

**Farmland Access & Ownership:  
An Overview of Barriers, Models, and Actions to Increase Land Access for Connecticut's BIPOC  
Farmers**

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## Acknowledgement

This report is borne out of the recommendation of the [Connecticut Department of Agriculture's \(CT DoAg\) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Working Group](#). The DEI Working Group is a crucial component of CT DoAg's agency-wide effort to engage and support current and future farmers and food actors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

The main charge of the DEI Working Group was to examine the barriers that prevent people from entering the agricultural sector and create recommendations for what the state and agriculture service providers can do to better support diversity and inclusion in Connecticut's agricultural community. Organized around a main working group and five subgroups, the DEI Working Group focused on access issues related to capital and financial planning; secure land tenure; education and training; resources, infrastructure, and business planning; and markets and diversification.

The DEI Working Group's recommendations can be found in the link below:

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOAG/Boards\\_Commissions\\_Councils/Diversity-Working-Group/DoAG-DEI-Report-English-Final-print.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOAG/Boards_Commissions_Councils/Diversity-Working-Group/DoAG-DEI-Report-English-Final-print.pdf)

Through their recommendations, the DEI Working Group has underscored the urgent need to dismantle systemic barriers and champion equitable and secure access to farmland for BIPOC farmers. This report stands as a testament to their dedication and a response to their call for actionable change. It is a collaborative endeavor, drawing inspiration from the voices and experiences of BIPOC farmers and other agricultural stakeholders who are the vanguards of an equitable and just transformation in our food system.

This report is possible because of the contributions of the following individuals:

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## Preface

This report is a collaboration between the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) and the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. CLCC's mission is to elevate and strengthen land conservation in Connecticut. We envision a future where every community is supported and sustained by a diverse mix of conserved land, and land conservation is embraced as an essential community value.

CLCC, as the umbrella organization and unifying force for Connecticut's ~125 conservation land trusts, operates on the commitment to nurturing partnerships that not only advance land conservation, but cultivate healthy and sustainable communities, of which food security, farmland, and farmers are an integral component.

CLCC recognizes that farmland access and ownership are not just agricultural imperatives but are a necessity of broader conservation, sustainability, and equity efforts. We recognize that conservation encompasses more than pristine forests and untouched wilderness. It must embrace the lands from which we draw sustenance, and our survival is predicated.

CLCC believes that the land conservation community must work to address the enduring systemic racism, prejudices, and injustices faced by BIPOC communities in all elements of our society – urban, suburban, and rural. This perspective underscores the indispensable role that conservation land trusts can play in addressing the unique needs of BIPOC farmers.

### © DEI Access to Secure Land Tenure Subgroup Recommendation

The focus of the Access to Secure Land Tenure subgroup was to develop recommendations on improving BIPOC access to farmland, resources for finding farmland, mechanisms that could increase the amount of farmland and infrastructure available for agriculture, and ways to reduce barriers for urban growers.

This report is a direct response to the DEI Access to Secure Land Tenure subgroup's recommendations, specifically recommendation 4.3.

*4.3 Commission a report on cooperative land trusts and other models of cooperative ownership/incubators models and how they could function in Connecticut with a focus on urban and suburban areas.*

In conceptualizing the creation of this report and understanding the focus of the subgroup, CLCC recognized the synergy with another recommendation, 4.1.

*4.1 Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers.*

By increasing the availability of land, 4.1 seeks to provide BIPOC farmers with opportunities to establish and grow their farm businesses. It recognizes that land access is a foundational prerequisite for their success. Recommendation 4.3 serves as a potential mechanism for achieving and implementing 4.1 by identifying models and providing insights into different approaches for increasing land access.

This report offers an overview of challenges and barriers to farmland access and ownership as well as examining different cooperative models. This report is not intended to be a comprehensive study. It is not exhaustive. It is meant to serve as a resource and an invitation for the state's agricultural stakeholders—including farmers, government agencies, land trusts, philanthropists, and universities—to gain an understanding of ongoing initiatives and work collectively towards facilitating greater and equitable land access for BIPOC farmers.

Beyond this report, CLCC will undertake an initiative in Eastern Connecticut, funded by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, to further engage land trusts, community groups, and BIPOC farmers in-depth discussions around challenges and opportunities for farmland access in the region with an eye towards working with this collective to champion one of the land access models highlighted in this report. The findings of these discussions will be compiled and sent to CT DoAg as an addendum to this report.

#### © Diversity Within BIPOC Communities

It is paramount to emphasize that the use of the term BIPOC throughout this report does not suggest homogeneity within the diverse communities it is meant to represent. The people and communities encompassed by this term have unique histories, cultural backgrounds, identities, and aspirations. They are not monoliths, in that their perspectives and lived experiences are not uniform across all identities, nor within a specific identity. Their desires and visions for land access and ownership are considerably varied. It is essential to tailor solutions to land access and ownership to the people and communities' specific needs and circumstances.

The use of the term in this report is meant to center the experiences and challenges faced by BIPOC communities in a collective context. When discussing specific individuals or groups, this report prioritizes how they self-identify.

#### © Methods

This report draws its insights from a combination of interviews, workshops, listening sessions, and desk research. These methods collectively capture some of the challenges and opportunities related to farmland access and ownership.



### 1. Interviews:

The foundation of this report rests upon 32 interviews conducted with a range of agricultural stakeholders, including but not limited to BIPOC farmers, who brought first hand experiences and perspective on land access; land trust representatives who offered a nuanced understanding of the challenges and possibilities for access and ownership from the viewpoint of organizations working closely with agricultural communities; and other individuals with agricultural expertise.

Interviewees were selected based on recommendations by CT DoAg, the BIPOC farmers interviewed, and CLCC staff. Interviews were semi-structured and conducted between March and September 2023. There are numerous BIPOC farmers and land trusts whose voices were not captured in this report due to limitations in resources and time. BIPOC farmers interviewed were all specialty crop producers. *These are producers who cultivate fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.*

No direct quotes are taken from these interviews and included in this report. Instead, relevant quotes, insights, and themes have been summarized, paraphrased, or synthesized to inform the relevant sections of this report and support the strategic actions outlined at the end. This approach respects the privacy of interviewees while ensuring that their valuable contributions inform the overall narrative.

### 2. Workshops and Listening Sessions:

Beyond individual interviews, this report benefited from the collective knowledge and discussions emerging from workshops, listening sessions, and conferences. Events and gatherings, such as the Black Farmers Fund and Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust Connecticut Unearthing session, the Land Trust Alliance's 2023 National Land Conservation Conference, and the Working Land Alliance Farmland Access Working Group, provided invaluable platforms for engaging with numerous stakeholders. These events facilitated dialogue, knowledge sharing, and the exploration of solutions to farmland access challenges.

### 3. Desk Research:

In addition to direct engagement with stakeholders, this report is informed by a review of existing literature, reports, and case studies related to farmland access and ownership. This desk research provided understanding of the broader context and factors influencing land access.

## Introduction

“Give us food and it will be gone tomorrow. Give us land and the tools to work it, and we will feed ourselves forever.” These words by civil rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer, capture the essence of the conversations had with farmers for this report. Hamer’s words exemplify several themes and ideas pivotal to the agricultural future of BIPOC farmers. These include:

- Land as a fundamental resource.
  - Land does not only provide the means for agriculture. It is a source of sustenance, wealth, and self-sufficiency. It holds cultural and historical significance that enables different communities to connect with their identity, heritage, and traditions.
- Ownership, control, and sovereignty.
  - "Give us land" calls for land ownership or secure land access. Owning or having control over land is critical for individuals and communities to shape their environment and outcomes as they see fit. Many of the farmers interviewed expressed the need for land sovereignty, which is the right to exercise autonomy, agency, and self-determination over land and its resources including what is grown on the land, how it is grown, and what is consumed.
- Self-reliance and sustainability.
  - Access to land and the means to cultivate it (“the tools”) empowers individuals and communities to sustain themselves and address the underlying issues to problems they may face such as food insecurity, poverty, cultural reclamation, and social equity.
- Community and collective action.
  - Hamer’s words emphasize a collective approach to land use. "We will feed ourselves forever" suggests communities must work together to ensure their survival. It underscores the value of community-based, cooperative, or shared agricultural models.
- Socioeconomic equity.
  - “Give us land and the tools to work it” acknowledges the need for equity and justice in the distribution of opportunities, knowledge, and resources as a means to address the inequities related to land access. Access to resources such as education, training, capital, and markets for agricultural products are essential to self-sufficiency and economic stability.
- Long-term planning.
  - Hamer’s words highlight the need to focus on long-term solutions and not just short-term relief. This forward-looking approach is essential to building resilience and sustainability in the agricultural community. Secure land access enables

farmers to make long-term investments in their land and communities whether that is infrastructure, soil health improvements, or hosting the community on the land for different events.

Access to farmland and secure land tenure are crucial elements to building and maintaining agricultural businesses. Yet, for many BIPOC farmers, these fundamental aspects of their livelihoods remain unattainable. Land tenure refers to the way a farmer accesses land and the manner or level of control they have over it. Commonly, farmers own or lease the land(s) they cultivate.

In the context of this report, secure land tenure means affordable and equitable access to land that enables farmers to plan, implement, and fully realize their agricultural goals and objectives. Secure land tenure is critical because it provides farmers with the foundation and stability they need to make long-term investments in their agricultural endeavors, which in turn, supports the sustainability of food systems, and fortifies the vitality and resilience of the agricultural industry.

This report is structured as follows:

- Barriers to farmland access and ownership.
  - This section discusses the challenges and barriers interviewees have experienced either in seeking farmland for themselves or facilitating access to it. It highlights why these barriers are pronounced for BIPOC farmers.
- Models for farmland access and ownership.
  - This section explores a variety of models and initiatives that seek to disrupt the existing paradigms of land distribution, access, and ownership.
- Considerations for farmland access and ownership.
  - This section briefly describes other elements to the multifaceted nature of land access that deserve further examination.
- Models for potential implementation in Connecticut.
  - Selecting three models from those previously discussed, this section details considerations for their implementation and the prospective role CT DoAg can undertake in facilitating their execution.
- Paving a path forward.
  - This report concludes with nine strategic actions, drawn from the interviewees and research, that can be undertaken to increase farmland access and ownership for BIPOC producers.

To echo the sentiments of Fannie Lou Hamer, land is the foundation upon which sustainable and self-sustaining agricultural communities and systems are built. This report aims to shed light on

the path towards a more equitable, just, and resilient future for BIPOC farmers, one where they have the land and tools to feed themselves and their communities, not just for today or tomorrow, but for generations to come.

## Barriers to Farmland Access and Ownership

Secure land tenure is restricted by a multitude of challenges and barriers that farmers must navigate in order to fully realize their agricultural goals. The issue of land tenure is not limited to simply having access or owning land; it encompasses an intricate tapestry of historical inequities, legal complexities, and socio-economic disparities that have and continue to disproportionately affect BIPOC farmers.

In this report, the challenges and barriers to farmland access and ownership are grouped into six categories: Information and Awareness; Economic; Structural and Institutional; Transition and Succession; Environmental; and Sociocultural. The barriers within each category are not exhaustive; however, they are representative themes gathered from stakeholders who contributed to this report. The different categories are interconnected and bear an influence on one another.

### © Information and Awareness

#### *Barriers include:*

- Identifying available farmland for leasing and/or purchase.
  - Public databases that consolidate available farmland listings are limited and may be missing accurate and up-to-date information. These databases may not capture farmland owned by municipalities, land trusts, or corporations.
  - Even if a farmer is aware and can access these databases, finding farmland that matches their vision for production may be a prolonged process.
- Awareness and access to existing opportunities, resources, and programs for accessing farmland.
  - Farmers may not be aware of state, nonprofit, or university extension support programs that provide assistance in finding land or identifying and applying for grants.
  - They may find it difficult to access technical resources that provide evaluations on the quality, suitability, and productivity of farmland for their agricultural production.
  - Mentorship and guidance resources: A lack of guidance can impact a new farmer's ability to access land and build their agricultural knowledge and business. Learning from experienced farmers is invaluable but can be scarce.
- Understanding the real estate market, land tenure options, and the process to acquire land.
  - Farmers may not be aware of the options available to them when it comes to accessing land. They may struggle negotiating fair lease terms with landowners,

understanding which financial institutions are willing to be their lenders, and how land use policies may impact their farm businesses.

- Understanding and navigating land use policies and regulations.
  - Land use policies and regulations can be intricate and challenging to understand, especially for farmers who may not have experience or access to legal resources.
  - Unintended non-compliance: Access to these policies may not be readily available to farmers. Farmers may only encounter these policies when they unintentionally find themselves in violation due to actions they believed were in line with good agricultural practices.
  - Farmers may not be fully aware of their rights or available resources when dealing with land use policies. This lack of awareness can hinder their capacity to advocate for their interests, navigate zoning restrictions, or seek remedies for harmful and discriminatory practices.
  - Connecticut has 169 municipalities, each governed by different policies, and each with a distinct agricultural history. As such, farmers may encounter inconsistencies in land use policies, which can create confusion and uncertainty for those farmers operating in multiple towns. The agricultural history of these towns may play a role in whether the visions of farmers are supported.

### © Economic

#### *Barriers include:*

- Affordability of farmland leases.
  - For new and beginning farmers, leasing farmland can be more financially viable than outright ownership. However, the affordability of leasing farmland can still be a significant challenge, especially if leasing at market rate.
  - Rental rates for agricultural land can vary widely based on factors such as location, soil quality, and market demand. High demand for a limited supply of farmland can make lease rates cost prohibitive for new farmers.
  - The potential for rental rate increases at the end of lease terms can also make it challenging for farmers to plan their operations and secure financial stability.
- Land prices.
  - The high cost of land is one of the most significant economic barriers to accessing and owning farmland, especially for new farmers and those with limited access to capital.
  - Rising land prices driven by speculative investments, development pressures, and other factors create an overwhelming financial burden for new farmers and farmers looking to expand their businesses.
- Capital requirements and financing.

- Farmers need substantial financial resources to purchase land. They may have trouble securing loans and lines of credit from financial institutions. Financial requirements and collateral demands can be an enormous economic barrier.
- Beyond the purchase, farmers need to invest in equipment and be able to cover initial operating expenses.
- Grant funding.
  - Grant programs provide an essential financial resource to farmers, but accessing these funds can be challenging.
  - Grant application processes can be complex and time-consuming, requiring detailed proposals, financial documentation, and adherence to specific eligibility criteria.
  - Farmers may struggle to navigate the landscape of grant opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels.
  - Even when funding can be secured, matching requirements can create an additional financial burden.
- Financial risk management.
  - Farmers face various financial risks, including those associated with crop failure, natural disasters (e.g., flooding, drought, and frost), market fluctuations, and liability. These risks can have a direct impact on the economic viability of their farm businesses.
  - The cost of insurance premiums and risk mitigation strategies such as protective infrastructure and pest control measures increases a farmer's operating and overhead costs.
- Market supply and demand.
  - The supply and demand for agricultural land can impact farmers' ability to acquire farmland. In areas with high demand and limited supply, competition can drive land prices up, making it more challenging for farmers, particularly those with limited financial resources, to purchase land.
  - The market need for certain agricultural products may change due to consumer demand or weather-related events, affecting a farmer's income.
  - Diversifying the range of crops and products grown can be a critical strategy for risk management and financial stability. However, farmers may struggle with diversification due to a lack of access to information, technical and financial resources, and opportunities to expand their agricultural offerings.
- Livable wage and economic viability.
  - Earning a livable wage from farming activities is a challenge. The insufficient economic return makes it difficult for some farmers to cover their basic living expenses. For new farmers, it can take 3-5 years just to make a profit.

