Secure the Future of Michigan Agriculture

MIFarmLink Impact 2025 Report

Contact:

- Website: mifarmlink.org
- Jill Dohner, MIFarmLink Director
- Email: info@mifarmlink.org
- Social Media: Facebook (MIFarmLink), Instagram (MIFarmLink), LinkedIn (MIFarmLink)

Introduction

MIFarmLink, an independent program of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, is dedicated to securing Michigan's agricultural heritage for future generations by bridging the gap between farmers seeking land with farmland owners. This report highlights the program's impact in 2025, reflecting our efforts to support Michigan's agricultural heritage.

The Need

Michigan's agricultural industry is at a pivotal moment. The average age of our state's farmers is 58, and over half of Michigan's farmland will change hands in the next twenty years. Decisions about who that land will pass to are being made now. Between 2017 and 2022, Michigan lost 292,000 acres of farmland and 2,060 farms. The rate of loss has the potential to accelerate rapidly, as 60% of farm owners surveyed by the Washtenaw County Conservation District lacked a succession plan, while 68% of beginning farmers cite land access as their biggest barrier to success. This situation underscores the critical need for programs like MIFarmLink to facilitate land transfer and support new generations of farmers.

Action

MIFarmLink addresses these challenges through a multifaceted approach:

1. **Online Platform**: Launched a new, user-friendly website where farmland owners can list available properties and farm seekers can post professional profiles.
2. **Outreach and Engagement:** Extensive outreach efforts have included presentations at conferences, webinars, and meetings with local realtors and conservation groups.
3. **Support Services:** Provided mentorship opportunities and connected farmers with resources on succession planning, business development, financing, and land management.
4. **Collaboration:** Partnered with organizations, MSU Extension, Michigan Farm Mentors, Legacy Land Conservancy, and Conservation Districts, to expand our reach and effectiveness.

Impact

The impact of MIFarmLink in 2025 has been substantial, exceeding our expectations across multiple metrics:

- **Farm Linking:**
    - New Properties Listed: 63
    - Hosted over 655 profiles created on the platform
    - Properties Linked: 12, totaling 511 acres
    - Connections made: 72
    - Farm Owners Assisted: 50
    - Farm Seekers Assisted: 345. An increase doubled from 2024
- **Outreach:**
    - Website Visits: Over 185,000 in 2025. Over 21,000 users
    - Earned Media: over 150,000+ households reached.
    - Over 2,500 subscribers and growing the MIFarmLink monthly newsletter.
    - Featured in the summer edition of Michigan Farm News and ran an online ad. Started a 7-month campaign with Michigan Ag Today.
    - Established a Facebook page with over 500+ followers, reaching 20,594 viewers, and a new
    - Instagram page with 218 followers. LinkedIn 92 followers.
- **Programmatic:**
    - Conducted exit interviews and one-on-one consultations with farmers
    - Added additional Regional Representatives across the state
    - Partnered with MSU Extension to survey farmers about land access and land transfer challenges
    - Presented at the Great Lakes Crop Summit, Michigan Farmers Union, American Farmland Trust, and Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.

Financial Planning

Support from SARE Partnership, TOPP, and the Towsley Foundations will fund the program through FY26. Additional funding is sought for FY26-FY27 to support outreach and robust marketing efforts to increase our impact across the state as well as increased capacity on our website. Our development plan involves securing funds from state and federal grants, private foundations, corporate sponsors, and a Giving Tuesday campaign.

Outlook for 2026 and Beyond

Working from our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, MIFarmLink will continue to build on the successes of 2024 by expanding outreach and enhancing our service offerings. Key initiatives include:

1. **Statewide Expansion**: It is with immense gratitude that we announce MIFarmLink has transitioned to a statewide entity under the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD). MIFarmLink now has a direct connection to all 75 Conservation Districts across Michigan, including our roots here in Washtenaw County.
2. **Enhanced Outreach and Marketing:** Increasing in-person outreach with Conservation Districts and developing a robust advertising campaign to raise awareness of MIFarmLink among potential users and stakeholders, including agricultural real estate professionals.
3. **Resource Development:** Creating a series of webinars and videos with partners at MSU Extension hosted on our website to educate farmers on assessing land opportunities, negotiating land tenure contracts, and succession planning tools. This was through a SARE Partnership grant opportunity.
4. **Mentorships**: Strengthening and filtering mentorship pairs for the MI Farm Mentors program (TOPP) to enhance our beginning farmer opportunities.

Conclusion

By increasing outreach across the state supported by our partners and funders, leveraging our successes, and building on our strategic plan, MIFarmLink will continue to support Michigan's farmers and preserve the state's valuable farmland for many years to come. Thank you to everyone who has supported MIFarmLink from the beginning. The work continues — bigger, better, and now statewide. Learn more at mifarmlink.org