



Programs and Services

A Guide for Municipalities

October 2014

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October 2014

Dear Mayors, First Selectmen, and Town Managers:

When I served as a municipal leader, I found it helpful when state government assisted me in achieving community goals.

In my current position, serving as Connecticut's agriculture commissioner, I see the vital roles agriculture plays in every city and town in the state. Whether your municipality is home to land used for the production of vegetables, fruits, horticultural crops, tobacco, hay, shellfish, or livestock, and/or for the purposes of hosting a farmers' market, it is part of Connecticut's important agricultural land base and economic sector.

Preserving, promoting, and growing agriculture in our communities provides a wealth of opportunities and benefits. The University of Connecticut has estimated the state's agricultural sector contributes \$3.5 billion to Connecticut's economic activity and employs as many as 28,000 people.

Interest in agriculture is on the rise in Connecticut. According to USDA's Census of Agriculture, the state added more than 1,000 farms between 2007 and 2012, bringing its total to nearly 6,000. This 22 percent increase in five years was the highest in New England and opposite the national trend. Connecticut's land in farms increased by eight percent over the same period.

Agriculture changes with time, as do all businesses. Recently, we have seen growth in smaller farms in every region of the state, along with a sharp increase in the number of young and new farmers. It is exciting to see young people choosing to put down roots and establish careers here in Connecticut. As municipal leaders, you have an opportunity to support the growth of these agricultural businesses, which by nature represent long-term commitments to their communities.

This guide was created to help inform and educate you and your staff about the programs and assistance offered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to assist you in encouraging, growing, and sustaining agriculture in your municipality.

I look forward to working with you to Grow Connecticut Farms and to hearing about the agricultural success stories in your communities.

Sincerely,

Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner
Connecticut Department of Agriculture

I. Connecticut Department of Agriculture Overview

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) was established in 1925, replacing the State Board of Agriculture created in 1866.

DoAg has statutory responsibility for a wide range of programs involving animal health, aquaculture, milk safety, agricultural commodities, licensing, and more. In addition, it has numerous responsibilities for agricultural development and resource preservation, including the promotion of Connecticut Grown farm products, management of Connecticut's Regional Market in Hartford, and administration of numerous grants to enhance farm viability and resource stewardship.

Connecticut's Public Act 490, the current-use property tax program established in 1963, and its farmland preservation program established in 1978 to protect agricultural land in perpetuity through the purchase of development rights, were among the first programs of their kind in the nation and have made Connecticut a leader in the protection of critical farm and forest lands over the last half-century.

As demands on the agency have accelerated, the Department of Agriculture has, over time, experienced significant reductions in staffing levels through attrition. Like other state and local government entities, DoAg has found ways to do more with less in recent years, streamlining operations and increasing efficiencies, in part through strategic partnerships.

Paramount among those partnerships is the agency's work with local municipalities to grow agriculture and protect public health and safety in matters related to farming and domestic animals, both locally and statewide.

Agriculture contributes \$3.5 billion and nearly 28,000 jobs to the state's economy, according to University of Connecticut estimates, along with additional, significant social and environmental benefits. Cost of municipal services studies have shown agriculture contributes more to the local tax base than it requires in services (comparable to commercial and industrial development), all while providing nutritious food and other essential products, working landscapes, open space, and an overall enhanced quality of life for residents.

DoAg is committed to helping local communities realize the many benefits that agriculture offers. Following is an overview of some of the agency's programs and initiatives that can assist Connecticut's municipalities and their leaders. Details can be found online at www.CTGrown.gov or by calling the agency at 860-713-2500.

II. Municipal Grant Programs

DoAg encourages municipalities to participate in these programs, and is available to each as it works to grow and sustain the benefits of agriculture in its community.

FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM (FMNP) FOR SENIORS

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$18 per eligible senior resident
Local Match:	None
Program Initiation:	1991
Funding Source:	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State of Connecticut (Appropriation)
Current Annual Funding:	\$441,495
Purpose:	To encourage communities to provide nutritious food to low-income seniors while supporting local agriculture.
Description:	FMNP vouchers are used by eligible seniors to purchase Connecticut Grown fruits and vegetables at any state certified farmers' market. Municipal agents and/or social/elderly service directors must document participant eligibility and distribute vouchers in order to participate in the program.
Application Timeline:	Annually in January

Individuals 60 years of age or older with incomes that do not exceed 185% of poverty income guidelines are eligible for FMNP funding. Residents must be participating in another program with proper means-testing verifying their eligibility, such as renter rebate programs or congregate meal programs.

FMNP funding was distributed by municipalities in 2014 to 30,905 seniors who were able to purchase local fresh produce, directly benefitting both Connecticut seniors and farmers.

FARM VIABILITY GRANTS

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$49,999
Local Match:	In-kind match in municipal services and/or cash match
Program Initiation:	2006
Funding Source:	State of Connecticut Community Investment Act
Annual Funding:	\$500,000
Purpose:	To encourage municipalities to support and promote Connecticut agriculture.
Description:	Farm Viability Grants may be used for capital projects, planning, and other agency-approved initiatives to support local agriculture.
Application Timeline:	Annually in November

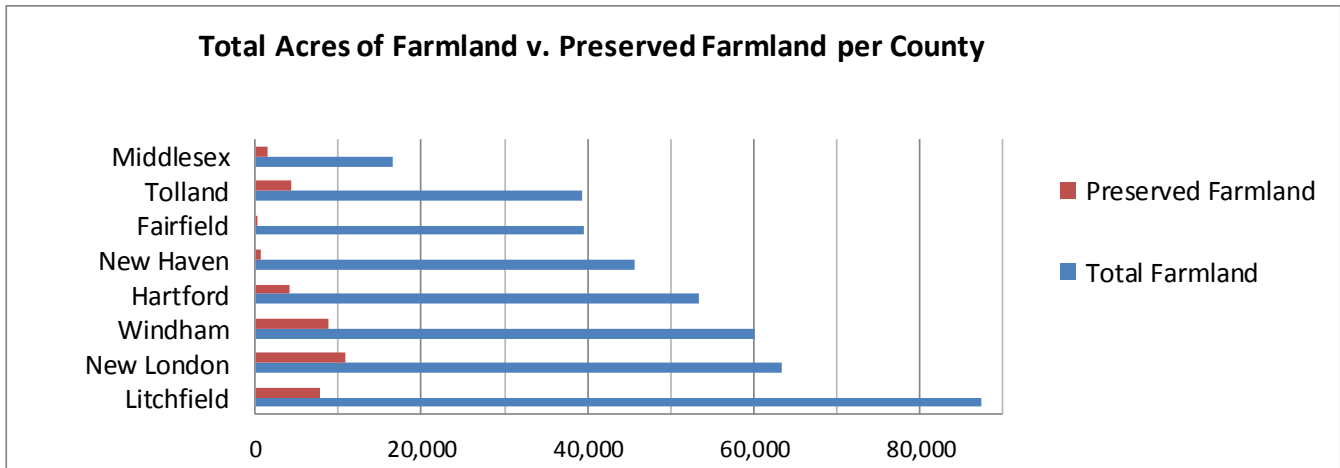
Nearly one-third of Connecticut's municipalities have benefited from a Farm Viability Grant. Examples of funded projects and participants:

- Ag-Friendly Land Use Regulation Development: East Windsor
- Agriculture Product Expansion and Infrastructure Projects: Branford, Clinton, Farmington, Guilford, New Milford, North Branford, New Haven, Norwich, Putnam, Stratford, Westport, Woodbridge
- Community Farm Initiatives: Granby, Middletown, New London, Old Saybrook, Simsbury, Waterbury, Woodbridge
- Farmers' Market Development: Bozrah, Columbia, Coventry, East Lyme, Haddam, Hamden, Lebanon, Litchfield, New Haven, Norwalk, Putnam, Southbury, Suffield, Voluntown, Waterbury
- Farmland Preservation Planning: Ashford, Branford, Colchester, Guildford, Lebanon, Madison, Middletown, Milford, Salem, Westport
- Geographic Information System Development: Bethany, Lebanon, Suffield, Thompson
- Land Use Education: Brooklyn, Chaplin, Killingly, Lebanon, Litchfield, New Milford, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Stonington, Thompson, Windham, Woodstock
- Marketing: Guilford, Killingly, Lebanon, Middletown, Suffield, Thompson
- Municipal Fiscal Impact Studies: Colchester, Lebanon, Thompson
- Plans of Conservation & Development: Bloomfield, Canterbury, Lebanon, Ledyard
- Regional Food System Planning: New London, Waterbury
- Resident Surveys: Lebanon, Thompson
- Agricultural Signage: Lebanon, Thompson

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$1,200,000
Local Match:	25 to 90% cash match based on formula related to amount of active farmland within 3-mile project radius
Program Initiation:	1978
Funding Source:	State Bonding and PA-228 Community Investment Act
Annual Funding:	\$10,000,000 in bonding/\$2,656,000 in CIA funds in 2012
Purpose:	To encourage municipal participation in purchasing development rights on farms with productive farmland soils to help promote a farmland economy and secure a food- and fiber-producing land base in Connecticut.
Description:	Municipalities can leverage state funds to purchase permanent conservation easements on active farmland. Preserved farmland has been shown to pay more than its fair share in local property taxes.
Application Timeline:	Ongoing

There are approximately 400,000 acres of farmland in Connecticut. DoAg has preserved approximately 40,000 acres on 300 farms in all eight counties toward its goal of 130,000 acres.



This chart shows total farmland and amount of preserved farmland per county per acre. Approximately 90% of Connecticut’s existing farmland remains unpreserved.

Owners who have sold their development rights are required to obtain approval by the Commissioner of Agriculture prior to obtaining a local zoning or building permit to erect structures or remove soil (C.G.S. 47-42d). If a permit is issued without the consent of the Commissioner, a municipality must revoke said permit upon notice by the department.

COMMUNITY FARMS PRESERVATION PROGRAM (CFPP)

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$1,200,000
Local Match:	25 to 90% cash match based on formula related to amount of active farmland within 3-mile project radius
Program Initiation:	2008
Funding Source:	Community Investment Act
Funding:	\$2,000,000 in 2011
Purpose:	To encourage purchasing of development rights on small food or fiber-producing farms to help secure an agricultural land base in Connecticut.
Description:	Municipalities can leverage state funds to purchase conservation easements on active farmland.
Application Timeline:	Ongoing

The Schedule of Contributions for farmland preservation projects initiated by municipalities is determined by CGS Sec. 22-26gg-12:

Acres of active agricultural land within 3-mile radius of project, excluding project	State’s contribution (whichever is less)
1,000 acres of more	75% of value or \$1,200,000
800-999 acres	65% of value or \$1,000,000
600-799 acres	55% of value or \$800,000
400-599 acres	45% of value or \$600,000
200-399 acres	25% of value or \$400,000
0-199 acres	10% of value or \$200,000

So far, DoAg has determined 25 municipalities eligible for participation for the CFPP. In order to be eligible, a municipality must do the following:

1. Recognize farmland preservation in Plan of Conservation and Development
2. Establish agricultural commission and/or program for farmland preservation
3. Inventory its local farmland resources
4. Prioritize farms for preservation using a criteria scoring or ranking system
5. Designate a fund for farmland preservation and have a method of funding
6. Request identification of locally important farmland soils through USDA-NRCS

FARMLAND RESTORATION PROGRAM (FLRP)