- For many farmers, farming is a full-time commitment, but some have to take on two or three additional jobs to survive.
- The disparity between land prices and the income potential from farming also makes it difficult for farmers to achieve a reasonable return on their investment, hindering economic sustainability.
- Investment in capital improvements.
  - Capital improvements encompass infrastructure upgrades, modernization of equipment, and investments in sustainable farming practices.
  - These improvements are essential for enhancing farm productivity, reducing operating costs, and complying with environmental regulations. However, they often require substantial upfront capital, which can be a significant barrier.
  - For farmers leasing land, the burden of making capital improvements becomes even more challenging. Investing in infrastructure and equipment on leased land can be financially demanding, especially when the farmer knows that they may have to leave the land once the lease term expires.
    - As an example, one of the farmers interviewed for this report invested ~\$10,000 into land they were leasing only to be unable to use the land the following growing season.
  - Climate smart infrastructure: With the changing climate, farmers may seek to invest in resilience infrastructure to mitigate its effects. The cost of purchasing and implementing such infrastructure can be a significant economic barrier. The cost of not investing in these measures is also significant and may result in financial losses and instability.

### © Structural and Institutional

#### *Barriers include:*

- Zoning and land use regulations.
  - Zoning and land use regulations can restrict agricultural operations, making it challenging to establish or expand farm businesses. For instance, some regulations may obstruct the use of farm stands for selling produce.
- Complex legal and financial processes, bureaucratic hurdles, and challenges in accessing credit or loans.
  - Farmers may not be knowledgeable in the legal details of land ownership, property rights, and land use policies, which may make them vulnerable to challenges and risks they did not know to prepare for.
  - Processes for obtaining permits, licenses, or zoning approvals can be prolonged and perplexing, especially for farmers juggling multiple jobs.



- Accessing credit or loans can be fraught with challenges. The requirements for collateral and creditworthiness may exclude new and small-scale farmers who lack significant assets or credit histories.
- Land tenure arrangements: absentee ownership, unclear ownership rights, and fragmented ownership.
  - Absentee ownership, and unclear or fragmented ownership rights can create uncertainty and difficulty for farmers looking for access.
  - Absentee ownership arises when the landowner does not reside on the land being leased or takes no vested interest in the land's productive use. These landowners may be less responsive to requests for lease agreements, maintenance, or infrastructure improvements, which can hinder the ability of farmers to cultivate land effectively and greatly impede secure tenure.
  - Unclear and fragmented ownership can complicate purchasing farmland and can affect the ability of farmers leasing the land to make improvements or seek out grants if permissions and approvals are needed from the landowner(s).
- Land ownership concentration.
  - Significant agricultural lands held by a small number of landowners, whether individuals or corporations, limit the availability and affordability of farmland.
  - The structural factor influencing this concentration is interest in farmland as a stable asset with the potential for long-term appreciation. This enables speculative practices.
- Limited education and investments in urban agriculture.
  - Municipalities may not be planning for urban agriculture or fully grasp what it constitutes and the ways it can manifest in communities. As such, farmers in urban areas may face an environment that is not supportive of their agricultural pursuits, hindering their ability to find land, receive funding, or access markets.

### © Transition and Succession

*Barriers include:*

- Aging farmer population.
  - As farmers retire or pass on, their lands become available for transfer. Without a succession plan, farmland may be left in a state of uncertainty, sold to nonfarmers, fragmented, or converted to non-agricultural uses.
  - As the lands of this aging population become available on the market, it can drive up costs due to high demand and limited supply. Aging farmers seeking to cash in on the high demand may prioritize their economic opportunities over maintaining their land's agricultural legacy.
- Land Inheritance.

- Farmland may be passed down through generations within families creating a barrier for new farmers without familial connections or those who lack opportunities for inheritance or succession.
- Farmland heirs may have different interests and intentions for the land, which may result in land being sold for non-agricultural uses. Multiple heirs can lead to land fragmentation or unclear ownership rights.
- Farmers who do not have the opportunity to inherit farmland or have the benefit of other assets may face challenges in accessing credit or loans.

### © Environmental

#### *Barriers include:*

- Development pressures and land conversion.
  - Competing land use priorities can see the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses reducing its availability.
  - Development can lead to fragmentation of farmland into smaller parcels, making it challenging to achieve economies of scale.
- Farmland location, quality, and productivity (land suitability).
  - Proximity to markets, transportation infrastructure, and urban centers can impact land prices and the potential for agricultural success.
  - Soil health is vital to a farm's productive capacity and long-term viability. Poor soil health may require investments in soil improvements, adding to operational costs.
    - Farmland located on or near former industrial sites or brownfields may have soil contamination issues, making it unsuitable for agricultural use without costly remediation efforts.
  - Inadequate water access can limit agricultural viability and may require costly solutions.
- Preservation and conservation priorities.
  - Some conservation easements place restrictions on farmland development and limit the agricultural potential of some lands.
  - Funding for conservation may not fully recognize the value of urban working lands, which often are smaller parcels compared to their rural counterparts. These parcels may not be considered a high priority for protection, leaving them open to non-agricultural development.
- Climate Impacts.
  - Changing climate conditions can affect agricultural viability and the number of agricultural lands suitable for production, affecting land value and land tenure stability.

- More frequent and severe weather events such as droughts and flooding pose risks to farmland. These events can damage crops, infrastructure, and soil leading to reduced productivity and increased costs for repair and recovery.

### © Sociocultural

#### *Barriers include:*

- Cultural and language differences.
  - Accessing information on available farmland, resources, and support networks may be more difficult for those facing cultural or language differences.
  - Access to farmland can be influenced by one's connections within the agricultural community. These differences can make it more challenging to establish and maintain connections, potentially limiting opportunities for land access and ownership.
  - Farmers with cultural and language barriers may face unequal treatment or biased decisions when dealing with potential sellers, lessors, financial institutions, or public officials.
  - Landowners seeking to lease or sell land may have prejudiced views on who is the “right fit” for a particular community or qualified to own land.
- Wealth and socioeconomic status.
  - Farmers with fewer financial resources may struggle to compete with wealthier land buyers or investors, limiting both their ability to acquire and maintain their farmland.
  - Wealthier individuals often have better access to safety nets such as insurance, emergency funds, and retirement accounts. These safety nets provide a buffer against unexpected financial setbacks or losses related. Farmers, especially BIPOC farmers, may not have these safety nets.
- Geography, safety, and belonging.
  - Geographic location can limit access to farmland, especially in urban areas. This limitation may require relocating or traveling back and forth to less familiar areas. Traveling or relocation costs can hinder a farmer's ability to access land.
  - Perception of safety or lack thereof can influence a farmer’s decision to lease or buy land in one location as opposed to another. For BIPOC farmers, fear of a community’s perception of them or potential hostility towards them based on prior experiences can discourage them from seeking land in regions with a perceived or actual lack of acceptance.
  - Absence of culturally diverse communities and support systems can lead a farmer to worry about isolation deterring them from pursuing certain lands.

- A lack or inadequacy in essential services in certain regions such as transportation, education, healthcare, or farm infrastructure and labor can be significant barriers to land access and ownership.
- Landowner and farmer relationship dynamics.
  - Lease arrangements can dictate farmers' ability to invest in land and develop long-term production strategies. Landowners with preference for short term leases or "handshake" deals make land tenure less secure.
  - Conflicting ideas about how farmland should be farmed or used can lead to insecurity in tenancy. Landowners may have their own vision for the land's use, which may not align with a farmer's production plan.
  - Ambiguities in lease agreements regarding specific farming practices or improvements on the land can create uncertainties for both landowners and farmers leading to potential disputes and disruption in tenancy.
- Discrepancy between farming "ideal" and farming reality.
  - The idyllic vision of a pristine, picturesque farm and the gritty, often messy nature of farming can have numerous implications for farmers who do not conform their environments to a perceived aesthetic.
  - Local regulations or zoning laws may enforce standards of visual appeal that make it difficult for farmers to maintain their farmland according to their practical and economic needs.
  - Tension between neighbors seeking a "clean look" to a farm and farmers simply farming can lead to disputes, complaints, or legal challenges.
  - Pressure to conform to an idealized appearance may impose an economic burden on farmers who may already face financial constraints.

The categories of barriers to farmland access and ownership are intrinsically interrelated. For instance, economic barriers, such as high land prices, can be influenced by institutional barriers such as zoning and land use regulations. Structural and institutional policies may reflect sociocultural biases, making it difficult for BIPOC farmers to access farmland. Sociocultural factors such as language can limit a farmer's awareness of opportunities and resources. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach. Solutions designed to remove a barrier in one category must take into account their potential ripple effects.

### © A Greater Challenge for BIPOC Farmers

As a point of emphasis, the challenges and barriers discussed above, while universal in some respects, take on new and varying dimensions when addressing the experiences of BIPOC farmers. BIPOC farmers face additional, distinct, and nuanced challenges in accessing and owning farmland due to interconnected historical, social, and systemic factors.

- Historical injustices:
  - BIPOC farmers carry the weight of inequities, such as land dispossession, discriminatory policies, and forced labor, which have left an enduring mark. These injustices have not only resulted in the loss of ancestral and familial lands; they have also contributed to economic disparities in wealth, limited land ownership, and lack of inheritance and succession opportunities, making it exceedingly difficult for BIPOC farmers to gain and/or regain a foothold in the agricultural industry.
  - Notable examples include:
    - The removal and displacement of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, exemplified by the Trail of Tears and the Dawes Act.
    - Slavery and its aftermath, including but not limited to discriminatory laws and practices such as redlining and exclusionary zoning, which still influence zoning regulations, and denial of loans by financial institutions and government agencies.
    - The exploitation of migrant farm workers, exemplified by the Bracero Program.
    - Alien land laws of the 1900s, which prevented Asian immigrants, particularly Japanese immigrants, from leasing or purchasing farmland.
- Bias and limited representation:
  - BIPOC farmers encounter institutional biases, stereotypes, and racial prejudices within government agencies, financial institutions, and agricultural organizations.
  - They often grapple with questions about their agricultural competence, which can manifest as doubts about their ability to manage a farm effectively, their knowledge of farming techniques, or their capability to adapt to changing agricultural practices.
  - BIPOC farmers may face a lack of trust from potential partners, lenders, or agricultural institutions. This skepticism is rooted in deeply ingrained biases that have perpetuated the idea that BIPOC individuals are less capable as farmers, hindering their access to resources and opportunities.
  - BIPOC farmers are often rendered invisible within the agricultural landscape. They may be excluded from promotional materials, conferences, and publications, eroding their recognition and representation.
- Land Stewardship & Practices
  - BIPOC farmers often carry forward cultural practices that have been passed down through generations. These practices are not always recognized within mainstream agriculture, and sometimes are viewed as less credible or less productive.

- BIPOC farmers may go unrecognized for their innovations in agriculture. These innovations may be co-opted and rebranded by larger, predominantly white-led agricultural institutions. This not only erases the cultural significance of these practices but minimizes the role BIPOC farmers play in advancing the agricultural industry.

The challenges and barriers to farmland access and ownership are multifaceted, interconnected, and deeply rooted in historical injustices, systemic disparities, and institutional practices. To ensure a more inclusive, sustainable, and just future for Connecticut's agricultural community, these must be understood and addressed in a resolute fashion.

## **Models for Farmland Access and Ownership**

The models described below provide avenues to farmland in many ways, each with differing levels of secure land tenure and approaches to addressing the challenges and barriers farmers face. This presentation of models is not encyclopedic. It does, however, provide an understanding of some of the options available, the initiatives being undertaken to facilitate farmland access, and the possibility of their adoption within the state.

### **© Incubator Programs**

Incubator programs (Incubators) provide beginning farmers with access to land, peer networks, planning resources, mentorship, training, and established markets to develop their agricultural knowledge and businesses. These programs vary in scale, structure, complexity, and focus but serve the purpose of reducing barriers to entry for aspiring farmers, the foremost being access to land and infrastructure.

By offering leased farm plots at subsidized rates and providing shared resources, incubators enable farmers to gain hands-on experience and build both their agricultural skills and business concepts without the financial commitment of outright land purchase and other startup costs. Incubators create a framework for beginning farmers to operate in a relatively low risk environment. As a result, farmers face reduced financial risk and are able to exit their farming ventures without bearing overwhelming costs should they choose not to pursue it further.

While incubator programs offer valuable opportunities for farmers, they do not address a farmer's long-term land access needs. For farmers, it can be exceptionally difficult to invest time and money in these temporary programs. And the transition from these programs to find secure land tenure poses a barrier in itself.

Since incubators vary in their offerings, farmers must scrutinize these programs in relation to their goals. They must understand what they are paying for, whether that includes paying for their own utilities, and what they are getting in return. Farmers must also have clarity on the ownership and organizational structure of these programs to ensure they are not adversely affected by changes in land ownership and organizational mission.

Incubators are launching points. They enable farmers to discover what they need for their businesses and perhaps most importantly determine whether farming is right for their long-term goals. Incubators nurture the next generation of farmers, contributing to the vitality and resilience of food systems.

Examples of Incubators: *Urban Edge; New Entry; Spring Valley.*

#### Southside Community Land Trust Urban Edge Farm

The Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT) has been working in Rhode Island since 1981 to build a sustainable local food system. Enabling access to locally grown, affordable, and healthy food, SCLT operates or supports ~60 community gardens and urban farms. Urban Edge Farm (UEF) is SCLT's incubator farm, which helps aspiring farmers grow their businesses. SCLT leases the 50-acre farm, 30 of which are cultivated, from Rhode Island's Department of Environment Management for \$1 a year. SCLT subleases to different farm businesses, who pay a fee per acre of land leased. In addition to lease payments, farmers pay for different farm services including the use of tractors, coolers, and a heated greenhouse. Farmers can lease land for five years but are not required to leave once their leases end. SCLT has a dedicated farm manager for UEF, who provides farmers with technical support.

#### New Entry Sustainable Farming Project Incubator Farm

The New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (New Entry) is an initiative of Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy that began in 1998. New Entry's mission is to foster resilience in local, regional, and national food systems by training new generations of farmers. Originally serving recent immigrant and refugee farmers through their programming, New Entry has expanded its target audience over the years to include beginning farmers of all backgrounds.

Located on 16 acres in Beverly, Massachusetts, New Entry's Incubator Farm provides skills-based training to beginning farmers who want to start and operate their own farm businesses. Farmers can participate in the program for up to three years. A prerequisite for farming at New Entry is completing an online farm business planning course and developing a completed business plan.

New Entry offers farmers:

- Land to farm, ranging from ¼ acre to 1 acre.
- Training and on-farm assistance including planting crops, setting up irrigation systems, using farm equipment, getting permits and insurance, and pest/disease management.
- Access to markets including support in developing a marketing plan and a customer base.
- Farm business planning including record keeping.

