How can you support agriculture and farmers in eastern CT?

In order to preserve farmland, you must preserve farming. You can provide support…

With your food dollars. Choose to buy local farm products at farmers markets, farm stands, garden centers, restaurants, and at the grocery store.

With your vote. Vote in favor of ordinances, farmland preservation funding, and other policies that encourage farmland and farmer retention and agricultural economic development.

With your time. Volunteer to help your agricultural commission as a "Friend of Agriculture." Town residents have varied and valuable talents and skills. You can be helpful in countless ways.

By educating yourself. You live in an agricultural region; educate yourself about farming and farm practices, meet your farmer neighbors, learn about the crops they grow, and learn about issues that affect agriculture and farmers' every day existence.

The AGvocate Program

began in 2009. Funded through CT Department of Agriculture Farm Viability Grants, it provides a forum for municipal officials, agricultural producers, and other stakeholders to strengthen the farm-friendliness of eastern Connecticut towns. Funding for this brochure was made possible through a grant from The Last Green Valley, Inc. (www.tlgv.org). More information about the AGvocate Program is available at www.AgInfoTLGV.org/AGvocate, or by contacting Jennifer Kaufman at 860-450-6007, AGvocate@yahoo.com.

AGvocate Towns Are Making Farming Viable in Their Towns By:

- Establishing an Agriculture Commission/Committee
- Identifying and promoting agricultural producers
- Updating town plans of conservation and development to ensure that farm viability is a goal
- Reviewing town land-use regulations to limit farm and non-farm conflicts
- Including agriculture in the local economic development strategy
- Implementing farm tax incentives
- Promoting agriculture through education and outreach

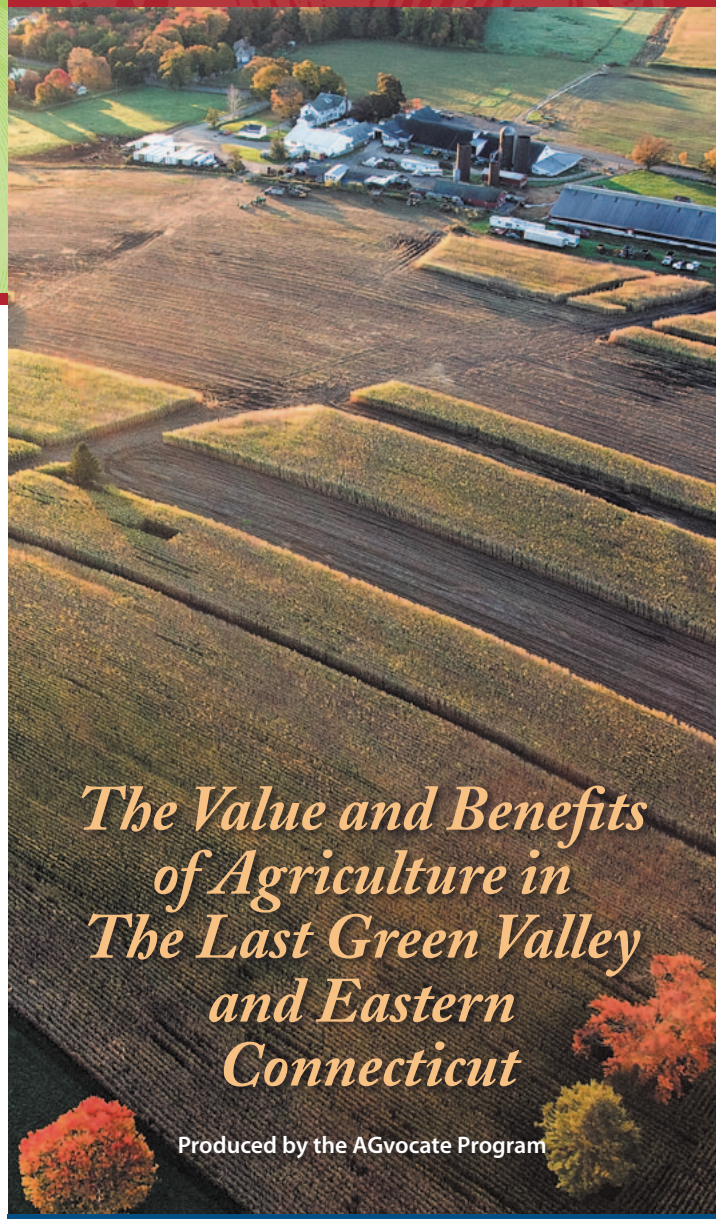
AGVOCATE
ADVOCACY FOR LOCAL AGRICULTURE

The Last Green Valley

Aerial photos from www.glsweetnam.com

Spring 2011

Farms in our community



The Value and Benefits of Agriculture in The Last Green Valley and Eastern Connecticut

