

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there's a large white barn and a field with rows of crops. To the right, a river flows through the landscape. In the background, there are more fields, trees, and a small pond. The sky is clear and blue.

Farmland Preservation 201

Funding Sources and Other Considerations for Protecting Agricultural Land

Bristol's Farm, Canton. Photo by Maddie Dres.

Kathleen Doherty, Connecticut Farmland Trust
Gwen Marrion, Bolton Land Trust

March 25, 2023

Poll: Who's in the room?



McCall Farm, Lebanon, NH



Photo courtesy of Gwen Marrion





CFT's Mission:
Preserving Connecticut
farmland for farmers
*Statewide, all types
of farms*

Byron Gallup, Gallup Homestead Farm, Voluntown



CFT has protected:

5,784 acres

73 farms

*Importance of
partnerships!*

Byron Gallup, Gallup Homestead Farm, Voluntown

Outline

1. The case for farmland preservation
2. Easement or fee?
3. Funding sources
4. Tools for equitable land access
5. Bolton Land Trust case study

Bristol's Farm, Canton



Bristol's Farm, Canton

Farms provide:

- Food, fiber, forest products
- Jobs and economic output
- Clean air and water
- Climate benefits
- Tax benefits for towns
- Connection to the land

Beltane Farm, Lebanon

Agriculture in Connecticut:

Contribution to CT economy:

\$3.3 - \$4.0 billion!

Top crops:

