

Farmland Protection for the Future

Midwest Easement Toolkit Webinar Series



Session Overview

- Farmland Protection Toolkit: Farm Viability Programs
- Research Review: Outcomes of Farmland Protection
- Viability Implementation: Soil and Water Conservation Grants and Wildlife Fencing Grants

American Farmland Trust

SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



PROTECT FARMLAND



PROMOTE SOUND FARMING PRACTICES



KEEP FARMERS ON THE LAND

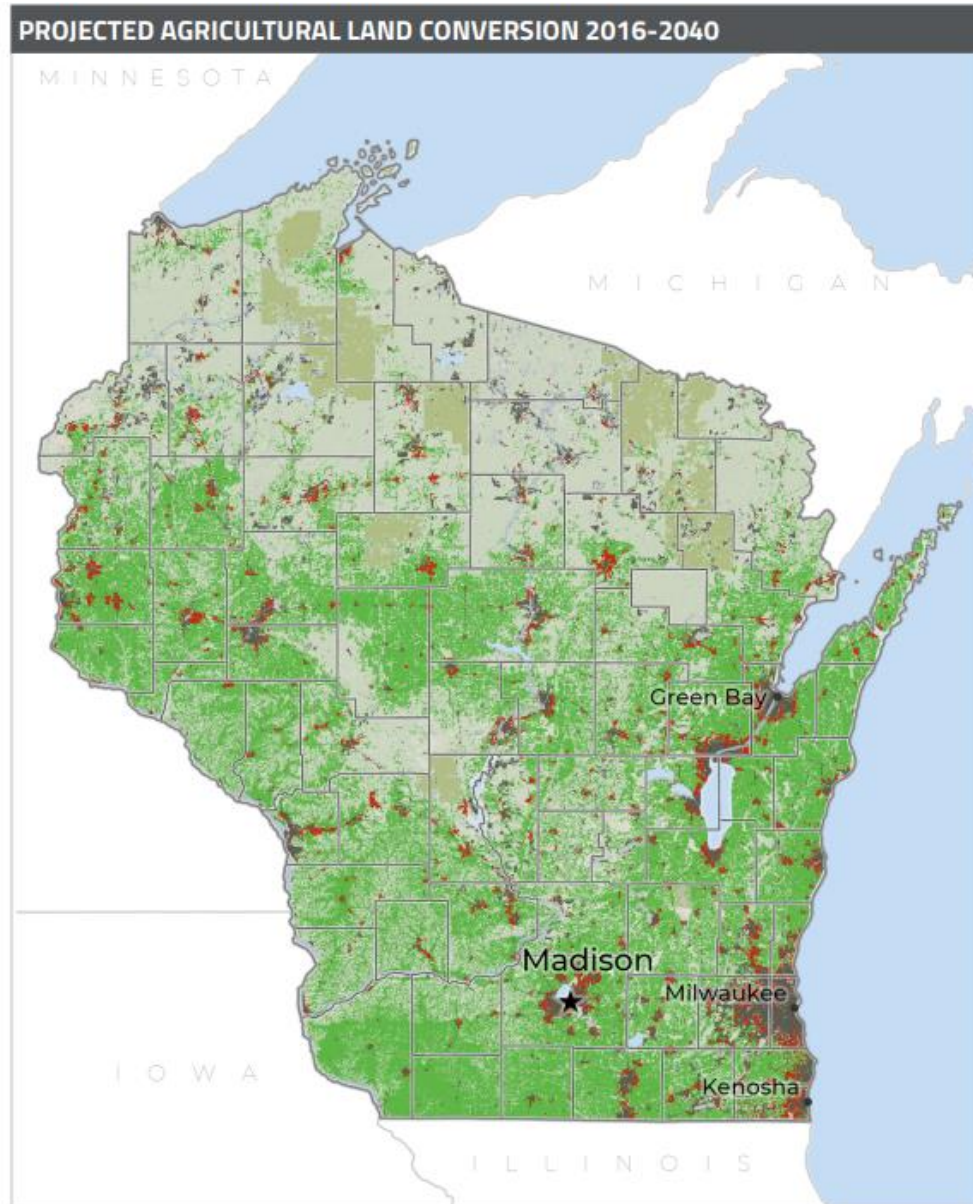
**No Farms
No Food®**


American Farmland Trust

Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership



Projected Conversion 2016-2040



Wisconsinites will pave over, fragment, or compromise

515,200 acres
of farmland.

