



December 2013 Update:  
Revelations and Recommendations

# GROW CONNECTICUT FARMS

Developing, Diversifying, and Promoting Agriculture

*A Project of the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development*

[www.GrowConnecticutFarms.com](http://www.GrowConnecticutFarms.com)



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### **Written by Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture**

Photos by Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture

Front Cover (top to bottom, left to right):

- Coventry Regional Farmers' Market, Coventry
- Stuart Family Farm, Bridgewater
- Rose's Berry Farm, South Glastonbury
- Ekonk Hill Turkey Farm, Moosup
- Killam and Bassette Farmstead, South Glastonbury
- Geremia Greenhouse, Wallingford

Back Cover (top to bottom, left to right):

- Mountaintop Mushrooms, Waterbury
- Goatboy Soaps, New Milford
- Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture, Milford
- Sankow's Beaver Brook Farm, Lyme
- Nonnewaug High School Agriscience Center, Woodbury
- Rose's Berry Farm, South Glastonbury

Graphic Design by Susan Schadt & Kevin Noonan, University of Connecticut



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“

Coming together  
is a beginning.  
Keeping together  
is progress.  
Working together  
is success.

—Henry Ford

”

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development and Grow Connecticut Farms, the state's first-ever holistic plan for agriculture, is the product of a wide, diverse network of farmers, other agribusiness men and women, policy makers, educators, and related stakeholders.

Appointed members of the council and working groups serve without pay or other compensation, volunteering their time and expertise with the confidence that their contributions will shape a vibrant and prosperous future for Connecticut's agricultural industry and citizens for generations to come.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture recognizes, relies upon, and is indebted to every member of the council's vast network for his or her input, energy, and invaluable effort.

The agency thanks the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association and the University of Connecticut for providing facilities, food, and other refreshments for council meetings, as well as the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources for assistance with the graphic design and layout of this report.

Special thanks go to USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and to Farm-to-Institution New England for funding additional research to assist with the council's work on farm-to-institution and other wholesale market opportunities.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Piotrowicz works in the Office of the Commissioner at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, where she leads efforts on the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development. She also shares public information responsibilities for the agency, serves as editor of the Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report, assists with the department's legislative program, contributes to day-to-day and long-range agency planning, and continues to coordinate the Farm-to-Chef Program, which she developed in 2006 as a member of the department's marketing unit.

Prior to joining the Department of Agriculture, Linda worked as a planning coordinator on the State of Connecticut's I-95 New Haven Program. Her 30-year career spans education, administration, sales, marketing, communications, and technology.

Linda holds a B.S. in horticulture from the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and is a graduate of the state Department of Education's Alternate Route to Certification, where she earned teaching eligibility in agriculture, biology, and general science. Linda is lifelong Connecticut resident and grew up in Simsbury, where she served on the town's design review board and recycling committee.



## FOREWORD

Henry Ford said, “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”

As the Governor’s Council for Agricultural Development wraps up its second year of work on Grow Connecticut Farms, it can take pride in the success it has already achieved.

The council came together at the beginning of 2012, energized and excited about developing the first-ever strategic plan for Connecticut agriculture, and enthusiastically dove head-first into this ambitious project. Some doubted the group would accomplish much, despite its good intentions.

While the council was inspired by similar planning projects in other states, it did not share the same level of financial and administrative resources. Instead, the council’s members—mostly farmers—learned they needed to rely on themselves and one another to get the job done. As the growing season unfurled, and on-farm demands increased, it quickly became apparent how challenging “keeping together” would be.

But the council defied the odds. Members not only kept together during long and exhausting days of farming, they solicited and collected input from hundreds of other farmers and stakeholders across Connecticut that year, providing a rock-solid foundation for a strategic plan.

As 2013 began, the challenge grew exponentially. The council organized into 12 working groups to delve into 12 different topics. Now each council member had a specific group assignment in addition to regular full council meetings and responsibilities. Again rising to the challenge, they kept together and worked together, sharing information from each group with the council, discussing and analyzing that information together, and producing the set of recommendations presented in this year-end update.

It is clear looking back at progress made so far that the council has already achieved considerable success in just two seasons. It is clear looking forward that there is plenty of work still to do. And it is perfectly clear that these members are up to the challenge.

As chairman of this remarkable council, I have deep appreciation for the dedication and commitment of each and every member who has served—and excelled—over these past two years. Developing a truly holistic long-range plan for Connecticut agriculture is not only complex and challenging, it is also extremely demanding in terms of time, energy, and effort.

My appreciation extends to members of all working groups who dedicated their time and expertise on issues and suggestions that will help shape a more vibrant future for our state.

Thanks also go to Connecticut Department of Agriculture staff who assisted working group chairs with scheduling, meeting reports, and disseminating information on top of already-heavy workloads.

Of course the council would not exist today if not for the vision and support of Governor Dannel P. Malloy and the Connecticut General Assembly, who took the initiative to resurrect the Governor’s Council for Agricultural Development and charge it with a timely mission to make meaningful recommendations.

The future of Connecticut agriculture requires advances in technology, creative thinking, real innovation, strategic planning, and committed partnerships among the wealth of public and private brainpower here in Connecticut and beyond. First and foremost, it begins with Connecticut’s hard-working and dedicated farm families—those serving on the council and the thousands of others they represent in the state.

I’m honored to serve these men and women—and the residents of this great state—as the chairman of the Governor’s Council for Agricultural Development and as the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Steven K. Reviczky

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This update is the second installment from the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development (GCAD) on Grow Connecticut Farms, the first-ever holistic, long-range, strategic plan for Connecticut agriculture. It begins at the end of the council's [December 2012 report](#), which can be found at [www.GrowConnecticutFarms.com](http://www.GrowConnecticutFarms.com).

During 2012, the council amassed an enormous amount of input from hundreds of Connecticut farmers and other agricultural stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities they have experienced in the industry. This input served as the foundation for the GCAD's first set of recommendations to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (presented in the December 2012 report) and its priorities and work for 2013.

As 2012 came to a close, progress on the council's first set of recommendations was already underway, including the introduction of a number of legislative initiatives addressing the GCAD's priority issues. An overview of successful legislation from the 2013 session of the Connecticut General Assembly is provided in Section 6, beginning on [Page 13](#).

The GCAD organized in early 2013 into 12 working groups to focus on specific topic areas. Each group took on an assignment for the remainder of the year as follows:

1. **Farm-to-Institution Working Group A** (public K-12 schools and state institutions): Examine procurement procedures and contracts and develop strategies for inclusion of more Connecticut Grown farm products in those contracts.
2. **Farm-to-Institution Working Group B** (private K-12 schools, higher education, healthcare facilities, and corporate foodservice): Examine procurement procedures and contracts and develop strategies for inclusion of more Connecticut Grown farm products in those contracts.
3. **Farm-to-Institution Working Group C** (restaurants): Examine Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(d\)](#) regarding "Certified Farm Fresh Restaurants" and make recommendations for implementation of a workable program.
4. **Consumer Education and Training Working Group**: Develop an implementation strategy for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 7, "Establish a bridge between the state departments of Agriculture and Education through a dedicated agricultural education coordinator, and develop ways to integrate agriculture into Connecticut's K-12 curriculum."
5. **Research Working Group**: Assess Connecticut's existing agricultural research infrastructure and develop suggestions for improvement.
6. **Food Security Working Group**: Develop a workable strategy to increase the supply of Connecticut Grown farm products in supermarkets and other retail stores.
7. **Marketing Working Group**: Review state statutes (CGS [Sec. 22-38](#) and [22-38a](#)) regarding advertising and promotion of Connecticut Grown farm products and suggest workable components for the comprehensive marketing strategy in GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 2, "Develop and invest in a comprehensive marketing strategy for Connecticut agriculture."
8. **Agricultural Business Environment Working Group**: Examine the current energy bill and make suggestions for enhancements based on GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 3, "Create an agriculture-friendly energy policy that includes agricultural net metering for power production and transmission, and qualification of agricultural anaerobic digestion projects for zero-emissions renewable energy credits (ZRECs)."
9. **Planning and Coordination Working Group**: Develop an implementation strategy for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 4, "Strengthen the state Department of Agriculture and



improve coordination among all agencies regulating agricultural businesses.”

