanently protect important community lands, including local farmland. The program can be used to fund the purchase of farmland outright or the purchase of development rights on farmland. As with the federal FRPP, landowners cannot apply directly to the program but must work with a sponsoring town or land trust. The program provides a maximum of 50% of a project's cost.

In recent years, state funding commitments to open space have far outpaced commitments to farmland protection. In the past 7 fiscal years (FY 98-04) the State of Connecticut has allocated over \$60 million to the DEP Open Space Grant program; during the same period Farmland Preservation received only \$12 million. [See Figure 3-D.](#)

Figure 3-C
Summary of NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program in Connecticut 1996-2004

Year	# of farms	# of farms with DoAg matching \$	Federal \$ (millions)
1996	5	5	\$1
1997*	4	4	\$1
2001	3	3	\$.6
2002	11	8	\$2.1
2003	9	7	\$1.9
2004	13	8	\$2.9
TOTAL	45	35	\$9.5
1996-2004			
Total Acres Protected			5,399
Acres of Prime Farmland Soils			1,527
Acres Statewide Important Soils			777
<i>* No funding available to CT in 1997, 1999, 2000</i>			

What's the Difference? PDR Program vs. Open Space Program

Since farmland may be preserved under either the Farmland Preservation Program or the Open Space Grant Program, it is important to understand the differences between the two programs. First, only private landowners are

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eligible for the PDR Program. When a farmer sells his or her development rights through the program, the state holds the easement while the farmer continues to own the property. In contrast, towns and land trusts often use the Open Space Grant Program to finance the direct acquisition of a property, with the land remaining in public or non-profit ownership.

The difference in *who* owns the underlying land has important implications. Most towns and land trusts are not in the business of farming or managing farm operations. These entities generally do not have a serious interest in seeing that farmland is put to agricultural use, and may in fact be wary of involvement in farm management issues. Any farming on land owned by a town or land trust is most likely to occur through a lease arrangement with a farmer, which does not necessarily promote a long-term commitment to farming that particular piece of land. The Open Space Grant Program also does not support the acquisition of farm buildings and infrastructure that are important to a farm’s long-term viability.

**Figure 3-D
Bond Allocations for Open Space & Farmland
FY 1998 - 2004**

	Open Space Grants Program	Farmland Preservation Program
FY 98	239,200	1,488,650
FY 99	13,632,104	0
FY 00	12,000,000	1,082,186
FY 01	12,000,000	1,947,415
FY 02	12,000,000	3,459,148
FY 03	6,500,000	1,487,950
FY 04	4,500,000	1,703,770
TOTALS	\$60,871,304	\$11,169,119

Source: CT State Office of Fiscal Analysis

On the other hand, most land enrolled in the PDR Program remains in active agricultural use. While there is no guarantee that preserved land will always be farmed, the program’s requirement that the land remain in private ownership encourages working lands and its easements are written to give landowners flexibility to adapt to changing agricultural

markets and practices. In the previously mentioned survey of Massachusetts PDR program participants, 91% of respondents who had participated in the program reported that they planned to continue farming, and 64% reported that their children or other family members would take over farm operations upon their retirement.¹²

A second important difference between the Open Space Program and the PDR Program relates to the programs’ respective missions. The sole purpose of the Farmland Preservation Program is to preserve productive farmland for current and future agricultural use. While the “preserv[ation] [of] local agricultural heritage” is an objective of the Open Space grant program, this objective is one of seven objectives of the program. Ecological and recreational values of the land are weighted heavily in determining whether to accept an application, and are a factor in how program easements are written. For example, public access is a requirement of the Open Space Grant Program—a requirement that has chilled farmer interest in the program. Additionally, Open Space easements may restrict the use of fertilizers and pesticides and require management of the farmland in a way that does not interfere with the program’s other objectives, such as protection of wildlife habitat. These restrictions can have a significant impact on a farm’s potential profitability.

Finally, a comparison of the cost per acre of Open Space farmland acquisitions and PDR easements between 1998-2001 found that the mean cost of protecting farmland through the Open Space program was \$11,805 per acre, compared to the mean for the PDR program, which was \$2,826 per acre.¹³ While this is somewhat of an apples-to-oranges comparison, as many of the Open Space farmland projects are fee acquisitions, not easements, the cost differential is significant, and may merit additional analysis of the programs’ relative costs and effectiveness. See Figure 3-E.

