
**NEW ENGLAND FARMLAND
and
THE CONNECTICUT PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS
PROGRAM**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Changes in New England farmland and related ecological patterns have been shaped by cultural, economic and political forces which extend outside of this region. Federal agricultural policies, technology, high land prices and demographics have all combined in the continuing decline of New England farmland. Farmland contributes to the environmental health, cultural strength and food security of New England. A farmland preservation movement has evolved on the national, state and local levels, and zoning, tax and legislative mechanisms have been developed to encourage the preservation of farmland. The complete or partial acquisition of farmland by government provides permanent protection for this resource.

In Connecticut (CT), the purchase of development rights (PDR) has been utilized as the primary means for preserving farmland in the state. A study of the CT PDR acquisitions showed that the Connecticut PDR Program has succeeded in preserving high quality farmland. However, progress towards the goal of increasing food security, measured by protected agriculturally productive land resources and CT commodity production and national consumption levels, is not sufficient. The study of types of farms protected and the fate of selected participating farms indicate that the program targets dairy farms, and some PDR farms have been sold as estates. The Program may be more effective at targeting commercially productive farms in order to assist farmers who depend on farming for their livelihood. Purchasing owner-operated, income generating farms in those counties of CT which are the most productive agriculturally will help attain this goal.

Not all farms in Connecticut qualify for the limited funds available to purchase development rights. These farms are, none the less, valuable for the maintenance of ecological and cultural integrity in their communities. Management options which may guide the conscientious maintenance of a 200 acre farm in Cornwall, Connecticut include protecting wetlands, sustainable grazing practices and selective timber harvesting. The study demonstrates that wildlife habitat management and environmental protection can be compatible with a commercially productive farming operation. The scenario considered on this particular farm is applicable to countless farms around New England.