For the 2023 season, farmers are charged \$860/acre (\$215/per ¼ acre). This fee includes landowner fees, spring/fall tillage, access to irrigation and electricity, fertilizer applications, use of small farm equipment, unheated high tunnels, and access to storage and sanitary facilities. Additional services/fees provided to farmers include but are not limited to individualized



technical assistance (\$350/season); custom tractor work (\$35/hour); cooler use (\$200/season); plastic mulch supplies (\$100/1000 bed feet); and heated greenhouse rental for seedling propagation (\$350/season).

At the end of a farmer's three-year tenure, New Entry provides assistance to help farmers transition from the incubator to their own independent site. This is done through their farmland matching service and providing referrals, for instance, to credit and loan programs.

### Spring Valley Student Farm

Spring Valley Student Farm was conceived in 2010 by two University of Connecticut (UConn) undergraduate students. It consists of a one-acre vegetable farm and two houses, which serve as the primary residences of eleven student farmers. Operating as an educational farm, Spring Valley provides its student farmers, who are involved with almost all aspects of the farm, with a hands-on experiential learning experience.

Upon its creation, Spring Valley has existed as a partnership between UConn's Dining Services and Residential Life Services. Dining Services funds the operations of the farm including infrastructure, seeds, and a full-time farm manager position. Residential Life Services offers discounted room rates to student farmers. Other partners supporting the farm include UConn's Ecohouse Learning Community, First-Year Program Office of Sustainability and the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources.

Students of all academic backgrounds and farming experiences are accepted to live and work on the farm. Spring Valley offers knowledge and skills development opportunities through teaching students about sustainable and regenerative farming practices, permaculture, seed planning, crop rotation, greenhouse growing, food harvesting and processing, and use of farm tools and implements. Spring Valley offers students a community, both in terms of building relationships with other farmers and with the land itself. Students have the opportunity to participate in UConn's Farm Fresh Market, selling the farm's produce, and making deliveries to UConn's dining halls.

Prominent features of the farm include two greenhouses, outdoor refrigeration, an ADA accessible outhouse, a Solar Thermal installation used to heat one of the greenhouses, and a Solar Photovoltaic array which will be connected to the grid to generate electricity on the farm in the future.

While Spring Valley is not explicitly labeled an incubator farm, it possesses the characteristics of this model. It is also a useful example of how universities could play a pivotal role in offering

direct access to land for farmers and providing them with the resources they need to build their agricultural businesses.

### © Apprenticeships

Agricultural apprenticeships place a strong emphasis on offering intentional and intensive mentorship to the next generation of farmers. These programs are designed to provide aspiring farmers with hands-on experience and education by working alongside experienced farmers and agricultural professionals. They are meant to facilitate farmer knowledge transfer.

Similar to incubator programs, apprenticeships vary in their offerings including duration, agricultural focus (such as organic farming or livestock management), structure, and complexity. Apprentices may receive compensation for their work in the form of stipends and/or room and board. However, it is worth noting that apprentices may find it challenging to cover their living expenses due to the modest nature of these stipends and the potential issue of limited or substandard housing, which can be a source of significant concern.

Examples of Apprenticeships: *Hudson Valley; 2023 CT DoAg Mentor Pilot; Brookfield.*

#### Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming - Hudson Valley Apprenticeship

The Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming (Glynwood) is a non-profit in New York's Hudson Valley working to foster and advance robust regional food systems by helping to prepare diverse new farmers and setting the tone for the future of farming through their programming and coalition building.

In 2022, Glynwood launched the Hudson Valley Apprenticeship (HVA), a decentralized apprenticeship program providing education, training, and mentoring to aspiring farmers across mentor farms in the Mid Hudson Valley. In this decentralized approach, Glynwood coordinates and facilitates connections between apprentices and mentor farms.

HVA was developed to address the issues new entrants from marginalized groups face when entering the agricultural environment. Initially funded by individual donors, the program is currently supported by a three-year USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant. HVA serves the dual purpose of providing entry-level opportunities (i.e., vocational training) to aspiring farmers while uplifting the knowledge and mentoring abilities of Hudson Valley Farmers. HVA is structured to equip farmers with the tools and insights to produce a more sustainable and inclusive farming future.

Apprentices spend a majority of their time doing field work, which is supplemented by 60 hours of classroom education. Though mentor farms vary in their structure, each farm covers a set of core topics including:

- Greenhouse management & propagation.
- Field & bed preparation.
- Planting & crop management.
- Irrigation.
- Weed management.
- Harvesting & post-harvest handling.
- Marketing & distribution.

*Classroom topics covered include:*

- Antiracism training.
- Business planning and financial management.
- Cover cropping.
- OSHA General Industry course.
- Pest and disease management.
- Small engine operation and maintenance.
- Soil science and testing.
- Team communications.
- Tractor safety and operation.

All apprenticeships are paid seasonal part-time or full-time positions depending on the mentor farm. Apprentices are paid for all field and classroom work and can be provided with compensation for travel. Apprenticeships differ in duration from three months to nine months. Host farms participating in HVA must:

- Demonstrate a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and share Glynwood's core equity goals.
- Compensate apprentices at minimum wage or higher.
- Practice sustainable production (e.g., certified organic, practicing organic, or certified naturally grown).
- Undergo anti-racist and team building training.

Priority consideration is given to mentors (and apprentices) from historically underrepresented or marginalized communities including BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+\*, and women. Mentors receive a \$3,000 stipend, a mentor toolkit, and an online repository of lessons developed by Glynwood. Additionally, some mentor farms provide on farm housing to apprentices.

Similar Northeast United States apprenticeship programs with decentralized frameworks include the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's Diversified Vegetable Apprenticeship and Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Farmer Apprenticeship.

*\*LGBTQIA2S+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and Two-Spirit. The terms used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations are constantly changing and being updated to better represent people.\**

### CT DoAg: Apprenticeship and Mentor Pilot Program for BIPOC Farmers

For the 2023 farm season, CT DoAg launched a pilot program to support BIPOC farm apprenticeships. With \$50,000 in funding, potential mentors (individual farms and/or non-profits) could apply for \$5,000 to use solely as stipends to host an on-farm apprentice who identified as BIPOC. Mentors were required to provide training and hands-on experience to apprentices in the skills and competencies for specialty crop producers. *Specialty crops include fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.* The skills and competencies include:

- Basic Soil Science.
- Crop planning.
- Propagation.
- Soil fertility.
- Field preparation.
- Crop production.
- Irrigation.
- Weed control.
- Pest and disease control.
- Harvesting.
- Post-harvest handling.
- Product distribution.
- Marketing.
- Safe tool/equipment usage.
- Basic business planning.

Mentors were responsible for recruiting and matching with an apprentice. CT DoAg supported this process by sending out interest forms for apprentices and publicizing position descriptions developed by potential mentors. Awarded mentors also received technical assistance from CT DoAg and had the opportunity to network and share resources with other mentors.

The pilot program ended at the end of September. Evaluations by apprentices and mentors lauded the value of the program and the positive experiences it provided both groups. Suggestions for improving the pilot program included starting earlier in the farm season, providing larger stipends, extending the program into November, and offering workshops and certifications to apprentices.

Though apprenticeships are meant as training mechanisms for new farmers, there is a potential for them to serve as a model for transferring land from retiring or aging farmers to a new generation. This approach can help address the challenge of farmland succession. Apprenticeships could incorporate a structured process for land transfer. This process could encompass clearly defined terms and conditions for the transfer, a gradual shift of

responsibilities and management, financial arrangements that accommodate both parties, and a well-defined timeline for the transition.

### © Land Link Programs

Land Link programs facilitate connections between farmland owners (e.g., private individuals, municipal and state governments, corporations, and nonprofits) and farmland seekers. These programs serve as intermediaries, matching landowners and farmers based on their respective needs and preferences. Typically administered by nonprofits and government agencies, these programs comprise various aspects to facilitate these connections.

These aspects include but are not limited to:

- Databases: These databases may contain both postings of available farms and farmland seekers. Available farmland listed may include information about land type, location, size, soil quality, utilities, and infrastructure. Farmers may provide details about their experience, current operations, goals, and land needs including preferences for on-farm housing. These postings can also contain land access options such as land leasing, farmer partnerships, lease-to-own arrangements, and outright purchases.
  - These databases often suffer from high demand for farmland and limited listings of available farms, making it challenging for farmers to find land. This can be remedied through farm owner education on the importance of leasing or selling land to farmers. Administrators of land link programs can also proactively reach out to landowners.
  - These databases also suffer from geographic disparities with farmland often concentrated in certain regions. For instance, farm seekers in rural areas may have more options than those in urban settings.
- Matchmaking and coordination: This requires a dedicated program coordinator who works with landowners and farmland seekers to determine the right match for both parties.
- Resources and services: These programs may provide educational resources and training on topics such as grants, acquisition financing, negotiation tactics, farmland resource evaluation, and regulatory policies. These programs may also provide consultation services such as on-site soil testing, lease development assistance, land use planning, and business planning.
- Succession planning: These programs may help retiring or aging farmers with transitioning their land to a new generation of farmers.
- Outreach: To ensure their efficacy, land link programs must promote their services to landowners and farmers. One of the barriers to using land link programs is the lack of

awareness about their existence. Another is the manner in which outreach is conducted, whether it is done in a culturally relevant and competent way.

- Monitoring and evaluation: With the right staffing capacity, land link programs can assess their utility to both farm owners and farmers. This can be done by documenting the number of matches made, their duration (i.e., lease term), the length of time postings remain unmatched, the demographics using the program and its services, and the types of arrangements (e.g., leases or outright purchases) that arise from matches.

Example: *CT FarmLink*.

### [CT FarmLink](#)

Created in 2006 with funding through the Connecticut Community Investment Act, CT FarmLink is administered by a partnership between the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT), a statewide farmland preservation land trust. CT FarmLink seeks to ensure that new, beginning, and established farmers looking to expand their businesses are more easily able to locate and access farmland while providing farm owners the opportunity to connect with potential tenants, buyers, and partners.

Both farmers and farm owners are able to create profiles on the CT FarmLink website detailing their land needs and land offerings, respectively. As of the writing of this report, there are ~490 farmer profiles and ~84 farm profiles.

The website enables farmers to search for farmland based on the following criteria:

- Tenure arrangement: Various options such as short-term leases, lease with option to buy, or standard sale can be considered.
- Acreage: Farms can range from zero to over five hundred acres.
- Type of operation: Farmers can filter by dairy, livestock, field crops, or specialty crops.
- Location: Categorized at the county level.
- Infrastructure: Users can specify their need for equipment, farm buildings, housing, or livestock facilities.
- Water source: Options include drilled well, municipal, pond, river, spring, or none.
- Conserved Land: Farmers can search for farms that are conserved, not conserved, or in the process of being conserved.

Beyond matching, CT FarmLink offers free onsite consultations for both farmers and farm owners on creating farm profiles, lease arrangements, land suitability, agricultural regulations assessment, and succession planning.

Until April of 2023, CT FarmLink did not have a dedicated staff person to facilitate the connections between farmers and farm owners. CFT's new Farmland Access Coordinator will oversee the program, adding needed capacity to support new and diverse farmers, improve the program's matching component, and work with different partners such as municipalities and land trusts to increase the number of farm profiles on the website.

Other Northeast land link programs include [Maine FarmLink](#), [Vermont Land Link](#), [Pennsylvania Farm Link](#), and [New England Farmland Finder](#). It is worth noting that Pennsylvania Farm Link offers free online video courses focused on organizations that provide assistance to farmers in addition to a resource hub with information ranging from business planning, marketing, and stress management to succession planning.

### © Agrihoods

Agrihoods or agricultural neighborhoods are residential communities designed around working farms or agricultural operations. They integrate housing with farmland, allowing residents to have a direct connection to agriculture. Agrihoods offer opportunities for residents to participate in farming activities, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, or have access to community gardens, promoting both farmland access and community engagement in food production. They may prioritize open space conservation and restoration and sustainable infrastructure development. Agrihoods vary in their farm size, farm management style, number of home sites, target residents (e.g., mixed income/age), amenities, development priorities, and cost to rent or own a home.

Agrihoods are development models and as such could function in the urban to rural spectrum. The feasibility of these developments depend on factors such as land location and availability, financing, zoning policies and regulations, community support, and long-term viability. As a model for farmland access, agrihoods can provide farmers with access to land and infrastructure either through leasing of farm space or being hired as farm managers. Agrihoods could also provide farmers with a ready market (i.e., agrihood residents) to sell their produce and on-site farm housing.

A concern with agrihoods is the notion of greenwashing, and the potential for developers to exaggerate the sustainability or the agricultural component of this model as a guise for using a greater portion of land for development. Another concern is gentrification and the displacement of existing communities due to affordability issues as property values increase with the development of these models. A third concern with agrihoods is the demographics

they may cater to and the possibility of this model being exclusive (e.g., financially) if not intentional about being inclusive.

Examples of Agrihoods: *Prairie Crossing*; *Creative Living*; *Michigan Agrihood*.

### Prairie Crossing

Prairie Crossing is an agrihood in Grayslake, Illinois situated on 677-acres that combines land conservation, housing development, and agriculture. Approximately 30% of the land is developed consisting of high to medium density housing, community centers, a railway station, and other residential amenities. The conserved portions of the property include over 200 acres of restored prairies and wetlands and the 100-acre Prairie Crossing Farm, an organic farm owned by the nonprofit Liberty Prairie Foundation.

The farm includes a business development center which provides an incubator setting for aspiring farmers to build their farm businesses. The farm is leased to multiple small farm businesses that grow a diverse selection of organic produce. Farmers are provided with short-term leases, typically five years, on five-acre plots at cost effective rates. Farmers are able to sell their produce to residents through community supported agriculture subscriptions and farmers markets.

### Creative Living Community of Connecticut

The Creative Living Community of Connecticut (Creative Living) is a nonprofit that seeks to create a shared, inclusive living experience for individuals with and without disabilities by building a farm community. Since 2015, Creative Living has been developing plans to create this community in Eastern Connecticut. In 2018, the nonprofit purchased a 10-acre property in Coventry, with its first farming season and first piece of construction, a farm stand, beginning in 2020.

Creative Living envisions a farm community that will offer:

- Supportive housing for individuals with special needs.
- Programs that promote self-worth and self-sufficiency.
- Shared community spaces for those with and without disabilities.
- Agricultural opportunities and spaces for residents and visitors including community gardens.
- Shared education and cultural space.
- Farm fresh produce for sale on site.



A percentage of future rental units will be available only to those with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities while the rest will be available at market rate. Creative Living is presently seeking capital gifts and securing investments to continue building the 10-acre site.

#### Michigan Urban Farming Initiative Urban Agrihood

Founded in 2011, the Michigan Urban Farming Initiative (MUFI) is a nonprofit organization that seeks to engage members of Detroit's North End community in sustainable agriculture and develop a model of redevelopment for other urban communities. MUFI's primary focus is the redevelopment and cultivation of approximately three acres of land that was once vacant and occupied by abandoned homes. The redevelopment of this space is central to MUFI's plan to create the first sustainable urban agrihood.

MUFI's urban agrihood currently features:

- An urban farm, which has been serving fresh, free produce to about 2,000 households since 2012.
- High density fruit orchard.
- Children's sensory garden.
- 16,000-gallon rainwater harvesting cistern created from the retention of an abandoned home basement.
- A building that is being rehabilitated into a community resource center, which will offer educational programs, event and meeting space, and house two commercial kitchens.