10. **Agricultural Resources and Investments Working Group:** Examine opportunities and develop recommendations for agricultural use of state-owned lands.
11. **Agriculture and Food Infrastructure Working Group:** Determine specific steps for GCAD’s 2012 Recommendation No. 1, “Study infrastructure gaps and opportunities for the aggregation, light processing, and distribution of Connecticut Grown products.”
12. **Producer Education and Training Working Group:** Develop recommendations for specific statewide initiatives to provide an adequate agricultural workforce based on GCAD’s 2012 Recommendation No. 5, “Perform a comprehensive review of agricultural labor issues and develop initiatives that provide an adequate workforce for Connecticut farm businesses.”

Each working group invited additional stakeholders with experience and expertise related to its specific assignment to engage in discussion, research, brainstorming, and the development of suggestions for the council’s consideration. Details of each group’s work are provided in Section 7, beginning on [Page 15](#).

The working groups reported back to the council in August. GCAD members discussed the groups’ findings at length, identifying common themes and intersecting issues, and recognizing the need for further review and reflection. A special meeting was set for September to extend the conversation.

Over the next several weeks, members continued to digest and analyze the results of each working group.

At September’s special meeting, the council resumed its discussion and developed a set of 12 recommendations to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Many recommendations align with a single group’s work, while some are the result of overlapping and/or intersecting challenges and opportunities identified in multiple groups. The recommendations are as follows:

- **Farm-to-Institution Working Groups A and B:** Modify Connecticut General Statutes [Section 4a-51\(b\)](#) to include the following: “At least 5 percent of purchases must be Connecticut Grown farm products” and implement a certification process for wholesalers.
- **Farm-to-Institution Working Group C:** In Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(d\)](#), change the name of the program “Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant” to “Connecticut Farm-to-Chef Restaurant” to better align with the Department of Agriculture’s existing Farm-to-Chef Program, and work with the agency’s Farm-to-Chef advisory group to develop criteria for implementation of a one-, two-, or three-fork restaurant certification within that program.
- **Consumer Education and Training Working Group:** Create within the Connecticut State Department of Education a full-time agricultural education coordinator responsible for creating and maintaining a web-based tool kit of curriculum for K-12 educators to use in core subject examples and assignments.
- **Research Working Group:** Create an agricultural innovation initiative that is a partnership among Connecticut’s private industry, state government, and educational institutions, including both public and private colleges and universities throughout the state.
- **Food Security Working Group:** Enhance enforcement of Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38\(b\)](#), and develop a pilot program to certify Connecticut Grown markets based upon Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(c\)](#), changing the program name from “Connecticut Farm Fresh Market” to “Connecticut Grown Market,” to better align with the existing Connecticut Grown Program, and revising the 15 percent stocking requirement to one appropriate for Connecticut Grown production.

- **Marketing Working Group:** Conduct research that will enhance the multiyear, state-wide Connecticut Grown marketing and advertising campaign in Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38a](#).
- **Agricultural Business Environment Working Group:** Support on-farm biomass energy projects that do not consume prime and important farmland and explore the carve-out of an AgREC within the LREC system.
- **Agricultural Business Environment and Planning and Coordination Working Groups:** Improve coordination among all state agencies with involvement in agricultural issues through designation of an agricultural liaison in each.
- **Agricultural Resources and Investments Working Group:** Inventory state-owned land and put an additional 4,000 acres into leases with farmers for agricultural production by the end of 2015.
- **Agriculture and Food Infrastructure Working Group:** Explore potential at the state-owned Hartford Regional Market for light processing facilities that would enable Connecticut farmers to reduce waste, expand offerings, and augment income through production and sale of value-added products.
- **Producer Education and Training Working Group:** Develop agricultural internship programs through partnerships between Connecticut's farms and educational institutions—including both public and private colleges and universities—and enhance Cooperative Extension focus on programs that educate farmers about continually changing challenges related to climate, insects, and diseases.
- **Farm to Institution A and B, Food Security, and Agricultural Business Environment Working Groups:** Assist agricultural producers with Food Safety Modernization Act education and compliance through existing programs; consider development of a new program dedicated to this purpose.

Details about each recommendation are provided in Section 8, beginning on [Page 41](#).

As 2013 winds down, the council is reviewing its work and recommendations from the past 12 months to determine its top priorities for 2014. It will tailor its working group structure around those priorities and convene those groups in January.

Each working group will report at the council's quarterly meetings, giving GCAD members an opportunity to listen, learn, analyze, and identify additional challenges and opportunities in the industry. With that new insight and information, the council will develop additional recommendations to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture on ways to increase consumer spending on Connecticut Grown farm products and develop, diversify, and promote Connecticut agriculture.

The council will issue another update on Grow Connecticut Farms in late 2014.

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL

Connecticut agriculture is a diverse industry estimated to contribute between \$2.72 and \$4.6 billion annually in economic activity, provide as many as 28,000 jobs, and significantly enhance the quality of life for all who live in or visit our state, as detailed in the Grow Connecticut Farms [December 2012 report](#) (available at [www.GrowConnecticutFarms.com](http://www.GrowConnecticutFarms.com)).

Recognizing the industry's value and contributions to the state, the Connecticut General Assembly in 1991 passed [Public Act 91-307](#), An Act Concerning Agricultural Societies and Establishing a Governor's Council for Agricultural Development.

Creation of the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development (GCAD) was met with enthusiasm and optimism by industry members. Over time, however, the original council's impractically large membership and lack of specifically defined goals resulted in a gradual loss of momentum and activity.

The GCAD was resurrected and reshaped through [Public Act 11-189](#), passed by the Connecticut General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Dannel P. Malloy in 2011. This legislation reorganized the council by reducing its size to a more practical 15 members and tasking it with two specific charges:

1. Make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on ways to **increase the percentage of consumer dollars spent on Connecticut Grown** fresh produce and farm products...**by 2020, to not less than five per cent** of all money spent by such residents on food.
2. Make recommendations concerning the **development, diversification, and promotion** of agricultural **products, programs, and enterprises** ...and ... provide for an **interchange of ideas** from the various commodity groups and organizations represented.

The newly structured council was filled through appointments by Governor Malloy and legislative leaders. It met for the first time in January 2012. Currently, the council consists of the following members:

### **Chairman**

- Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Connecticut Department of Agriculture

### **Vice Chairmen**

- Henry Talmage, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association; representing the Connecticut Milk Promotion Board
- Dean Gregory J. Weidemann, Ph.D., University of Connecticut, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

### **Members**

- Allyn L. Brown, III, Maple Lane Farms, LLC, and Connecticut Currant, representing agricultural production
- James F. Guida, Guida's Milk, representing agricultural processing
- George Hindinger, Hindinger Farm, representing agricultural production
- Jason Hoagland, Connecticut Agricultural Education Foundation, representing agricultural education
- Herb Holden Jr., Broad Brook Beef, representing agricultural production
- Jamie Jones, Jones Family Farms, representing agricultural production
- Michael T. Keilty, Maple Spring Farms, representing an agricultural trade association
- Shelly Oechsler, Botticello Farms, representing agricultural production
- Peter Orr, Fort Hill Farms, representing agricultural production
- Kevin Sullivan Jr., Chestnut Hill Nursery, representing the Green Industry

*As of October 1, 2013, the positions representing agricultural marketing and agricultural sales were vacant due the resignations of Winter Caplanson and Greg Veneziano, respectively.*

Realizing both the implications and the enormousness of its statutory charge, the council at once set forth on the development of Connecticut's first-ever holistic, long-range strategic plan for agriculture, Grow Connecticut Farms.