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Other Farmland Protection Tools – State Level

While the Farmland Preservation Program is the most effective tool to permanently protect working agricultural land, the state has other programs and policies designed to encourage farmland protection. As noted below, most of these policies have limitations that minimize their effectiveness. These programs and policies include:

- Site Review (Conn. Gen. Stats. Section 22-6): The Commissioner of Agriculture is required to prepare a report for the State Bond Commission considering the impact of any state project proposing the conversion to non-agricultural use of properties containing 25 or more acres of prime farmland. The report, however, is advisory only, and the State Bond Commission is not required to abide by the report in deciding whether or not to approve the project.
- Use Value Assessments (Public Act 490) (Conn. Gen. Stats. Section 12-107a): State law reduces the property tax burden on farmers by allowing farm and forest land to be assessed at its current use value rather than its “highest and best use” value. Once land has been determined eligible for the program, it remains eligible until the use of the land changes or the land is sold. If land enrolled in Public Act 490 is sold or taken out of agricultural production, landowners may face a penalty. As noted in Section I, even with this program, farmers have seen an average 44% increase in their property taxes since 1997.
- The 2004-2009 Recommended State Plan of Conservation and Development (Conn. Gen. Stats. Section 16a-24–33) “provides the policy and planning framework for administrative and programmatic actions and capital and operational investment decisions of state government.”¹⁴ The recommended

plan calls for the protection of the state’s remaining active agricultural land unless and until the land is no longer viable for agricultural use. While the statute encourages municipal and regional adherence to the Plan, only projects using state funds are required to be consistent with it.

- Municipal Enabling Statutes (See, e.g., Conn. Gen. Stats. 7-131q, 8-25, 8-25b, 22-26cc(e)): A number of Connecticut statutes allow municipalities to adopt and implement policies supporting farmland and open space preservation. These policies are described in greater detail below.
- Municipal Farmland Mitigation (Public Act 04-22): Enacted during the 2004 legislative session, this provision requires towns that take active agricultural land by eminent domain to mitigate the loss of that farmland by either purchasing the development rights on comparable farmland in town, or, if no comparable farmland is available, to pay a fee to the state Department of Agriculture to be used to finance the purchase of development rights on farmland of similar size and quality elsewhere in the state.

Other Farmland Protection Tools – Town Level

Below are some of the tools that can and have been used by municipalities to promote local agriculture and encourage local farmland protection.

Non-Regulatory Tools:

- Policy statements in support of farmland protection: This is required for towns seeking to fund PDR projects through the Joint Town-State Farmland Preservation Program.
- Creation of a municipal agricultural land preservation fund: This is also required for the Joint Town-State program. There is no minimum dollar amount required in the fund,

SECTION III – TOOLS FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION

and no requirement as to how the fund may be financed.

- Identification and prioritization of local farmland: To build landowner and community support for farmland protection funds and projects, towns may establish a public process for identifying and prioritizing locally important farmland. This process should include farmers from the outset, in order to understand and incorporate the perspectives and needs of the local farm community.
- Town-sponsored agricultural events and markets: To provide a direct outlet for its farmers, and to raise public awareness about local agriculture, Suffield launched a farmer's market on the town green once a week during the summer. Other towns participate in regional bicycle tours highlighting local farm products and/or host local agriculture fairs or field days.
- Town level research on the importance or impact of farmland protection: Includes Cost of Community Services studies and Build Out analyses.
- Creation of town agricultural advisory board: A local agricultural advisory board can ensure that farmers' voices are heard in local decision-making and can be charged with developing local initiatives in support of agriculture. South Windsor and Mansfield both have local agriculture advisory committees.
- Additional tax abatements: If a town chooses, it may offer local farmers additional property tax relief on farmland or buildings.

Regulatory Tools:

- Conservation subdivision regulations: Towns may require developers to set aside for conservation purposes a portion of a proposed subdivision.
- Fees in lieu of open space: As an alternative to requiring a conservation set-aside, towns may collect fees in lieu of open space to

generate revenue for local farmland and open space protection efforts.