Future development of the site includes several additions such as:

- Low cost housing options, featuring a two-bedroom shipping container home and the transformation of a four-bedroom vacant home into student intern housing.
- Health food cafe.
- Outdoor gathering space.

#### © Community Land Trusts

Community land trusts (CLT) are nonprofit organizations that hold and steward land for the benefit of a specific community. CLTs serve diverse purposes including promoting affordable housing, preserving natural resources, and fostering sustainable development and community ownership.

CLTs separate ownership of land from ownership of structures or improvements on the land. This separation is achieved through a ground lease, wherein individuals or organizations, known as leaseholders (lessees), gain ownership of the structures they create through their labor or investments. However, they do not own the land itself. Lessees purchase the structures on the land at a subsidized price and are responsible for the maintenance of the land and structures.

This cost reduction is subsidized through public and philanthropic funding or landowner donations through bargain sales.

An illustration of this model:

- A CLT acquires (purchase, donation, or other method) and holds title to land, ensuring it becomes and remains a community asset.
- An individual or organization (lessees) purchases a structure (e.g., house) or develops on the CLT-owned land.
- The lessee enters into a ground lease agreement with the CLT, which grants them use of the land for a predetermined period, typically 99 years (*governed by state law*). These leases can be inherited and are mortgageable.
- Under the ground lease, the lessee owns the structures and improvements (e.g., house, barn, greenhouse, soil improvements) on the land and accrues equity.
- The ground lease includes provisions that restrict the resale price (resale price restrictions) of structures by factoring out the land value in future sales. These restrictions prevent the property from being sold at market rate, ensuring affordability. Additionally, these leases incorporate mechanisms to capture a portion of the structures' appreciation upon resale by lessees.

The separation of land ownership from structural ownership in CLTs ensures:

- Permanent affordability of the land for future buyers and generations.
- Protection of the long-term interest of the community by keeping the land under community control enabling residents to shape land use policies.
- Land is removed from the speculative market, which helps prevent the inflation of property values.

CLTs are governed by those living within the CLTs service area. This includes an equal balance of CLT residents/leaseholders, community residents who do not live on the CLT's land, and nonprofit and public representatives including public officials, local funders, and service providers.

Though this model is designed to ensure long-term land stewardship, affordability, secure land tenure, and robust community control and participation in decision-making processes, for those who have been excluded from land ownership due to historical, social, and economic factors, the prospect of not owning the land may be potentially worrisome. Not owning the land can be perceived as a lack of control and raise concerns about decisions concerning the land and its uses.

As a model for farmland access and ownership, CLTs can acquire and hold farmland to ensure it remains in agricultural use. CLTs can then lease the land to farmers at affordable rates. Through the ground lease, farmers can be assured of the security and stability of their access, and they can build equity on the land through their structural improvements.

Examples of CLTs: *New Communities; SE CT CLT; Boston Farms; 2-Tier CLT.*

### New Communities, Inc.

CLTs are rooted in historical and cultural cooperative landholding arrangements. The first CLT in the United States, New Communities, Inc., was established during the civil rights movement to address land ownership and economic disparities faced by Black farmers in the rural South. In 1969, New Communities, Inc., purchased 5,735 acres of farmland and woodlands in Lee County, Georgia with a vision to create a self-sustaining, cooperative community that would include farming, education programs, affordable housing, and economic development initiatives.

This vision unfolded through the 1970s, but financial difficulties, successive years of drought, resistance from white landowners, and persistent discrimination when seeking loans from government agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farmers Home Administration made it difficult for the CLT to hold onto the land. In 1985, the land was lost to foreclosure. Despite the loss, New Communities, Inc., remained in existence. In 2009, the CLT was granted restitution in the amount of \$12 million as part of a class action lawsuit against the USDA for systematically denying loans, subsidies, and technical assistance to Black farmers, on account of their race, which resulted in loss of land and economic opportunities. New Communities, Inc., used the \$12 million to purchase a 1,638-acre former plantation, of which the central farmland is used for production, operations, and housing.

### Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust

The Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust (SE CT CLT) is a membership-based nonprofit that holds land for the development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing, food production, green space, and facilities for community organizations. SE CT CLT works to further neighborhood revitalization efforts in Southeastern Connecticut.

SE CT CLT mission includes putting land in trust for urban agriculture and supporting permanently affordable farms. In furtherance of its mission, SE CT CLT has a partnership with FRESH New London (FRESH), a food justice organization working to empower youth, build food sovereignty, and create community connections. SE CT CLT hosts FRESH on an urban lot that was donated to the CLT. FRESH uses the land for community garden beds, fruiting shrubs, and snack beds, which the general public can harvest from.

In September of 2023, SE CT CLT purchased Hominick Farm in Salem, CT. This purchase arose from a partnership with two landowners (*David and Anne Bingham*) and the Salem Land Trust. The landowners purchased the 200-acre Hominick Farm & Forest with the intention of conserving the forested portion of land (~185 acres) with the Salem Land Trust and selling the farm portion (~15) at a reduced price (i.e., bargain sale) to SE CT CLT. SE CT CLT's purchase of ~15 acres include a house, historic barn, and seven outbuildings. SE CT CLT is working with a collective of farmers who are interested in making the land a sustainable farm which benefits the community.

*Connecticut is home to other community land trusts including the Litchfield Housing Trust; Naugatuck Valley Housing Development Corporation; Sharon Housing Trust; and Washington Community Housing Trust. These CLTs are mainly focused on affordable housing.*

#### Boston Farms Community Land Trust

Founded by the Urban Farming Institute in 2017, Boston Farms Community Land Trust (Boston Farms) was created to own, develop, and steward commercial farms for community benefit. Boston Farms turns vacant urban lands in Roxbury; Dorchester; and Mattapan, Massachusetts into urban farms that are accessible to Black and Brown farmers. The CLT leases land to urban farmers across five farm sites, totaling 1.3 acres. They prioritize neighborhood residents and BIPOC farmers. They support farmers with knowledge and resources to be operationally and economically successful.

#### A Two-tiered Approach to CLTs: BCLT & CLTSB

Berkshire Community Land Trust (BCLT) was founded in 2015 as a 501(c)(3) organization while Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires (CLTSB) was founded in 1980. In 2017, CLTSB obtained a 501(c)(2) status as a title holding corporation for BCLT. Both organizations seek to secure permanent access, affordability, and productivity of land for housing, farming, and local industry.

Using a two-tiered model for community land trusts, land acquired by BCLT is transferred to CLTSB to lease to year-round residents of the Berkshires using a 99-year ground lease. BCLT falls into tier one as a 501(c)(3) charity while CLTSB falls into tier two as a 501(c)(2) asset holding company. BCLT operates as a regional educator and center, building public awareness of CLTs, offering technical and administrative services to emerging CLT education programs, and providing fundraising capacity. CLTSB's role is to hold title to and manage land and leases; collect fees and pay expenses; oversee lease transfers, purchase and sale, and buyer selection; and ensure compliance with lease terms.

## © Conservation Land Trusts

Conservation land trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations dedicated to the permanent protection and stewardship of land for public benefit. They range in size and capacity from small, all-volunteer organizations to those with professional staff, and their work can have a local, regional, or national focus. Agricultural land trusts are specialized conservation land trusts whose primary mission is to preserve and protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural use. They play a vital role in ensuring long-term productive capacity of agricultural lands.

Conservation land trusts conserve natural and working lands such as forests, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, farms, parks, streams, and ponds; protect historical and cultural sites; connect people to land through outdoor recreational opportunities; and are essential partners in building healthy, resilient communities. They conserve land by acquiring land outright through purchase or donation or working with willing landowners to place a conservation easement on a property. A conservation easement is a legal tool that limits the uses of land (e.g., development or subdivision) in order to protect its conservation values. Easements may be donated by landowners, purchased by land trusts, or a combination of the two (i.e., bargain sale). The placement of a conservation easement on a property lowers the property's value because of the restriction on its use. This reduction in value can make the land more affordable for future buyers.

Conservation land trusts can promote farmland access and ownership by:

- Hosting an incubator or apprenticeship program on conserved agricultural land.
- Acquiring farmland and leasing it at affordable rates (e.g., \$1/year leases) and offering long lease terms (e.g., 10 years).
  - Land trusts can use long term agricultural ground leases (99-year period with option renew) to provide farmers with secure land tenure. Ground leases create a shared-equity structure in which the land trust retains ownership of the land while the farmer is able to invest and build equity in the farm infrastructure.
- Leasing municipal or state-owned working lands and subleasing to farmers.
- Buying, protecting then reselling farmland at its agricultural value instead of its fair market value.
  - Fair market value is the estimated price that a property would sell for on the open market. It takes into account a property's highest and best use, i.e., the property's potential for alternative uses including residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural.

- Agricultural value refers specifically to a property's viability and capacity for agricultural activities. A property's agricultural value is typically lower than its market value.
- Transferring ownership of farmland to farm businesses through lease-to-own arrangements.
- Purchasing agricultural conservation easements on working lands to keep the land in agricultural use and reduce the cost of farmland.
  - An agricultural conservation easement is designed specifically to keep land available for farming. It restricts land uses that are inconsistent with agricultural use. They typically permit development related to farm operations and the construction of farm buildings. They do not restrict farming practices but may require following agricultural best management practices.
- Using an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) in addition to agricultural conservation easements as a safeguard to ensure farmland remains available for agricultural use and in the hands of farmers.
  - If a farm has an agricultural conservation easement placed on it and is going to be sold, the easement does not require that the land is sold to a farmer. As such, the farm can be sold to non-farmers who may take the land out of agricultural production and convert it to an estate property, which inflates the land value and no longer makes it affordable to farmers. A way to require that farmland is transitioned to a farmer is through the use of an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV). An OPAV restricts the sale of farms to certain qualified farmers or to family members. Qualified farmers may be defined as farmers deriving 50% or more of their income from agricultural production or having a business plan and the experience to operate a commercial farming operation suitable to the farm property. An OPAV provides a land trust with the right to purchase farmland at its agricultural value if the landowner decides to sell.
- Creating cultural respect easement and agreements in partnership with Indigenous communities.
  - Cultural respect easements are a type of legal agreement that formalizes Indigenous Peoples access to their ancestral lands for cultural uses, cultivation and harvesting, hunting, and tribal events and ceremonies.

Examples of land trusts: *EGLT & Nourish*; *WLT & Newgate*; *DCLT & NLC*.

#### East Granby Land Trust\* & Nourish My Soul

The mission of the East Granby Land Trust (EGLT) is to acquire and preserve open space and to promote public appreciation of the natural environment of East Granby, Connecticut. Nourish

My Soul (Nourish) is a nonprofit that educates young people on growing, preparing, and sharing food. Nourish advocates for food sovereignty and seeks to build a just food system.

In 2021, EGLT acquired by donation the 15-acre Howard Preserve. In 2022, Nourish began leasing eight acres of the property. Both organizations mutually agreed on a one-year lease. The short term was meant to test the compatibility of the two organizations and to give Nourish an option to withdraw if the property did not fully meet their needs, particularly considering its location in a flood zone. In 2023, Nourish signed a 10-year lease agreement with EGLT at a cost of \$1/year. The agreement prohibits the use of pesticides on the property, stipulates employing sustainable practices, and a requirement for EGLT's approval for any structural improvements on the land.

With an understanding of the huge upfront investment for farming and the need for space for new farmers to learn, Nourish seeks to provide young and BIPOC farmers with a space to grow on the preserve at no cost. This partnership has helped both organizations. The presence of Nourish has turned Howard Preserve into an educational site for the East Granby community. Nourish encourages community members to come onto the land and learn to grow food. This takes some pressure from EGLT to engage the community on the preserve. EGLT, in turn, have leveraged their connections to have the fields mowed and harrowed and mulch delivered to make walking paths.

*\*EGLT is now the Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy after a merger with Wintonbury Land Trust and West Hartford Land Trust.*

#### Wintonbury Land Trust\* Thrall Farm Equity Lease

The Wintonbury Land Trust (WLT) mission is to promote the preservation, improvement, protection, and conservation of natural resources for the benefit of the community. In 2007, WLT acquired by donation the 12.2-acre Thrall Farm in Windsor, Connecticut. The property includes eight farmable acres, a farm pond, wetlands, a potato barn, and a tobacco shed.

Neglected for several years, the farm had become overgrown and its infrastructure in disrepair. WLT's vision for the farm was to revitalize it and put it back into productive use. However, they did not want to own the farm property and instead wanted it under a farmer's ownership. As such, in 2013, WLT partnered with a local vegetable production farm, Newgate Farms, and developed an equity lease arrangement.

In this arrangement, Newgate Farms would lease Thrall farm for a period of five years with the anticipation that the property ownership would be transferred to them on or before the lease's

expiration. WLT, or another entity specializing in farmland easements, would retain a conservation easement on the property, ensuring its long-term agricultural use. In the event that the transfer of the property did not occur within the initial five years, Newgate Farms would have the option to extend the lease annually for five more years.

At the inception of the lease agreement, the purchase price of the property was established at \$87,500, reflecting a property value with its use restricted to agriculture. Newgate Farms agreed to an annual lease of \$900 (~\$75/acre). Newgate Farms could accrue equity interest in the property through an annual farmer's fee of \$6,000, which WLT credited to them, for activities related to reclaiming the property as a working farm. These activities included:

- Converting necessary and related land to agricultural production.
- Applying soil amendments.
- Raising cover crops.
- Developing and implementing long-term pest and weed management plans.
- Managing brush and field edges.
- General property management, particularly day-to-day repair and maintenance of the potato barn and tobacco shed.

This accrued equity, including funds or in-kind services, would be used to offset the property's purchase price. After 10 years, and as of the writing of this report, WLT, now the Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy after a merger with East Granby Land Trust and West Harford Land Trust, is in the final stages of transferring the property to Newgate Farms.

Concerning the conservation easement, not only will it ensure that the farm stays a working farm, but it will have the added benefit of specifying a building envelope on the property, which will enable Newgate Farms to build a small farmhouse.

#### Dennis Conservation Trust & Native Land Conservancy

In 2021, the Dennis Conservation Land Trust (DCLT) and the Native Land Conservancy (NLC), a land trust led by members of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe in Massachusetts, worked together to establish a cultural respect easement on all DCLT properties. This perpetual easement will enable NLC and its constituents safe access to the ancestral homelands of the Wampanoag for harvesting, cultural uses and practicing traditional ceremonies.

Connecticut is home to ~125 conservation land trusts. The land trusts interviewed for this report—*Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy; Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy; Connecticut Farmland Trust; Granby Land Trust; Aspetuck Land Trust*—are among a larger cohort of land trusts working directly with farmers. There is great potential for more of these organizations to partner with farmers and provide pathways to accessing farmland.



### © Land Banks and Land Bank Authorities

A land bank is a public or nonprofit entity that acquires, holds, manages, and repurposes vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties for community development purposes. They are commonly granted special powers via state enabling legislation. Land banks work to revitalize neighborhoods, promote economic development, and address blight or disinvestment in communities. Their primary focus is land use for housing affordability.

A land bank typically acquires vacant property at auction or from a municipality. These properties are tax delinquent and/or have been abandoned. The land bank secures the property by removing liens, clearing title, conducting preliminary environmental assessments, removing debris, and protecting the property from the elements (e.g., boarding windows). After a property is acquired and secured, the land bank sells the property through a bidding process to a buyer or developer whose intent most closely aligns with community goals. The property is returned to active community use as a residence, business, community garden, or park.