Produced by the AGvocate Program

Agriculture is our region's history. Let's make it our future.

The Last Green Valley is a 1,086 square-mile region with 78% forest and farmlands, or 549,000 acres of working land. Our farms and forest are our region's economy, beauty, history, peacefulness, and overall quality of life.

In eastern CT, dairy farms keep the most acres in farmland, and they support several sectors of the economy, including large animal veterinarians, farm equipment manufacturers and repair, and grain and hay producers. Financially, nurseries and greenhouses are the largest part of our agricultural economy.

But eastern CT farmers are diversifying. Some farms now produce high-end, specialty products on small acreage. Responding to our desire for locally grown food, farmers also produce goat cheese, fruit brandy, wine, wool, pasture raised livestock and poultry, grass-fed beef, and organic fruits and vegetables.

Farms benefit our communities and lives.

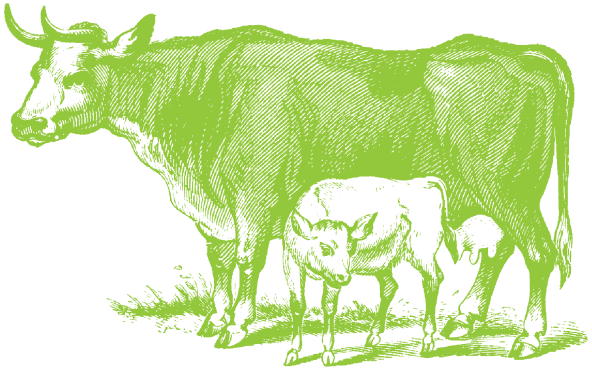
- Farms provide jobs. They are our local businesses. The agriculture industry in Connecticut brings in $3.5 billion to the state every year and produces approximately 20,000 jobs.[1]
- Farms protect the environment. They provide food and cover for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds, and maintain air quality.
- Farms provide "food security." They ensure the long-term availability of healthy, fresh, locally grown food.
- Farms draw tourists. People are drawn to our region to pick their own fruits and vegetables, visit a corn maze, go on a hayride, and view the rolling hayfields and pastured livestock.
- Farms help to stabilize municipal budgets. They require an average of 31¢ in municipal services for each dollar that they provide in property tax revenue. Residential development, on the other hand, requires $1.11 in services for every dollar collected.[2]

Community support will help keep our region's farms viable.

Farming is different from other businesses. If a retail, commercial, or industrial operation goes out of business, another business can take its place. If a farm goes out of business, its land will likely be converted to another use and lost forever.

If we are to save our farms, we need to take advantage of their untapped potential. Today, Connecticut residents spend an estimated $13.75 billion on fresh, prepared, and processed foods from supermarkets, restaurants, and other sources, but less than 1% of this money is spent on locally grown food. [3]

The southern New England region has 11 million people. While our population and proximity to several large cities brings with it pressure to develop, it also provides an extraordinary opportunity to distribute CT grown farm products. We can have a powerful say in the ways our farmland will be used in the future…



[1] *Economic Impacts of Connecticut's Agriculture Industry*, University of Connecticut, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, 2010.

[2] American Farmland Trust, Farmland Information Center, *Fact Sheet: Cost of Community Services*, 2007.

[3] 2009 Per Capita Food Expenditures ($3,929) x population of Connecticut = $13.75 billion; USDA Food CPI and Expenditures, Table 13. USDA 2007 Agriculture Census market value of agricultural products is $551 million minus tobacco, horses, Christmas trees, and non-food nursery = $98 million, or .72% of total food purchases.