The council spent much of 2012 gathering input from hundreds of stakeholders from all sectors of agriculture and regions of the state, employing in-depth interviews, an online survey, listening sessions, and topic-specific meetings to learn more about challenges and opportunities in the industry and to collect ideas on ways to overcome those challenges and make the most of the opportunities.

From this vast amount of stakeholder input, common themes and priorities emerged. After considerable review and discussion of all the information it had amassed, the council developed its first set of formal recommendations to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture at the end of 2012. Details of this process are provided in the Grow Connecticut Farms December 2012 report.

The council's initial set of recommendations included the following seven suggested action items:

1. Study infrastructure gaps and opportunities for the aggregation, light processing, and distribution of Connecticut Grown products.
2. Develop and invest in a comprehensive marketing strategy for Connecticut agriculture.
3. Create an agriculture-friendly energy policy that includes agricultural net metering for power production and transmission, and qualification of agricultural anaerobic digestion projects for zero-emissions renewable energy credits (ZRECs).
4. Strengthen the state Department of Agriculture and improve coordination among all agencies regulating agricultural businesses.
5. Perform a comprehensive review of agricultural labor issues and develop initiatives that provide an adequate workforce for Connecticut farm businesses.
6. Increase weight limits on truck loads to be consistent with surrounding states.
7. Establish a bridge between the state departments of Agriculture and Education through a dedicated agricultural education coordinator, and develop ways to integrate agriculture into Connecticut's K-12 curriculum.

These laid the foundation for the GCAD's work in 2013. The council organized into 12 working groups to address priorities that had emerged and develop strategies for implementing recommendations. These working groups and their findings are presented in more detail in Section 7, beginning on [Page 15](#).



## PROGRESS TO DATE

Even before the Grow Connecticut Farms [December 2012 report](#) was released, work on several of the GCAD's recommendations and priorities had begun.

Legislation crafted, introduced, debated, and ultimately passed during the Connecticut General Assembly's 2013 session, and then signed by Governor Malloy into state law, addresses many of these issues. Among the relevant new public acts are the following:

**[An Act Concerning Locally Grown Poultry in Connecticut Food Markets](#)** allows for more Connecticut Grown poultry in grocery stores and retail food establishments. Governor Malloy's own initiative, it resulted from his touring farms in the state, recognizing a need and opportunity to expand Connecticut Grown availability, and working efficiently to provide farmers with tools to grow.

**[An Act Concerning Revisions to the Transportation Statutes and the Designation of Roads and Bridges in Honor or Memory of Persons and Organizations](#)** paves the way at the state level for the federal action necessary to increase truck weight limits in Connecticut from 80,000 to 100,000 pounds. The change will eliminate a disadvantage faced by Connecticut farms that move both inputs (animal feed, fertilizer, etc.) and outputs (milk, plants, etc.) through states with higher weight limits.

**[An Act Concerning the Implementation of Connecticut's Energy Policy](#)** allows for virtual net metering, which helps farms generating some of their own energy balance out periods of peak demand with periods of lower demand. Previously the energy these farmers used during peak demand cost far more than the credit given for surplus energy they generated off peak. For farms capable of creating more energy than they need during certain times of day, this change can provide meaningful reduction of input costs, which have been identified by stakeholders as the greatest challenge faced by Connecticut agriculture.

**[An Act Concerning a Preference for Connecticut Grown Protein in Certain State Contracts](#)** allows for primary consideration to be given to beef, pork, lamb, and farm-raised fish that is raised in Connecticut if the products are comparable in cost to those raised out of state. It builds on existing law that gives the same consideration to Connecticut Grown products such as dairy, poultry, eggs, fruits, and vegetables.

**[An Act Concerning the University of Connecticut and Competitive Bidding for Agricultural Purchases by the Constituent Units of Higher Education](#)** eases the requirements of a



*Governor Malloy discusses the needs of Connecticut poultry producers*



competitive bid process and gives preference to purchases less than \$50,000 of Connecticut Grown dairy products, poultry, eggs, fruits, or vegetables as long as costs are comparable with importing similar goods from out of state.

**An Act Concerning Connecticut's Clean Energy Goals** includes anaerobic digesters in the definition of Class I renewable energy sources. Anaerobic digesters use plant and animal waste to produce methane gas, which can be burned to generate electricity now eligible for renewable energy credits (RECs). Anaerobic digesters are particularly well-suited to some types of farms in Connecticut, helping not only manage waste but also significantly reduce energy costs and even generate income.

**An Act Concerning Energy and Jobs** requires wholesale and retail food sellers within 20 miles of a composting facility to ship organic waste to that facility. Anaerobic digesters receiving this additional organic waste will be able to produce more energy.

As the 2013 legislative session came to a close in June, the GCAD recognized the tremendous progress that had been made on their initial recommendations over a short period of time. The council also realized that work had only just begun, and there was much more to accomplish in order to meet the GCAD's statutory charge.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) webinar *A Different View: Is Waste Really a Waste, Or Is It Perhaps a Resource?* anaerobic digestion is "a natural process that converts biomass to energy under oxygen free conditions; bacteria the most important factor; net energy gain and useful byproducts."

Common organic wastes that can be used in anaerobic digestion include

- manure
- food scraps
- food process side streams
- yard/landscape by-products
- saw mill side streams
- algae
- grasses

Resulting byproducts:

1. digester gas (methane can be as high as 70%)
2. post-digested materials including liquids and solids (usually a 50% solids reduction within digester)

Potential outputs and revenues:

- electricity
- heat
- carbon dioxide
- post-digested liquids(fertilizer)
- post-digested solids (bedding, soil amendment, compost, skate boards, etc.)
- carbon credits
- tipping fees

([http://www.epa.gov/region2/webinars/pdfs/3-24-10\\_1.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/region2/webinars/pdfs/3-24-10_1.pdf))

## 2013 WORKING GROUPS

To help further implement and build off its first set of recommendations—and address other priorities that had emerged—the GCAD organized itself into 12 working groups. Each was chaired by a different council member\* and took on a specific assignment for the remainder of 2013:

Group	Chair	2013 Assignment
Farm-to-Institution Subgroup A (public K-12 schools and state institutions)	Shelly Oechsler	Examine procurement procedures and contracts and develop strategies for inclusion of more Connecticut Grown farm products in those contracts.
Farm-to-Institution Subgroup B (private K-12 schools, higher education, healthcare facilities, and corporate foodservice)	Shelly Oechsler	Examine procurement procedures and contracts and develop strategies for inclusion of more Connecticut Grown farm products in those contracts.
Farm-to-Institution Subgroup C (restaurants)	Shelly Oechsler	Examine Connecticut General Statutes <a href="#">Section 22-38b</a> (d) regarding “Certified Farm Fresh Restaurants” and make recommendations for implementation of a workable program.
Consumer Education and Training	Jason Hoagland	Develop an implementation strategy for GCAD’s 2012 Recommendation No. 7, “Establish a bridge between the state departments of Agriculture and Education through a dedicated agricultural education coordinator, and develop ways to integrate agriculture into Connecticut’s K-12 curriculum.”
Research	Kevin Sullivan	Assess Connecticut’s existing agricultural research infrastructure and develop suggestions for improvement.
Food Security	Mark Zotti	Develop a workable strategy to increase the supply of Connecticut Grown farm products in supermarkets and other retail stores.
Marketing	Peter Orr	Review state statutes (CGS <a href="#">Sec. 22-38</a> and <a href="#">22-38a</a> ) regarding advertising and promotion of Connecticut Grown farm products and suggest workable components for the comprehensive marketing strategy in GCAD’s 2012 Recommendation No. 2, “Develop and invest in a comprehensive marketing strategy for Connecticut agriculture.”
Agricultural Business Environment	Allyn Brown	Examine the current energy bill and make suggestions for enhancements based on GCAD’s 2012 Recommendation No. 3, “Create an agriculture-friendly energy policy that includes agricultural net metering for power production and transmission, and qualification of agricultural anaerobic digestion projects for zero-emissions renewable energy credits (ZRECs).”

