



Getting Started-Planning for Agriculture
AGvocate Train the Trainer Boot Camp
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Why Plan for Agriculture?

- ❑ Farms are the cornerstone of many CT communities
- ❑ Can be taken for granted



It's Your Job as AGvocates that it is not!

What is the AGvocate Program?

- A grassroots program that empowers farmers, citizens, and municipal decision makers to leverage partnerships, enact farm-friendly policies and regulations, provide tax incentives, and revive the agricultural culture within towns.



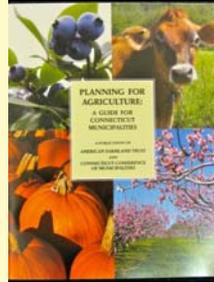
Why Was AGvocate Established?

- To create a voice for local agriculture in municipal government
- To remove municipal barriers to farming
- To help towns understand the business of farming
- To revive towns' agricultural culture



How AGvocates Create an Agricultural Culture in Towns

- Establishing a permanent voice for Agriculture through a town Commission or Committee
- Promoting agricultural producers
- Implementing farm tax incentives
- Improving town land-use regulations
- Including agriculture in the local economic development strategy
- Implementing Local Right-to-Farm Ordinances



Original AGvocate Towns

Ashford	Killingly
Bozrah	Pomfret
Brooklyn	Scotland
Canterbury	Sterling
Eastford	Thompson
Franklin	Windham
Hampton	Woodstock

Challenges

- Farming offers low income and hard physical work
- Average age of farmer in CT is 57.6 years
- Off Farm Jobs necessary
- High land prices and taxes
- Declining profitability of dairy industry
- Land use regulations
- Land use conflicts
- Farmland lost to development (mainly residential)
- General public lacks understanding of realities of farming

Agriculture's Impact

□ Quality of Life



Corn Maze at Merrow Farm

- Rural character is valued by citizens as demonstrated by our Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and Strategic Plan.
- Recreation benefits-corn maze, pick your own, hayrides, etc.
- Scenic vistas
- Cherished rural character is why they live here
- People value knowing where their food is grown, tastes better, more nutritious, better for the environment
- Eastern Highlands Health District is promoting Healthy Eating and Active Living to create a healthier community through the ACHIEVE initiative
- Food Security

Agriculture's Impact

□ Environmental



Crane Hill Field-Town owned Agricultural Land

Agriculture provides many environmental benefits. Some of these benefits include:

- Maintaining or increasing biodiversity
- Improving surface and water quality by filtering water
- Reducing flooding by slowing runoff and providing recharge areas
- Improving air quality by filtering air and producing oxygen
- Reducing carbon emissions by reducing reliance on foods, feeds, and horticulture products that need to be shipped from long distances
- Retaining soil for plant growth
- Absorbing and sequestering carbon

Connecticut's 357,154 acres of farmland and woodland provided an estimated \$442.7 million annually in non-market environmental services-such as maintaining habitat, filtering water, reducing flooding, and sequestering carbon.

(Massachusetts Audubon used 42 studies to create a conservative estimate of the non-market economic value of different land uses. Research suggests that cropland and pastureland provide non-market environmental services of valued at \$1331/acre. Forestland services are valued at \$984/acre/year).

From Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities A Publication of American Farmland Trust and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

Agriculture's Impact

□ Economic/Fiscal



Breezy Acres Percherons



Vegetable Production at Breezy Heights Farm

According to a 2010 publication by UConn's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, The agriculture industry in Ct has a \$3.5 billion economic impact on the state economy and has an employment impact of approximately 20,000 jobs. It is estimated that agriculture in Mansfield provides jobs for upwards of 200 people. Farming brings in more revenue than it uses in services, Mansfield's farm businesses are local businesses with a high local multiplier effect (hire local workers, buy local supplies, use local services). Supporting agriculture is supporting smart economic development.