By sales: greenhouse/nursery

By acreage: hay and corn

David Rathbun, Wehpittituck Farm, Stonington



Windsor loamy sand



Photo from UConn Extension

Photos from Soil Science Society of America



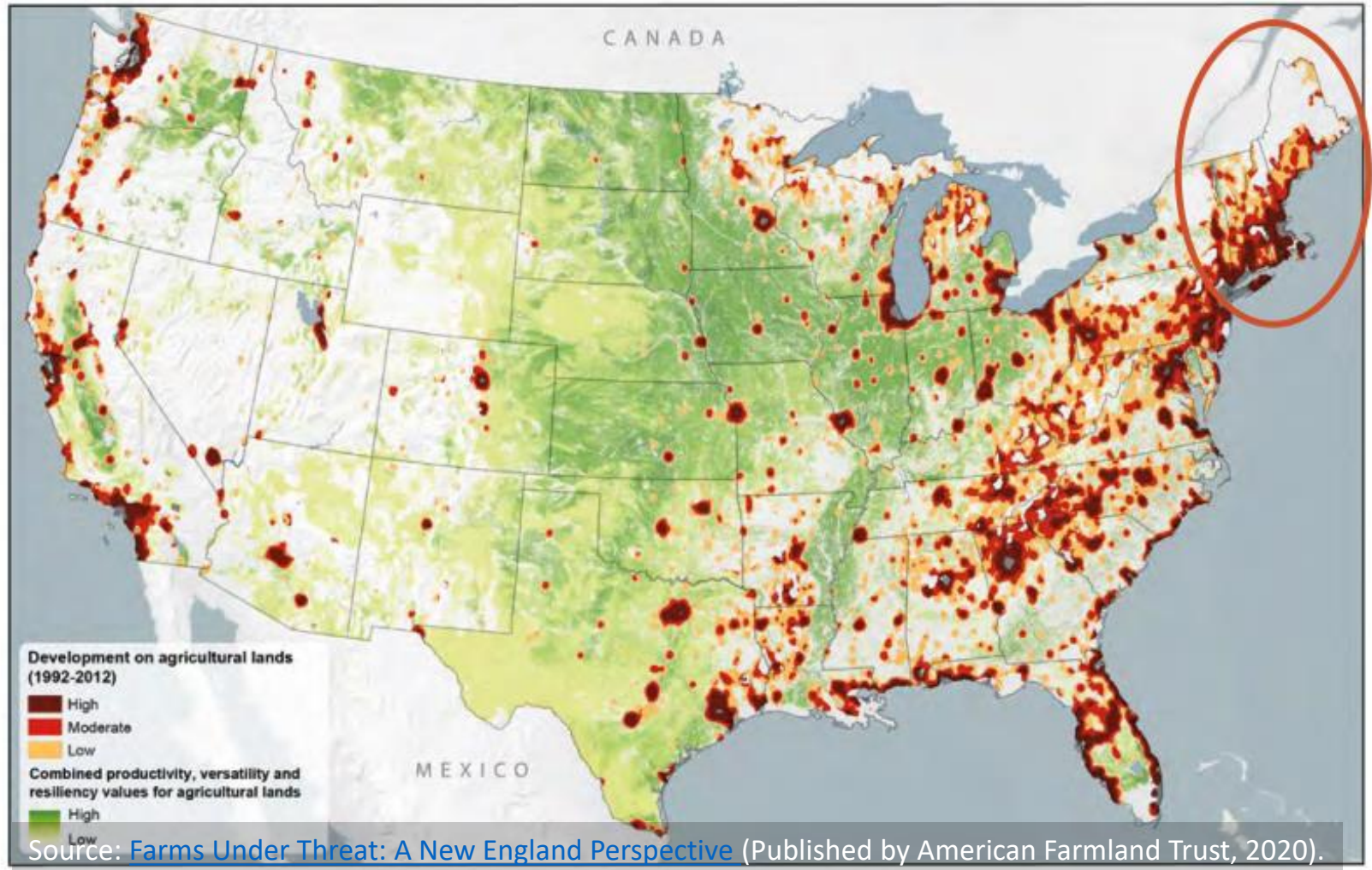
Anonymous Tobacco Farm

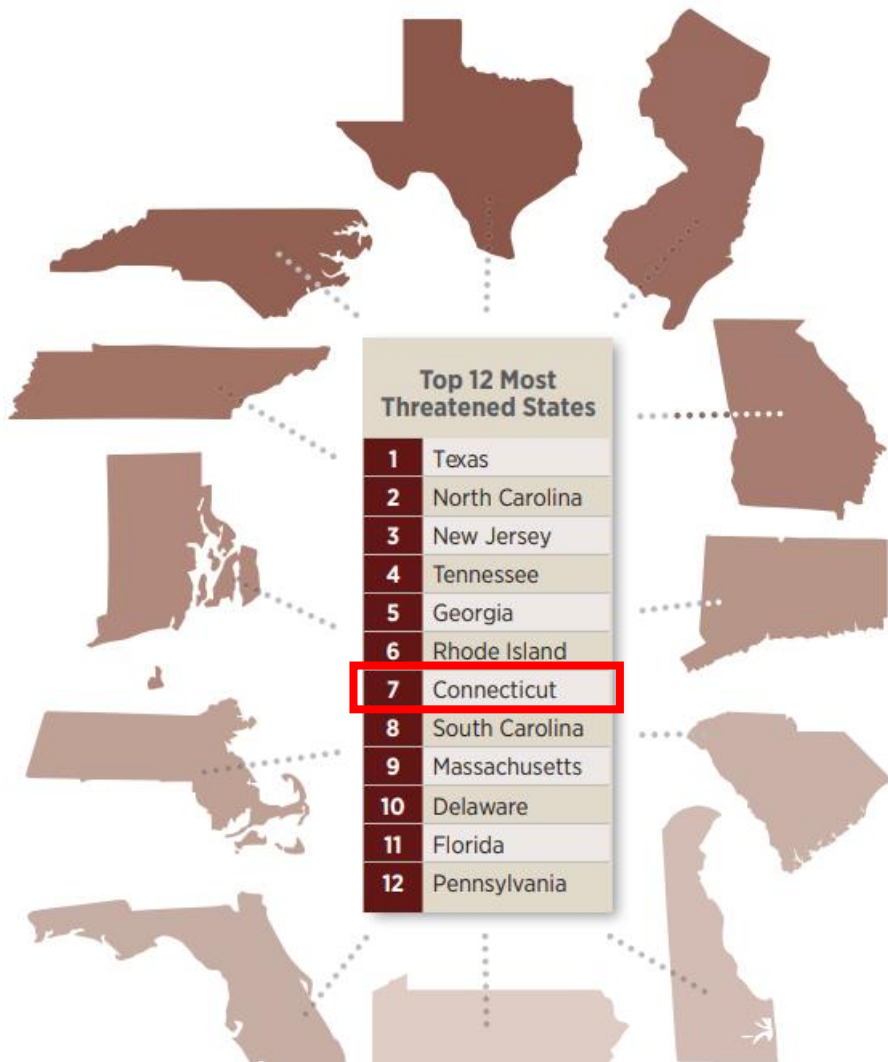
Soil, not "dirt"

- An inch of soil takes hundreds of years to form!
- Soil is a living, breathing ecosystem

Anonymous Tobacco Farm

FIGURE 1. MANY NEW ENGLAND STATES LOST A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THEIR AGRICULTURAL LAND TO URBAN AND HIGHLY DEVELOPED USES (1992-2012)





Between 2001 and 2016,
23,000 acres
of Connecticut's farmland
were developed or
compromised

Source: [Farms Under Threat: The State of the States](#).