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$20,000
Local Match:	In-kind match in municipal services and/or cash match
Program Initiation:	2012
Funding Source:	State Bond Commission
Funding:	\$5,000,000
Purpose:	To encourage and help municipalities and farmers restore prime and statewide important farmland for agricultural use.
Description:	FLRP funds are granted to increase food- and fiber-production agriculture in Connecticut.
Application Timeline:	Ongoing

JOINT VENTURE GRANT

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$2,995
Local Match:	50% cash match
Program Initiation:	1986
Funding Source:	Community Investment Act
Annual Funding:	Varies
Purpose:	To encourage use of the Connecticut Grown logo.
Description:	Joint Venture grants support projects using the Connecticut Grown logo to enhance demand for Connecticut Grown products. Grants may not be used to promote one business or farm or any branded agricultural products.
Application Deadline:	Annually in January.

Eligible Connecticut Grown farm products are established by CGS Ch. 411 Sec, 22-6r(7) as “any fresh fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, nuts, shell eggs, honey or other bee products, maple syrup or maple sugar, flowers, nursery stock and other horticultural commodities, livestock food products, including meat, milk, cheese and other dairy products, food products or “aquaculture”, as defined in subsection (q) of section 1-1, including fish, oysters, clams, mussels and other molluscan shellfish taken from the waters of the state of tidal wetlands, products from any tree, vine or plant and their flowers, or any of the products listed in this subdivision that have been processed by the participating farmers, including, but not limited to, baked goods made with farm products.”

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (SCBG)

Max. Annual Dollar Award:	\$75,000
Local Match:	None required, but municipalities providing a cash match receive preference
Program Initiation:	2006
Funding Source:	USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
Overall Funding:	Varies annually per the Agriculture Act of 2014
Purpose:	To solely enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut's specialty crops.
Description:	Municipalities may use grant funds for any project that solely enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut's specialty crops and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public. Project funds cannot be used to benefit a single producer, individual, institution, or organization.
Application Timeline:	Annually, with concepts due in April and full proposals in June.

Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, maple syrup, honey, horticulture and nursery crops.

III. Technical Assistance for Municipalities

DoAg provides a variety of technical assistance services to municipalities. If you are dealing with any of the following issues, please contact the agency for more information.

PUBLIC ACT 490

In 1963 the Connecticut General Assembly enacted Public Act 63-490 (PA 490), an act concerning the taxation and preservation of farm, forest or open space. The act helps preserve agricultural, forest and open space land by offering property owners the ability to pay taxes at its current use value rather than highest value. This in turn helps prevent the conversion of farmland into more intensive uses. Studies show that local property taxes generated by farmland assessed at PA 490 rates are greater than municipal expenditures to service that land.

The approval of land classification under PA 490 falls upon each community. However, the Commissioner of Agriculture is authorized under CGS Section 22-4c(4) to provide an advisory opinion upon request of any municipality, state agency, tax assessor or any landowner as to what constitutes agriculture or farming pursuant to subsection (q) of CGS Section 1-1 or regarding classification of farmland or open space land pursuant to CGS Sections 12-107b to 12-107f, inclusive.

Please contact the Commissioner's Office if you are having difficulty determining if a property falls under PA 490.

FARMERS' MARKETS

In 2013 there were 125 farmers' markets in Connecticut, providing 500 local farmers and producers a venue to sell their goods. Farmers' markets fuel local economies and encourage community engagement while providing residents fresh, nutritious food and other farm products.

Many municipalities support their local farmers' markets through funding, a public location such as a park or community building, and/or administrative or management assistance. In addition to the grants previously identified, DoAg helps municipalities support farmers' markets through the following:

- Consultation on how to start and run a market;
- Publication of a reference guide to assist in starting or expanding a market, with information including common market rules and applicable codes/laws of governing state and local agencies
- Random market inspections for compliance with laws/regulations pertaining to Connecticut Grown advertising and promotion

ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Increased consumer demand for locally produced farm products has led to a renewed interest in agricultural production. More than 2,000 Connecticut farms reported sales from livestock, poultry, dairy or related products in 2007, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

DoAg is the state agency charged with assuring that no person causes, engages in or maintains any condition or activity which is likely to result in imminent and substantial harm to any animal or to public health (excerpt from C.G.S. Sec. 22-4d).