That's the equivalent of losing

2,400 farms,
\$377 million
in farm output, and
6,400 jobs
based on county averages.¹

67% of the conversion
will occur on Wisconsin's
Nationally Significant land.²

Hardest-hit counties:

- ▶ **Dane**
- ▶ **Waukesha**
- ▶ **St. Croix**

Wisconsin Farmland
Protection Partnership



Agricultural
Conservation
Easements



Land
Management



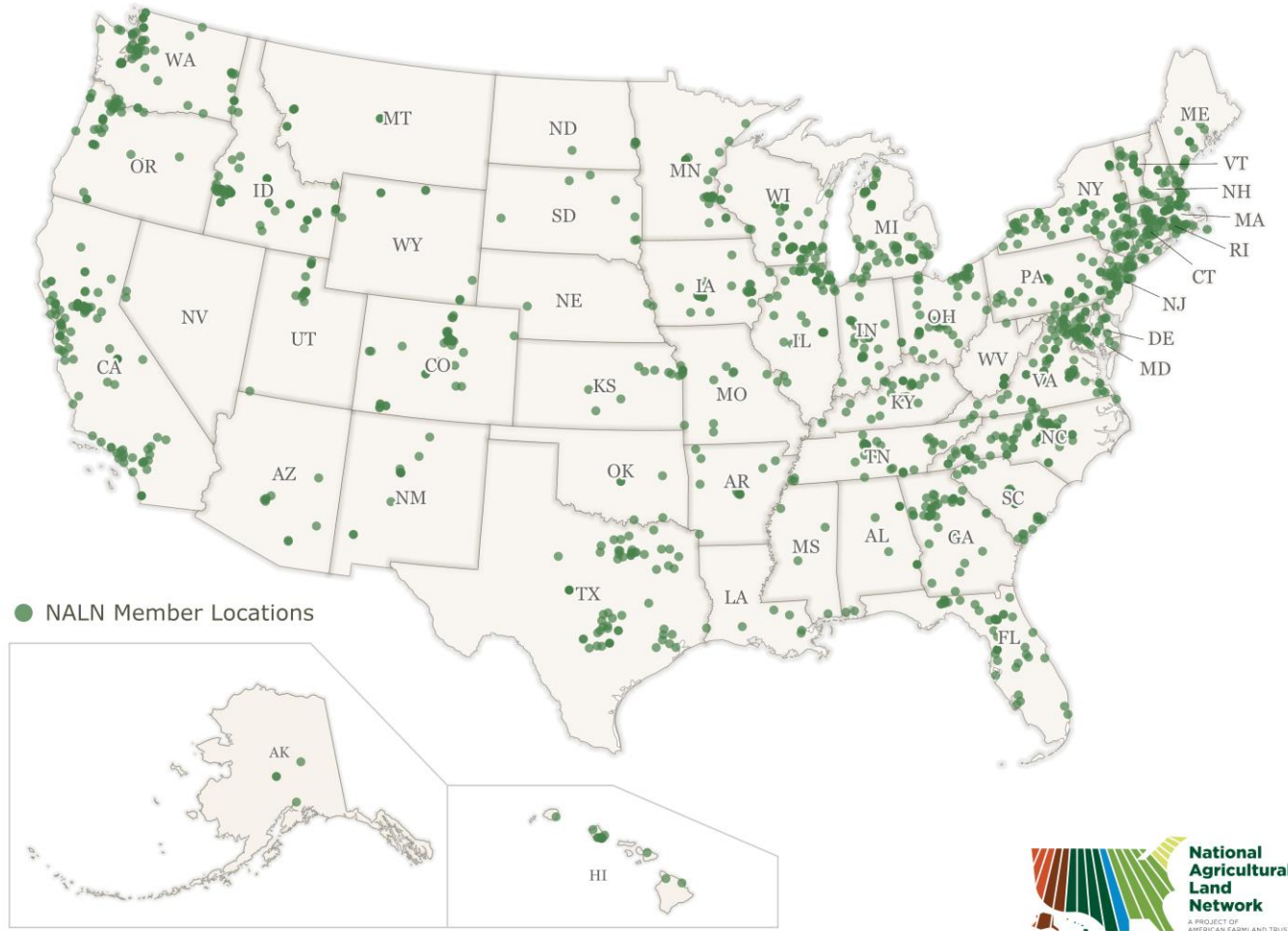
Outreach &
Education



Demonstration
Sites

The National Agricultural Land Network (NALN)

National Agricultural Land Network (NALN) Members as of December 2025



- Membership in the Network is free, and people can sign up as an individual or as an organization where all staff are eligible for benefits
- NALN products and services include:
 - Informational Webinars
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program- Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) Resources and Support
 - Workshops
 - State, Regional, and Topical Roundtables
 - Online Community Platform & Resource Library
 - Monthly Network Newsletter
- Access 1,600+ like minds by joining the NALN at <https://farmland.org/national-agricultural-land-network>
- Join the NALN BPS community today for details on the next quarterly BPS roundtable.

Land Transfer Navigators (LTN)

- Multi-year initiative in partnership with the NALN and NRCS, focused on farm transfer
- Offering grants to farmers and ranchers
- Training service providers as "Navigators" to provide direct 1:1 support
- Building regional networks to strengthen local support
- Launching a virtual transfer resource hub with tools, guidance, and stories from farmers