- Buffers: To protect existing farm operations from non-farming neighbors, towns can require buffers between subdivisions and an abutting farm.
- Right to farm ordinances: These can provide local protection for farmers against complaints from neighbors for noise, odors and practices that are considered normal agricultural activities.
- Agricultural zones or districts: Towns may create agricultural zones or districts in which certain agricultural and compatible non-agricultural land uses are allowed by right.
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaws: State law authorizes the use of TDRs by municipalities. TDR bylaws establish sending and receiving areas as a way of directing development away from one area and toward another. TDR bylaws have been used in other states (primarily at the county level) as a farmland protection tool.

The development of additional municipal-level tools, policies and financing mechanisms for land protection could greatly increase the statewide effort to preserve farmland. As importantly, perhaps, raising awareness of agriculture at the local level can increase local demand for Connecticut farm products, promote an understanding of local farms and their land use and business needs, build support for local farmland protection funds, and generate additional public advocacy in support of state and federal farmland protection programs.

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Figure 3-E
Comparison of Cost per Acre of Open Space Farmland Acquisition and PDR Easements

DEP Open Space Grant Program					
	Total # of Properties (analyzed)	LOW	HIGH	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL YEARS (1998-2001)	53	\$950.12	\$36,036	\$11,805	\$9,845
1998	0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
1999	20	\$950	\$34,403	\$9,498	\$8,878
2000	22	\$1,673	\$36,036	\$14,088	\$10,929
2001	11	\$1,445	\$24,050	\$11,931	\$15,000
Department of Agriculture PDR Program					
	Total # of Properties (analyzed)	LOW	HIGH	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL YEARS (1998-2001)	16	\$1,200	\$5,204	\$2,826	\$2,430
1998	2	\$1,623	\$2,000	\$1,811	\$1,811
1999	0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
2000	9	\$1,200	\$4,290	\$2,465	\$2,432
2001	5	\$1,997	\$5,204	\$3,608	\$3,414

CONCLUSION

Agriculture is a vibrant industry in Connecticut, generating over \$500 million in direct farm cash receipts and far more in total economic output. The industry's continued trend toward direct marketing and value-added products is steadily improving farm product value; the average market value of production per farm increased 27 percent from 1997 to 2002, to \$112,297. Given Connecticut's location in the middle of the northeast economic corridor, or "New Atlantic Triangle," the potential for additional industry growth is substantial.

The future viability of the state's agriculture industry, however, depends on its land base. *And farmland is a finite resource.* As more and more retirement-age farmers, whose farmland is their primary asset, seek to liquidate that asset to finance retirement, health care and other family needs, escalating real estate values are driving that land out of the reach of neighboring and new farmers and into the hands of homebuilders and developers. The result: farmland is being converted at an escalating rate, young farmers are finding it tough to establish a farm operation, and a crisis of transition—from the current to the next generation of farmers—is looming.

In the summer of 2004, the Farmland Preservation Task Force, convened by Senators Don Williams and Len Fasano, spent several weeks developing recommendations to address the critical problem of farmland loss and farm transition. The Task Force's recommendations focused on five broad areas.

Five Broad Recommendations of 2004 Farmland Preservation Task Force

1. Reduce barriers to the success of existing farmland protection programs, including lack of state financial commitment;
2. Revisit state planning goals for farmland protection;
3. Create new tools and incentives for *municipalities* to preserve farmland;
4. Create new tools and incentives for *individuals* to preserve farmland;
5. Provide new support to increase the marketing of Connecticut-grown agricultural products.

These recommendations have focused leaders and advocates on several pieces of legislation in the 2005 Legislative Session that would create significant new financing mechanisms for farmland preservation, improve the efficiency of the PDR program, promote estate planning, and develop new state and local farmland protection and farm viability tools. We look with renewed hope and optimism to the Office of the Governor and the General Assembly to take up this *Call To Farms* and enact legislation to ensure a future for farms and farmland in Connecticut.