In addition to licensing and conducting regular inspections of dairy, poultry, and shellfish facilities, DoAg regularly is called on to conduct inspections for the purpose of (1) offering an advisory opinion, pursuant to C.G.S. 22-4c(4), as to what constitutes agriculture or farming as defined in C.G.S. §1-1(q) and (2) determining if an agricultural or farming operation is following generally accepted agricultural practices as authorized by the "Right to Farm Law", C.G.S. §19a-341, *Agriculture or Farming Operation not deemed a Nuisance*.

A municipality should call upon DoAg if it needs clarification on generally accepted agricultural practices or if it suspects that certain activities may be in violation of state statute or the regulations in the State Public Health Code.

IV. Additional Municipal Resources

FARMLINK

The Connecticut FarmLink program is run by DoAg and offers a website (www.farmlink.uconn.edu/) where farmers can find information on how to find farmland to start or grow a farm. Municipalities can use this site to register town land they would like to make available for farming.

FARM TO SCHOOL

The Farm-to-School program is designed to help farmers sell their products and encourage foodservice directors (pre-K through high school) to use Connecticut Grown products in their menus. www.ctgrown.gov/farmtoschool

FARM TO CHEF

The Farm-to-Chef program helps connect producers of Connecticut Grown farm products with restaurants, caterers, institutions, colleges, universities, corporations, and other foodservice professionals seeking to use Connecticut Grown ingredients. DoAg coordinates Farm-to-Chef Week each September to help showcase Connecticut Grown at these dining venues and promote the farms from which these ingredients are sourced. www.ctfarmtochef.com

CONNECTICUT GROWN MASCOTS

DoAg has colorful industrial strength adult costumes representing Connecticut Grown farm animals and products available at no charge April 15—November 15 to help encourage awareness and use of Connecticut Grown products by both children and adults of all ages.

PUBLICATIONS

DoAg publishes or disseminates the following publications to promote Connecticut Grown products and producers. Most can be found at CTGrown.gov and/or in print, with bulk copies offered to municipalities.

Community Supported Agriculture
Dairy Producers
Farm Map
Farm Stands and Stores
Farmers' Markets

Honey
Meat Producers
Pick-Your-Own
Programs and Services

DoAg has published the *Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report* since 1920. The report contains articles, price reports, classified advertisements, and other information related to Connecticut agriculture and is available by email for free. To subscribe, call 860-713-2503 or email Jane.Slupecki@ct.gov.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

DoAg collaborates with many local, state and federal agencies, and non-profit organizations to grow Connecticut agriculture. The following agencies and organizations can be valuable resources for municipalities:

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a national non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. AFT has experts available to municipalities for education on subjects including local agricultural policy. 860-683-4230, www.farmland.org.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES)'s scientists work to improve agricultural productivity, remaining committed to "Putting Science to Work for Society" and seeking solutions for the benefit of urban, suburban, and rural communities. 203-974-8500, www.ct.gov/caes.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) provides a municipal open space funding program to preserve land, including farmland. DEEP also provides environmental regulatory protection. Open space preservation 860-424-3016, environmental issues related to farming 860-424-3803, www.ct.gov/deep.

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) provides policy input and analysis on a variety of agricultural-related municipal subjects. 203-498-3000, <http://ccapa.org>.

Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) is a non-profit state-wide organization that works to permanently protect Connecticut's working farms. CFT offers educational and financial assistance to municipalities looking to preserve farmland and holds farm easements. 860-247-0202, www.ctfarmland.org.

The University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources' programs address our food system; protect natural resources and the environment; improve citizens' health and nutrition; and address needs of individuals, families and communities. 860-486-2917, www.cag.uconn.edu.

USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides matching farmland preservation funds for which municipalities can qualify. 860-871-4011, www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov.

