

Helping Communities Grow Local

Wholesome, fresh food. Thriving communities. Local economic development. All are vitally important for our families and our future, and they have something else in common: their health depends on the health of local farms and farmland.

Agriculture offers solutions to the nation's critical need for food, economic stability, renewable energy and a clean environment. But farms—particularly those on the urban edge where most of our dairy products, fruits, vegetables and are grown—are increasingly threatened by sprawling development, difficult market conditions and a host of other challenges.

That's why American Farmland Trust's *Growing Local* program is so important. *Growing Local* is working with farmers and communities to save farmland, improve the outlook for local agriculture, and meet the burgeoning demand for local food.

The stakes could not be higher.

Without Local Farms and Farmland, There Is No Local Food

During the past 20 years, the nation's best agricultural soils have been developed the fastest, while the average acreage devoted to new housing, per person, nearly doubled. More than one million acres of precious farmland are developed each year. And even though so much of the food we eat is grown near cities, our food travels an estimated 1,500 miles, on average, before it reaches our plates.



Farms near metropolitan areas produce

86%
of the nation's fruits and vegetables and

63%
of our dairy products.



“In a perfect world, everything that was sold, everything that was purchased and consumed would be local, so the economy would receive the benefit of that. But sometimes that stresses the capacity: the production capacity or the distribution capacity. Especially since we don't have yet a very sophisticated distribution system for locally grown food. One thing we can do is work on strategies to make that happen.”
—U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

Consumers are eager to buy local food and other local farm products. Farmers markets in the United States surged almost 160 percent from 1994 to 2008, and the number of “community supported agriculture” (CSA) farms tripled in the past five years. The growing “buy local” movement is much more than a fashionable trend. But it depends on the sustainability of nearby farms and ranches. In these uncertain times,



a vibrant local food and farming system is critical to the health of our communities.

American Farmland Trust is working to make “growing local” a reality for farmers, ranchers and communities through projects and programs that:

The 2008 U.S. Agricultural Census reports a

49%

growth in sales from farms directly to consumers since 2002—representing

\$1.2 billion

that stayed in local communities and produced direct economic benefits.

Protect Farmland and Support Smart Growth. For more than 30 years, we’ve been the national leader in farmland protection and conservation. Through our work promoting smart growth and helping state, federal and local governments design, implement and fund farmland protection programs, we will continue to lead the urgent drive to save farmland—an integral part of the “green infrastructure” needed for America’s future.

Plan for Agriculture and Strengthen Regional Food Systems. Even in states like California, the demand for local food and farm products exceeds the available supply, with many obstacles in the way for local products to reach nearby consumers. We’re continuing our cutting-edge work with states and communities to develop farm-friendly plans and food and farm strategies—work that is helping communities develop the infrastructure needed to clear the path from farm gate to dinner plate.

Promote Changes in Food and Farm Policy. Many titles in the federal farm bill have implications for local food and agricultural production. In addition to achievements in conservation and farmland



protection, our work on the 2008 Farm Bill and other federal legislation has succeeded in securing significantly increased funding and new programs to support farm profitability, the expansion of regional food systems and opportunities for new farmers to enter agriculture.