Land banks can facilitate greater farmland access and ownership by intentionally acquiring vacant or underutilized properties that can be made available for agricultural purposes. They can develop programs and policies that prioritize the transfer of land to BIPOC farmers. As institutions rooted in community development, land banks can use a network approach to partner with government entities, community organizations, and agricultural stakeholders to access resources and services to promote agricultural viability in urban, suburban, and rural environments.

A note of distinction: “Land banks” are different from “land bank authorities” though they essentially serve the same purpose. The main distinction is that “land bank authorities” are quasi-governmental organizations.

Examples: *Hartford Land Bank; other CT land banks.*

#### Hartford Land Bank

The Hartford Land Bank (HLB) is the first land bank in Connecticut. Its mission is to acquire blighted and abandoned properties including vacant lots in the city of Hartford and reactivate them. Part of this mission is increasing home ownership in Hartford in order to foster generational wealth. HLB was established as a nonstock corporation in 2017 and became a nonprofit in 2019. It is funded by a \$5 million grant from the State Department of Housing and a \$175,000 grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Through a memorandum of understanding with the City of Hartford, HLB acquires its properties from the City at no cost. The City provides HLB with a list of properties that are vacant and have been through the foreclosure process. HLB selects the properties that align with its goals, and the City transfers ownership to HLB. Subsequently, HLB remediates and reactivates these properties.

#### *Urban Farm/Vacant Lot Reactivation Project*

HLB has partnered with Keney Park Sustainability Project (KPSP) on a Vacant Lot Reactivation Project. KPSP's mission is to connect people to the healing power of nature by engaging residents of North Hartford's region through hands-on programming and demonstrations such as hydroponic gardening, mushroom cultivation, wood milling, trail maintenance, nutrition education, and animal husbandry.

Through this project, HLB and KPSP are supporting the transformation of ten vacant lots into active urban farms over the next three years. These vacant lots will be transferred directly to the ownership of experienced BIPOC urban farmers in Hartford for \$1. To ensure the properties are used in accordance with their original intent, HLB will secure each lot with a deed restriction. This restriction will stipulate that if the owners fail to adhere to the intended usage or face unforeseen financial difficulties that hinder the fulfillment of their commitments, the property will revert to the ownership of HLB.

The vacant lots on average will range from 5,000 to 10,000 square feet. Since these lots are zoned for residential use, they will need to be rezoned through a special use permit. Prospective urban farmers seeking ownership of these lots must present their site layout for the lots to the City of Hartford's Planning and Zoning Division and gain approval from their districts Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. The site layout will include the following plans: compost, water management, CT DEEP's integrated pest management, soil remediation if needed, and organic/agricultural chemicals use. HLB will pay for costs associated with the permit and plans.

This vacant lot activation project faces several significant challenges. Foremost, the cost associated with securing the special use permits would have been a financial obstacle if HLB did not pay it. There is a water access issue on these lots, as connecting to the Metropolitan District for water services is prohibitively expensive. As an interim solution, farmers will rely on rain barrels and water catchment systems. The farmers' interaction with planning and zoning authorities showcased the need to educate public officials (and the public generally) about urban agriculture and its fundamental aspects.

Other Connecticut land banks

While land banks are relatively recent developments in Connecticut, the state has several others, such as:

- Eastern Connecticut Land Bank, which specializes in the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield properties.
- Connecticut Brownfield Land Bank, which helps municipalities overcome brownfield challenges by providing support including staff capacity, strategic planning, project prioritization and management, site control, and funding applications.
- Waterbury Land Bank Authority, which prioritizes infill housing, housing rehabilitation, community greening, and tree canopy projects and is the first “land bank authority” in Connecticut.
- New Haven Land Bank Authority, a newly formed entity as of 2023, will have a similar focus as HLB.

© Comparing Community Land Trusts, Conservation Land Trusts, and Land Banks

	<u>Community Land Trust</u>	<u>Conservation Land Trust</u>	<u>Land Bank</u>
Mission/Purpose	Acquire properties to create community assets, including permanently affordable housing.	Acquire and preserve land with ecological, agricultural, or cultural value.	Acquire and repurpose vacant or abandoned properties to revitalize communities and promote economic development.
Governance and Structure	Tripartite board including CLT residents, community residents, and nonprofit and public representatives	Nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors or trustees.	Public or quasi-public entities created by local governments or established as nonprofit organizations.
Property Acquisition	Purchase or donation.	Purchase or donation.	Various means: purchase, donation, tax foreclosures, etc.
Tenure of Ownership	Perpetual ownership of land.	Perpetual ownership of land or long-term interest through a conservation easement.	Short-term ownership, and typically no long-term interest.
Property Disposition	Sell structures, but not the land itself. Offers renewable 99-year ground lease.	Maintains ownership and does not usually sell properties.	Sells property to achieve community revitalization goals.

Funding Sources	Grants, donations, lease payments, resale price restrictions (not a direct source, but contributes to financial stability).	Grants, donations, fundraising campaigns.	Property sales, government appropriations, grants, fees for certain services.
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There is great potential for collaboration among these three entities. Land banks, which prioritize short-term property ownership, can transfer suitable properties to community land trusts for agricultural or affordable farmer housing purposes. In partnership, conservation land trusts and community land trusts can acquire farmland together. The conservation land trust handles the easement aspect of the transaction while the CLT manages community ownership and farmland leasing. By pooling their financial resources, these three entities can collectively purchase at-risk farmland.

© Agrarian Commons

Launched in 2020, Agrarian Commons (The Commons) are hybrid models of community and conservation land trusts that hold farmland and housing to support new generations of farmers, promote equity and diversity in agriculture, and build regenerative and resilient food systems.

The Commons are the co-creation of Agrarian Trust and twelve farms. Established in 2013, Agrarian Trust is a national nonprofit founded to address the loss of farmland and the challenges facing farmland seekers. The Commons are subsidiary entities, registered as 501(c)(2) or 501(c)(25) organizations of Agrarian Trust. They acquire land through donations or by purchase. Agrarian Trust, itself, does not own land nor does it intend to unless as a needed vehicle to convey title to an Agrarian Common. The trust leverages their status to assist The Commons in acquiring philanthropic funding for acquisitions and related due diligence expenses such as appraisal and surveys. Furthermore, Agrarian Trust plays a vital role in raising awareness about The Commons and facilitating engagement with their shared mission.

Through this model, agricultural lands are permanently removed from the speculative market and are placed in the collective ownership of a community. The Commons are structured to ensure local stewardship and governance with boards overseen by an even distribution of leaseholders (farmers), community members, and Agrarian Trust representatives/partner organizations. Boards make decisions about the priorities of The Commons and how much farmers pay for rent.

While farmers do not own the land within The Commons, they hold ground leases that provide secure and stable land tenure and enable them to build limited equity through their farming operations. Features of the ground lease include:

- Long-term 99-year leases (leases adhere to state laws regarding maximum terms).
- Rent based on the agricultural value of land, not the market value.
- Shared infrastructure and stewardship opportunities between farmers, The Commons, and Agrarian Trust.
- A requirement for farmers to follow ecologically regenerative practices.
- Farmer ownership of improvements, such as buildings or equipment, which have been purchased, constructed, or installed on the land. These can be sold to other farmers.

Beyond secure and affordable land tenure, being a farmer within The Commons opens the door to capital resources such as United States Department of Agriculture funding and technical training and support that a farmer may not have had access to.

Example Agrarians: *Little Jubba; Central Virginia.*

#### Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons

Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons (Little Jubba) was created through a partnership between the Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine (SBCA) and Agrarian Trust. SBCA was formed in 2005 to provide transitional services, advocacy, and support for food production that empowers Maine's Somali Bantu refugee community, aiding them in upholding their cultural identity and achieving economic well-being.

A cornerstone of SBCA's efforts is their community farming program, Liberation Farms. Through Liberation Farms, SBCA provides Somali Bantu families with access to land (*1/10 of an acre*), tools, and resources to grow culturally appropriate foods for themselves and their community and address food insecurity. SBCA hosted their community farms program across disconnected land parcels, all with short-term leases.

The dependence of food security on land security prompted SBCA to seek permanent farmland. In June of 2020, SBCA toured a 106-acre organic farm in Wales, Maine. In August of 2020, SBCA with support from Agrarian Trust raised \$367,000 to acquire the farm. The farmland is held in the Little Jubba Commons with SBCA holding a 99-year renewable lease. A majority of the Little Jubba board is made of the Somali Bantu community. The land is farmed by over 200 Somali Bantu families participating in the Liberation Farms program. It is worth acknowledging that for a refugee community who have known decades of displacement, the 99-year lease is a new sense of security, stability, and peace.

### Central Virginia Agrarian Commons

The Central Virginia Agrarian Commons (CVAC) seeks to provide secure land tenure and support the needs of BIPOC agrarians and BIPOC-owned farm businesses in an effort to build resilient regional food systems. CVAC emphasizes the interconnectedness between urban and rural communities. Urban and rural lands acquired under CVAC will play a complementary role. Smaller urban parcels will function as farm incubator spaces and food aggregation, distribution, and marketing hubs. These parcels will provide urban farmers with the ability to grow where they live. Rural farmland will provide farmers looking to scale up their operations with secure land tenure and the opportunity for on-farm housing. The urban lands will enable rural farmers to have ready-made markets for their produce.

CVAC was seeded through the donation of 80 acres of rural farmland in Amelia County, Virginia. Most recently, CVAC acquired a 5-acre urban parcel located within a food desert. This land will be the home of the Petersburg Oasis CommUNITY Farm, a Black farmer enterprise focused on food production for the community and agricultural education.

### © Buy-Protect-Sell (BPS)

Buy-Protect-Sell (BPS) is a land conservation model that can be used to protect farmland from development and preserve it for agricultural use. It can also be viewed as a land transition model to facilitate the transfer of property from aging farmers without heirs or any succession plans to a new generation of farmers.

BPS involves three steps:

- Buy: In this first step, an entity such as a land trust purchases farmland at risk of development. Funding for this purchase can come from various sources including government grants, private donations, foundations, and short-term loans. Willing landowners could provide the land trust with a bargain sale, which involves selling the property at a price lower than its fair market value. A bargain sale reduces the acquisition costs for the land trust and can provide the landowner with a tax incentive.
- Protect: After acquiring the property, the land trust implements measures to ensure the land is protected. This can be done through an agricultural conservation easement, which restricts the land use for agricultural purposes, limiting nonagricultural development. The easement can include restrictions on the type of farming done on the land such as farming organically or sustainably. The easement reduces the future purchase price of the property.
- Sell: In the final step, the land trust sells the land at its reduced price to a farmer, which can be an individual farmer, a cooperative, or an agricultural nonprofit.

Notably, this model presents some challenges. Among them are:

- **Funding:** A land trust needs a sustainable financial plan that will work with the property they seek to acquire. There is often a gap that must be filled between the purchase price and sale price of the property. Since the easement reduces the overall cost of the property, a land trust may not be able to fully recoup acquisition costs when they sell. Bargain sales to the land trust can help fill this gap as can low lending rates in cases where loans are needed for acquisition.
- **Holding costs, including transaction costs:** Holding costs are the ongoing expenses associated with owning and managing a piece of land. These can include mortgage interest, property taxes, insurance, infrastructure maintenance (e.g., barns), and land management. Buying and selling the land also comes with associated transaction costs including paying for appraisals, legal costs, environmental assessments, surveys, etc. Holding costs can be reduced by leasing to local farmers and creating a path to ownership for these farmers. The BPS model, then, can take the form of a lease-to-own arrangement.
- **Matchmaking:** Finding the right farm business for the acquired property. Using CT FarmLink and networks such as the CT BIPOC Food Network, farmers could be matched early on with farmland before the property and acquisition is pursued.
- Despite these challenges and others not mentioned, this model represents a proactive approach to farmland conservation and farmland access and ownership.

Examples BPS: *Conservation Fund; Rhode Island; Potential BPS in CT.*

#### The Conservation Fund Working Farms Fund (Buy-Support-Protect-Sell)

The Conservation Fund is a national nonprofit with a mission to create innovative solutions that drive nature-based action for climate protection, sustainable economies, and vibrant communities. In 2021, the nonprofit launched the Working Farms Fund, a revolving fund, in the Atlanta, Georgia metro region. The fund's purpose is to rebuild local food systems and create sustainable farm business; develop pathways to affordable farmland ownership for next-generation and historically disadvantaged farmers (e.g., BIPOC farmers); permanently conserve farmland at risk of being developed; and provide intentional land access and ownership.

Through this fund, the Conservation Fund buys small to mid-sized farms and matches the land with next generation farmers who lease the land with an exclusive option to buy it within three to five years. Farms are leased at market rate. Through the lease period, the Conservation Fund supports farmers by investing in farm infrastructure, providing 1:1 consulting support to help

them grow their businesses, and providing access to new markets and wholesale buyers (e.g., restaurants and universities).

The Conservation Fund conserves the farmland by placing an agricultural conservation easement on it. The nonprofit does not hold the easement themselves; rather, they partner with entities like land trusts to do so. The sale of the easement reduces the cost of the property by ~40-60%. After the three-to-five-year lease period, the Conservation Fund will sell the farm to the farmer at its agricultural use value. Proceeds from lease payments, the sale of the conservation easement to the land trust, and the sale of the farm to the farmer are rolled back into the Working Farms Fund to acquire new farms. In addition to the proceeds, this model is funded by grants from foundations and the United States Department of Agriculture, along with a \$2 million set aside by the Conservation Fund.

In the matchmaking component of this model, the Conservation Fund considers farm businesses that are historically disadvantaged and that have:

- 3 years of farm management experience.
- Documented records for multiple growing seasons.
- A desire to create a viable business plan.
- A commitment to sustainable agriculture (the Conservation Fund does not mandate farmers to farm organically).

Farmers are matched to farmland based on the appropriateness of the farm to the farm business.

Since its launch, the Working Farms Fund has secured 745 acres across 10 farms within Metro Atlanta and Metro Chicago. These farms range from 22 to 197 acres. ~75% of farm businesses participating in the Farms Fund are women, immigrant, and BIPOC owned. Farm businesses range from individual ownership to cooperatives.

#### Rhode Island's Farmland Access Program

Rhode Island's Farmland Access Program is designed to bolster the state's agricultural economy by facilitating the acquisition of farmland for both emerging farmers and established agricultural businesses. The voluntary program was approved by voters as part of an environmental bond measure to help ensure farmlands remained in farming. It enables the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to partner with the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission (ALPC) and willing sellers to purchase unprotected farmland, protect it, and affordably sell it to "farmer-buyers" looking for land.



The program functions in three steps.

- First, through a selection process, a willing seller sells DEM a parcel of unprotected farmland at its appraised fair market value.
- Second, a public advisory committee, consisting of representatives from the farming community and DEM, accepts applications from prospective “farmer-buyers.” Farmers are solicited through a request for proposal process. Applicants are evaluated based on farming and farm business experience, financial capability to acquire the farmland, and evidence of at least two years of farm business operation or management generating a minimum of \$5,000 in annual gross farm revenue.
- Finally, DEM and the ALPC work together to retain the development rights to the land through an agricultural conservation easement and subsequently sells it to a selected farmer-buyer. This process ensures an agricultural future for both the land and new owner.

