



Planning for Agriculture

Community planning is not complete without a plan for food and agriculture. Planning for Agriculture creates the framework for local land use policies to keep land available for farming, environmental management to keep it healthy and economic development to sustain viable agriculture and promote food security. Planning *for* agriculture—not just around it—builds healthy communities by managing municipal costs, strengthening the local economy, protecting natural resources, and ensuring the supply of sustainable, locally grown food and farm products. American Farmland Trust has helped states, counties and towns across the country create plans and programs that support agriculture.

California Agricultural Vision (Ag Vision): The California Department of Food & Agriculture and the State Board of Food & Agriculture conceived [Ag Vision](#) to address the many challenges that could jeopardize the ability of the state's farmers and ranchers to produce sufficient food, care for the environment and remain profitable. After holding public listening sessions and formulating a set of goals, the State Board turned to AFT to manage the Ag Vision process. AFT convened workshops in which more than 90 agricultural and other leaders proposed actions to address key issues. Working with an Advisory Committee of representatives from agricultural, environmental, labor, hunger and nutrition interest groups, AFT then transformed proposals from the stakeholder workshops into a set of carefully focused strategies. AFT's final report to the State Board, entitled [California Agricultural Vision: Strategies for Sustainability](#), outlines a plan to ensure the continued viability of the state's \$36 billion-a-year agriculture industry, including strategies that will promote AFT's mission of saving the land that sustains us by protecting farm and ranch land, improving environmental stewardship and ensuring a sustainable future for farmers and ranchers.

San Diego County, California: AFT worked with the County of San Diego, the San Diego Farm Bureau, and the University of California Cooperative Extension/Farm & Home Advisors to develop a Farming Program Plan to help San Diego County:

- Provide recommendations for the 2007 Farm Bill;
- Streamline the regulatory environment for farmers;
- Provide economic incentives to restore, enhance, or create habitat for sensitive species;
- Provide recommendations for equity mechanisms, i.e., transfer and/or purchase of development rights;
- Support County pest exclusion and pest detection efforts designed to minimize the economic damage caused by quarantines and treatment protocols required for new and exotic pests.

The Farming Program Plan included a Plan and an Implementation Manual to create the framework for economically and environmentally sustainable farming, land use policy and program recommendations to keep land available and affordable for farming, and economic development tools to help improve farm profitability.

Suisun Valley, California: The small but fertile region of Suisun Valley in Solano County, California, turned to AFT for help in forming an agricultural vision and recommendations to guide the County's support for agriculture during its General Plan Update process. Through listening sessions and interviews AFT assessed farmers' concerns for the future of local agriculture. In the resulting report,

Agricultural Vision and Economic Innovation in Suisun Valley, AFT outlined a strategic plan for agricultural development and conservation in Suisun Valley and Solano County.

Connecticut

AFT and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities are currently providing technical assistance to help communities plan for agriculture. Six municipalities—Coventry, Durham, Eastford, North Stonington, Preston and Woodbridge—were selected to receive technical assistance to implement one of the strategies discussed in *Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities*. The towns are focusing on strategies such as: initiating an Agricultural Commission; reviewing farm tax reduction options; encouraging buy local opportunities; including agriculture in town conservation and development plans; and developing right-to-farm ordinances.

Department of Agriculture, Maryland: *The Maryland Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management* was the culmination of a 15-month planning process led by AFT in partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture. AFT helped organize the public input process, including stakeholder surveys, listening sessions, conference calls with experts and the Governor’s Agricultural Forum. AFT developed the strategic plan, the core of which centers around three overarching issues: enhance profitability, ensure an adequate base of well-managed agricultural land, and advance research, education and the advocacy of agriculture.