Converting farmland to housing raises property taxes. Cost of Community Services Studies (COCS) use municipal data to determine the fiscal contribution of various local land uses. Over 20 years of COCS from around the country have shown that farmland and other open space generate more public revenue than they require in services. Even when farmland, for example, is assessed at its current agricultural use value under Public Act 490, farmland generates a surplus to offset the shortfall created by residential demand for public services.

A review of COCS research in eight CT Towns shows that for each dollar of property tax revenue generated by working farmland and open space land, on average, only \$0.31 is required in municipal services. Whereas, on average, \$1.11 is required in municipal services by residential land uses. A summary of COCS data is attached.

Agriculture in Connecticut

- 1991-2008: www.agcensus.gov
 - ▣ Average size of farm in CT has decreased
 - ▣ Number of farms has increased



Ag Census information for Tolland County is attached.

Average size of farm in CT has decreased from 87 to 82 acres

Number of farms has increased from 4,250 to 4,900

1,232....<10 acres

1,894....10-49

*AG Census defines farm as any place producing \$1,000 worth of agricultural product in one calendar year

Agriculture in CT

- 30 million consumers nearby.
- Ag Tourism one of the fastest growing segments
- Important for Renewable energy industry



According to a report developed by the Rural Sustainability Report prepared in February 2009, The Last Green Valley (TLGV) (<http://www.tlgv.org/uploads/Publications/Reports/Rural%20Sustainability%20Region,%20022509.pdf>), eleven (11) million people live in the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, no more than 2 hours from TLGV.

The region known as the Last Green Valley remains 78% forest and farmland in the midst of the most densely developed area of the east coast. This is both a blessing and a curse.

- The proximity of the Last Green Valley's Agricultural community to a densely populated area provides tremendous market and food distribution possibilities.
- An abundance of land, the relatively low price of land, the lowest mortgage rates in decades, and the location of the Last Green Valley within a one-hour commute to three of the four largest urban centers in New England has created tremendous development pressure.
- Residents of the Last Green Valley value the rural heritage of agriculture but few people understand the business of farming. Occasional noise, traffic, and smell are part of a farming operation. Without viable farm businesses, farmland will not and cannot be preserved.

Agriculture in CT

- Direct farm sales increasing
 - Farmers Markets
 - CSAs
- Seasons are extended
- Diversified farms with high end/specialty products



The Gardens at Bassetts Bridge Farm

Majority of farm families have off-farm jobs

Direct marketing is increasing

- Farmers Market-2009 there were 123 farmers markets in CT
- Community Supported Agriculture is on the rise-Two in Mansfield (EcoGarden and Shundahai farm).

There is more diversity in agriculture using less acreage and producing higher end products

- Hydroponics-not much acreage needed but can produce much revenue
- Unusual livestock
 - Alpacas
 - Cashmere goats
- Extended growing season through the use of green houses
- Thriving nursery industry

How Mansfield is AGvocating

The Town of Mansfield is committed to supporting agriculture:

- Comprehensive Agriculture Strategy completed in 2013
- Plan of Conservation and Development will be completed in 2014



The Commonfields-Town-owned Agricultural Land

Mansfield POCD

Policy Goal #2

To conserve and preserve Mansfield's natural, historic, agricultural and scenic resources with emphasis on protecting surface and groundwater quality, important greenways, agricultural and interior forest areas, undeveloped hilltops and ridges, scenic roadways and historic village areas

C: Objective

To protect agricultural and forestry resources and to encourage retention and expansion of agricultural/forestry uses by refining Zoning Map and land use regulations and considering other actions.

Mansfield's Strategic Plan (Mansfield 2020) refers to "Historic and Rural Character, Open Space and Working Farms" as a priority vision point.

"Mansfield's cultural history together with its woodlands, open fields, and working farmlands, remain an integral part of the Town's character providing locally produced food, abundant wildlife habitat, scenic views, and recreational opportunities. Through collaboration with the University of Ct and the Department of Agriculture, Mansfield is known as an incubator site for a growing number of entrepreneurial farms and farmers.

