

# Farmland ConneCTions

Growing Opportunities for Connecticut's Farmers through  
Land Lease Agreements with Municipalities & Land Trusts

A project of UConn Cooperative Extension System, in partnership with  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and American Farmland Trust

# **Farmland ConneCTions**

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## *Leasing Farmland in Connecticut*

American Farmland Trust Seminar  
“Planning for the Future of Your Land”  
May 31 & June 1, 2012

To download a copy of the guide:  
<http://www.extension.uconn.edu/>



## Funding provided by:



# Leasing Farmland to Promote Access to Land and the Agricultural Economy





# Cost of Farmland

## 2010 Farm Real Estate values:

*(includes agriculture land and farm buildings)*

- *RI = \$13,600/acre*
- *MA = \$11,600/acre*
- ***CT = \$11,500/acre***
- *Northeast = \$4,690/acre*
- *National = \$2,140/acre*

*Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistical Service*



# Cost of Farmland

## *Trend in Farm Real Estate values:*

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Connecticut</b> \$/acre	12,100	12,700	12,700	12,000	11,500

*Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistical Service*



# Who relies on leased farmland in CT?

- 38% of principal farm operators  
(defined as the “person primarily responsible for the on-site, day-to-day operation of the farm”)
- 29% of all farmers

Source: USDA 2010 Census of Agriculture &  
[www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0828.xls](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0828.xls)



# Outreach Service

*(currently available)*

- Outreach to towns and land trusts to educate about farmland leasing
- One-on-One assistance developing leasing preferences for farmers and landowners (including towns)
- Online resource portal





# Additional Resources

- Farmland Restoration Program - CT Dept. of Agriculture:

“Authorized by Public Act 11-1, this voluntary program provides **matching grants of up to \$20,000 for restoration activities that increase the state's farmland resource base for agriculture, with an emphasis on prime and important farmland soils and on human and livestock food production.** It is expected that the program will be able to work with over 250 farms.

**A conservation plan is required** for participation (prepared by USDA NRCS or the North Central Conservation District/NCCD).

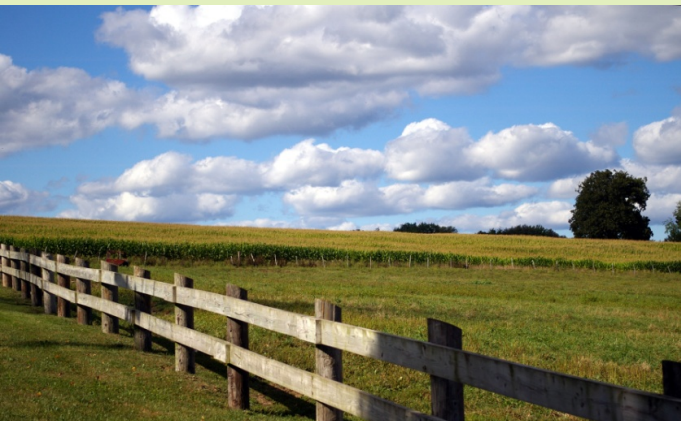
The Department of Agriculture will give **priority to projects targeting production of fruits and vegetables.** The agency will consider livestock, livestock feed, and support production second, with tertiary consideration given to other uses based on land use and acreage to be restored for agricultural production.

**Farmers can use the grants for a variety of restoration treatments,** including clearing and removal of trees, stumps, stones, and brush to create or restore agricultural use; installation of resource protection barriers to protect crop fields on restoration areas; restoration of shellfish beds or aquaculture ponds; and removal of invasive plants and hedgerow management for reclamation of overgrown fields, pastures, and meadows.”

*quoted and condensed from CT Dept of Ag press release issued 2/2/12*

# Additional Resources Cont.

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program – USDA/  
Natural Resources Conservation Service
- CT FarmLink – CT Dept. of Agriculture
- Additional farm and agriculture guides and  
publications





# Connecticut FarmLink

Connecting Farms and Farmers to Keep Connecticut Growing

[For New Farmers](#) | [Farm Transfer](#) | [Estate Planning](#) | [Farm Partnerships](#) | [CT FarmLink Associates](#) | [Financing](#) | [Resources](#) | [Biodiesel](#)

## Welcome to Connecticut FarmLink Program

Do you and your family have a plan for the farmland you own? Are you a young farmer who is looking for land? According to [state statute](#), The Connecticut FarmLink Program and website is designed to be a clearinghouse for the transition between generations of farmers with the goal of keeping farmland in production. Farmland is irreplaceable. There is a new generation of young farmers who want to be tomorrow's Stewards of the Land. But they do not have land to work.