Source: Farms Under Threat: The State of the States
(Published by American Farmland Trust, 2020).

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How to preserve farmland?

#1. Agricultural conservation easement

#2. Fee acquisition with lease to farmer

Phillips Farm, Southbury



Phillips Farm, Southbury

#1. Agricultural conservation easement

- Farmer-friendly easement terms
- Housing and ag structures
- Easement stewardship

Model ag easement available from CLCC

Johnson Angus Ranch, Middletown

#2. Fee acquisition with lease to farmer

- Managing multiple uses on property
- Farmer-friendly lease terms
- [Guide for land trusts to lease to farmers](#)

How to find a farmer?

Walnut Ledge Farm, Glastonbury



CT FARMLINK



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Find a Farmer

www.ctfarmlink.org

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CONNECTICUT
FARMLAND
T R U S T

PRESERVING CONNECTICUT FARMLAND FOR FARMERS

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Funding sources

#1. Funding for preservation

#2. Funding for land management

Phillips Farm, Southbury

Funding for preservation

- CT Dept. of Ag [Farmland Preservation](#)
 - Best source for easement acquisition
 - Land trust-owned land is eligible
 - State pays costs; State holds easement
 - Rolling application; bond funded
 - Criteria: prime farmland soils, active agriculture

Strong Family Farm, Vernon (photo by Ron Sperry)

Funding for preservation

- USDA-NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easement ([ACEP-ALE](#))
 - Land trust-owned land NOT generally eligible
 - Pays 50% of easement value
 - Land trust pays transaction costs; land trust holds easement (at least temporarily)
 - More flexible easement terms

Strong Family Farm, Vernon (photo by Ron Sperry)

Funding for preservation

- CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition ([OSWA](#))
 - Easement or fee acquisition
 - Primarily designed for open space
 - No buildings allowed
 - Public access required
 - Can be combined with ACEP-ALE
 - Recommend excluding a building area from OSWA easement

Strong Family Farm, Vernon (photo by Ron Sperry)

Funding for preservation

- Town funding sources
 - Varies town-by-town

Strong Family Farm, Vernon (photo by Ron Sperry)

Funding for preservation

- Bridge financing
 - [The Conservation Fund](#)

Strong Family Farm, Vernon (photo by Ron Sperry)



Strong Family Farm, Vernon (photo by Ron Sperry)

Funding for land management

- CT Dept. of Agriculture [Farmland Restoration Grant](#)
 - Reimbursement grant with match requirement (in-kind match allowed)
 - Land may be farmer-owned or land trust-owned
 - Restoration activities:
 - Clearing trees, removing rocks, invasive removal, fencing, irrigation, well drilling

Cooley Farm Preserve, Cornwall

Funding for land management

- Other state grants for farmers and landowners
 - CT Dept. of Agriculture [grants](#)



Cooley Farm Preserve, Cornwall

Funding for land management

- USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program ([EQIP](#))
 - Implement farm practices to address a resource concern: soil erosion, water quality, wildlife habitat, etc.
- USDA-NRCS Ag Management Assistance ([AMA](#))
 - Irrigation, high tunnels

Cooley Farm Preserve, Cornwall

Funding for land management

- USDA-NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program ([CSP](#))
 - Enhance existing farming practices (5-year contracts)
- USDA-FSA Conservation Reserve Program ([CRP](#))
 - Payments to farmers for removing sensitive land from production (10- to 15-year contracts)