Planning and Coordination	Henry Talmage	Develop an implementation strategy for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 4, "Strengthen the state Department of Agriculture and improve coordination among all agencies regulating agricultural businesses."
Agricultural Resources and Investments	George Hindinger	Examine opportunities and develop recommendations for agricultural use of state-owned lands.
Agriculture and Food Infrastructure	Herb Holden	Determine specific steps for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 1, "Study infrastructure gaps and opportunities for the aggregation, light processing, and distribution of Connecticut Grown products."
Producer Education and Training	Jamie Jones	Develop recommendations for specific statewide initiatives to provide an adequate agricultural workforce based on GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 5, "Perform a comprehensive review of agricultural labor issues and develop initiatives that provide an adequate workforce for Connecticut farm businesses."

*\*Chairman Reviczky assigned a Department of Agriculture staff member to chair the Food Security working group after GCAD member Michael Keilty declined.*

An outline of each group's work follows.



## **Farm-to-Institution A and B Working Groups**

A: Public K-12 schools and state institutions

B: Private K-12 schools, higher education, healthcare facilities, and corporate foodservice

### ***2013 Assignment***

Examine procurement procedures and contracts and develop strategies for inclusion of more Connecticut Grown farm products in those contracts.

Farm-to-Institution subgroups A and B shared the same assignment for 2013. They opted to work together, anticipating their respective institutional sectors' purchasing policies and contracts to present some common barriers and opportunities (as well as a few unique ones).

### ***Participants***

The following individuals participated in the combined meetings of these subgroups:

- Shelly Oechsler, Botticello Farms and GCAD (group chair)
- Timothy Cipriano, Guilford Public Schools
- Steven Cop, HPC Foodservice
- Linda Hubeny, Connecticut Department of Administrative Services
- Michelle McCabe, Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity
- Monica Pacheco, Connecticut Department of Education
- Nick Pawlowski, Sodexo at Fairfield University
- Thomas Peterlik, Regional School District No. 4
- Dennis Pierce, University of Connecticut
- Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (representing Commissioner Reviczky)
- Anne Simeone, Connecticut Department of Administrative Services
- Kathy Smith, The Farmer's Cow
- John Stoddard, Healthcare without Harm
- John Turenne, Sustainable Food Systems

Also invited were Marydale DeBor from Fresh Advantage and Terry Jones from Jones Family Farms.

### ***Schedule of Work***

The combined subgroups met in person on June 20 and July 17, 2013, and conducted follow-up work via email.

### ***Highlights of Discussion***

During the first meeting, members of the combined subgroups found the following common themes among the institutional sectors represented:

- GAP/food safety requirements for vendors
- volume/year-round product availability requirements
- approved/preferred vendor lists
- price
- lack of contract preferences for local products
- distribution logistics

In their second meeting, members divided up to focus on the specific challenges and opportunities presented by three smaller groups of different institutional sectors:

- K-12 schools (public and private)
- higher education and healthcare facilities
- state institutions

### ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The three smaller groups reviewed perceived barriers specific to their institutional sectors' purchasing contracts and came up with the following suggestions as strategies for inclusion of more Connecticut Grown farm products in those contracts:

#### Public K-12 Schools

1. Determine level of interest in using Connecticut Grown among foodservice directors and determine level of interest in selling to K-12 schools among Connecticut farmers.
2. Establish a third party to assist with interpreting contract language so it is easier for potential bidders to understand.

#### Higher Education and Healthcare

1. Implement an incentive program that provides a rebate/voucher back to the institution for using Connecticut Grown farm products. The program would be funded through state money, which in the long run would be balanced by the economic stimulus created.
2. Market to institution presidents and CEOs about the benefits of using Connecticut Grown farm products.
3. Create and implement a "fair trade" certification to ensure distributors providing institutions with Connecticut Grown products are paying a fair share to the farmers who grow and produce those products.

#### State Institutions

1. Provide a credit to the institutions for using Connecticut Grown farm products. Credits would be funded through state money.
2. Define/refine "comparable in cost" in Connecticut General Statutes [Section 4A-51\(b\)](#).
3. Reduce the \$2,500 threshold for opportunity buys.
4. Break out smaller contracts for certain Connecticut Grown products to enable farmers to bid on them directly.

### ***Additional Notes***

Shelly Oechsler, the group's chair, pointed out that the above suggestions for rebates/vouchers, supplying credits for using Connecticut Grown product(s), and hiring of a third party to interpret contract language require additional state funding, which in theory would be balanced by the additional economic stimulus generated through the increased spending on Connecticut Grown farm products.

Ms. Oechsler added that the GAP/food safety certifications required by institutional buyers present a significant challenge to farmers who could potentially sell products directly to these customers. Because this challenge also exists in other wholesale channels (including those involving supermarkets and retail food stores), she suggested the council consider a 2014 working group dedicated to food safety.

Regarding the K-12 group's suggestion to establish a third party to assist potential bidders with

interpreting contract language, Ms. Oechsler suggested instead the development of simpler, plain-language RFPs for Connecticut Grown items that would make it easier for the state's farmers to bid directly on the contracts. Eliminating an additional layer would streamline the process and result in cost efficiencies.

Ms. Oechsler also pointed out that there had been many conversations during the working group's meetings about extending availability of seasonal products through light processing, such as freezing or canning, into a value-added form with a longer shelf life. She said a central processing facility or commercial kitchen available to residents would provide opportunities for additional commerce in Connecticut, and suggested that rental or membership fees for such a facility could offset operational expenses. It was noted that the Connecticut Department of Agriculture has begun researching options for such a facility through USDA grant funding.

## Farm-to-Institution C Working Group

C: Restaurants

### 2013 Assignment

Examine Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(d\)](#) regarding “Certified Farm Fresh Restaurants” and make recommendations for implementation of a workable program.

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38b. Grocery or food store eligibility for state grant, financial assistance, loan or state-funded incentive. Certification as Connecticut Farm Fresh Market or Restaurant. Regulations.

(d) The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish and administer a program, within available resources, to promote restaurants in the state that serve farm products grown or produced in the state. The commissioner shall, upon receiving proof satisfactory to said commissioner that at least twenty per cent of food served by a restaurant consists of farm products grown and produced in the state, certify the restaurant to use the words “Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant” for promotional and marketing activities. No restaurant other than one certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant may use such words for promotional and marketing activities.

### Participants

The following individuals participated in this subgroup:

- Shelly Oechsler, Botticello Farms and GCAD (group chair)
- Herb Holden, Broad Brook Beef and GCAD
- Drew McLachlan, Whole Foods Market
- Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (representing Commissioner Reviczky)
- Peter Sepe, Sepe Farm

Also invited were Lena DiGenti from Locals 8 Restaurants, Nicole Griffin from the Connecticut Restaurant Association, Rita Decker Parry from Hartford Food System, and Jesse Powers from Cavey’s Restaurant.

### Schedule of Work

The group met on June 25, 2013.

### Highlights of Discussion

The group reviewed the existing statute and determined that any restaurant certification program as described in the statute should be developed in coordination with the existing Connecticut Farm-to-Chef Program.

Members discussed the 20 percent threshold contained in the existing statute and wondered if it was based on a year-round average or an in-season level, and whether it was practical. Considering other types of certification programs, the group concluded that a Connecticut Farm-to-Chef restaurant certification program could use multiple thresholds (e.g., 10, 25, and 50 percent), as part of a points-based system that would result in a 1-, 2-, or 3-fork/pitchfork certification rating.

### Outcome and Suggestions

The group came up with the following suggestions:

1. Change “Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant” in the statute to “Connecticut Farm-to-Chef Restaurant” so it better melds with the already-established Farm-to-Chef Program.
2. Develop the certification program using a points system and tiered criteria such as incremental percentages of Connecticut Grown farm products.

