



Future of Farming CT

The New CT Farmer Alliance Policy Platform, 2022

Recommendations for the CT Legislature

Improve the Economic Viability of Farming

1. Pass worker protections for farm workers, including extending collective bargaining rights and the right to overtime pay. Use the recently passed legislation in [New York](#) and [Colorado](#) as a model for workers protection.
2. Create programs and pass legislation that bring farmers closer to receiving fair prices for our products. This will require broadening farmers' consumer base to include more low and middle income shoppers by:
 - a. Continuing to support programs like [CT Grown](#) (funded through the Community Investment Act) that encourage consumers to buy more of their products locally.
 - b. Cultivating relationships between SNAP users and Connecticut farmers.
 - c. Doubling or tripling SNAP benefits for customers shopping at CT farms, not just at [select farmers markets](#) but across the board. Connecticut could work to replicate the Massachusetts Healthy Incentive Program which allows SNAP recipients to use earmarked funds to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables. In addition, explore using this model to assist consumers in purchasing meat and dairy products.
 - d. Subsidizing SNAP processing fees for small farmers beyond the one year subsidy already offered by [MarketLink](#).
3. Create better options for farmers to save for retirement, potentially including a state or non-profit run 401k contribution matching program.
4. Address the high cost of childcare throughout the state and make childcare more affordable and accessible for working class people, including farmers, in CT.
5. Create a zero-interest or low-interest loan and down-payment support program specifically for *farm workers* looking to purchase a home off the farm. Farm workers purchasing homes off the farm do not currently benefit from any of the programs offered by Farm Credit East, FSA, etc, which only serve potential farm owners looking to purchase farmable property. Meanwhile, 33% of young farmers report that finding or maintaining adequate housing is a challenge. For BIPOC young farmers, that number is 42%.

Make Farmland More Accessible

1. Land reform & reparations. Recognizing the trauma that this country has dealt to BIPOC farmers, land stewards, and communities, we must embark on land based reparations and land rematriation.
 - a. Connecticut land trusts, nonprofits, and the Department of Ag should amplify and materially support the work of BIPOC-led land access efforts as appropriate. The [Every Town Project in VT](#) is one example of a proactive statewide program to put more land under the stewardship of BIPOC residents.
2. Create a new farmland preservation program specifically targeted at preserving urban farms. The existing [Farmland Preservation Program](#) and Community Farms Preservation Program do not currently work to preserve urban land.
3. Implement [Option to Purchase at Ag Value](#) for all farmland properties protected by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture.
4. Set aside \$2 million/year for a program specifically designed to assist farmers in purchasing land (could be used to pay for down payments, title search, closing costs etc). This could be administered in the form of a down payment assistance loan that is forgiven over time, similar to



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the existing [Time to Own](#) program but tailored specifically to farmers. It is important that this program be administered in a timely manner due to the quick pace of real estate transactions.

Improve Agricultural Infrastructure in CT

1. Invest in more livestock processing facilities and infrastructure, such as in USDA-certified mobile slaughter units.
2. Invest in infrastructure and businesses, such as affordably priced commercial kitchen space and canning facilities, that will help farmers produce value added products.
3. Revitalize already existing infrastructure (i.e. unused buildings and abandoned factories) to create new opportunities for local food aggregation and distribution.
4. Incentivize the production of CT-made compost, including in urban settings.
5. Create incentives for hemp processing facilities to be established in Connecticut.

Confront Climate Change and Build Climate Resilience

1. Provide robust incentives for farmers to implement [climate smart](#) practices on their farms including agroforestry, cover cropping, grazing management, composting, and crop diversifications by:
 - a. Removing the \$20,000 cap on the Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Grant program to allow farmers to implement higher cost climate resilience projects and
 - b. Stipulating that some degree of climate smart agricultural practices be required for all Department of Agriculture grantees.
2. Provide incentives for farmers to purchase climate smart infrastructure, i.e. solar panels, electric vehicles, etc. This may require [expanding permitting](#) so that electric vehicle manufacturers can sell directly to consumers.
3. Prioritize research and technical assistance for climate smart practices in publicly funded University programs. In NCTFA's 2022 survey of our members, we found that 62% of respondents were interested in receiving one-on-one technical assistance for implementing one or more climate smart ag practices on their farm.
4. Prioritize making Connecticut a leader in hemp farming and include hemp growing as an example of a climate smart agricultural process.
 - a. Fund research around hemp as a bioremediation tool to confront pressing issues such as possible PFAS contamination in CT soils.

Increase Access to Affordable Healthcare for Farmers

1. Create an option for farmers to access affordable healthcare that is directly tailored to their needs. One possible path to affordable healthcare for farmers is to allow us to enroll in one of the [State of CT health care plans](#), currently only available to state employees.
2. Partner with an organization like [Agribility](#) to provide services (training, equipment modification, professional development, etc) specifically targeted at farmers with disabilities.

For more information or to view the full policy platform, please visit our website, newctfarmers.com. If you'd like to get involved in our advocacy work, you can reach us at newctfarmers@gmail.com.