\$5 million was allocated to the Farmland Access Program as part of Rhode Island’s 2014 and 2018 Clean Water, Open Space and Healthy Communities bond issues.

#### Potential for BPS in Connecticut - CT Green Bank and CT DoAg

The Connecticut Green Bank (Green Bank) is a quasi-public agency established in 2011 by Governor Malloy and the Connecticut General Assembly. Its mission is to confront climate change by increasing and accelerating investment into Connecticut’s green economy to create more resilient, healthier, and equitable communities. Green Bank works with the private sector to create low-cost long-term sustainable financing opportunities. In 2021, Green Bank expanded its investment focus beyond clean energy to include environmental infrastructure, which involves projects related to agriculture, land conservation, waste and recycling, etc.

As part of this expanded focus, Green Bank identified a revolving loan fund for Buy-Protect-Sell as a pilot opportunity. There is potential for collaboration between Green Bank, CT DoAg, and nonprofit agricultural conservation organizations, in which Green Bank would offer low interest rates to entities such as land trusts to buy farmland at risk of development. This land would then be protected through an agricultural conservation easement and sold or leased, with priority consideration for BIPOC farmers. Green Bank is examining if this is an approach they can pursue as a strategy for agriculture.

#### © Land Redistribution

Land redistribution, as used in this report, refers broadly to initiatives, policies, or programs aimed at transferring land rights or land ownership from one entity—whether an individual, a collective of individuals, or an organization—to another as a means to address historical

injustices, promote equity and justice, and provide opportunities for marginalized communities to gain access to or acquire land. Related to land redistribution is land reparations, which aims to address specific land-related historical inequities such as forced displacement and dispossession suffered by descendants of enslaved populations, Indigenous peoples, and other communities.

Land redistribution and reparation efforts can facilitate access to and ownership of farmland through the return of land or providing compensation for past land theft and dispossession. This form of restitution can provide an avenue for BIPOC farmers, especially Indigenous farming communities, to regain autonomy over ancestral lands and engage in traditional farming practices.

The land back movement exemplifies an undertaking of land redistribution that centers Indigenous communities and their historical and cultural relationships with land. Land back emphasizes the return of land and sovereignty to Indigenous peoples to address the historical and ongoing injustices of colonization, dispossession, and violation of Indigenous land rights. The movement is built upon the principles of Indigenous self-determination and the reclamation and revitalization of cultural livelihood.

Land Return Examples: *Methow; Western Rivers; First Light*.

#### Methow Conservancy - Colville Tribes

The Methow Conservancy is a land trust in Washington State with a mission to inspire people to care for the land of the Methow Valley. In 2021, the Conservancy raised \$3.6 million to purchase the 328-acre Wagner Ranch with the intention to donate it to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Tribes). In 2022, they transferred ownership of the land to the Colville Tribes in acknowledgement and honor of the Methow People who called the Valley home since time immemorial.

The Colville Tribes intend to hold the land for fish and wildlife habitat and restore the property's riverfront to benefit salmon. As an act of respect to the Tribe's sovereignty and a recognition of the generations of Methow People who stewarded the Valley, the land was transferred without the Conservancy retaining a conservation easement.

For the Conservancy, the transfer of land is an act of land justice and a recognition that the Valley they work to conserve and steward were taken by the U.S. government without the consent of the Methow People. To the Colville Tribes, it is a step towards redressing historical

injustices and dispossession of the Methow People's ancestral lands and a reclamation of space for the practice of cultural traditions.

#### Western Rivers Conservancy - Esselen Tribe of Monterey County

The Western Rivers Conservancy is a land trust dedicated to the conservation of the Western States' rivers and streams. The Esselen Tribe of Monterey County is a Tribal Group and a nonprofit working toward continuing cultural traditions and protecting the cultural heritage of the tribes located within California's Monterey County.

In 2019, the two organizations secured a \$4.5 million grant from the California Natural Resources Agency to support the protection and stewardship of 1,200 acres along the Little Sur River. This gave the tribe the funds needed to purchase the land from the Conservancy enabling them to regain ancestral homelands for the first time since the Spanish displaced the Esselen tribe over 250 years ago. Ownership of the land will allow the Tribal Group to conduct traditional ceremonies, native plant gathering, and repatriate tribal members.

#### First Light

First Light is a collaboration in Maine between non-native conservation organizations and Wabanaki tribal and conservation leaders to build collective awareness and understanding of Wabanaki history and presence in Maine; recenter Indigenous voice; return land, resources, and power; and create a stronger conservation movement that includes Indigenous expertise and perspective. The Wabanaki is a regional identity composed of members of the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet, Abenaki, and Micmac tribes. In 2020, the Elliottsville Foundation, part of First Light, returned 735 acres of Penobscot ancestral lands to the Penobscot Nation in furtherance of the goals of this collaborative.

While land back centers Indigenous communities, other land redistribution efforts such as "Where is My Land" focuses on Black American's land loss. Where is My Land is an organization dedicated to helping Black people reclaim stolen land through their research, advocacy, and technology services. The organization was founded in the aftermath of California Governor Gavin Newsom signing a bill to return Bruce's Beach, a beachfront property in Southern California, to the descendants of its original owners.

Bruce's Beach, originally owned by Black landowners Willa and Charles Bruce, was acquired by the couple in 1912 with the intent of providing a beach destination for Black residents who were denied access to other beaches due to racial segregation. However, the landowners faced white supremacists' violence over the next 12 years before the city council took the beach by eminent domain.

Though land redistribution efforts cannot change the past nor fully or ever mend the inequities suffered by communities that have endured the injustices of dispossession and land theft, they can play a crucial role in shaping a more just and equitable future. By returning land or providing compensation for historical wrongs, these efforts acknowledge the enduring significance of land, not just as an economic asset, but as a cornerstone of identity, culture, and empowerment. As such, land redistribution can be a transformative force that fosters resilience, enables self-determination, and provides redress.

## Considerations for Farmland Access and Ownership

While this report has examined various barriers to farmland access and ownership and the models that can facilitate it, there are several other dimensions that demand greater attention. These include but are not limited to:

- Land leasing.
  - Access to land through leasing is a common entry point for farmers, but it comes with its own set of challenges. Leasing arrangements must be secure, transparent, flexible, and affordable. Addressing issues such as lease duration, renewal options, the opportunity to build equity, common goals of the landowner and lessee, and tenant rights is crucial to ensure that farmers can establish viable agricultural businesses.
- Housing and farmland access.
  - Ideally, farmers would want to live where they work, but access to affordable housing near farms may be challenging. Proximity to or living on the farm has numerous benefits for a farmer. This can include reduced commuting time and financial constraints, more efficient farm management, and a greater balance between farming and other employment or family responsibilities. Living where they work also enables farmers to foster engagement with neighbors and potentially build a consumer base, essential to the success of their businesses.
- Unaffordability of health insurance and other safety nets.
  - Farmers face the inherent risks and physical demands of agriculture. Adequate health insurance ensures that they have the necessary coverage to address potential injuries, illnesses, or other health-related challenges. Yet so often, farmers cannot afford the coverage they need. Farmers also face many unforeseen challenges such as crop failures, market fluctuations, and weather events that can diminish their incomes. Access to other safety nets such as income support or retirement benefits can offer protection against financial hardship. When farmers are unable to secure health coverage or protect their livelihoods against financial risks, their capacity to enter and sustain their farming businesses is compromised.
- Sustainability in farmland ownership.
  - While acquisition of farmland is a significant milestone, especially for BIPOC farmers, it is essential to recognize that this is only the beginning. Farmers need to invest in both the land and themselves to ensure the long-term viability of their operations. Investments in the land could encompass infrastructure development, soil health improvements, and conservation initiatives to enhance biodiversity. Investments in the farmer could involve education and training to

bridge skill gaps, community and network building, and succession planning. Farmland ownership is important, but equally critical is retaining ownership of the land.

- Community engagement and education.
  - Engaging local communities and providing education on the value of farmers and farmland is fundamental to fostering farmland access and ownership. This engagement and education can raise awareness about and encourage local food systems; garner support for farmland preservation and policies that promote and facilitate farmland access; and help farmers gain access to new partners and markets.
- Role of universities.
  - Universities can play a pivotal role in providing direct land access to farmers whether that is through leasing their own lands; receiving land donation requests and working with donors to transfer ownership to farmers; or serving as hubs for incubator programs and apprenticeships. Beyond this, universities can also serve as marketplaces for local farmers, whether as wholesale buyers or as hosts for farmers' markets or agricultural fairs.
- Role of municipalities.
  - Municipalities can take proactive measures to ensure that farmers have the tools they need to build and sustain their agricultural enterprises. Beginning with zoning policies and regulations, municipalities can adopt land use measures that impact agricultural accessibility including but not limited to:
    - Right to farm ordinances.
      - These ordinances identify agriculture as a valued activity, creates a supportive environment for it, and can minimize conflicts that arise between farmers and their non-farmer neighbors.
      - These ordinances can shield farmers from complaints related to noise, odors, and other common aspects of farming that non-farmer neighbors may consider a nuisance.
    - Agricultural zoning designations.
      - Municipalities can designate specific areas for agricultural use that enable the establishment and operation of farms. These designations can protect farmland, ensure its future availability, and limit incompatible land uses and development.
    - Cluster development.
      - Municipalities can use cluster development as a strategy to encourage the grouping of buildings and residential units in a way that allows for the preservation of agricultural lands. This

approach strikes a balance between accommodating growth and preserving natural resources.

- Urban agricultural planning/zoning.
  - Urban areas are often characterized by limited available land, making it essential to optimize land use for various purposes. Planning for urban agriculture is essential for optimizing land use; promoting local food production, thereby increasing the resilience of urban food systems; and supporting economic and community development.
  - Municipalities can adopt zoning policies that recognize the value of urban agriculture, specify where and what agricultural activities can take place including size and scale of operations, provide opportunities for animal husbandry, and ensure permitting and licensing for operations are equitable and conducive to the needs of farmers.
- Beyond land use regulations, municipalities can financially invest in farmers and farmland, engage in public education and outreach, and facilitate access to local markets and customers.

These additional considerations reflect the complexity and the broader nature of the challenges and opportunities for farmland access and ownership. They must be acknowledged and addressed in envisioning an equitable and just agricultural future.

## Models for Potential Implementation in Connecticut

### © Conservation Land Trust Equity Lease Model (equity lease-to-own arrangement)

As illustrated in the Wintonbury Land Trust Thrall Farm Equity lease example, an equity lease is an arrangement that provides a tenant farmer with the opportunity to lease land while simultaneously building equity in it over time to eventually purchase the property.

The equity lease can be broken down into three major elements:

- Lease agreement.
  - The agreement specifies the lease term (e.g., 5 years), rental payments, permitted uses and use restrictions of the property, subletting rules, insurance and liability, and other provisions as needed.
- Equity accumulation and use.
  - This element of the lease details how the farmer builds equity in the property; how the equity is calculated and documented; and how the equity can be applied towards the property's purchase. In the case of Thrall Farm, equity building was achieved through rental payments; maintenance, repair, and capital improvements to infrastructure; and returning the land back to agricultural production.
- Purchase option.
  - The property's purchase price is predetermined at the onset of lease. In the case of Thrall Farm, the property value was determined with its use restricted to agriculture.

Implementing this model - things to consider:

*This model is not restricted to conservation land trusts. All farmland owners may engage with this model.*

- Needs Assessment.
  - Identify interested parties.
    - At the outset, this would be the conservation land trust willing to engage in a lease-to-own arrangement and a farmer seeking to lease property with the goal of eventually owning it.
      - CT Farmlink can be an avenue for this matchmaking along with networks of farmers such as the CT BIPOC Food Network.
      - CLCC can be a partner in this process to help identify and create an inventory of willing conservation land trusts.
  - Define intentions, expectations, and goals.



- The land trust, farmer, and other relevant stakeholders should engage in initial discussions to determine mutual interest and assess compatibility in terms of conservation goals, land use, and long-term objectives.
  - These discussions should balance the practical and idealistic aspirations of the parties involved.
    - Practical considerations: recognize the practical aspects of the arrangement, such as financial considerations, legal obligations, and the day-to-day operational aspects.
    - Idealistic aspirations: acknowledge the idealistic or aspirational aspects related to farming and conservation goals, ensuring that these align with the practical realities.
- Property assessments.
  - Farmers and land trusts should assess the suitability of the farm to the farmer's business and should consider factors such as soil quality, water access, electricity, and housing.
- Equity lease drafting and negotiation.
  - Legal consultation.
    - The land trust and farmer should independently engage legal professionals with experience in real estate and agriculture to ensure provisions in the lease are equitable and legally sound.
      - Both farmers and land trusts may find it useful to engage the consulting services provided through CT Farmlink on lease development, crafting, and negotiation.
  - Lease agreement: the farmer and land trust should work with their legal representatives and other thought partners to draft a comprehensive agreement outlining the terms, conditions, and legal obligations of both parties.
    - Terms should include lease duration, lease extensions, rent, property uses, equity contributions, purchase price, adaptation clauses, termination conditions, insurance requirements, and other relevant details.
  - Equity accumulation structure.
    - The lease should clearly detail how equity will be calculated; tracked and documented; and applied to the purchase price.
    - Some options for structuring equity contributions could include:
      - Farmer making fixed or annual payments toward equity.
      - Equity credits for lease payments.

- Equity credits for property improvements whether that is in infrastructure or returning portions of the land back to agricultural production.
    - Farmer providing a percentage of crops to the landowner as their contribution.
  - Financial planning.
    - In addition to rent payments and equity contributions, farmers and land trusts working together should discuss financing options for the farmer’s eventual purchase, whether that is seeking loans or grant funding.
    - If helpful, both parties should model different financial scenarios taking into account possible changes in market conditions, expenses, life related events (e.g., sickness, death, etc.), etc.
    - The land trust and farmer should set up a transparent system for tracking rent payments and equity contributions.
- Monitoring and communication.
  - Regular communication and updates between the land trust and the farmer is integral to ensure the successful implementation of this model.
    - Updates can include accumulated equity, concerns, potential adjustments to lease, etc.
- Other considerations.
  - Divestment of property.
    - If a land trust considers divesting itself of a property, it needs to navigate this process thoughtfully, keeping in mind the implications for donor intent and funding restrictions.
    - Land trusts seeking to engage in this model need to ensure that these arrangements align with and further their conservation goals.
    - Transparent communication about divestment decisions is crucial to maintain the support and trust of donors and other stakeholders.

Potential role of CT DoAg in implementation:

*CT DoAg can...*

- Work with other agricultural stakeholders to create a model equity lease that can be referenced and amended to meet the specific needs of parties seeking to implement this model.
- Facilitate introductions between farmers and farmland owners.
- Share information about grants or funding opportunities that support financial and technical aspects of equity lease-to-own arrangements.

- Provide funding to landowners and farmers to conduct due diligence activities such as title searches; property and lease value appraisals; environmental assessments including soil testing; boundary surveys; and other relevant activities.
- Provide funding to farmers and land trusts to cover legal fees and other consultant related expenses.
- Offer technical expertise to assist in property assessments, including guidance on identifying and addressing issues before finalizing the equity lease-to-own arrangement.
- Offer guidance on navigating local regulations, obtaining permits, and ensuring compliance with zoning laws.
- Share resources on insurance providers and coverage options relevant to agricultural land management.