We hope you use this site as a place to link people who have land to farm with people who want to farm but don't have land.

Help us to keep farmland working. Use this site to find farmland partners, to transition and plan, and help us keep farming in Connecticut, for generations to come.

Farm owners or farm seekers can use this site to share information with other owners and seekers registered with the FarmLink Program. Below you will find a summary of the procedures for the program. If you have any questions, or need further assistance, please call the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Marketing Division at (860) 713-2503.



## How Do I Find A Match?

The Connecticut FarmLink Program offers a free, abbreviated website listing for registered farm owners and registered farm seekers.

The following links provide lists of current opportunities available in the Connecticut FarmLink Program.

[Farm Seeker List](#)  
[Farm Owner List](#)

Staff in Department's Marketing Division can then send the full application from our listings to any registered program member as requested.

If you find a listing that looks promising, call (860) 713-2503. You will be asked for your own case number along with the case

## How to Join the Farm Link Program

Farm Owners and Farm Seekers must register by completing either a [Farm Seeker Application](#) or [Farm Owner Application](#) which includes a description of your farm or your needs for farmland. It is important this description is a true representation of your situation since it will serve as your advertisement on the website. You will be contacted by others based upon this description. Please mail

## What's Next?

After we receive your completed Application we will send you a confirmation letter including your assigned case number. The description you provided in your application will be added to the Connecticut FarmLink website along with your case number, which will serve as your only identification on the site. Published listings will never include your

# Understanding Lessors in CT

## Focus on Private Landowners, Land Trusts & Towns

### ***Why lease?***

- Financial
- Economic Growth
- Quality of Life

### ***For what?***

Mission & Objectives

### **To whom?**

- Considerations in Finding a Farmer
- Leasing Procedures

### **For how long?**

- Tenure Options....



# Tenure Options

- Short term lease
- Long term lease
- Rolling lease
- Very long term ground lease
- Licensing



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# Financials of Farmland Leasing

## ***Estimated benefit to landowner from land stewardship***

- After 3-5 years of not farming = \$1,500/acre or more to return the land to farming
- Benefit to landowner is \$300-500/acre a year

## ***What is my land worth?***

- Depends on the variables of the property for lease - length of lease, location, quality of soil, infrastructure (irrigation, storage, etc.)
- Depends on market demands for the area the property is located in
- Site suitability - NRCS Web Soil Survey: [www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov)  
CT Environmental Conditions Online: [www.cteco.uconn.edu](http://www.cteco.uconn.edu)



# Financials of Farmland Leasing

*Rates are calculated per acre, per year*

## Rough estimates of Farmland Leasing Rates

- good hay and a short-term lease: \$0 - \$50/acre (even more for alfalfa hay with a longer-term lease)
- hay and land in silage: \$0 - \$70/acre
- vegetable production in best soils (75-80% prime farmland soils): \$0 - \$150/acre (top price includes long-term lease and irrigation)
- veg. production outside of River Valley: \$0 - \$110/acre
- *As the ranges above attest, there are many variables to consider!*

## Lessor complaints:

- Farmer fails to pay rent on time
- Inadequate stewardship practices
- Failure of farmer to maintain structures
- Under-utilization of fields by tenant
- Concern about creating unfair competition with local farmers if tenant farmer comes from outside the community



# Farmer complaints:

- Lessor does not understand agriculture
- Lack of designated person or commission to make timely decisions about lease issues
- Maintenance issues – access gates, delays on road clearing, or possibly damage from utility work
- Damage from vandalism and poaching



# Landowner Considerations:

1. “Community Farms”
2. Stewardship of land
3. Using open space for agriculture



# 1. Community Farms

A Community Farm is typically a non-profit entity that leases a parcel from a municipality or land trust, with a mission to provide:

- a) Educational programs
- b) Job opportunities / service learning
- c) Production of food