3. Work with the existing Farm-to-Chef Advisory Team to develop the specific program criteria. A DoAg staff person will be needed to implement and administer the new certification program.

***Additional Notes***

Shelly Oechsler, the group's chair, noted that ratings systems such as one, two, or three stars are commonly used by critics and other evaluators as a means to qualify an establishment's level of quality. A fork rating system for Certified Farm-to-Chef restaurants would help customers quickly determine whether they wish to patronize an establishment or take their business elsewhere. Participation in such a certification program would be voluntary and could be used as a promotional tool for restaurants.

She added that the program should incorporate a fee structure and annual re-certification (similar to licensing) that would help fund program expenses and support program objectives.

# Consumer Education and Training

## **2013 Assignment**

Develop an implementation strategy for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 7, "Establish a bridge between the state departments of Agriculture and Education through a dedicated agricultural education coordinator, and develop ways to integrate agriculture into Connecticut's K-12 curriculum."

## **Participants**

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Jason Hoagland, Connecticut Agricultural Education Foundation and GCAD (group chair)
- Linda Drake, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension
- John Frasinelli, Connecticut Department of Education
- Tera Harlow, Rockville Agricultural Education Center
- Rob Miller, Eastern Highlands Health District
- Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (representing Commissioner Revczky)
- Bill Seedman, Connecticut Department of Social Services
- Sofia Segura-Perez, Hispanic Health Council

Also invited were Christine Applewhite from the Connecticut Department of Public Health and Bill Duesing from the Connecticut Chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association.

## **Schedule of Work**

The group met on June 24, 2013, and conducted follow-up work via email. Members researched similar positions in other states.

## **Highlights of Discussion**

The group came to consensus that implementation of the GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 7 should involve a full-time position to perform the following:

1. Work with an advisory group to develop state agricultural education standards across K-12 disciplines and a board of directors to implement a quality program in Connecticut.
2. Complete an inventory of existing agricultural education programs/curricula, both within Connecticut and in other states.
3. Promote state agricultural education standards across K-12 disciplines.
4. Develop an online agricultural tool kit for school districts and teachers to use for all levels K-12.
5. Maintain a website with the tool kit and other materials for educators.
6. Educate districts and teachers about programs and information available.
7. Coordinate with programs such as Food Corps, Future Farmers of America (FFA), etc.
8. Develop a way to measure the advancement of agricultural education curriculum.
9. Develop and foster school/student relationships with farms and farm groups.
10. Facilitate additional grant funding from foundations and other organizations.
11. Solicit and manage volunteers to assist with the program.

### ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The group came up with the following suggestions:

1. Finish reviewing other states' job descriptions for this type of position.
2. Develop a formal job description.
3. Explore and pursue program funding opportunities.
4. Assist with candidate selection process.

### ***Additional Notes***

Jason Hoagland, the group's chair, noted that although the group recommends a new full-time position, re-allocation of an existing staff person's duty could be an interim solution if necessary. He emphasized it should occur at the Connecticut Department of Education, since adding additional responsibilities to existing Connecticut Department of Agriculture staff is contrary to the GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 4, "Strengthen the state Department of Agriculture and improve coordination among all agencies regulating agricultural businesses," the 2013 focus of the council's Planning and Coordination working group.

# Research

## **2013 Assignment**

Assess Connecticut's existing agricultural research infrastructure and develop suggestions for improvement.

## **Participants**

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Kevin Sullivan, Jr., Chestnut Hill Nursery and GCAD (group chair)
- Kristin DeRosia-Banick, Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Dr. Richard Fu, Agrivolution
- Russell Holmberg, Holmberg Orchards
- Dr. Leah Mayor, Taking Root
- Dr. Lisa Milke, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Dr. Jeff Ward, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
- Dean Gregory Weidemann, University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Joe Wettemann, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

## **Schedule of Work**

The group initially met on June 10, 2013, and then split into two subgroups. One focused on research demand and met July 1, while the other focused on research supply and met July 3. The entire group convened again on August 9, and performed additional follow-up via email.

## **Highlights of Discussion**

During its initial meeting, the group broadly assessed agricultural research in Connecticut. It determined assessment from specific perspectives would better help the group develop suggestions, and divided into two subgroups as follows:

- Demand (producer perspective): What needs exist, what is taking place to meet those needs, and how is that information disseminated?
- Supply (service provider/scientist perspective): What research is ongoing and who is conducting it?

## **Outcome and Suggestions**

The group came up with the following suggestions based on common findings of its two subgroups:

1. Task a standing research-focused group composed of representatives from all sectors of Connecticut agriculture with identifying and driving priorities and coordinating regional agricultural research and outreach to better connect that research with industry.
2. Create a pool of funds from state and industry sources that can be used to address industry research, human capital, and priority needs, and which is substantial enough to respond quickly to industry emergencies. Resources will be needed to manage the fund and its distribution.
3. Determine the economic metrics of each agricultural discipline to better direct research needs and optimize the return on research investments. This will require federal, state, and/or industry support.



4. Establish a center for agricultural innovation and advancement to undertake collaborative, private-public research to increase agricultural productivity and viability. Private, public, industry, and state contributions would be required.

***Additional Notes***

The GCAD agreed that the concept of a center for agricultural innovation and advancement warrants further exploration and development. The working group will gather more information for presentation to the council in early 2014.

# Food Security

## **2013 Assignment**

Develop a workable strategy to increase the supply of Connecticut Grown farm products in supermarkets and other retail stores.

## **Participants**

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Mark Zotti, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (group chair\*)
- Christine Applewhite, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Kate Ballantine, Connecticut Food Bank
- Scott Danis, Stop & Shop/Ahold
- Leah Johnson, Wholesome Wave
- Michael Keilty, Maple Spring Farm and GCAD
- Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (representing Commissioner Reviczky)
- Don Preli, Belltown Hill Orchards
- Melissa Spear, Common Ground
- Henry Talmage, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association and GCAD

*\* Assigned by GCAD Chairman Reviczky after council member Michael Keilty declined.*

Also invited were Richard Cohen from Shop Rite, Arthur Lerner from Fresh New London, and the Connecticut Department of Social Services.

## **Schedule of Work**

The group met on June 26, 2013.

## **Highlights of Discussion**

The group agreed that virtually all consumers shop at supermarkets/retail outlets for at least some of their food, and that these outlets provide a sizable opportunity to connect more consumers with Connecticut Grown farm products. Strategies to get more Connecticut Grown products into these retail stores considered four broad issues:

1. Aggregation and distribution: Connecticut Grown farm products will not reach retail store shelves unless all involved parties benefit. The system currently depends largely on wholesale distributors, which aggregate products from multiple producers to meet stores' demand. While the stores benefit by being able to provide local products through a single supplier, this system does not work for all farmers for any one or more of variety of reasons, including insurance, food safety requirements, payment terms, and others. Aggregation and/or farmer cooperatives that could offer stores benefits comparable to those of wholesale distributors should be explored.
2. Food safety: Food safety requirements are not going away; however, some existing and/or proposed requirements deter the state's farmers from entering into or expanding wholesale channels. Farm products involve myriad food safety issues and requirements. Specific working groups could be created to study issues relating to produce, meat, dairy, etc., and make suggestions for opening up wholesale channels for each.
3. Connecticut Grown logo and branding: Consumers should be educated about the benefits

of Connecticut Grown farm products. Retail outlets should use the Connecticut Grown logo with Connecticut Grown products instead of promoting “local” and “native” items, which often are from out of state. While these more generic terms are defined in Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38](#), they frequently are misused, so enforcement of or a change in the statute is warranted. Use of the Connecticut Grown logo instead of “local” or “native” descriptors would increase consumer confidence in and demand for these products.

C.C.S. Sec. 22-38. Advertising of Connecticut-Grown farm products. Advertising of locally-grown farm products. (a) For purposes of this section, “farm products” means products resulting from the practice of agriculture or farming, as defined in section 1-1 and “Connecticut-Grown” means produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut.