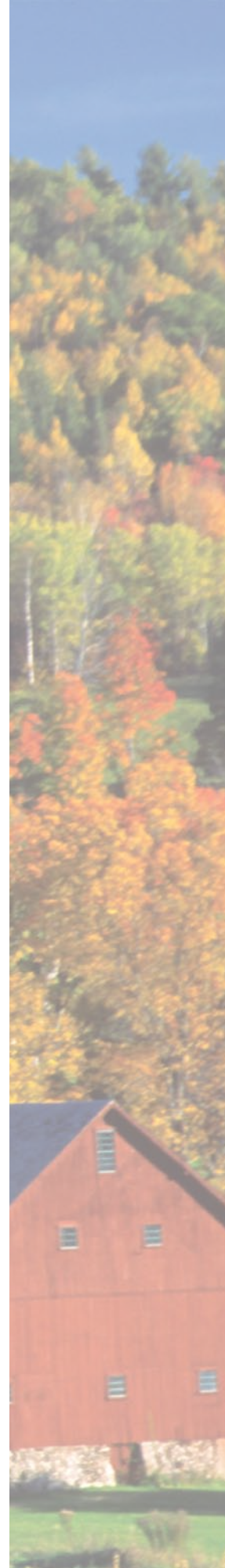
Make the “Field to Fork” Connection. We’re helping bolster state agricultural viability programs, community supported agriculture, farmers markets, farm-to-school programs, food policy councils and local food purchasing policies to close the gap between farm production and consumption. To educate and mobilize consumers, we’re focusing on demonstrating the direct benefits provided to society by farms and ranches, along with the urgency to support them.



On-the-Ground Projects

As our key projects demonstrate on-the-ground successes around the country, *Growing Local* will document the “best practices” to be replicated elsewhere, disseminating research and advice through our Farmland Information Center, workshops and conferences and other venues. Our recent projects include:

- In California, we released a report assessing the capacity of the San Francisco Foodshed. The study found there is enormous potential for the city to feed itself from local farms, but there are significant challenges to making that a reality, which American Farmland Trust and city leaders are now working to address through a Bay Area Urban Rural Roundtable. We also undertook a model farmland conservation plan for Fresno County, the nation’s number-one agricultural producing county.
- In New Jersey’s Burlington County, a strong farming area in the shadows of Philadelphia, we crafted model ordinances that support local farms and food, and we are working to enact them. We also advised the county on how to improve access to local food at the county’s farmers market by enabling the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer and the use of farmers market coupons for WIC recipients and low income senior citizens.
- In New York and New England, we’re working with municipal officials to develop community-oriented plans that identify critical farming resources, strategies to protect them and infrastructure and economic development to support agricultural viability.



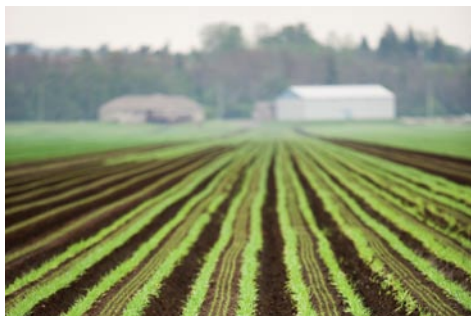
Our Goal: Healthy Farms, Healthy Food and Healthy Communities

For nearly 30 years, American Farmland Trust has been a leader in farmland protection and conservation, earning national recognition for our ability to bring together diverse interests in agriculture, smart growth and the environment. Our *Growing Local* program is uniting local activities into a national agenda that can bring about the systemic change needed to ensure healthy farms, healthy food and healthy communities.



As a result of *Growing Local*:

- **Smart growth and “no net loss of farmland” policies** will help secure the nation’s valuable farm and ranch land.
- **Agricultural viability** will be enhanced through improved farm income, robust supply chains and new marketing opportunities, including “added value” and distribution of local food.
- **A regionally diverse food and farming system** will close the gap between consumption and production; reduce food miles traveled; and ensure access to, and sustainability of, local food and other agricultural products.
- Incentives will be in place to support **local agricultural infrastructure** and develop farm-based sources of renewable energy.
- Opportunities will be available for **beginning farmers** to enter agriculture.
- **Farms and ranches will sustain a vital and bountiful landscape** and be a cornerstone of economic prosperity, local heritage and environmental quality in communities across the nation.



“Across the country, there’s a lot of enthusiasm for buying locally and investing local resources to revitalize our communities. One of our most precious resources is our farm and ranch land and all the public benefits it provides: healthy food, economic opportunities, environmental amenities—even renewable energy.”

—Julia Freedgood, Director of *Growing Local*