**Source: Adapted from CT NOFA definition**





Community Farm *of* Simsbury



# ■ CFS Key Concepts

## Education

- Farm based relevant education for all ages

## Food Security

- Certified organic produce for families in need

# Education Programs

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graph TD; A[Education Programs] --> B[Summer Programs]; A --> C[School Year Programs]; A --> D[Incubator Farmer Program];
```

Summer  
Programs

School Year  
Programs

Incubator Farmer  
Program

## **Raised Bed Gardens - CFS Style!**

**Students from Mary Hooker School work together to build and seed two gardens**



# Food Security

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graph TD; A[Food Security] --> B[Gifts of Love]; A --> C[Simsbury Social Services]; A --> D[Hartford Food System]; A --> E[Billings Forge Community Works]; A --> F[Foodshare];
```

Gifts of Love

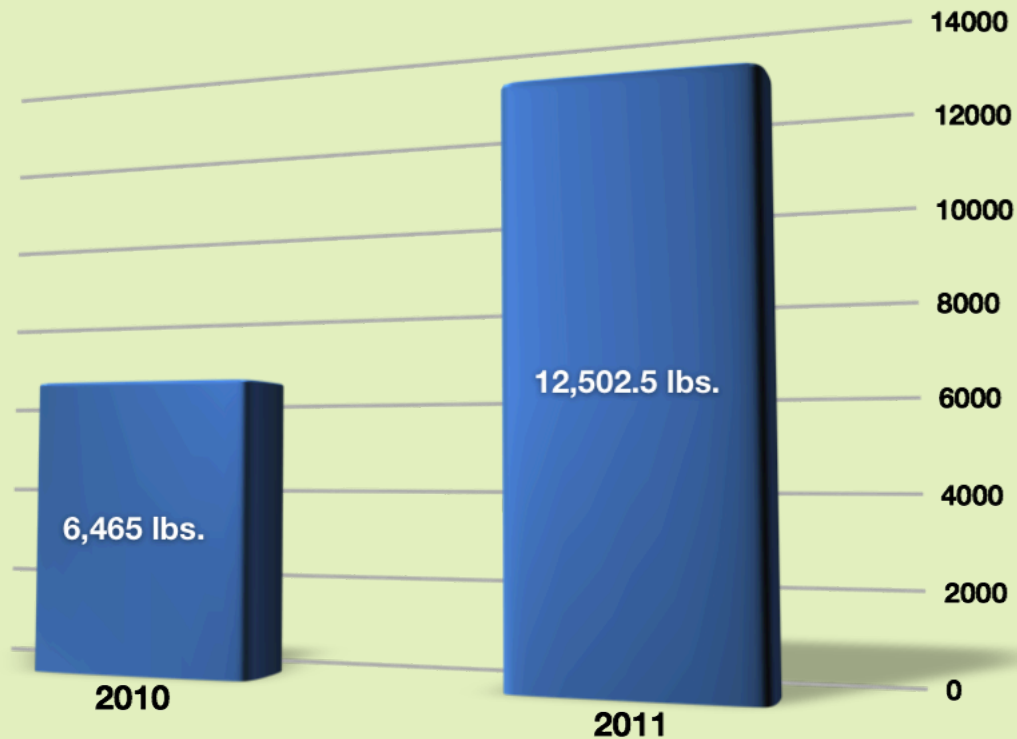
Simsbury  
Social Services

Hartford Food System

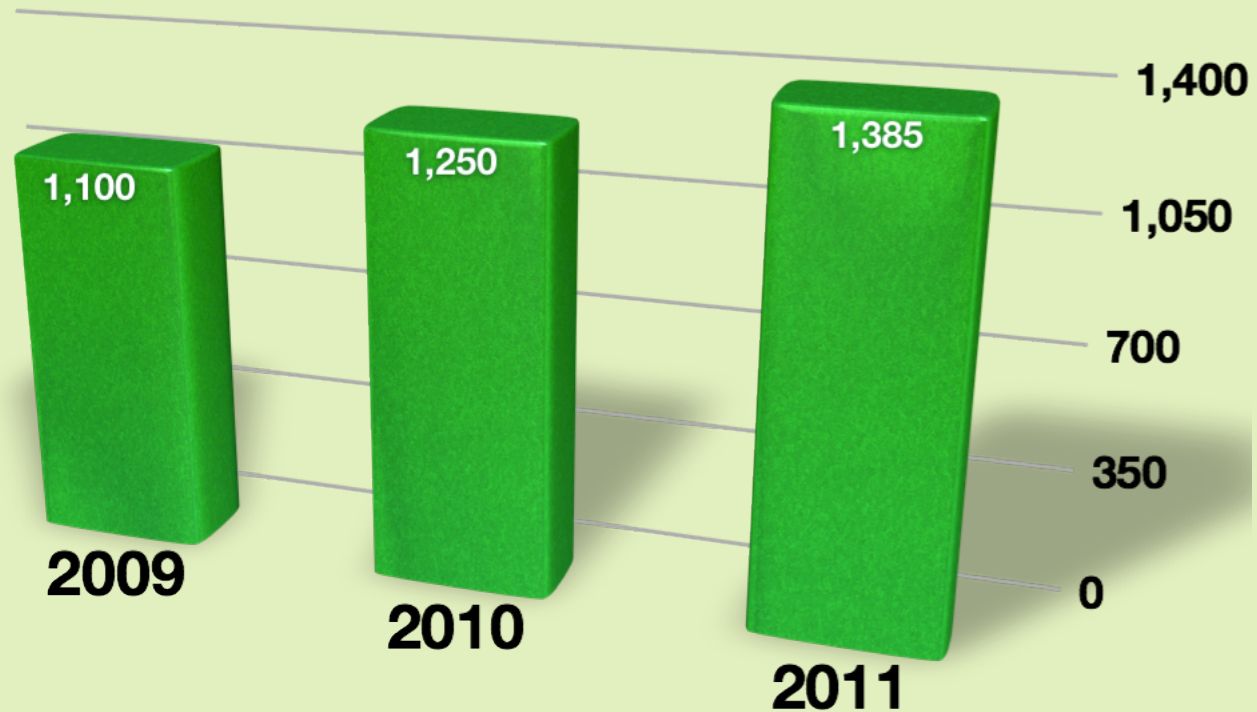
Billings Forge  
Community Works

Foodshare

## Pounds of Certified Organic Produce Donated 2010 & 2011



# Volunteer Hours





## 2. Stewardship

<div> Less Sustainable Thinking <div> → → → → → </div> More Sustainable Thinking </div>			
Get through this year	Make or break in the next few years	Transfer farm to kids or to another farmer	Stewardship for many generations
Whole field soil inversion to same depth each year to prepare for planting	Subsoiling to reduce compaction plus whole field soil inversion to same depth	Reduced tillage in strips to disturb soil only as much as needed in crop rows	Reduced tillage in combination with cover crops, crop rotation, and/or permanent beds for crops



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## 3. Using open space\*

### Probably Not Possible

- Lack of public access (e.g. fencing of entire property)
- Retail on site
- Long term leases that create sense of monopolization of property
- Permanent structures