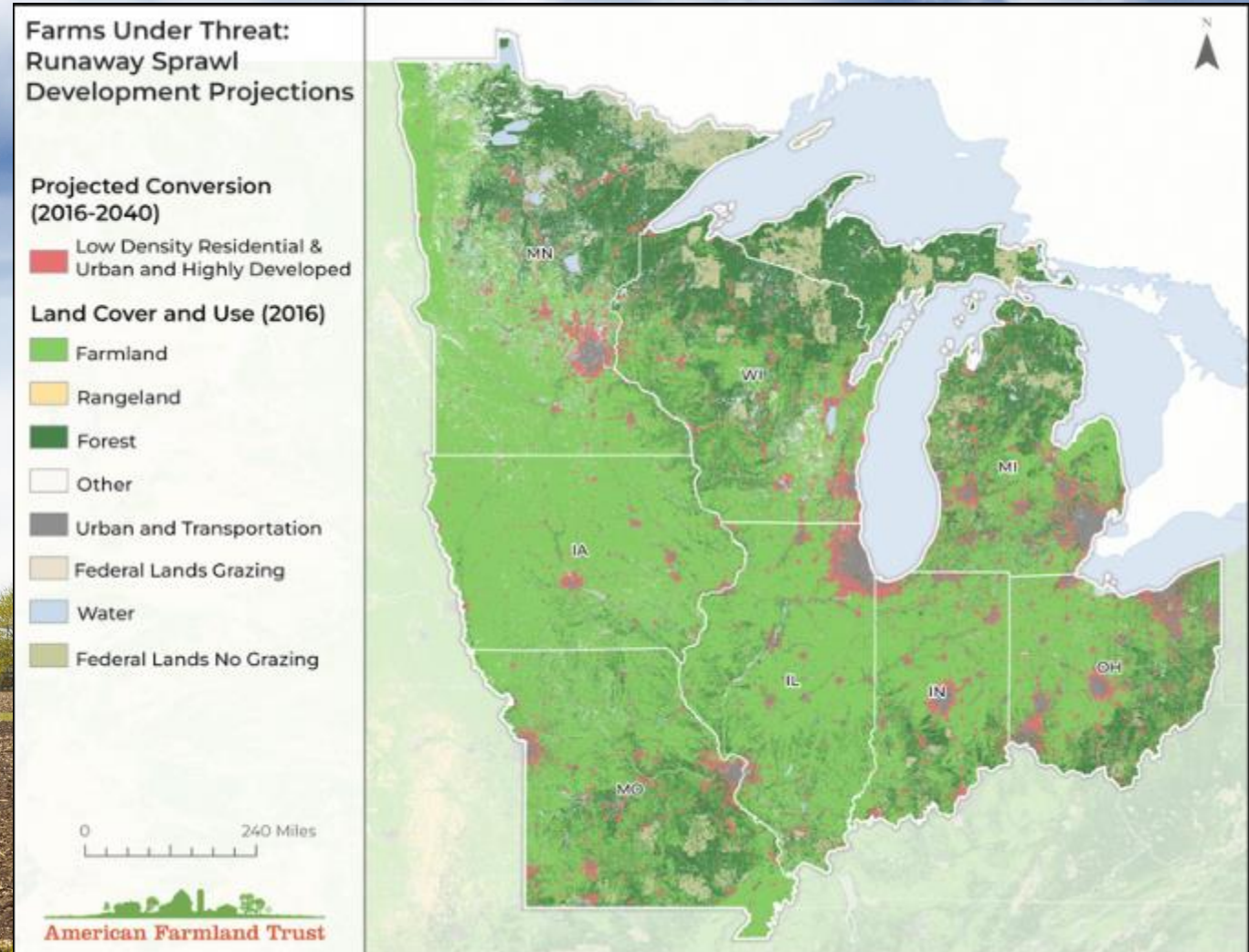


Why protect farmland?

We are losing our best farmland. Forever.

Protection Toolbox

- Agricultural conservation easements
- Succession planning
- Land access
- Planning for agriculture
- Viability programs



Agricultural Conservation Easements

- A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization or governmental agency
- Keeps land available for farming and ranching
- Limits certain uses and activities that are not compatible with agriculture
- Most are permanent