APPENDIX

Amount/Definitions of Farms or Active Agricultural Lands

Data source	Data Year	Total acreage in CT	Total acreage of farm or active agricultural lands	Percent of CT in farmland
NASS ⁱ	2002	3,101,000	357,154	11.52%
CLEAR ⁱⁱ	2002	3,205,760	380,800	11.88%
USFS ⁱⁱⁱ	1998	3,101,000	270,800	8.73%
NRI ^{iv}	1997	3,058,000*	316,100	10.30%

ⁱNational Agricultural Statistics Service, 2002 Census of Agriculture, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census02/volume1/ct/ct1intro.pdf>.

ⁱⁱCLEAR, University of Connecticut. 27 Aug., 2004, <http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/landscape/statewide/landcover.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱWharton et. al .2004. Forest Statistics for Connecticut: 1985 and 1998. USDA Forest Service Resource Bulletin NE-160.

^{iv}National Resources Inventory, 1997 data, NRCS. The NRI excludes water over 40 acres and Federal Lands in its calculations.

Data source	Data Year	Farmland and/or Active Agricultural Land is:	Definitions	Data concerns
Census of Agriculture - National Agricultural Statistics Survey (NASS)	2002	'Land in farms'	"The census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. The definition has changed nine times since it was established in 1850. The current definition was first used for the 1974 Census of Agriculture and has been used in each subsequent agriculture census. This definition is consistent with the definition used for current USDA surveys." ¹	The 2002 Census of Agriculture introduced a new methodology to account for all farms in the United States. Incompleteness in the census mail list was measured by matching list names against all qualifying operations found through canvassing sample land areas throughout the Nation. All 2002 published census items were reweighted for undercoverage. To provide comparable data, comparable 1997 data published in 2002 were also reweighted for undercoverage. This change makes it difficult to compare to data collected prior to 1997. ²
Connecticut Land use Education and Research – University of Connecticut (CLEAR)	2002	'grasses and other agriculture'	"Includes non-maintained grassy areas commonly found along transportation routes and other developed areas and also agricultural fields used for both crop production and pasture." ³	This category does include some land, such as highway grass strips, that are not being farmed or in farms, and it misses lands, such as turf grass farms, that are considered a part of the agricultural industry according to economic categories. It also misses "some agricultural fields due to similar spectral reflectance

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Data source	Data Year	Farmland and/or Active Agricultural Land is:	Definitions	Data concerns
				properties" to the 'turf and grass' category. ⁴
US Forest Service (USFS)	1998	'improved/maintained pasture' and 'harvested cropland'	This category is made up of the 'improved/maintained pasture' and 'harvested cropland' categories. 'Improved/Maintained pasture' is land that is currently used and maintained for grazing (not including grazed cropland). 'Harvested Cropland' is all lands from which crops were harvested or hay was cut, all land in orchards, citrus groves, vineyards and nursery and greenhouse products. ⁵	This category does not include land in the 'idle farmland' category which is "former cropland or pasture that has not been tended for within the last 2 years and has less than 10% stocking with live trees (established seedlings or larger trees) regardless of species." ⁶
National Resources Inventory – USDA (NRI)	1997	'cropland' and 'pastureland' categories	Cropland is "a land cover/use category that includes areas used for the production of adapted crops for harvest. Two subcategories of cropland are recognized: cultivated and noncultivated. Cultivated cropland comprises land in row crops or close-grown crops and also other cultivated cropland, for example, hayland or pastureland that is in a rotation with row or close-grown crops. Non-cultivated cropland includes permanent hayland and horticultural cropland." Pastureland is "a land cover/use category of land managed primarily for the production of introduced forage plants for livestock grazing. Pastureland cover may consist of a single species in a pure stand, a grass mixture, or a grass-legume mixture. Management usually consists of cultural treatments: fertilization, weed control, reseeding or renovation, and control of grazing. For the NRI, includes land that has a vegetative cover of grasses, legumes, and/or forbs, regardless of whether or not it is being grazed by livestock." ⁷	The NRI does not include crop or pasture land that is federally owned, nor does it count woodlots, wetlands, farmsteads etc. that are owned by farmers or make up part of a farms total land holdings. Additionally, between 1997 - 2005 the NRI data will not be statistically relevant at the state level. Therefore, the 1997 data is the most accurate and up to date data available from this source. ⁸

QUOTABLES – Why is farmland preservation important to your interests?