Additional local agricultural organizations that may be helpful include the Connecticut Apple Market Board (www.ctapples.org), Beekeepers Association (www.ctbees.com), Christmas Tree Growers Association (www.ctchristmastree.org), Farm Bureau Association (www.cfba.org), Greenhouse Growers Association (www.ctgreenhousegrowers.org), Northeast Organic Farming Association (www.ctnofa.org), Nursery and Landscape Association (cnla.biz), Poultry Association (www.ctpoultry.com), Sheep Breeders Association (www.ctsheep.org), Vineyard and Winery Association (www.ctwine.com), Hereford Association (www.newenglandhereford.org), Maple Syrup Producers Association (www.ctmaple.org), and others.

Creating a Local Farmland Preservation Plan

by Philip S. Chester, AICP

It is amazing how many young, bright and educated people choose to go into agriculture. They do this knowing that the labor can be hard and the pay mediocre, but that the rewards of working the land, being one's own boss, and marketing one's product can be fulfilling.

I have never met a farmer who wants to sell their land for development. Farmers can be in need of resources (money), but would rather see their property preserved for agriculture than developed—even if they can no longer farm it.

The upward trend in the number of new farms in Connecticut is stronger than ever as more consumers care about how their food is grown and where it comes from, and as DoAg works to preserve, promote, and expand agricultural opportunities throughout the state.

So much can be accomplished to help promote agriculture at the community level. Municipalities do best when they focus on non-regulatory approaches to preserving agriculture and should consider regulations only when deemed necessary. Regulations related to agriculture are often antithetical to the goal of promoting agriculture because they are restrictive by nature.

However, with proper planning and zoning, agriculture can flourish in your community. Below are steps municipal officials can take to create or enhance their local agricultural preservation program.

PLANNING

The most important local planning document is the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which is the community master land use plan. The POCD is the chief local document that expresses community goals and aspirations regarding existing and proposed land uses—including agriculture. It is also the basis for sound zoning.

Under C.G.S. Sec. 8-23, POCDs must be completed by each municipality at least every 10 years. In the past, POCDs tended to focus only on residential and non-residential aspects of planning, omitting agriculture altogether. However, consideration to the “protection and preservation of agriculture” is now a prerequisite to preparing a Plan of Conservation and Development under the Connecticut General Statutes.

At least one representative from your agricultural community should be included when drafting a Plan of Conservation and Development. Plans can be as specific or broad as a community wants. However, all POCDs should contain a section on agriculture that includes specific goals and objectives and a statement that reads, “All ordinances, regulations and policies should consider the importance of agriculture in our community.”

In addition, the importance of agriculture should be contained in each section of a POCD; e.g., economic development, natural resources, historical and cultural, future land use plan, etc. The plan should also contain a statement that reads, “All municipal boards, commissions and agencies shall read and follow the Plan of Conservation and Development.”

Besides the POCD, there are other planning studies a municipality can undertake that shed light on the benefits to agriculture and have been funded by DoAg in the past.

- **Cost of Community Services (COCS) Study:** A COCS study compares the cost of municipal services to the specific types of land use in town—typically residential, commercial/industrial and farmland/open space. It requires an analysis of a specific budget year and discussions with town staff to attribute town expenditures to each of the identified land uses. In general, this study finds that for every tax dollar collected from residential development, more than a dollar is expended in municipal services; but for every tax dollar collected for non-residential development, including farmland, only about a quarter is expended in services.
- **Community Surveys:** Nothing can shed light on residents' beliefs and values like a statistically valid survey. Organizations conduct surveys on behalf of municipalities interested in finding out how their residents value a whole host of subjects, including agriculture. Quantifying your community's support of agriculture is invaluable to determining the amount of municipal resources (both in staff and funding) that should be allocated toward agriculture.
- **Effects of Local Tax Reduction Programs for Agriculture:** Studies have been conducted to determine the tax effects on the average taxpayer if a community were to adopt one of the optional tax reduction provisions for farmers. Tax reduction options include an exemption of up to \$100,000 on farm buildings, up to 50% of the property taxes for farm businesses, and an additional \$100,000 tax exemption on farm equipment above the \$100,000 already mandated by State Statute.
- **Build-Out Analysis:** A build-out analysis examines current zoning and existing land use and projects the maximum number of homes and amount of non-residential development permitted in a community. It is used to evaluate current zoning to help determine if the "build-out" matches a community's vision. The more developable a community the greater the potential for change. In general these studies help coalesce consensus around land preservation, including farmland.