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy: AFT developed an agricultural economic development strategy for a six-county region of Maryland working with economic development specialists and agriculture professionals. The strategy offers an innovative model for communities where commodity-based agriculture and a variety of resource-based enterprises must adapt to globalization and development. Based on the regional strategy’s recommendations, the Rauch Foundation provided a generous grant to create and fund an ombudsman position to support agriculture- and forest-related industries in the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Saratoga County, New York: Working with the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, AFT developed an agricultural and farmland protection plan for Saratoga County, N.Y. This project included surveys and analyses of agricultural resources, trends in the local economy and development patterns, assessment of the importance of agriculture to the local economy, an exploration of ways to support agricultural development, public education and policy recommendations.

Department of Agriculture, Ohio: Seeking to stop the loss of farmland in Ohio, the state’s Farmland Preservation Task Force hired AFT to analyze the causes and consequences behind the decline. AFT also helped the taskforce develop recommendations for improving existing growth management and farmland protection programs and for creating new programs.

Berks and Schuylkill Counties, Pennsylvania: The Berks County Community Foundation asked AFT to analyze the agricultural industry in Berks and Schuylkill counties. AFT conducted an eight-month assessment of agriculture in the two counties, including research, economic analyses, and discussions with farmers and local leaders. Working with a local advisory committee, AFT identified key issues and developed recommendations to address them and ensure a vital, sustainable agricultural industry in Berks and Schuylkill counties.

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: AFT worked with Wallace, Roberts & Todd (WRT) Design on the update of the nationally recognized Lancaster County Growth Management Plan’s strategy to sustain

rural areas in this Pennsylvania county. AFT's work focused on the viability of agricultural industry and the creation of a "Smart Growth Toolbox," including methods to be implemented by municipalities and the county to improve regulatory and capital investment strategies. The plan update, *Envision Lancaster County*, won a 2006 Outstanding Planning Award from the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Planning Association and a 2009 National Smart Growth Achievement award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Union County, Pennsylvania: AFT worked with WRT on a comprehensive plan for nine rural townships and four boroughs of Union County, Pa. Located along the Susquehanna River 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia and 200 miles east of Pittsburgh, Union County anticipates its residential housing to grow 40 percent by 2030, with highest growth in agricultural townships. The Agricultural Development and Natural Resources Element of the plan offers strategies to protect farmland and promote smart growth, and explores regional food system development and other economic development strategies to support the business of farming and encourage sustainable agricultural and forestry practices to improve and protect the region's natural resources.

U.S. Department of Defense: AFT wrote *Working to Preserve Farm, Forest and Ranch Lands: A Guide for Military Installations* to assist the military in its efforts to educate military base personnel on the techniques and opportunities for farmland preservation. Managing 30 million acres of rural land, the Department of Defense (DoD) has an important role in protecting working landscapes and buffering military bases from incompatible land uses. Through collaborative partnerships with communities, conservation organizations and state and local governments, DoD is increasingly using the techniques in AFT's *Guide* to preserve agricultural lands on the perimeter of military installations.

Other Clients:

- Town of Brutus, N.Y.
- Genesee County, N.Y., Department of Planning
- Town of LeRoy, N.Y.
- Town of Lima, N.Y.
- Town of North East , N.Y.
- Rensselaer County, N.Y., Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- Town Boards of Brant, Evans and North Collins counties, N.Y.
- Buncombe County, North Carolina
- Bear River Association of Governments, Utah

AFT's Planning for Agriculture Guides

Planning for agriculture is just as important as planning for development. It establishes a framework for an economically and environmentally sustainable agricultural industry. Planning for agriculture protects farm and forest lands from other uses and provides support for the businesses that rely upon the land for their economic survival. AFT's Planning for Agriculture Guides offer strategies and tools for communities to preserve and protect their agricultural resources and businesses for the long-term benefit of their residents' quality of life. AFT's Guides and many of the sample documents, resources and laws referenced in them are available in PDF format on the Farmland Information Center Web site (www.farmlandinfo.org).

- *Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities*
- *Planning for Agriculture in New York*
- *Planning for an Agricultural Future: A Guide for North Carolina Farmers and Local Governments*