FARMER:

"Our family is very passionate about farming and the protection of farmland. Because of this we decided to make a commitment to our town and state and sold our development rights in 1980. Initially it allowed us to expand our business but more importantly it has saved this land for the future. It's important for us to know that this decision, made 25 years ago will have an impact for generations to come."
George Hindinger, Hindinger Farm, Hamden

FARMER:

"Now more than ever, I believe, people are gaining an appreciation for quality, natural, locally grown food and agricultural products as well as recognizing the importance of investing in programs that will maintain a viable farmland base for the future. Connecticut agriculture needs to adapt to take advantage of these opportunities that have the potential to offer significant economic returns. Healthy, profitable, agricultural businesses won't be in a hurry to sell their land. Economic viability and land stability go hand in hand. Connecticut agriculture needs both."
Robin Chesmer, Graywall Farms, Lebanon

CITY OFFICIAL:

"Among the many components that go into making a successful community, one of the critical pieces that ties everything together is a sense of place. By that I mean a reason for people to want to identify with their hometown. For example, a vibrant and unique town center does that, while a strip development of big-box chain stores that could be anywhere does not. A weekend farmers' market in a local park definitely adds to a sense of place. People like them because they give them a chance to mix with neighbors in a pleasant setting, and because they can connect to the farms of our state."
Mayor John DeStefano, New Haven

TOWN OFFICIAL:

"The City of Shelton has long recognized the benefits of encouraging the growth and maintenance of farmland in our community. We passed landmark legislation for Farmland Preservation and have purchased conservation easements on a number of local farms to assist the farmers in perpetuity. We have built a permanent Farmer's Market building that has evolved to serve the entire community in many ways. Through our Economic Development Commission, we continue to promote our local farms in brochures and our quarterly mailing to all residents. Our quality of life is enhanced by almost two thousand acres of farmland in Shelton, a community that is only minutes from two major metropolitan cities."
Mayor Mark A. Lauretti, Town of Shelton

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:

"Here in the Naugatuck River Valley and across this great state of Connecticut, farmland preservation and open space conservation are essential ingredients in a well-balanced approach to economic prosperity and to maintaining our quality of life. I urge all of my Chamber of Commerce colleagues from throughout Connecticut to heed the call to keep our farming industry healthy, productive and a vital contributor to our state's economy".
Bill Purcell, President, Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, Shelton

BUSINESS:

"My wife and I truly enjoy taking a nice Sunday afternoon to poke around the back roads of Connecticut. There are some marvelous old farms, and looking for them is one of the joys of living in Connecticut. At such time as all the old farms are turned into Condo's, we will move on and take our technology company with us. Development threatens the very reasons we came to Connecticut in the first place. I would much rather see my taxes support retaining the rural portions of the State, than having one more set of stop lights or big glaring street lights."
Gregory J. Miller, Esq. , Gold Line, Redding

NUTRITIONIST:

"Preserving local farms protects our ability to count on a nutrient-rich food supply. When produce isn't subjected to long-distance travel, it retains more nutrients. In addition, short- or no-distance shipping improves the farmer's ability to plant varieties of produce that wouldn't travel well, thus including a wider array of nutrient-dense vegetables and fruits that can be picked when perfectly ripe, at their nutritional peak."
Sue Gebo, St. Joseph's College, Community Nutrition Educator

ENVIRONMENTALIST – WATER:

"Farmland that is well managed can be very protective to water resources. Farmland is generally open land (few buildings, roads) which interferes little with the hydrologic cycle. This means that water can sink into the ground or filter through vegetation before it enters a surface water resource. In addition, the open land provides wildlife habitat. Resource managers can have greater success working with one owner of 20 acres vs. 10 or more owners in say a 2-acre zoned residential land use."
Laurie Giannotti, Executive Director, Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition

FARMLAND OWNER:

"The importance of the preservation of farmland is not only a necessity for the economy, the state and industry, it is also important for generations to come."
George Case

ENVIRONMENTALIST – FOREST & WILDLIFE:

"Connecticut's historical landscape since colonization has been one of a mix with open and agric lands and our wildlife reflected that diversity, we not only had deep forest animals we also had the beauties such as barn owls and kestrels and woodcocks some of our early woodcock and some of our early grassland sparrows which would include some or our nesting shore birds. We had a lot of diversity when we had that wonderful a balance of forest and agricultural lands. Like some many species. we seem to go form one extreme to the other in our management practices, but there's a ton of that ecological diversity we miss when we just have one extreme or the other. What I love about the current farmland preservation movement it will enable us to regain that balance of forestlands, agricultural lands, and different stages of land such as early successional lands and ecological diversity. There's a ton of that ecological diversity we miss when we just have one extreme or the other.