FARM-FRIENDLY REGULATIONS

Zoning and subdivision regulations are the main regulatory tools a municipality may use to regulate and define agriculture. As noted, adopting specific regulations for agriculture can be contrary to promoting, preserving, and growing agriculture. However, below are some positive steps a municipality can take to make their regulations work for agriculture.

- Identify **AGRICULTURE** as a principle or primary land use in most zoning districts in your community. Agriculture can occur in relatively small spaces and does not always need multiple of acres to succeed.
- Define **OPEN SPACE** in your zoning and subdivision regulations so that it includes **AGRICULTURE**. Suggested wording: "Land permanently preserved through deed or conservation restriction in its natural state and/or developed for agricultural or recreational use."
- Mandate **CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT** so that greater open space set asides are created—set asides that may include farmland. Requiring large lots eats up the land and creates sprawl. Try to save the fields for the farmers.
- Mandate **AGRICULTURAL BUFFERS** as part of open space requirements in subdivisions. Agricultural buffers, like fences, help make good neighbors. When development is proposed adjacent to actively farmed land a buffer should be considered as part of an open space requirement.

- Adopt the State’s definition of AGRICULTURE in your zoning regulations. Limiting the definition of agriculture town-by-town limits agriculture in our State and leads to conflicts as many farmers own land in more than one community.
- Add to the stated PURPOSE of your zoning and subdivision regulations the following: (1) “Promote and protect existing agricultural uses and prime and important farmland soils,” and, (2) “Promote cluster development.”

Try not to mandate how animals and their byproducts are kept, as this should be left to the professionals at DoAg.

NON-REGULATORY APPROACHES

Below are some non-regulatory strategies a municipality can take to encourage agriculture.

- Designate a municipal staff and/or commission liaison to your agricultural community and conduct outreach. Nothing breeds good government like reaching out to citizens and businesses to offer support. With agriculture you get two for one!
- Include farmers in decision-making. Before making decisions that could impact your agricultural community, consult with your local experts. For example, lease excess municipal land to farmers, but remember to consult with your conservation or agriculture commission regarding lease terms prior to advertising.
- Inventory farmland, create a farmland rating system and designate town funds for farmland preservation. These funds can be used to match funds provided by DoAg.
- Establish and/or support a farmers’ market and food production in your community. The demand for local food has never been stronger. Today, almost 25% of Connecticut’s farms market their product directly to the consumer.
- Establish a right-to-farm ordinance to reaffirm your community’s commitment to agriculture.
- Celebrate farming. Designate a section of the municipal web page to agriculture and create a farm business brochure.
- Obtain grants from DoAg or other sources to assist the agricultural sectors in your community.

Too often communities focus their limited resources on developing land versus preserving or promoting agriculture. Both have their pluses; however, only agriculture provides sustainability in terms of municipal finance, aesthetics, food security, and the environment, which can be appreciated by all. With a limited investment, municipalities can work to preserve their agriculture and create a climate where it can flourish.

Mr. Chester is a professional land use planner who holds professional degrees in both planning and architecture. He has served as Town Planner in Suffield and Lebanon, Connecticut, and in 2010 was bestowed the Outstanding Planner Award by the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of the APA. Mr. Chester has served as a Director at Connecticut Farmland Trust, Vice President of Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Council, and Bloomfield Town Plan and Zoning Commissioner.