



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service
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PROTOCOL FOR IDENTIFYING FARMLAND OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE IN MASSACHUSETTS

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Additional farmland of local importance. In some local areas there is concern for certain additional farmlands for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops, even though these lands are not identified as having national or statewide importance. Where appropriate, these lands are to be identified by the local agency or agencies concerned. In places, additional farmlands of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance. - Code of Federal Regulations Title 7, part 657.5d as amended Sept. 25, 2000.

Farmland of local importance is not prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance, but is additional farmland of local concern suited to the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Inventories of important farmland soils do not constitute a designation of any land area to a specific land use.

The designation of farmland of local importance does not negate applicable state, local, or federal environmental regulations or policies.

Steps to establish farmland of local importance:

1. Ensure the USDA soil survey map units representing the land of concern are not currently classified as prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance.
 - Soil survey information can be obtained at Web Soil Survey:
<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>
2. Document empirical evidence that the land of concern is important for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and/or oilseed crops. This can include Farm Service Agency crop history records and/or aerial imagery that evidences multiple year use in crop production.
3. If the land of concern is represented by soil survey map units comprised predominantly of hydric soils (poorly drained and very poorly drained), document evidence of historical use and/or suitability to produce food, feed, fiber, forage, and/or oilseed crops. "Historical" is defined as prior to December 23, 1985 in accordance with the wetlands conservation provision of the Food Security Act of 1985. Typically, these are areas where soil saturation has been maintained at a depth that does not impede farm operations and crop productivity during the growing season in years of normal precipitation by drainage ditches and/or subsurface drainage.
 - Wetland areas manipulated after Dec. 23, 1985 to enable the production of a commodity crop may be out of compliance with the wetlands provision of the Food Security Act and will not be recognized as farmland of local importance.
4. In writing, formally petition the NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts to recognize the soil survey map units representing the land of concern as farmland of local importance. Submit evidence of importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and/or oilseed crops, and compliance with the wetland conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 if applicable, as described above.