Patty Pendergast, CT Forest & Park Association

ENVIRONMENTALIST – BIRDS:

Connecticut's working farms are immensely important to birds. Farmland offers variety of critical habitat for migrant nesting and wintering birds such as Bobolink, Blue-winged Warbler, and American Woodcock. Audubon is please to join with other conservation partners to ensure that working farms remain a part of Connecticut landscape e for our children and children's children.

Sandy Breslin, Director of Governmental Affairs, Audubon Connecticut

ANTI-HUNGER ACTION GROUP

The preservation of working lands is not only a land use issue it is a means of combating hunger and malnutrition in our state. Connecticut farmers are generous in their donations of fresh produce to food banks and emergency food sites. Because the food is grown locally it is fresher and less costly to transport, thereby making it more accessible to those who need it the most. For urban residents, the state's 60 plus Farmer's Markets are easily the best place find fresh, quality produce. For supermarket deprived inner city neighborhoods, the farmers markets may in fact be the only way to get fresh produce for those who do not have transportation.

Lucy Nolan, Executive Director, End Hunger CT!

FARMLAND OWNER:

"Since God is not making any new land, once it is lost it is lost forever, never to be open space or farmland again."

John Yusza, Jr.

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE:

"Over the past few years, we have made great strides in connecting our local farmers with the school meal programs. The students have benefited from not only eating fresher product but also learning more about the farming industry in our state. The farmers have been able to improve their distribution of product to local buyers and can develop a strong, steady business with us. Locally grown tomatoes, potatoes, lettuces, apples and carrots offer a great added value to the student meal, are bright with flavor, are less likely to be damaged, bruised or spoiled, and usually take less time to clean or prepare! It certainly does not make sense to buy Delicious apples from Washington State for the 1st day (and perhaps several months) of school when local apple farms are advertising pick your own fresh apples. Nor does it make sense to buy the strawberries sent from California in June when there are local fresh berries available. Our locally grown potatoes are clean, young, undamaged, easy to clean and prepare and very tasty! The taste and smell of the local has been wonderful and well received by students, parents and the school administration and staff. We hope that schools are contributing to the preservation of the local farms as we can offer the farmer an outlet for their product and justification for maintaining the planting of the fields -- a definite plus to ensuring the preservation of farmland in our community."

Mary Ann Lopez, Director of Food Services, South Windsor Public Schools

HISTORIC/CULTURAL COMMITTEE:

"The Working Lands Alliance [new report] cogently presents the case for farmland preservation as critical to the future viability of Connecticut's economy, its scenic beauty and its historic character. Loss of farmland to development has encouraged movement away from established, historic urban centers and has contributed to the sprawling of our state. Loss of farmland irrevocably alters the historic and very scenic rural landscape of Connecticut that defines us and is a critical motivator to visit and live in this state. Intricately tied to the loss of farmland is the loss of their historic barns, artifacts of our agricultural past and powerful symbols of a way of life we value. Barn preservation and farmland preservation go hand in hand. The Working Lands Alliance [new report] adds a critical voice to the historic preservationists' concerns about the protection of historic barns and demonstrates that protecting our landscape directly protects our historic cities, towns and village centers."

Helen Higgins, Executive Director, CT Trust For Historic Preservation

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Executive Summary

¹ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>. Farmland is defined many different ways depending on the data source. For the remainder of this white paper, ‘land in farms’ means the amount of land owned by farmers (this includes land not actively farmed such as wetlands or forested lands – but that is kept in its natural state as part of a working farm). See table on farmland definitions and data sources – Appendix.

² Economic Research Service (USDA), “Farm and Farm-Related Employment,” 2000, 1 July, 2004 <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmandRelatedEmployment/ViewData.asp?GeoAreaPick=STACT_connecticut>.

³ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ This statistic based on a review of several data sources, including National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, as well as USDA/NRCS *1997 Natural Resources Inventory*. About half this acreage was active cropland, hay land, and pastureland, while the other half was comprised of the farmstead, woodlands, and wetlands that are a necessary part of farm operations. The Census of Agriculture measures the total acreage of the farm- so it includes land that is important to the farming operation though not cropped.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *Land Values and Cash Rents: 2004 Summary*, 2004, USDA, 23 Aug. 2004, <<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/land0804.pdf>>; National Agricultural Statistics Service, *USDA to Measure Agricultural Land Values*, 2003, 25 Aug. 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/pdf/p03land.pdf>>; and *Agricultural Land Values*, 1998, 25 Aug. 2004, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/land0398.txt>.

⁸ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>. Second behind Massachusetts, which had a 52% increase.

⁹ National Agricultural Statistics Service, “Land Values and Cash Rents: 2004 Summary.” August 2004. <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/land0804.pdf>

¹⁰ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>. http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census02/volume1/ct/st09_1_061_061.pdf>.

¹¹ Robin Chesmer (CT Dairy Farmer and member of Very Alive), Interview, 9 June, 2004

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ CT Department of Agriculture, “Outline of the Department of Agriculture Joint State-Town Farmland Preservation Program.”

¹⁵ Connecticut, Governor’s Task Force for the Preservation of Agricultural Land, *Report of the Governor’s Task Force for the Preservation of Agricultural Land*, (Hartford: 1974).

¹⁶ Fellows, I.F. and Cody, P. “A Food Production Plan for Connecticut, 1980-2000, A Guide To The Purchase of Development Rights On Farmland,” University of Connecticut, 1979.

¹⁷ As of January 1, 2005, Farmland Preservation Program, Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

¹⁸ Based on statistics from Connecticut Department of Agriculture, 2004.

Section I – The Lay of the Land

¹ Jim Futtner, Farmer in Mike Swift, “Satellite Pinpoints State’s Sprawl New Computer Maps Show Loss Of Land In Every Town To Development Over Decades,” January 4, 2004, The Hartford Courant. And as Kip notes, the soil in the Connecticut lowlands can produce yields as high as anywhere. Kip Kolesinkas ,personal conversation 27 Aug. 2004.

² Mt Auburn Associates, Inc., *MetroHartford Millennium Project: An Economic development Action Agenda* (Somerville, 1998). Check back to the NRI website though because by the end of august there should be new regional level data released: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/>

³ Connecticut, *About Connecticut*, 2004, Connecticut Government, 19 July 2004, <<http://www.ct.gov/ctportal/cwp/view.asp?a=843&q=246434>>.