(b) Only farm products grown or produced in Connecticut shall be advertised or sold in Connecticut as “Connecticut-Grown”. Farm products grown or produced in Connecticut may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as “Native”, “Native-Grown”, “Local” or “Locally-Grown”. Farm products grown or produced within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale for such farm products may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as “Native”, “Native-Grown”, “Local”, or “Locally-Grown”. Any person, firm, partnership or corporation advertising farm products as “Native”, “Native-Grown”, “Local”, “Locally-Grown”, or “Connecticut-Grown” shall be required to furnish written proof within ten days of the sale of such products that such products were grown or produced in Connecticut or within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale, as applicable, if requested to do so by the Commissioner of Agriculture or said commissioner’s designee. Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be fined not more than twenty-five dollars for each product label in violation of this section.

4. The Certified Farm Fresh Market Program described in Connecticut General Statutes Section 22-38b: Changes to the law are warranted to make the program practicable. The 15 percent requirement should be examined and adjusted as needed. The program name should include the words “Connecticut Grown.” Establishment of a pilot program should be considered as a start and should be marketed to both retailers and farmers to encourage participation.

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38b. Grocery or food store eligibility for state grant, financial assistance, loan or state-funded incentive. Certification as Connecticut Farm Fresh Market or Restaurant. Regulations.

(c) The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish and administer a program, within available resources, to certify grocery and food stores as “Connecticut Farm Fresh Markets”. A grocery or food store may be certified by the commissioner as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market if proof is submitted, to the satisfaction of the commissioner, that such store continuously stocks fifteen per cent or more of its shelf space for retail produce and dairy with farm products grown or produced in this state. Such products include, but are not limited to, dairy products, meat, poultry, seafood, nuts, eggs, fruits and vegetables. A grocery or food store certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market may use the words “Connecticut Farm Fresh Market” for promotional and marketing activities. No store other than a store certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market may use such words for promotional and marketing activities.

### ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The group came to consensus on the following suggestions:

1. Explore aggregation and cooperatives in depth to determine models that would work for both Connecticut farmers and wholesale customers.
2. Create a program to assist Connecticut farmers with infrastructure and other improvements necessary to meet increasingly stringent food safety requirements of wholesale customers.
3. Expand and distinguish Connecticut Grown branding. Connecticut Grown should instill consumer confidence and connote quality above and beyond “local.”
4. Implement the Certified Farm Fresh Market Program described Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(c\)](#) with legislative adjustments to make the program workable.

### ***Additional Notes***

Mark Zotti, the group’s chair, noted that small “mom and pop” stores have given way to supermarkets, which have transitioned into superstores. The superstores have begun offering

services such as Peapod, Shop at Home, and Amazon Fresh to make grocery shopping more convenient by preparing orders for pick-up or home delivery. This is an emerging sector of the grocery business.

These larger retail stores are where the majority of consumers shop. Increasing demand for Connecticut Grown products to a level where they become prominent in these stores will result in a significant opportunity for Connecticut farmers to capture a portion of this emerging market.

# Marketing

## 2013 Assignment

Review state statutes (CGS [Sec. 22-38](#) and [22-38a](#)) regarding advertising and promotion of Connecticut Grown farm products and suggest workable components for the comprehensive marketing strategy in GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 2, "Develop and invest in a comprehensive marketing strategy for Connecticut agriculture."

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38. Advertising of Connecticut-Grown farm products. Advertising of locally-grown farm products. (a) For purposes of this section, "farm products" means products resulting from the practice of agriculture or farming, as defined in section 1-1 and "Connecticut-Grown" means produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut.

(b) Only farm products grown or produced in Connecticut shall be advertised or sold in Connecticut as "Connecticut-Grown". Farm products grown or produced in Connecticut may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as "Native", "Native-Grown", "Local" or "Locally-Grown". Farm products grown or produced within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale for such farm products may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as "Native", "Native-Grown", "Local", or "Locally-Grown". Any person, firm, partnership or corporation advertising farm products as "Native", "Native-Grown", "Local", "Locally-Grown", or "Connecticut-Grown" shall be required to furnish written proof within ten days of the sale of such products that such products were grown or produced in Connecticut or within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale, as applicable, if requested to do so by the Commissioner of Agriculture or said commissioner's designee. Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be fined not more than twenty-five dollars for each product label in violation of this section.

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38a. Promotion of Connecticut-Grown farm products. Regulations. The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish and administer a program to promote the marketing of farm products grown and produced in Connecticut for the purpose of encouraging the development of agriculture in the state. The commissioner may, within available appropriations, provide a grant-in-aid to any person, firm, partnership or corporation engaged in the promotion and marketing of such farm products, provided the words "CONNECTICUT-GROWN" or "CT-Grown" are clearly incorporated in such promotional and marketing activities. The commissioner shall (1) provide for the design, plan and implementation of a multiyear, state-wide marketing and advertising campaign, including, but not limited to, television and radio advertisements, promoting the availability of, and advantages of purchasing, Connecticut-grown farm products, (2) establish and continuously update a web site connected with such advertising campaign that includes, but is not limited to, a comprehensive listing of Connecticut farmers' markets, pick-your-own farms, roadside and on-farm markets, farm wineries, garden centers and nurseries selling predominantly Connecticut-grown horticultural products and agri-tourism events and attractions, and (3) conduct efforts to promote interaction and business relationships between farmers and restaurants, grocery stores, institutional cafeterias and other potential institutional purchasers of Connecticut-grown farm products, including, but not limited to, (A) linking farmers and potential purchasers through a separate feature of the web site established pursuant to this section, and (B) organizing state-wide or regional events promoting Connecticut-grown farm products, where farmers and potential institutional customers are invited to participate. The commissioner shall use his best efforts to solicit cooperation and participation from the farm, corporate, retail, wholesale and grocery communities in such advertising, Internet-related and event planning efforts, including, but not limited to, soliciting private sector matching funds. The commissioner shall use all of the funds provided to the Department of Agriculture pursuant to subparagraph (C) of subdivision (5) of subsection (a) of section 4-66aa for the purposes of this section. The commissioner shall report annually to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment on issues with respect to efforts undertaken pursuant to the requirements of this section, including, but not limited to, the amount of private matching funds received and expended by the department. The commissioner may adopt, in accordance with chapter 54, such regulations as he deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

C.G.S. Sec. 4-66aa. Community investment account. Distribution of funds. (a) There is established, within the General Fund, a separate, nonlapsing account to be known as the "community investment account". The account shall contain any moneys required by law to be deposited in the account. The funds in the account shall be distributed every three months as follows:

(5) twenty-five per cent to the Department of Agriculture to use as follows:

(C) one hundred thousand dollars annually to encourage the sale of Connecticut Grown food to schools, restaurants, retailers and other institutions and businesses in the state;

## ***Participants***

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Peter Orr, Fort Hill Farm and GCAD (group chair)
- Nicole Berube, CitySeed
- Margaret Chatey, Ashford Hill Distillery and Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
- Joseph Dippel, Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Steve Domyan, MetroCrops
- Kevin Donahue, Imperial Nurseries
- Randy Fiveash, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Barbara Gordon, Connecticut Seafood Council
- James Guida, Guida Dairy and GCAD
- Tricia Levesque, Connecticut Food Association
- George Motel, Sunset Meadow Vineyard and Connecticut Farm Winery Development Council
- Commissioner Steven Reviczky, Connecticut Department of Agriculture and GCAD
- Henry Talmage, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association and GCAD

Also invited was Winter Caplanson from the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market and GCAD.

## ***Schedule of Work***

The group met on June 26, 2013. Background information was distributed via email for review prior to the meeting and follow-up was conducted by email after the meeting.

