

Leasing Farmland in New Jersey

Landowner Worksheet: Planning for a Lease



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Planning Worksheet – Identifying Your Goals and Assessing Your Land

When considering a lease agreement for your land, it is important to clearly define your goals and expectations at the beginning of the process. Thinking critically about what you need and want before entering into a lease can help you avoid problems later.

As a landowner, also keep in mind that your objectives and your expectations for the land might be very different from those of a farmer. While a farmer typically focuses on what is required to run a successful farm business, you might be concerned about other factors, such as those specific to your vision for the land.

Choosing to make your land available for farming can also be beneficial for both parties and for the land. Reviewing and answering the questions in this worksheet – and spending time to research any additional information needed – can start you on the path to developing a lease that addresses all of your interests and concerns, as well as those of a prospective farmer tenant.

As you go through the worksheet, you may need to consult with other resources or professionals to help answer some questions. Some of these resources are noted. For a more comprehensive review of leasing considerations, including information that could help with writing a lease, please see the companion guidebook, “Leasing Farmland in New Jersey: A Guide for Landowners and Farmers.”



Your Farm Vision

There are many reasons landowners choose to make their land available for agriculture. Whether your vision includes supporting a specific type of farming, maintaining farmland tax assessment on the land, or something else, spending some time to think about your goals and expectations for the property can help establish a framework for the lease you create and the leasing discussions you have with potential farmers. This initial step in the planning process may also bring to light some ideas you may not have explored or aspects of a lease relationship you may not have considered.

What is your vision for the property?

Who else is a decision-maker for the land (e.g., other family members or business partners)? Do they have a different vision for the property?

What is your level of involvement with the property now? (For instance, do you live there, visit on weekends, hold the land as an investment, or harvest timber products?)

What level of involvement do you want to have with the property in the coming years? How much time are you willing to commit to the management of the land?

Are there specific elements of your property that are important to you, or that you would like kept in their current condition (e.g., a specific view or a walking trail along a field edge)?

Are there any things that you do not want on your land (e.g., access by the public for a farm market or pick-your-own operation)?

Are there certain types of agriculture you think your property would be well-suited for?

What are your financial goals or requirements for the property? (What rental rate do you think you need? What is the average rental rate in your area? Note: You can research basic rental rates through the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service at [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide to NASS Surveys/Cash Rents by County/index.asp](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide%20to%20NASS%20Surveys/Cash%20Rents%20by%20County/index.asp).)

Your Farmland

Knowing the basics about your land can assist you in many ways. Researching and answering the following questions can help you align your vision for the land with the land's agricultural capabilities, understand what a fair rental rate is for the land, and increase your comfort level in talking with farmers about what you have available on your property.

How much land are you making available? (How many acres are tillable? How many acres are forested? What areas would be included in the lease?)

What is the predominant soil type? (Note: You can use USDA's Web Soil Survey to create a soil map of your property and research general information about your soil types. See <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>.)

Are there areas of your farm that are frequently flooded or very wet at certain times of the year? Can they usually be farmed?

What are the previous agricultural uses of your land? What crops have been grown?
(Previous uses may be indicative of what the ground can support.)

Are there any restrictions on the use of your land? Are there any easements on any portion that will be leased (e.g., a utility, drainage, or farmland preservation easement)?

Is all or part of the property enrolled in a conservation program (e.g., through a USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) or Farm Service Agency (FSA) contract)?

Is there a farm conservation plan on the property? Will the tenant farmer be required to implement the plan or to maintain conservation practices already implemented?

Is some or all of your land certified for organic production? Will the farmer be required to maintain this certification?

What infrastructure is available on your farm? Will it be included in the lease? (Some infrastructure might include housing, utilities, fenced areas, barns, storage areas, market areas, and greenhouses.) If infrastructure is not available, would you allow a farmer to make improvements to the property? Under what conditions?

What types of wildlife do you see on the farm? Does the wildlife damage the crops? Will the tenant farmer or some other group be granted permission to hunt the land to reduce wildlife pressure on crops? If not, is there another option for wildlife-control?

Is there a farm well (or other water) available for irrigation and farm needs? How much water does the well produce (gallons/minute)?

Are there any competing adjacent uses (e.g., residential, commercial, or industrial?)

Additional notes:

Additional Resources

As you clarify your goals and assess your land, you may find it helpful to consult with agricultural professionals and review other resources. “Leasing Farmland in New Jersey: A Guide for Landowners and Farmers” contains a listing of agencies, organizations, and other resources that may be of assistance for understanding the soil, water, and other natural resources on your land, as well as farm businesses and the agricultural industry in New Jersey. The guidebook also includes information on leasing considerations, creating and maintaining a lease, sample leases, and leasing profiles.

For a printed copy of the guidebook, contact the State Agriculture Development Committee at (609) 984-2504 or the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey at (908) 371-1111. The leasing guidebook also is available online at <http://nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmlink/resources/leaseguide.pdf>.



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www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc

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