- Permanent or temporary housing for farmer and staff

*This applies to properties acquired using State of Connecticut funding through the Open Space & Watershed Acquisition Program*

## **3. Using open space cont.\***

### Probably Possible

- Periodic closing of public access for application of fertilizer, pesticide, herbicides
- Using farm lanes/tractor lanes as public access
- Short term leases (e.g. up to 5 years)
- Hay or Silage, Organic farming, Community Garden, Portable structures (such as high tunnels), CSA farm
- Rebuilding on an existing foundation
- Using existing structures for storage

*This applies to properties acquired using State of Connecticut funding through the Open Space & Watershed Acquisition Program*

# Landowner Self-Assessment

## Vision for Agricultural Use

- What are your purposes and interests relating to agriculture?
- What are your goals for leasing agriculture?
- How do you imagine the farm being used in 2, 5, 10 or 20 years?
- What agricultural activities will you permit and who, when, how and why?



# Landowner Self-Assessment

- Assess your properties/land for farming
- Identify how agriculture best meshes with your vision/mission
- Consider factors involved in leasing your land for farming
- Consider typical conservation provisions
- Consider the special case of helping beginning farmers



# **18 ELEMENTS OF A GOOD LEASE**





# 18 Elements of a Good Lease

1. Identification of the Parties
2. Description of the Property
3. Durational Terms of the Lease
4. Rent or Payment
5. Taxes
6. Utilities
7. Uses of the Property
8. Entry
9. Maintenance and Repairs



# **18 Elements of a Good Lease cont.**

10. Alterations and Improvements to the Site
11. Stewardship Guidelines
12. Additional Limits/Restrictions on Farm Practices
13. Subletting
14. Default Provisions
15. Security Deposit
16. Monitoring/Reporting
17. Insurance/Liability
18. Condemnation/Casualty Loss



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