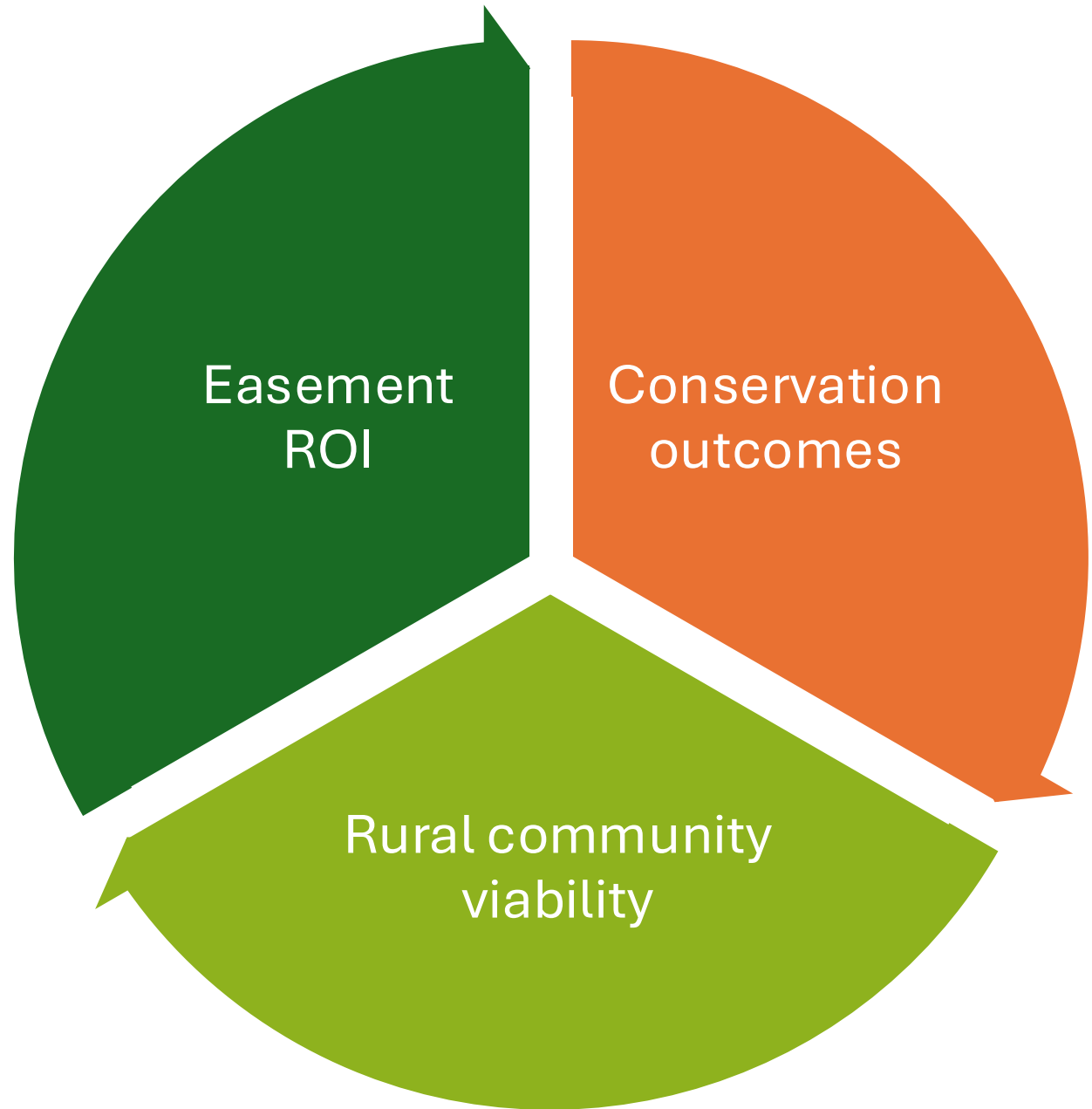


What is farm viability?

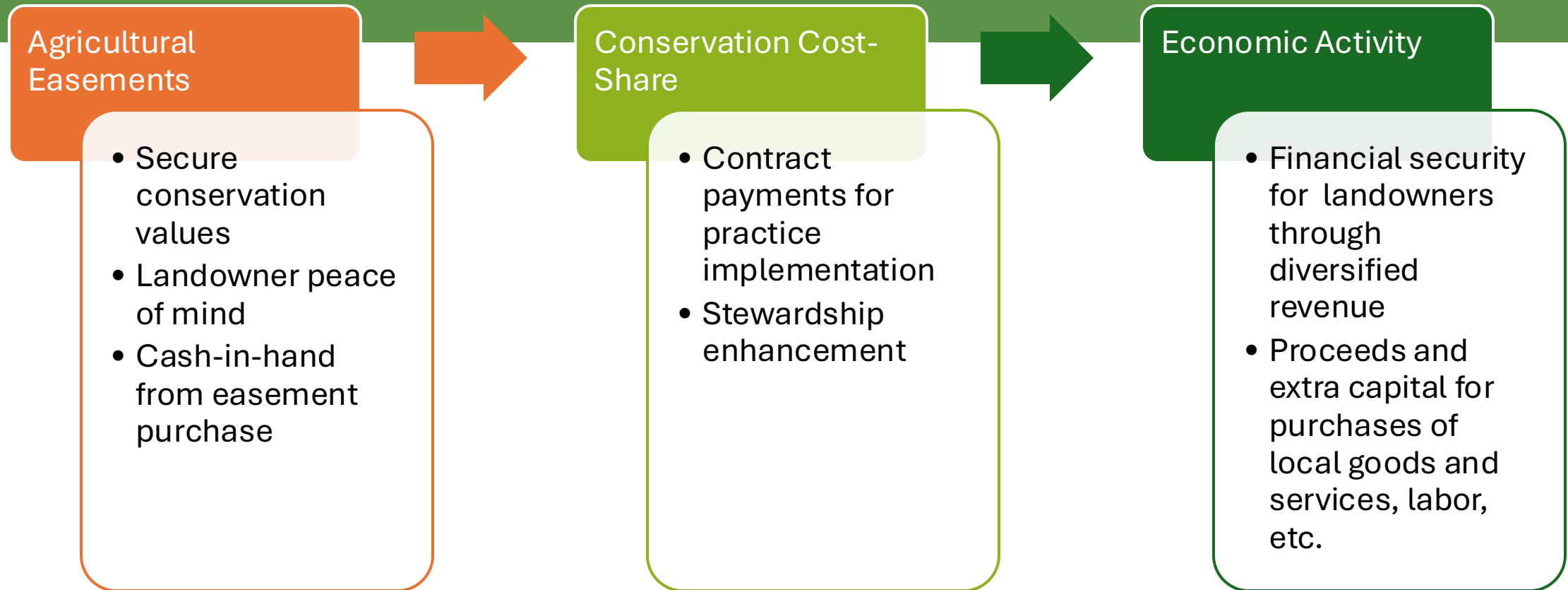
Strategies and programs that enhance the profitability of a farm business.