Cooley Farm Preserve, Cornwall



Cooley Farm Preserve, Cornwall

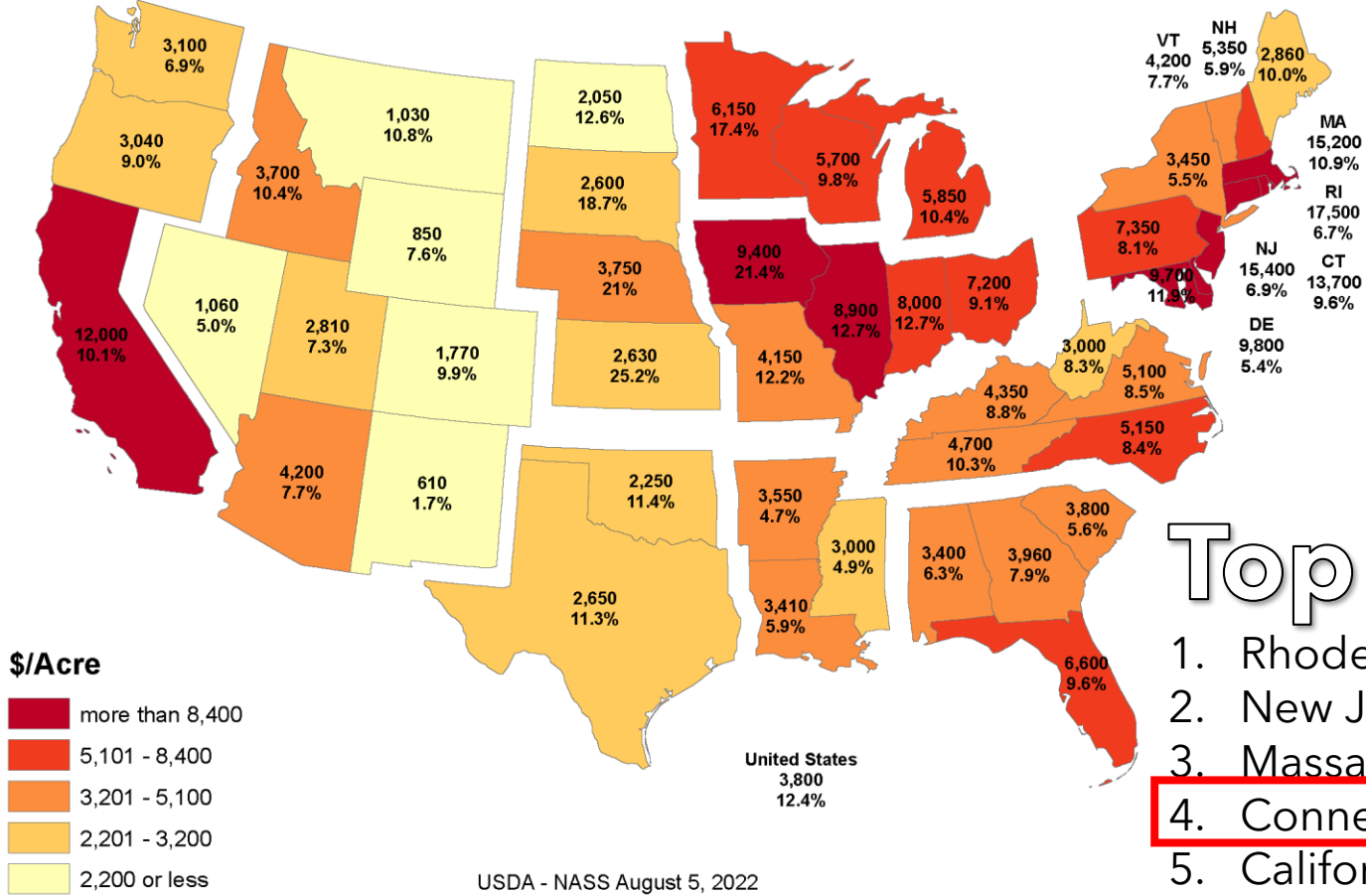
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2022 Farm Real Estate Value by State

Dollars per Acre and Percent Change from 2021



Top 5 states:

1. Rhode Island (\$17,500/acre)
2. New Jersey (\$15,400/acre)
3. Massachusetts (\$15,200/acre)
4. Connecticut (\$13,700/acre)
5. California (\$12,000/acre)

Source: [USDA NASS](#)

Tools for equitable land access

- Affordability tools
 - Buy-Protect-Sell
 - Option to Purchase at Ag Value (OPAV)
- Other land tenure tools
 - Communal ownership model
 - Ground lease

Guiding question: Conservation for whom?

Wike Brothers Farm, Sharon

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Larry Pesce, Pesce's Farm, Bolton



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Pesce's Farm, Bolton (photo courtesy of Gwen Marrion)



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Pesce's Farm, Bolton)photo by Maddie Dres)



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Rich Barger, Barger Farm, Bolton



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Barger Farm, Bolton (photo courtesy of Gwen Marrion)



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Thank you!

Kathleen Doherty

kdoherty@ctfarmland.org

Gwen Marrion

gmarrion@snet.net

Cato Corner Farm, Colchester