

Fact Sheet #2 Finding a Farm



Beginning the Search for Farmland

When beginning the process of locating farmland, it is important to first think about your overall farming goals. It is also helpful to know your needs and your preferences and compare these with options available to you.

Ask yourself:

What kind of land will best meet my farming goals?

Think about access to land, equipment needs, water availability, soil type, and location from your house or to markets.

Are there restrictions on the land that won't let me meet my goals?

Examples: wetlands, conservation restrictions, zoning requirements

What do you need to secure your investments if you do not live on the land?

Examples: infrastructure for storing assets, fencing, farm insurance

What financial resources do you need to maintain the land?

Shall I rent, lease, or purchase?

This decision will determine how you go about finding land.

Will an alternative type of land tenure arrangement best meet my needs?

Examples: lease with option to buy, crop share, or fee title purchase with agricultural conservation easement.

Helpful Contacts for Finding a Farm

New Entry has a [Farmland Matching Service](#) to help qualified beginning farmers and experienced growers to locate suitable land for agricultural production. For more information, contact nesfp@tufts.edu.

The New England Small Farm Institute has a [New England LAND-LINK service](#). The \$10 annual fee includes access to property listings and landowner contact information.

New England Farm Finder helps farmland owners and seekers [find each other](#).

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

- The Bureau of Land Use often leases land to farmers when it is not being used by the department, via its [Farmland Stewardship Program](#). Call them at (617) 626-1700.
- The Agricultural Preservation Program (APR) gives financial incentives to keep Massachusetts' most productive farmland in agricultural use. Since farmers are paid the difference between the "fair market" and "agricultural" value of their land when they enroll in the program, APR land can be an affordable option for beginning farmers. To find out more about the APR, [visit MDAR's website](#).



You may see land that is classified for agricultural use referred to as 61[a] land. This relates to the tax code. Some land link programs match farmers with land in peril of losing 61[a] status with beginning farmers looking for land to work. By keeping farmland in active use, landowners can continue to receive an agricultural tax benefit.

Local Conservation Commissions

Every town/city has a [Conservation Commission](#) that may be helpful in finding local land to use for agricultural preservation. They are always a government group, and you can call a town or city hall to get contact information. Land trusts, watershed councils, and historic commissions may also be helpful.

Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Comissions

As of June 2013, there were [154 agricultural commissions](#) within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Town agricultural commissions represent the farming community, encourage the pursuit of agriculture, promote agricultural economic development, and protect farmlands and farm businesses.

Other good places to look for information on available farmland include

land link programs that connect new or relocating farmers with landowners, agriculture publications, farming newsletters, local newspapers, land trusts, town or village governments, signs or postings in farm supply stores, and word-of-mouth.

Farm Real Estate Brokers

While conventional real estate brokers list farms for sale, most active farms are considered commercial property and are listed by real estate agents specializing in farm transactions. The list below does not imply endorsement of any of the following businesses:

- [MLS Residential Search](#)
- [Farm Credit](#)
- [Farm Service Agency Real Estate for Sale](#)
- [Landandfarm.com](#)
- [Landdirectory.com](#)
- [United Country Real Estate](#)

Also, check with locals in the area near where you hope to farm to find realtors who specialize in farm property.



Additional Resources:

The [American Agriculturalist](#) lists land for sale across the country.

The [National Farm Transition Network](#) connects retiring farmers with entering farmers.

The [Farm Transfer Network of New England](#) helps farmers transition from one owner to another.

[American Farmland Trust – New England Office](#) specializes in farmland protection.

[Land for Good](#) helps farmers and land owners with land transfer planning, leases, and other land use agreements.

The [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) is a program of the USDA that serves farmers and ranchers with programs such as crop insurance, funding for land conservation, and farm loans. The [Massachusetts Farm Service Agency](#) office maintains an online listing of farm land they have for sale.

Deciding if a Farm Property is Right for You

Once you have located a farm, there are several things to take into consideration when deciding to lease or purchase the property. These will be related to the goals you set at the beginning of the process. In particular, you will want to look at:

- Physical land characteristics (acreage, soils, topography, water availability)
- Climate (average temperature, average rainfall, number of frost-free days, wind patterns, etc.)
- Location (distance from markets and services, quality of the surrounding community)
- Infrastructure (roads, electricity, water and sewer service, buildings, housing)
- History of the land's use and any legal restriction or burdens that come with the land

New Entry offers a guide to help you assess farmland before signing an agreement.

See Fact Sheet #3 to help you assess farmland before signing an agreement. Additional fact sheets detail the final step in accessing farmland – [negotiating an agreement to rent, lease, or purchase the land you have chosen](#).