Why is farm viability important?



Toolbox Implementation: WI Farmland Protection Partnership



Federal Viability Programs

- Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)
- Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) Programs
- Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) Grants
- Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG)



State Viability Programs

- Agricultural District Programs
- Farm Building and Equipment Extensions
- Property Tax Relief Programs
- Right-to-Farm Laws



Local Viability Programs

- Land Use and Zoning Ordinances
- Agricultural Commission and Advisory Boards
- Geographic Preference Procurement Policies



Activity:

What viability programs have had or would have the most impact on farm businesses in your geography?

Research Review: Easements, Conservation, and Economic Impacts

- Outcomes: Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program
 - Protected farmland in high-pressure areas
 - Land acquisition and loan downpayment
 - Encouraged conservation practices
 - Business investments

CHANGE	#	INITIATED CHANGE (%)
Expand operations	385	43%
Change crop or livestock type or number	383	31%
Add renewable energy facilities	384	16%
Diversify marketing options by selling produce directly to consumers	380	15%
Add processing facilities or businesses	382	10%
Install a greenhouse or high tunnel	381	9%
Diversify marketing options by selling produce to intermediaries	378	9%
Install retail facility	380	8%

Research Review: Easements, Conservation, and Economic Impacts

NUMBER OF PRACTICES ADOPTED	ALL OWNERS (N = 388)	PERCENT OF ALL OWNERS	OWNER-OPERATORS (N = 255)	PERCENT OF OWNER-OPERATORS	NON-OPERATING LANDOWNERS (N = 133)	PERCENT OF NOLS
At least one	362	93%	245	96%	117	88%
At least two	335	86%	230	90%	105	79%
At least three	303	78%	214	84%	89	67%
No practices	26	7%	10	4%	16	12%

Number of practices adopted by FRPP landowners.

Conservation Practice Adoption: Permanence Effect

CONSERVATION PRACTICE	#	% ADOPTING
Conservation tillage	378	63
Nutrient management practices	368	59
Buffers along streams or field edges	385	59
Cover crops or green manure crops	378	57
Rotational grazing	376	39
Crop or livestock diversification	364	38
Grassed waterways	368	37
Cropland converted to perennial crops	375	36
Integrated pest management	369	34
Subsurface and surface drainage	368	31
Extended rotations	372	31
Compost, biochar, or other soil amendments	371	31
Pond(s), sedimentation basin(s), or well(s)	370	27
Fish and wildlife practices	366	24
Rangeland management	360	21
Irrigation	367	20
In-field buffer strips	364	20
Organic production or transition to organic	364	15
Terraces	362	8

Note: NRCS Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities are highlighted in bold type and green shading.

Economic Impacts of Farmland Protection in Wisconsin

The Impact



A \$15-million investment in agricultural conservation easements would:

Investments in agricultural conservation easements yield indirect/induced **economic activity** from:



Grow Wisconsin's Economy:

Yield a total economic impact of **\$27.9 million** when easement funding is granted to resource-efficient² farmers.



Farm employee wages.



Create Agricultural Jobs:

Create **152 jobs** and generate **\$7.4 million** in labor income.



Purchases for seed, equipment, and other farm supplies.



Keep Farmland Farmland:

Permanently protect **6,400 acres** of farmland across **27 farms**³.



Purchases made by farm employees.