

UNION COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION SURVEY

1. How much farmland, in acres, do you own in Union County?

2. How many years have you been a farmland owner in Union County?

3. Is there a farming operation on the farmland you own in Union County?

4. How large is the farming operation (include all owned and leased land), in acres?

5. Do you actively participate in the farming operation on the farmland you own in Union County (i.e., do you help make the day-to-day decisions on what to plant, when to plant, when to harvest, etc.)? If the answer is "no" please skip to question 7.

6. In what year did you become involved with the farming operation?

7. What is the primary enterprise, in terms of gross sales, on the farmland that you own in Union County (e.g., dairy, beef, vegetable)?

8. Approximately what percentage of your net family income came from farming in 1996?

Union County, PA
1997

9. Over the next five years, do you intend to (please check all that apply):

- Expand your farming operation (e.g., farm more acres, invest in new buildings and livestock)
- Scale back your farming operation (e.g., farm fewer acres, sell equipment, reduce size of herd)
- Make no changes to your farming operation
- Sell a portion of your farmland for nonagricultural purposes
- Sell all of your farmland for nonagricultural purposes
- Relocate all of your farming operation outside of Union County
- Relocate part of your farming operation outside of Union County
- Transfer all of your farming operation to a family member
- Transfer part of your farming operation to a family member
- Other

10. What are your reasons for the above decision(s)?

11. Union County has approximately 65,000 acres of farmland. This represents a loss of 25,000 acres of farmland in the past 35 years, largely to nonfarm development. Is the loss of farmland of concern to you?

no concern moderate concern large concern not sure

12. Union County has had a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program since 1989. Through the program, the county purchases development rights on farmland from willing sellers. When the rights are sold, a conservation easement is placed on the property, which restricts the use of the land to agricultural purposes. Landowners retain full ownership and control of their land. Have you heard of the county's PDR program?

yes no

13. How effective do you think the Union County PDR program has been in protecting agricultural land?

not effective somewhat effective very effective not sure

14. The Board of County Commissioners has allocated \$50,000 per year for the Union County PDR program. Coupled with state funding, this has not been enough funding to satisfy the demand from landowners who want to create conservation easements. If additional funding was available to support the Union County PDR program, how effective do you think the program could be in protecting agricultural land?

_____ not effective _____ somewhat effective _____ very effective _____ not sure

15. If additional local funding is needed to support the Union County PDR program, which of the following funding options would you favor? (Please check all that apply):

- _____ Issuing bonds
- _____ Increasing property taxes countywide
- _____ Reallocating existing property tax revenues to the PDR program from other programs
- _____ Reallocating county general funds to the PDR program from other programs
- _____ Other

16. The following is a list of possible initiatives the county could take to keep farming economically viable. Please rate each by indicating how helpful you think each would be in making Union County agriculture more profitable. A description of some of the terms used below is provided on the last page of the survey:

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Not Sure
A. Purchase of development rights program	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Transferable development rights program	_____	_____	_____	_____
C. Establishing an agriculture development specialist role to promote, market, and generally provide economic development support for agriculture	_____	_____	_____	_____
D. Offering additional use-value tax assessments for active and productive farms	_____	_____	_____	_____

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Not Helpful
E. Organizing farm tours and other education programs for nonfarmers/consumers	_____	_____	_____	_____
F. Agricultural protection zoning	_____	_____	_____	_____
G. Urban growth boundaries	_____	_____	_____	_____

17. If you have any additional comments, please write them below.

GLOSSARY

- **Agricultural Protection Zoning:** The generic term that embraces ordinance provisions intended to protect the agricultural land base by using some or all of the following provisions: (1) density is low, generally one dwelling unit per 25 or 30 acres; (2) requiring nonfarm residences to be built on small lots with the balance of the land in the tract restricted to agricultural use; (3) limiting the kinds of uses permitted to those that are compatible with farming; (4) discouraging division of land into small lots; and (5) providing for setbacks or buffers between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. There are three types of agricultural protection zoning. Large minimum lot sizing agricultural protection zoning requires minimum lot sizes of 30 or more acres. Fixed area-based allowance agricultural protection zoning specifies the number of dwelling units that can be built on a tract in proportion to the size of the tract. The ratio is fixed; e.g. one unit for each 25 acres, or one unit for each 40 acres. Sliding scale area-based allowance agricultural protection zoning prescribes the ag. uses that are permitted in the agricultural zone and prohibits all others.
- **Purchase of Development Rights Program:** A program under which a government agency or nonprofit organization buys the development rights of land from willing landowners, and then places on that land a conservation easement that permits it to prohibit practices, uses and development of the land. Generally, the future use of the land is limited to agriculture. The program does not give the buyer the right to develop the land. It simply permits the buyer to extinguish those rights in return for appropriate compensation. Landowners retain full ownership and control of their land.
- **Transferable Development Rights Program:** A program under which owners of properties in a "protection area" (i.e., an agricultural area) can sell rights to develop land to owners of properties in a "receiving area" (land designated for high-density development). Land in the protection area is permanently restricted and land in the receiving area may be developed at a higher density than would otherwise be possible under existing zoning.
- **Urban Growth Boundaries:** A line drawn around a city or town to define the limits of growth for a specified period (e.g. 15 or 20 years). Development is encouraged within the boundary and discouraged or prohibited outside the boundary.
- **Use-Value Assessment Program:** A program that permits eligible agricultural land to be assessed at its agricultural use value, rather than its fair market value, while it remains in eligible use. Pennsylvania's Clean and Green Program, established in 1974 through Act 319, is a use value assessment program. The average reduction in taxes per acre through the Pennsylvania program has been approximately 50 percent.

Please return in the enclosed self addressed envelope to:

*American Farmland Trust
1920 N Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036*

COMMISSIONERS OF UNION COUNTY

County Commissioners

Ruth W. Zimmerman, *Chairman*

W. Max Bossert, *Vice Chairman*

Harry A. VanSickle, *Secretary*

Solicitor

James E. Persing

Chief Clerk

Diana L. Robinson



103 SOUTH SECOND STREET - LEWISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17837-1996 - 717/524-8686 - FAX: 717/524-8635

February 24, 1997

Dear Farmland Owner:

The Union County Board of County Commissioners and American Farmland Trust are working together to determine how, if at all, the county should improve its farmland protection program. AFT is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting agricultural resources. Since 1980, AFT has been helping county governments throughout the nation, including in Pennsylvania, create public policies and programs that address the threats confronting farmland.

As part of its work in Union County, AFT is conducting a farmland protection survey. We urge you to complete the enclosed survey because your input and ideas are important. We apologize for the length of the survey, but it is necessary in order to identify the issues affecting farming in Union County. Please return the survey to AFT (address is on last page of survey) by March 17, 1997 in the envelope provided.

We strongly support this project and encourage your participation. If you have any questions, please call Ruth Zimmerman at 524-8686, David Epler at 523-1459 or Henry Sanders at 922-1202. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Ruth Zimmerman
Chairperson
Board of County
Commissioners

Henry Sanders
Chairperson
Union County
Conservation District

David Epler
Chairperson
Agricultural Land
Preservation Board