### © Buy-Protect-Sell

Buy-Protect-Sell is a land conservation model that can be used to protect farmland and affordably sell it for farmers. It involves three key steps:

- Buy: An entity purchases farmland from a willing landowner.
- Protect: After the farm is acquired, an easement is placed on the property, which limits the land use for agricultural purposes. The easement reduces the future purchase price of the property.
- Sell: The entity sells the land at its reduced price to a farmer.

Implementing this model - things to consider:

- Some initial questions to ask in the planning process:
  - Who is the ideal buyer for acquiring farmland properties in this model?
    - Is it a state agency, conservation or environmental organization, municipality, educational or research institutions, private foundations and individuals with agricultural interests, or other (e.g., CT Green Bank)?
    - Is the ideal buyer a statewide entity or will the ideal buyer change from project to project.
  - Who is the ideal easement holder?
  - Where is the funding coming from to buy properties, protect them, and deal with holding and stewardship expenses?
  - What equity considerations must be made, and what accountability mechanisms need to be in place?
  - Will farmers already be identified before properties are acquired?
    - It would be ideal to engage farmers at the outset of this model to ensure properties acquired to be protected and sold are lands that farmers want.
  - How will farmland owners be engaged in this model?

- Leveraging partnerships.
  - For Buy-Protect-Sell to be an effective and sustainable strategy for farmland access and ownership, it is fundamental to leverage partnerships and prioritize community and landowner engagement.
  - Partnerships open the door to diverse expertise and resources including financial support and funding opportunities.
  - Community engagement helps build trust and support and offers valuable insights into community priorities, cultural considerations, and specific land use needs.
  - Landowner engagement promotes voluntary participation in the buy phase of this model. Establishing a trusting and collaborative relationship with landowners increases the likelihood of a successful acquisition and may possibly help to reduce acquisition costs if a landowner offers a bargain sale.

### *Buy*

- Define goals and criteria.
  - What properties will be selected for acquisition? There are agricultural, ecological, farmers goals, and community objectives to be considered.
    - Some agricultural considerations: farm size, location, arability, and productivity.
      - Will farms be acquired in rural, peri-urban, urban, or suburban areas?
      - Are lands in need of remediation going to be considered for acquisition?
      - Will lands that can be suitable for alternative growing methods (e.g., vacant lots) be considered?
      - What is the property's proximity to markets? To other farms?
      - What infrastructure challenges will a property pose for farmers?
  - Planning for acquisition.
    - Will this phase be a passive or active process?
      - Passive: waiting for farmland to come on market and proceeding towards acquisition.
      - Active: strategically mapping out farms and engaging landowners before they decide to sell.
  - Who will the farms be sold to?
    - In the Conservation Fund case example, the nonprofit considers farm businesses that are historically disadvantaged and meet the following criteria:

- 3 years of farm management experience.
  - Documented records for multiple growing seasons.
  - A desire to create a viable business plan.
  - A commitment to sustainable agriculture.
- Secure funding and resources.
  - Explore financing options and scenarios best suited for the property to be acquired.
    - Identify and secure funding for acquisition including for due diligence, holding, and stewardship costs.
    - Financing scenarios should include the cost of purchasing an easement to protect the land.
  - Engage in negotiations with willing landowners to acquire property.
    - Landowners should be aware of the goals of this model and the intended beneficiaries.
      - Landowners with the ability to may provide a bargain sale to buyers.

#### *Protect*

- Partner with entities such as land trusts, state agencies, or other conservation organizations to establish easements that limit non-agricultural uses of the land and ensure that the farm remains as working land.
- Utilize funding sources such as USDA-NRCS's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and CT DoAg's Farmland Preservation Program to purchase conservation easements.
  - Other potential funding sources may include the USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which supports a range of conservation activities, including easement acquisition; corporate social responsibility initiatives; fundraising campaigns, etc.
- Develop and implement stewardship plans for the transition between protecting and selling land to farmers.
  - This could include leasing the land to interested farmers in the interim.

#### *Sell*

- Identify potential farmer-buyers for the farm whose farm business is appropriate for the property.
  - This matchmaking process must be intentional to ensure program goals and criteria are met.

#### *Evaluation of efforts.*

- Conduct a post-project evaluation to assess the success of the land conservation effort. Identify lessons learned, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, and use insights to inform future conservation initiatives.

Potential role of the CT DoAg in implementation:

*Buy:* CT DoAg can...

- Provide funding to organizations to engage in data collection and mapping of areas for farmland acquisition.
- Facilitate partnerships between buyers and other stakeholders such as landowners, other state agencies (e.g., Department of Economic Development and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection)\*\*, financial institutions, etc.
  - \*\*Department of Economic Development (DECD).
    - CT DoAg can collaborate with the Department of Economic Development to align farmland access initiatives with broader community and economic development goals.
  - \*\*Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).
    - CT DoAg can coordinate with DEEP to explore opportunities for using the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program and Urban Green and Community Garden Program as avenues for farmland acquisition.
- Provide funding to buyers to conduct due diligence activities such as title searches; appraisals; environmental assessments including soil testing; boundary surveys; and other relevant activities.
  - To encourage landowners to participate in this model, CT DoAg can also provide funding to them to cover costs associated with selling their farmland.
- Organize educational workshops and training sessions in partnership with other stakeholders (e.g., CLCC) for both buyers and landowners covering topics such as navigating the land acquisition process, understanding conservation easements, etc.

*Protect:*

- Leverage farmland preservation program to purchase easements to ensure acquired farmland remains in agriculture.
- Explore potential for other funding sources for easements.
- Provide funding to buyers to deal with holding costs while the protection process is underway.

*Sell:*

- Provide financial support to farmers through grants to purchase the protected property.
  - This can be done through the USDA's Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program in the form of down payment assistance.

- Leverage existing farmland restoration programs to help farmers restore degraded or underutilized farmlands.
  - Expand the use of this funding program to include non-prime farmland.
- Provide business planning support to farmers to assist in creating a viable business plan for the property.
- Provide funding to farmers to cover legal costs associated with navigating the transaction process from negotiations to understanding easement terms.
- Offer farmers the opportunity to explore alternative financing options such as community development financial institutions (CDFIs).
- Collaborate with DECD to explore funding opportunities and facilitate access to grants and low-interest loans for farmers acquiring protected lands.

### © Community Land Trusts

Community land trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organizations that acquire, hold, and steward land for the benefit of a specific community. CLTs separate ownership of land from ownership of structures or improvement on the land through a ground lease. The ground lease is a renewable and inheritable lease arrangement between a CLT and the leaseholder, which gives the leaseholder the right to use the land.

Implementing this model - things to consider:

- Needs Assessment.
  - Proponents of a CLT should identify specific needs and concerns related to farmland access and ownership, housing, and other land uses, and the role the CLT could play in addressing these.
    - This requires intentional and extensive stakeholder engagement to build a shared vision and understanding of the need for a CLT.
    - Stakeholders may include farmers, potential future residents of the CLT, community development entities, local government representatives, prospective funders, real estate professionals (e.g., lawyers), affordable housing developers, etc.
- Purpose, function, and reach.
  - The CLT may be organized to:
    - Create secure land tenure arrangements for BIPOC farmers through the acquisition and leasing of farmland.
    - Promote food security by putting vacant lands in trust for urban agriculture.
    - Increase affordable homeownership opportunities for BIPOC farmers so they can live where they farm.

- The CLT may decide to serve a particular neighborhood, city, or region.
  - A regional service area may provide for more opportunities in acquiring land and engaging prospective funders.
- The CLT should be mindful of whom they intend to serve; how they intend to do so; and the organizations in their potential service area that may be during similar work.
- Structure and governance.
  - A typical CLT is a nonprofit organization governed by a tripartite board of directors. This board includes an equal balance of CLT residents/leaseholders, community residents who do not live on the CLT's land, and nonprofit and public representatives including public officials, local funders, and service providers.
    - Variations to this structure can be made to meet the needs of the CLT and community.
- Development plan for CLT.
  - Organizational.
    - Establish a nonprofit entity.
      - This includes drafting and filing articles of incorporation; drafting and adopting bylaws; and preparing and filing applications for federal tax-exemption.
      - New CLTs may benefit from seeking guidance from experienced CLTs (e.g., Southeastern CT Community Land Trust).
    - Financial planning.
      - Develop a comprehensive budget for the first year of operations outlining expected income and expenses. Relevant expenditures should include operational costs, programs, acquisitions, etc.
      - Identify diverse funding sources along with plans for fundraising.
      - Explore partnerships with local government, local funders and lenders, philanthropic organizations, and other community stakeholders for financial and in-kind support.
      - Establish accounting and bookkeeping processes.
    - Building capacity.
      - Develop personnel procedures and policies.
      - Hire and train staff, which may include an executive director, property manager, community outreach coordinator, and other personnel as needed based on the needs and complexity of the CLT.
  - Projects/Programming - farmland access.
    - Acquisitions.



- Identify suitable properties for acquisition based on the CLT's goals considering factors such as location, size, and suitability for the intended land use.
- Identify potential funding sources, including grants, loans, and donations. Establish financial sustainability plans, considering both initial startup costs and ongoing operational expenses.
- Land use agreements.
  - Establish ground lease.
    - Terms of the ground lease should include lease duration and renewal; rent and payment terms; land use restrictions and requirements; taxes and assessments; ownership and improvements on the land; permitted leasehold mortgage; insurance and liability requirements; transfers, sale, or disposition of improvements; subleasing; resale restrictions; right of first refusal; other relevant details.
  - Ensuring affordability: Resale restrictions or resale formulas control the resale price of a CLT property. They help to preserve long-term affordability. These restrictions may be calculated in a variety of ways including but not limited to:
    - Appraisal based formulas, which adjust resale price by adding to the original purchase price a specified percentage of increases in appraised market value.
    - Fixed-rate formulas, which adjust resale price by a fixed annual percentage.
    - Indexed formulas, which adjust resale price in proportion to changes in an index such as the Consumer Price Index or the median household income.
- Farmer selection process and orientation to CLT.
  - Outline criteria for selecting farmers, which may include considerations such as farming background and experience, farmer alignment with CLT mission, business plan and viability, etc.
  - Provide clear information to leaseholders about the CLT model, their rights and responsibilities under the ground lease, and the benefits of being part of the CLT.
- Sustainability and growth.
  - Finance.

- CLTs need a diverse range of funding sources, including grants, donations, loans, and earned income from rent in order to sustain the work they do.
    - Developing long-term financial plans that account for both operational and project costs, and other related expenditures is necessary to ensure CLTs are successful in their work.
  - Community engagement and partnerships.
    - The community CLTs serve, including leaseholders, is integral to their sustainability. Having engaged and supportive community members committed to the CLT's mission enables CLT to operate effectively.
    - Strategic partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders can increase a CLT's impact and reduce some of its costs.
      - Partnerships with financial institutions can provide an avenue for the CLT to receive funding or direct leaseholders to potential funders.
      - Partnerships with organizations operating complimentary programs such as homebuyer education (e.g., CT Housing Finance Authority), farmer training (e.g., Solid Ground), and others relevant to leaseholders can be beneficial.
  - Stewardship and Monitoring.
    - Conduct periodic assessments both of the CLT's efficacy in carrying out its mission and of leaseholders ability to comply with their obligations.
    - Monitor financial activity including lease payments; mortgage payments; tax payments; insurance payments; and others as needed to ensure leaseholders are in good standing with the CLT and other institutions.
    - Monitor permitted uses of the land including improvements; maintenance and repairs; occupancy; transfers of ownership; and assess damage or destruction to land and property.

Potential role of CT DoAg in implementation:

*CT DoAg can...*

- Provide financial assistance or matching funds to support CLT's efforts in acquiring and/or revitalizing properties to agricultural production.
- Provide funding to CLTs to conduct due diligence activities such as title searches, appraisals, environmental assessments, surveys, and other relevant activities.
- Provide technical assistance and expertise in farm planning, including suitable uses for acquired farmland.
- Offer expertise in assessing the condition of existing farm structures, providing guidance on repairs or renovations needed to make them functional.

- Assist in connecting farmers on the CLT-owned property with local markets, cooperatives, or farm-to-table programs to enhance market access for their products.
- Facilitate connections between CLT and other government agencies such as the Department of Housing and DECD to...
  - Explore opportunities for collaboration in creating affordable housing options for farmers leasing CLT land.
  - Support infrastructure development for housing on farm properties, such as utilities and community facilities.
- Provide CLTs with technical assistance focused on supporting farmers in growing and sustaining their operations by facilitating partnerships with agricultural extension services (e.g., UConn Extension); universities; local agricultural nonprofits, and pro bono legal services.
- Facilitate partnerships between CLTs and institutions such as land banks to identify vacant or underutilized properties that can be used or repurposed for agricultural uses.

## **Paving a Path Forward**

### **9 Strategic Actions for Increased Farmland Access and Ownership**

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (CT DoAg), as a steward of the state's agricultural interests, holds a pivotal role in shaping the current and future state of farming. CT DoAg's vision is to "benefit the citizens of the state through proactive programs that address the issues of the changing face of agriculture". Thus, the department should acknowledge that the evolving agricultural landscape must address the land access and ownership needs of BIPOC farmers and must meet these needs with openness, genuine conviction, and strategic action.

CT DoAg has the potential to drive positive change, empower BIPOC farmers, and promote a more diverse and resilient agricultural community. Beyond playing a role in the implementation of the aforementioned models, there are numerous other avenues for the department to bolster land access efforts.

The following strategic actions can pave a way to proactively addressing the issues that BIPOC farmers face. For each action, CT DoAg is at the forefront of implementation, serving as the impetus and catalyst for change. Where needed, the department should actively seek input, guidance, and support from other agricultural stakeholders, particularly the BIPOC farmers these actions are meant to serve.

It is important to note that while these actions are targeted toward BIPOC farmers, their implementation carries benefits that will ripple throughout the entire agricultural industry. A more diverse and inclusive sector not only amplifies the richness of the state's agricultural heritage but also promotes innovation, resilience, and sustainability.

#### **© Increase CT DoAg Capacity**

Increase CT DoAg capacity by bringing in staff, contactors, or consultants exclusively devoted to advancing farmland access and ownership initiatives. Where needed, CT DoAg should leverage the personnel and expertise of other state departments to strengthen collaborative efforts in this endeavor.

- *Action steps:*
  - Recruit personnel to oversee and implement farmland access and ownership initiatives emphasizing the needs of historically underserved farmers including BIPOC, new and beginning, women, and veterans.
  - Personnel responsibilities should include but are not limited to:
    - Identifying and securing funding opportunities to support land access and ownership initiatives.

- Providing technical assistance and resources specifically tailored to BIPOC farmers including assisting them in identifying, preparing, and submitting grant applications.
  - Facilitating partnerships with other local and state agencies to leverage expertise and resources.
  - Collaborating with community organizations, municipalities, financial institutions, advocacy groups, policymakers, and other agricultural stakeholders to develop and implement land access and ownership initiatives that prioritize BIPOC farmers.
  - Developing effective, culturally sensitive, inclusive outreach.
  - Encouraging and empowering BIPOC farmers to take an active role in shaping policies and programs that affect their agricultural pursuits.
  - Monitoring and assessing the impact of land access and ownership initiatives.
- *Rationale:*
    - Increasing the capacity of CT DoAg ensures that farmland access and ownership initiatives receive focused attention. It will enable CT DoAg to address the multifaceted barriers BIPOC farmers face in a direct and comprehensive manner. It would allow for the implementation actions that synergize various farmland access efforts.