Agriculture Today in Mansfield

□ Agricultural Products

- Dairy
- Livestock
- Hay



Mountain Dairy



Windhover Farm



Twin Ponds Farm

Mansfield has 3 dairy farms owning or leasing over 1,800 acres of land, 5 livestock farms using approximately 625 acres of land, and approximately 175 acres in hay production.

Agriculture Today in Mansfield

□ Agricultural Products

- Fruits and vegetables
- Maple Syrup
- Christmas trees
- Nursery stock



Bailey's Maple Syrup and Honey



Farmstand at River Rd. Ledgecrest Greenhouses

Cedar Ledge Tree Farm

- Fruits and vegetables-8 fruits and vegetable producers, which includes pumpkins
- Maple Syrup-2 maple syrup producers
- Christmas Tree Farm-3 Christmas tree farms
- Nursery Stock-5 nurseries

All of these farms are using less than 50 acres each. Some are farming on as little as five acres.

Agriculture Today in Mansfield

- Commercial Agriculture
 - Many different products
 - 34 retail outlets
 - Businesses supporting agricultural operations



Please see “Mansfield Grown: Agricultural Products and Services,” a brochure produced by the Agriculture Committee for detailed listings of the many agriculture-based retail outlets in Town.

Agriculture Today in Mansfield

□ Agricultural Retail Outlets

- Farmers Market
- Farm stands
- CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture)
- Nurseries



Eco Garden CSA



Storrs Farmers Market



Farm Stand at River Rd



UConn Floraculture

Farmstands-10 (includes maple syrup)

CSAs-2

Nurseries-5

Storrs Farmers Market has been serving the greater Mansfield community for 16 years. It is the only farmers market open year-round in Northeastern Connecticut. The Market serves hundreds of Mansfield residents and residents from neighboring towns. Demand for locally-grown foods continues to increase. In 2010, Storrs Farmers Market opened its Midweek Mini Market, open Wednesdays from 3-6:00 pm, July – Sept., to better serve Mansfield residents.

Agriculture Today in Mansfield

- Private Agriculture
- Thriving Agriculture Education Program for All Ages



Agricultural Science
and
Technology Education
Programs



University of
Connecticut | College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture

Private Agriculture

Home gardens, community garden, honey, sheep, cattle, poultry, horses, rabbits, llamas, and alpacas

Thriving Agriculture Education Program for All Ages

- 4-H
- Storrs Regional Future Farmers of America (High School Student Organization)
- EO Smith High School Agriculture Education Program
- UConn College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Since 1995 the number of undergraduate degree seeking students in agricultural fields has increased 63% (513 in Fall 1995 - 835 in Fall 2009)

How is Mansfield Supporting Agriculture?

- Agriculture Committee
- Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)
- Zoning/subdivision Regulations
- Right-to-Farm Ordinance
- Tax incentives
- Support Storrs Farmers Market
- Participate in the Community Farms Program with CT DoAG



- Include agricultural goals in POCD
- Formulate Zoning Regulations that support agricultural businesses
- Ensuring subdivision regulations that minimize effect of development on local farms
- CT General Statutes sec. 19a-341 declares that “no agricultural or farming operation, place, establishment or facility, or any of its appurtenances, or the operation thereof, shall be deemed to constitute a nuisance” provided that the operation is following generally accepted agricultural practices.” Generally accepted practices are determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture. Local Right-to-Farm ordinances are a policy statement emphasizing a Town’s support of agriculture.
- Implement local tax reduction programs to assist in retaining farms and farmland

How is Mansfield Supporting Agriculture?

- Held Events
- Present to the Town Council
- Leasing Program for Town Ag Land
- Include Agriculture on the business portal of Town Website
- Participate in the Farm to School Program
- Preserved farmland through the subdivision process



Mansfield Community Garden

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Mansfield

- Mansfield is still not perceived as an agricultural community.



Mansfield Agriculture Committee Goals:

- Promote agricultural viability and preservation
- Promote healthy environment.
- Represent agricultural community before land use and other commissions.
- To be a resource of agricultural information.
- Support a balance between agriculture, preservation, and other land uses

The newly adopted charge is attached.