ENDNOTES

- ⁴ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid. 2,589 farms are less than 50 acres in size.
- ⁸ Statistic based on review of several data sources, including National Agricultural Statistics Service, *1997 Census of Agriculture*, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, as well as USDA/NRCS *1997 Natural Resources Inventory*. About half this acreage was active cropland, hay land, and pastureland, while the other half was comprised of the farmstead, woodlands, and wetlands that are a necessary part of farm operations. The Census of Agriculture measures the total acreage of the farm-so it includes land that is important to the farming operation though not cropped.
- ⁹ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>.
- ¹⁰ Based on the assumption that the percentage of loss in each given bracket is comparable even though the actual numbers of farmland loss over the entire time period are not due to a re-weighting of data in 2002 and retroactively to 1997 which give the NASS greater coverage and accuracy.
- ¹¹ In a survey of Connecticut dairy farmers, respondents reported that their families had been farming the same piece of land for an average of 85 years. Most of these farmers would like their farms to continue to operate. Over 80% responded that they planned to be in business for 5 years or more, and 42% responded they planned to expand their operations. However, nearly 16% responded that they had talked to a developer within the last 5 years about selling their land. Jeremy Foltz, "Summary Statistics: Connecticut Dairy Farmer Survey," (Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Connecticut, 1999).
- ¹² Robin Chesmer (CT Dairy Farmer and member of Very Alive), speech at Connecticut Rural Development Council meeting, 8 December 1999.
- ¹³ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *Land Values and Cash Rents: 2004 Summary*, 2004, USDA, 23 Aug. 2004, <<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/land0804.pdf>>; National Agricultural Statistics Service, *USDA to Measure Agricultural Land Values*, 2003, 25 Aug. 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/pdf/p03land.pdf>>; and *Agricultural Land Values*, 1998, 25 Aug. 2004, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/land0398.txt>.
- ¹⁴ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>> Second behind Massachusetts, which had a 52% increase.
- ¹⁵ Kip Kolesinskas (NRCS),
- ¹⁶ National Agricultural Statistics Service, "Land Values and Cash Rents: 2004 Summary." August 2004. <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/land0804.pdf>
- ¹⁷ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>.http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census02/volume1/ct/st09_1_061_061.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Robin Chesmer (CT Dairy Farmer and member of Very Alive), Interview, 9 June, 2004
- ¹⁹ Economic Research Service (USDA), "Land Use, Value, and Management: Agricultural Land Values," 2002, 27 Aug. 2004, <<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/LandUse/aglandvaluechapter.htm>>.
- ²⁰ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>.
- ²¹ National Agricultural Statistics Service, *2002 Census of Agriculture*, 2002, Washington DC, 25 August 2004, <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>> The average age of farmers in Connecticut is 55.4 years. This is slightly higher than the national average of 55 years of age.
- ²² For operations assessed at over 1 million dollars the estate tax this is an important consideration (Bonnie Burr, Agricultural Task Force number 3, 17 Aug. 2004).
- ²³ Bill Dakin personal conversation, 9 Aug. 2004.
- ²⁴ Thomas Zupane, et. al., "The Intricacies of Special-Use Valuation," in *The Tax Advisor*, July 2004, 434.
- ²⁵ In 2000 real estate values accounted for 79% of the total farm business assets. Economic Research Service (USDA), "Land Use, Value, and Management: Agricultural Land Values," 2002, 25 Aug. 2004, <<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/LandUse/aglandvaluechapter.htm>>.
- ²⁶ Harvard Design School, "Promoting Smart Growth in Connecticut," (Harvard, 2002) 5.
- ²⁷ Regional Plan Association, "APPENDIX: The Shape of Things to Come: Is Connecticut Sprawling?" in *Connecticut Economic Vitality and Land Use: A Report of the Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century*, (Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century, 2003) 13

²⁸ “Connecticut Economic Vitality and Land Use: A Report of the Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century,” (Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century, 2003) p. 10.

²⁹ Orfield, M. and Luce, T. *Connecticut Metropatterns: A Regional Agenda for Community and Prosperity in Connecticut*, Ameregis, Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, and the Office of Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Hartford, 2003, p. 7.

³⁰ Swift, Mike. “Satellite Pinpoints State’s Sprawl,” Hartford Courant, Jan 04, 2004.

Section II – Farmland Is Important

¹ \$502,521,000 dollars generated by agricultural sector in CT according to Lee and Leonard 2000 data. T. Lee and R.L. Leonard, “The Contribution of Agriculture to the Connecticut Economy,” in “*Connecticut Agriculture and Resources: 21st century Issues and Challenges*” based on papers for conference ‘Managing Risk: Opportunities and Outlook for Connecticut Agriculture,’ (University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, 2004) 13. Using Department of Commerce multipliers Lee and Leonard calculated the total household earnings and number of jobs based on the contribution of agricultural production to households and number of employed in all sectors. Economic multipliers multiply the initial value of product sales by the frequency of recirculation of those dollars within the community to determine the total impact of a business sector on the economy.

² T. Lee and R.L. Leonard, “The Contribution of Agriculture to the Connecticut Economy,” in “*Connecticut Agriculture and Resources: 21st century Issues and Challenges*” based on papers for conference ‘Managing Risk: Opportunities and Outlook for Connecticut Agriculture,’ (University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, 2004)13. and New England Agriculture Statistics Service, “2002 Cash Receipts,” 2003, 23 Aug. 2004, <http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/pdf/03cash.pdf>.

³ New England Agriculture Statistics Service, “2002 Cash Receipts,” 2003, 23 Aug. 2004, <http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/pdf/03cash.pdf>. (Dairy equals milk and hay receipts combined)

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Section III – Tools for Protecting Farmland

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