#### ◎ Equity in Land Ownership: Empowering BIPOC Farmers

Create land ownership initiatives for BIPOC farmers.

- *Actions Steps:*
  - Develop and implement targeted land ownership initiatives specifically designed to assist BIPOC farmers in acquiring and maintaining farmland. This could take shape as a:
    - Down payment assistance program.
      - CT DoAg through the USDA's Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program will pilot a grant program that will support land access and secure land tenure for BIPOC farmers through equitable leasing or direct land acquisition.
      - If this program is successful in achieving its goals, replication and sustainability should become CT DoAg's priority.
    - Revolving loan fund with forgiveness option.
      - CT DoAg can engage local and regional financial institutions and agencies (e.g., Green Bank, Farm Credit East, DECD, CDFIs, etc.) on the potential of establishing a revolving loan fund that offers

- favorable financing options (low or no interest loans) for farmland acquisition with priority consideration for BIPOC farmers.
- This fund should incorporate an option for loan forgiveness within the revolving loan fund for BIPOC farmers who meet certain criteria, such as maintaining sustainable farming practices, committing to community engagement, and offering mentorship opportunities for beginning farmers.
  - Farmland acquisition fund prioritizing BIPOC farmers modeled after Rhode Island’s voluntary Farmland Access Program.
    - Rhode Island’s voluntary Farmland Access Program enables the state to purchase farmland, protect it with an agricultural conservation easement, and sell it affordably to young and beginning farmers.
    - CT DoAg can engage with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to discuss the current status of the program and its impact.
  - Support the establishment of a statewide BIPOC led agricultural land trust dedicated to helping BIPOC farmers acquire farmland.
    - Support from CT DoAg could include providing grant funding, technical assistance, and opportunities for collaboration on acquisitions along with facilitating connections with entities to support the development of this trust.
    - This trust could engage directly in Buy-Protect-Sell in partnership with CT DoAg and other partners or be an avenue to identify and sell protected farmland to BIPOC farmers.
  - Farmland and succession planning: Develop a proactive program to identify and assist retiring farmers in transitioning their land to farmers, prioritizing BIPOC farmers.
    - This can involve a collaborative process with Connecticut Farm Bureau, Land for Good, Farm Service Agency, land trusts such as Connecticut Farmland Trust, BIPOC farmers, and other agricultural stakeholders.
    - This proactive program could take the form of a transition apprenticeship program or through the support of lease-to-own arrangements between BIPOC and retiring farmers.
  - Offer financial literacy and planning programs tailored to the unique needs of BIPOC farmers, with a focus on building wealth, managing land-related expenses, and navigating property ownership.

- Provide funding to farmers or facilitate connection to pro bono or low-cost legal services as they navigate the farmland acquisition process.
- Incorporate cultural sensitivity training into land ownership initiatives to better serve the diverse backgrounds and needs of BIPOC farmers, and ensure that outreach, educational materials, and support services are culturally relevant and accessible.
- *Rationale:*
  - Creating land ownership initiatives for BIPOC farmers is a necessary step towards realizing equity within the agricultural sector. These initiatives are essential for addressing historical and systemic injustices (e.g., land dispossession, discriminatory lending policies), promoting land and food sovereignty, economic empowerment, and encouraging culturally diverse agricultural practices.

#### ◎ Support Agriculture on Non-Prime Farmlands

Support and invest in agriculture on suitable land that does not have prime or important soils (non-prime farmlands) including underutilized or vacant lands and properties that can be adapted for alternative growing methods (e.g., raised beds, vertical farming, hydro- and aquaponics, rooftop farming, etc.).

- *Action Steps:*
  - Collaborate with municipalities, land use planners, land trusts, and other agricultural stakeholders to identify suitable non-prime farmlands.
  - Explore opportunities to invest in soil remediation and improvement programs to enhance agricultural productivity on non-prime lands, especially in urban areas.
    - Partner with other state agencies (e.g., Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Department of Public Health, and Department of Economic Development), universities, and environmental organizations and agricultural professionals to develop tailored remediation strategies.
  - Provide technical assistance and guidance (e.g., soil improvement, crop selection, and water management) to BIPOC farmers seeking to cultivate non-prime farmlands.
- *Rationale:*
  - Utilizing non-prime agricultural farmlands expands the state’s agricultural capacity, providing new, beginning, and BIPOC farmers with other avenues for accessing and owning land. These lands, especially those that can be adapted for alternative growing methods, can contribute to climate resilience in agriculture, and when properly managed can offer environmental benefits such as improved soil health. With limited prime farmland and important soils, non-prime

farmlands can be an avenue to enhance local and regional food systems, especially in Connecticut's urban areas.

### © Foster Collaborative Farming Initiatives

Promote informal and formal collaborations between BIPOC farmers, with CT DoAg positioned as a convener and facilitator of cooperative and collaborative efforts. *Models that could facilitate these collaborations include incubator programs, apprenticeships, and cooperative farming.*

- *Action Steps:*

- Recognize and promote the value of informal collaborations and networks among BIPOC farmers. These collaborations can include shared knowledge, resources, equipment, and labor.
- Encourage the establishment of farmer cooperatives by providing training and resources including legal and financial expertise.
- Organize networking events, forums, and workshops to facilitate and strengthen informal and formal collaborative efforts.
- Enhance the visibility, accessibility, and amount of funding of existing CT DoAg grant programs (e.g., Farm Transition Grant) that support farmer cooperatives and informal collaborations and reduce requirements that may pose a barrier to using these programs (e.g., cash match; reimbursement only grants).
- Replicate and expand the 2023 CT DoAg BIPOC apprenticeship program.
  - Increase stipend amounts and program duration.
  - Provide pathways for certifications for apprentices.

- *Rationale:*

- Promoting collaborative efforts among BIPOC farmers fosters a sense of community and collective resilience. Farming, often, can be isolating, taking a toll on the farmer and their work. Collaborative ventures and networks can provide an avenue for farmers to connect, share knowledge and experience, navigate challenges, and seek emotional support. Farmers working together can also achieve greater financial security and deepen cultural ties and traditions.
- Positioning CT DoAg's role as a convener in these efforts can help farmers access essential resources, support, and platforms for building community.

### © Expand Education and Support Programs

Expand education and support programs, emphasizing land access and ownership.

- *Action steps:*

- Provide training in grant proposal writing, budgeting, and reporting to increase the competitiveness of grant applications by BIPOC farmers.



- Offer workshops, webinars, and training sessions on topics such as land acquisition strategies, financial literacy, farm business planning, zoning policies and regulations, and legal aspects of land ownership.
- Deliver educational content and resources to land trusts and other farmland holding organizations on ways to partner with BIPOC farmers.
- *Rationale:*
  - Expanding education and support programs will equip BIPOC farmers with the knowledge, skills, resources, and connections necessary to make the path towards farmland access and ownership more manageable.

### © Conservation Land Trust Partnerships

Collaborate with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) and other conservation stakeholders to facilitate partnerships between BIPOC farmers and conservation land trusts.

- Action Steps:
  - Create and allocate funding to a Land Access and Conservation Partnership Initiative with CLCC and other stakeholders.
    - Compile and maintain an inventory of conservation land trusts that are willing and equipped to partner with BIPOC farmers.
    - Through CLCC and CT FarmLink, provide land trusts with guidance on engaging with farmers on their conserved lands.
    - Appoint a program manager (e.g., Farmland Access and Ownership Specialist) for this initiative to work in partnership with the CT Farmlink Farmland Access Coordinator to oversee efforts between land trusts and BIPOC farmers.
  - Develop and implement training programs for both farmers and conservation land trust personnel in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ), as well as anti-racism principles. These training sessions should promote collaborations.
  - Organize regional roundtables that facilitate networking and collaboration between land trust representatives, BIPOC farmers, and agricultural experts. *CLCC is currently developing its program to undertake this effort in Eastern CT and is interested in expanding this statewide.*
  - Encourage partnerships that align agricultural production with land trust conservation priorities.
  - Allocate grant funding to support collaborative projects between BIPOC farmers and land trusts. Examples include:
    - Developing a farm incubator or apprenticeship program on a land trust property.

- Implementing agroforestry projects such as forest farming in which BIPOC farmers cultivate high value, non-timber forest products like mushrooms or medicinal herbs.
    - Establishing community gardens on conserved land and offering educational programs for BIPOC communities on sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and environmental stewardship.
  - Offer technical assistance or referral to experts to support collaborative project development and implementation.
- *Rationale:*
  - Facilitating these partnerships offers BIPOC farmers land access, promotes sustainable farming practices that align with conservation objectives, contributes to environmental stewardship, and benefits both farmers and land trust. These partnerships would also advance inclusion in the agricultural sector.

### © Municipal Engagement for Equitable Land Access

Engage municipalities in land access efforts.

- *Action steps:*
  - Collaborate with municipalities to establish a joint Municipal-State Land Access Task Force with a focus on identifying municipal-owned lands suitable for agricultural use.
    - This task force should be composed of representatives including but not limited to municipalities, CT DoAg, land banks, conservation districts, land trusts, community stakeholders, council of governments, and BIPOC farmers.
  - Through this collaborative, conduct a comprehensive inventory and assessment of municipal-owned lands that can be used or repurposed for agricultural use and identify opportunities for leasing or sale to farmers.
  - Provide funding to municipalities to engage in this land inventory effort.
    - The 2023 CT DoAg Farm Viability Grant Round included a micro grant in the amount of \$5,000 for municipalities to create electronic and printed maps/brochures highlighting all the farms in their towns. This could be expanded to support this land inventory effort.
  - Offer municipalities guidance, model policies, and consultation on reviewing and potentially revising land use regulations, zoning codes, policies, and bureaucratic processes to facilitate greater land access for farmers.
  - Collaborate with municipalities to create standardized land lease agreements that prioritize BIPOC farmers and offer long-term lease options and affordable rental rates.

- Provide municipalities funding (or support enabling legislation to allow municipal funding options) to implement Plan of Conservation and Development policies, strategies, and actions that are favorable to land access, particularly in urban areas.
- Conduct educational outreach in partnership with other agricultural stakeholders to educate municipalities on working with farmers.
- *Rationale:*
  - Engaging municipalities increases the land access possibilities for farmers. It presents an opportunity for the state to leverage the resources and influence of local governments to advance policies and initiatives that support agricultural development.
  - This strategic action aligns with the DEI Access to Secure Land Tenure subgroup recommendation 4.4 (*Work with Municipalities to Increase Land Access*).

© Feasibility Assessment of Option to Purchase at Agricultural Values

Collaborate with other agricultural stakeholders to conduct a feasibility study on the practical implementation of Option to Purchase at Agricultural Values (OPAV) on Connecticut farmland easements.

- *Action Steps:*
  - Commission a comprehensive feasibility study to assess the potential implementation of Option to Purchase at Agricultural Values (OPAV) in Connecticut.
  - Engage stakeholder groups, including the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board, farmers, agricultural organizations, legal experts, and other government agencies, in discussions and workshops to gather input and insights on the practicality and viability of OPAV.
  - Identify legal and regulatory changes needed to implement OPAV effectively, including considerations for retroactive consideration.
  - Assess the financial implications of OPAV, including potential state, federal, and private funding sources, budget requirements, and economic impacts on the agricultural sector and communities.
  - Evaluate the capacity and expertise of Connecticut appraisers to accurately assess farmland values in the context of OPAV, ensuring that appraisals align with affordability and equitable access goals.
  - Ensure that the feasibility study includes a strong focus on equity and inclusivity, examining how OPAV can specifically address the historical barriers faced by BIPOC farmers and promote their participation in Connecticut’s agricultural community.

- *Rationale:*
  - OPAVs are a potential tool to not only ensure the affordability of farmland, but also to keep farms in the hands of farmers. A study on their feasibility specific to Connecticut would provide the necessary insights into the practicality and long-term sustainability of their implementation. It would also provide an understanding of their capacity to reduce the overall cost of farmland.

© **A Safety Net for BIPOC Farmers\*\***

Improve access to and explore options for establishing safety nets tailored to the needs of BIPOC farmers, including access to essential benefits.

- *Action Steps:*
  - Evaluate existing safety net programs to identify gaps and areas where improvements are needed to better serve the needs of BIPOC farmers.
  - Collaborate with relevant state agencies, agricultural organizations, BIPOC farmers, and other stakeholders to explore and develop options for providing affordable health insurance coverage.
  - Support policies that facilitate access to disability insurance for BIPOC farmers, recognizing that injury or illness can have significant financial consequences, especially for those with limited access to traditional safety nets.
  - Explore opportunities to create and implement a retirement savings program, offering accessible and flexible options for contributions, including tax-advantaged retirement accounts.
  - Provide educational resources and conduct outreach to inform BIPOC farmers about available safety net options, ensuring that they are aware of and can access them.
  - Provide education and resources to help BIPOC farmers plan for their long-term financial well-being and retirement security.
  - Offer financial counseling services that address the financial challenges and opportunities unique to farming, including budgeting, debt management, and estate planning.
  - Collaborate with BIPOC-led mental health organizations to establish counseling services tailored to the mental health needs of BIPOC farmers.
  - Ensure that these safety nets are culturally sensitive and accessible, taking into account language and cultural preferences.
- *Rationale:*
  - Access to benefits for farmers are typically challenging to obtain. Establishing safety nets promotes long-term economic security, has the potential to attract new farmers, encourage existing farmers to stay in industry, and ensures farmers

are better equipped to adapt to changing circumstances. Safety nets can reduce stress, improve quality of life, and enhance the overall resilience of Connecticut's agricultural community.

*\*\*Message: While recognizing that all farmers can benefit from a safety net, regardless of their background, this strategic action along with the others deliberately target BIPOC farmers in light of the historical disparities they have faced and to ensure they are not left behind in accessing essential benefits and support systems. This strategic action, in particular, cannot be undertaken alone by CT DoAg. However, by taking the lead on this, CT DoAg can set the tone for a collective approach, engaging the relevant stakeholders and truly serve as the impetus and catalyst for change.*

## Conclusion

Ensuring secure land access for BIPOC farmers is not just a matter of equity. It is central to the resilience and vitality of Connecticut's agricultural industry. The diversity of voices and practices within Connecticut's farming communities contributes to the robustness of the state's food system, fosters agricultural innovation, and strengthens food sovereignty.

While this report has explored several models for farmland access and ownership, there are many more opportunities to explore to support BIPOC farmers' secure land tenure. Of note, one model for farmland access and ownership that has not been detailed in this report is "cooperative farming." Cooperative farming involves multiple individuals or groups coming together to collectively own and operate a farm. This approach can enable BIPOC farmers to pool their resources and knowledge, reducing some of the barriers they face.

It is vital to emphasize that this report merely serves as a stepping stone. A true measure of commitment to ensuring secure land tenure lies in the actions that follow. As such, the question that looms above is, "What comes next?" To actuate the strategies for facilitating farmland access and ownership as identified through the case examples and as evinced in the strategic actions requires an unwavering driving force and commitment to action, now, rather than later.

For CLCC, taking immediate action means forging collaborative partnerships with land trusts—leveraging the combined expertise and resources—to support farmers in gaining secure land access. For CT DoAg, it is a matter of deciding upon what their capacity allows and assessing their role in implementing the models and strategic actions outlined.

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