Mansfield Tomorrow Project

- ❑ Town project funded by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Sustainable Housing Communities.
- ❑ Goal is to help Mansfield maintain our rural character while providing access to the jobs and homes that are the foundation of the town's long-term sustainability.
- ❑ Guided by a robust community engagement strategy



Mansfieldtomorrow.com

Mansfield Tomorrow Project

Outcomes:

- ▣ Agriculture Strategy
- ▣ Economic Development Strategy
- ▣ Housing Strategy
- ▣ New POCD/Comprehensive Plan
- ▣ Full rewrite of our zoning and subdivision regulations



Mansfieldtomorrow.com

2013 Agriculture Strategy

- ❑ Worked with Ag Committee
- ❑ All Day Farmers Forum
- ❑ Focus Groups
- ❑ Interviews with farmers
- ❑ Interviews with local, regional, and state leaders



2013 Agriculture Strategy

- Agriculture is visible and valued in the community
 - Increase visibility of local/regional agriculture
 - Promote agricultural experiences for the public
 - Share information on agriculture-related activities, policies, products, activities, and experiences



Mansfieldtomorrow.com

2013 Agriculture Strategy

- Mansfield's Agribusinesses are green and growing
 - Support the expansion of agricultural operations and agricultural related businesses
 - Support new market channels of local agricultural products
 - Support marketing and agricultural businesses
 - Mansfield is a model and regional leader for farm-friendliness.



Mansfieldtomorrow.com

2013 Agriculture Strategy

- **Mansfield is a model and regional leader for farm-friendliness**
 - Town Council understands and declares that agriculture is essential to Mansfield-all staff, boards, and commissions are engaged and educated.
 - Integrate agriculture throughout POCD
 - Farmers' voices are heard
 - Regulations and policies are continually reviewed and updated to ensure we are supporting agriculture
 - Ensure that we publicize the Town's Commitment

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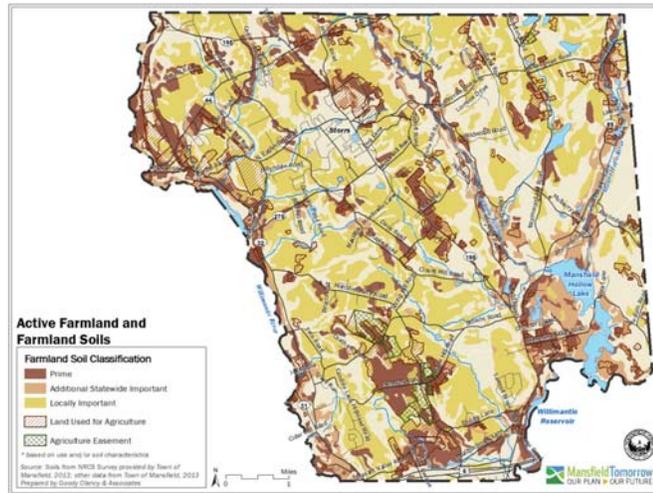
Agricultural Viability

- To preserve farmland we must preserve FARMING
- A Shared Responsibility
- Your job as AGvocates is to lead the way!



Thank you for your support of our efforts. We look forward to working together to support agricultural viability in Mansfield.

Inventory of Farmland in Mansfield



Dark areas indicate farmland on Agricultural/Forestry Natural Diversity Resources Map above

Productive Land

Cropland land--696 acres

Pastureland--852 acres

Forestland—1,387

Orchard—10 acres

Publicly owned farmland

Town—Approximately 70 acres

UConn—895 acres of farmland of which 237 acres is cropland. In addition, UConn maintains approximately 1700 acres of forest used for extension and outreach.

Federal--32 acres

Preserved Farmland- easement that restricts use to agriculture

State Purchase of Development Rights(PDR)- 300 acres.

Town PDR-12 acres.

Acres of Farmland in the Public Act 490 Program (Ct's land use assessment law for farmland, forestland, and open space land)- 3,199