## ***Highlights of Discussion***

The group recognized that the marketing of Connecticut agriculture and its products is a very complex situation. Members agreed on the following:

1. Connecticut's proximity to large populations, including Boston and New York, represents huge opportunities.
2. Connecticut's marketing of agriculture should be led by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture but should be collaborative with other state agencies and industries, such as tourism.
3. Agricultural marketing should be treated as a major economic development program, with special consideration given to the existence of high-end market opportunities.
4. Any comprehensive marketing program must include all sectors of Connecticut's diverse agricultural industry.

## ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The group recommended the following steps be taken before creating and implementing a comprehensive agricultural marketing campaign:

1. Gather existing market research data.
2. Conduct additional market research as needed.
3. Identify existing consumer perception(s) of Connecticut Grown.
4. Identify target audiences.
5. Determine Connecticut Grown's marketing/branding message and sub-messages.

6. Identify partnership opportunities (e.g. Office of Tourism Still Revolutionary campaign, other state programs, etc.).
7. Identify components still needed after partnerships are formed.
8. Identify a marketing campaign budget.
9. Determine components of a campaign within that budget.

***Additional Notes***

Peter Orr, the group's chair, noted that the general consensus among the group was that the Department of Agriculture's current Connecticut Grown program should be renovated and expanded with new approaches taken, including partnerships with other agencies and industries.

Mr. Orr stated that it is time to act, with many components of a significant health, quality-of-life, and economic initiative for the State of Connecticut already available, and a tangible program within reach, given the focus and creative means to pull it all together.

He pointed out that one of Connecticut's nicknames is the Provisions State because it provided most of the food and cannons for the Continental forces during the Revolutionary War. The state's diversity of quality agricultural products fits well into theme of Connecticut's Still Revolutionary program. This partnership, as well as others, should be considered and pursued.

# Agricultural Business Environment

## 2013 Assignment

Examine the current energy bill and make suggestions for enhancements based on GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 3, "Create an agriculture-friendly energy policy that includes agricultural net metering for power production and transmission, and qualification of agricultural anaerobic digestion projects for zero-emissions renewable energy credits (ZRECs)."

## Participants

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Allyn Brown III, Maple Lane Farms and GCAD (group chair)
- Phil Chester, Town of Lebanon
- Joan Nichols, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
- Mark Polzella, Connecticut Department of Labor
- Bill Rees, Green Power Solutions
- Rich Roberts, Esq., Halloran & Sage, LLP
- Peter Rogers, Rogers Orchards
- Mark Sellew, Pride's Corner Farms
- Lynn Stoddard, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

## Schedule of Work

The group met on June 17, 2013, did follow-up by email, and had a conference call on August 15, 2013.

## Highlights of Discussion

The group discussed ZREC (zero-emission renewable energy credit) and LREC (low-emission renewable energy credit) evolution since 2011 along with the 2013 change by [Public Act 13-303](#) that qualifies the product of anaerobic digestion as a Class 1 renewable resource.

The concept of an AgREC was discussed, with the group considering two potential options:

1. An AgREC limited to in-state operations within CL&P or UI service territories and requiring Connecticut farm-based generators to derive a specified percentage of material used in their systems (fuel stock) from the host or regional farms. This provision would exclude non-farm operations from simply importing material to supply a farm-sited generator, but it also recognizes that anaerobic digestion system performance can be optimized by processing a blend of organic material, including some which may result from non-farm sources.
2. An AgREC as a carve-out within the existing LREC program. In essence, the carve-out would specify that some percentage of the total number of LRECs procured by the Connecticut utilities must come from sources that qualify as AgREC generators.

Of the two options, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) strongly prefers a carve-out within the LREC program.

Other beneficial aspects of anaerobic digestion systems, including reduction of manure odors, contributions to nutrient management systems, and increased efficiency through use of food waste, also were discussed.

It was noted that DEEP is supportive of anaerobic digestion and is exploring a permit prioritization



policy, and that the Clean Energy Finance Authority has extended their pilot program, providing incentive funding for anaerobic digestion.

The group also discussed the specific legislation enabling agricultural virtual net metering. The new law allows energy-generating host farms to partner with up to beneficial 10 accounts that can use the on-farm generated energy. It also provides that host with full retail credit and partial transmission cost exemption for all power consumed by the host and its beneficial accounts. Beneficial accounts currently are limited to other farms, municipalities, or state agencies, making it difficult for a host farm to find and contract with sufficient users of the power. Including food manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers could provide the demand needed to create a sustainable market for farm energy and warrants further consideration.

Vermont's Feed-In-Tariff system was another topic of discussion. That state puts a value on electricity produced using various technologies, with producers receiving that rate for electricity sold to utilities. This type of program eliminates some risks for investors while allowing a broad range of technologies to compete. While the Feed-in-Tariff system has been used widely, Connecticut has chosen to concentrate on reducing ratepayer costs, often through a reverse auction or competitively selected power purchase agreements. DEEP does not recommend use of a Feed-In-Tariff system at this time.

The potential for conversion of agricultural land to photo voltaic solar systems was raised as a concern. The working group recommended monitoring and providing input when agricultural lands are proposed for large photo voltaic solar systems that would sell energy to the grid. Productive, prime and important soils should be preserved for producing food.

The outdoor wood-burning furnace bill that ultimately did not pass (Substitute Bill No. 1134) was discussed. The net result is the continued sale and use of outdated outdoor wood-burning technology. The working group acknowledged the importance of this issue. Due to an inability to reach agreement on [Substitute Bill No. 1134](#), DEEP will focus its resources on pursuing a voluntary approach to buy out the more polluting outdoor wood-burning furnaces. New EPA rules should help resolve many of the issues. The working group thought Substitute Bill No. 1134 was a good compromise.

The Governor's Natural Gas Initiative, which is part of the state's Comprehensive Energy Strategy, was discussed as a possible benefit by lowering energy costs for large agricultural producers. The group agreed there could be a significant benefit for large agricultural producers from additional natural gas connections in already developed areas.

The last item of discussion was collaboration with the Connecticut Energy Efficiency board of directors to direct funds to the agricultural sector to incentivize energy efficiency. The group recognized the value of the recent appointment to the board of Amanda Fargo-Johnson, program coordinator for the Connecticut Farm Energy Program, noting she will be able to promote agricultural interests and serve as a liaison to the agricultural community.

### ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The group suggested continued engagement of and collaboration of DEEP toward synergistic goals pertaining to energy production, greenhouse gasses, and waste reduction. Key areas for initial focus should include the following:

- Exploration of an AgREC carve-out in the LREC program
- Promotion of anaerobic digestion
- Assisting farms with virtual net metering opportunities
- Development of on-site renewable energy systems that do not consume prime agricultural land

- Identification of high-priority, large-scale agricultural producers who could benefit significantly from natural gas infrastructure expansion
- Increased dialogue on strategies to resolve outdoor wood-burning furnace issues
- The direction of energy-efficiency incentive funds to farms

***Additional Notes***

Allyn Brown, the group's chair, noted that the working group could take on other issues related to the agricultural business environment.

## **Planning and Coordination**

### ***2013 Assignment***

Develop an implementation strategy for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 4, "Strengthen the state Department of Agriculture and improve coordination among all agencies regulating agricultural businesses."

### ***Participants***

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Henry Talmage, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association and GCAD (group chair)
- Christine Applewhite, Connecticut Department of Public Health
- Phil Chester, Connecticut chapter of the American Planners Association
- Laura Francis, Connecticut Council of Small Towns and Town of Durham
- Lindy Gold, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Frank Greene, Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection
- Commissioner Reviczky, Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Lynn Stoddard, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Bruce Whittchen, Office of Policy and Management

Also invited were the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services and Kachina Walsh Weaver from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

### ***Schedule of Work***

The group met on June 25, 2013.

### ***Highlights of Discussion***

The group consisted of members from many different state agencies and municipalities, and therefore directed its focus on improving interagency communication and coordination. After reviewing stakeholder interview comments that highlighted this need, the group discussed suggestions for further consideration. A mutual spirit of cooperation towards helping agriculture thrive was apparent among all participants.

### ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The group came up with the following suggestions:

1. Cooperate with regional planning agencies on planning and mapping for Connecticut agriculture in an effort to reduce energy costs for Connecticut farmers through expansion of gas-line infrastructure to critical farms.
2. Enhance outreach to Connecticut farmers via town planners, officials, and commissions.
3. Inform both farmers and town officials of the relevant laws and regulations of each state agency and federal government, including the scientific basis for each and potential risks/ complications of non-compliance. This information could be disseminated via a variety of local and state representatives, including those from councils of government and regional planning agencies, agricultural commissions, Cooperative Extension, retiree mentors, and peers.
4. Where possible, make improvements in coordination between state agencies, especially DEEP, DPH, and DCP, regarding the dual role of agencies in regulatory compliance as well as

technical assistance for Connecticut farmers. Ask agencies to identify an agricultural liaison from existing staff.

5. Expand distribution of DoAg press releases and publications.

### ***Additional Notes***

Henry Talmage, the group's chair, noted that strengthening the way government communicates, provides services and resources, and regulates agriculture is essential to fostering the growth of the industry. With that in mind, he added, it is also essential that the Connecticut Department of Agriculture—by definition the primary agency in the state serving this industry—must receive the funding and jurisdiction necessary to carry out its numerous statutory obligations and provide the various resources Connecticut agriculture needs and depends upon. This is a key component of the GCAD's 2012 recommendation on which the group's assignment was based.

# **Agricultural Resources and Investments**

## ***2013 Assignment***

Examine opportunities and develop recommendations for agricultural use of state-owned lands.

## ***Participants***

The following individuals participated in this group:

- George Hindinger, Hindinger Farm and GCAD (group chair)
- Lisa Bassani, Working Lands Alliance
- Lisa Coverdale, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Lindy Gold, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Bryan Hurlburt, USDA Farm Service Agency
- Kip Kolesinskas, formerly USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Commissioner Steven Reviczky, Connecticut Department of Agriculture and GCAD
- Dr. Bruce Sherman, Connecticut Department of Agriculture
- Matt Staebner, Blue Slope Farm
- Keith Stechschulte, Farm Credit East
- Henry Talmage, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association and GCAD

## ***Schedule of Work***

The group met on June 17, 2013, with follow-up by email.

## ***Highlights of Discussion***

The group agreed that in order to achieve anything concrete, an inventory of all state-owned lands must be completed and goals set for the leasing of state-owned agricultural lands.

## ***Outcome and Suggestions***

The group came up with the following suggestions:

1. Examine existing agricultural leases and identify specific contacts in each state agency.
2. Assess demand for farmland through a survey using existing databases.
3. Set realistic goals for (a) determining the acreage of state-owned prime and important farmland soils suitable for agricultural use and (b) leasing a percentage of that acreage not currently leased for agricultural purposes.
4. Request DEEP include assessment of land's agricultural value during its statutorily mandated identification of state-owned lands valuable for conservation purposes that are in the custody of each state agency.

## ***Additional Notes***

George Hindinger, the group's chair, provided no additional comments.

# Agriculture and Food Infrastructure

## **2013 Assignment**

Determine specific steps for GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 1, "Study infrastructure gaps and opportunities for the aggregation, light processing, and distribution of Connecticut Grown products."

## **Participants**

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Herb Holden, Broad Brook Beef and GCAD (group chair)
- Chris Bassette, Killam and Bassette Farmstead
- Andy Bozzuto, Three B Ranch and John's Refuse
- Fred Monahan, Stone Gardens
- Commissioner Steven Reviczky, Connecticut Department of Agriculture and GCAD
- Scott Stanton, Stanton Equipment

Also invited were Joe Arisco from T&D Growers and the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association, Chad Simoneaux from Gulf Shrimp Company, and Bill Syme from Crop Production Services.

## **Schedule of Work**

The group met on June 24, 2013, with follow-up by email.

## **Highlights of Discussion**

The group discussed the issues they believed were limiting factors in expanding the consumption of Connecticut Grown products within the state. The following issues were raised during the conversation:

- Smaller farmers need the ability to use the Hartford Regional Market for aggregation and light processing of their Connecticut Grown produce.
- Farmers should have access to an inventory/list of co-packers, and, ideally, reasonably priced co-packing services at the Hartford Regional Market and/or other state facilities in order to extend shelf life of Connecticut Grown farm products.
- An online distribution system to link farmers with wholesalers/retailers could be part of an enhanced Department of Agriculture Connecticut Grown website.
- A centrally located broker at the Hartford Regional Market or other location could link farmers, aggregators, processors, co-packers, wholesalers, and retailers.
- A survey of farmers' processing needs would help ensure farmers' needs are being met.
- Communication between producers should be ongoing.

## **Outcome and Suggestions**

The group came up with the following suggestions:

1. Investigate installation of light processing facilities at the Hartford Regional Market and/or other locations and identify farmers who could significantly grow their businesses from access to those facilities.
2. Survey farmers, co-packers, and processors to identify opportunities to increase Connecticut Grown consumption through development of centralized processing facilities.

3. Assess development of a broker and/or virtual distribution system.

***Additional Notes***

Herb Holden, the group's chair, noted that while there are many small farmers in the industry getting by on what they are currently doing, others are willing to invest capital and other resources to expand. Options for creating opportunities for them should be explored and developed.

Expanding the Connecticut Grown program from a brand to an entity with certain quality standards is another potential opportunity that could provide an outlet for farmers of all different sizes and lead to opportunities for bidding on larger state and institutional contracts.

## Producer Education and Training

### **2013 Assignment**

Develop recommendations for specific statewide initiatives to provide an adequate agricultural workforce based on GCAD's 2012 Recommendation No. 5, "Perform a comprehensive review of agricultural labor issues and develop initiatives that provide an adequate workforce for Connecticut farm businesses."

### **Participants**

The following individuals participated in this group:

- Jamie Jones, Jones Family Farms and GCAD (group chair)
- Joe Geremia, Geremia Greenhouse
- Bill Duesing, formerly of Connecticut chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association
- Elaine Clark, Connecticut Board of Regents
- Eloise Marinos, GeoRoots Solar Growth Farm
- Linda Piotrowicz, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (representing Commissioner Reviczky)

Also invited were Bill Davenport from Nonnewaug Agriscience Center, Cameron Faustman from University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Diane Hirsch from University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension.

### **Schedule of Work**

The group met on June 13, 2013. Jamie Jones made follow-up phone calls after the meeting.

### **Highlights of Discussion**

The major themes discussed were creating an incubator farm, better funding for high school vocational agriscience centers, engaging colleges and universities in creating internship programs on farms, and enhancing Cooperative Extension.

### **Outcome and Suggestions**

The group came up with the following suggestions:

1. Create an incubator farm on the farmland of the Southbury Training School to provide opportunities for beginning farmers to learn without the entire capital input of starting a farm on their own.
2. Fund state high school agriscience centers at the same level as state technical high schools. While the state has invested wisely in the agriscience center infrastructure, lack of operational funding limits full enrollment and students are turned away from these valuable programs.
3. Research and develop agricultural internship programs in Connecticut's community college and university system that link with farms across the state.
4. Focus on Cooperative Extension programs that educate farmers about the continually changing challenges of climate, insects, and diseases. Consider allocation of STEM funding for this.

### **Additional Notes**

Jamie Jones, the group's chair, noted that the working group could do more research on this issue, especially during the off season.



## 2013 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

After all of the GCAD's working groups met and deliberated on their respective assignments, each chair reported his or her group's findings and analysis to the full council. The GCAD reviewed and discussed what the groups presented. Per the council's statutory charge, it developed a second set of formal recommendations to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

While many of the recommendations resulted from a specific group's focus on a particular topic, two evolved from suggestions of multiple groups and address broader, cross-cutting issues. The council's 12 recommendations to the Department of Agriculture for 2013, listed by group(s) from which they originated, are as follows:

Originating Working Group(s)	Recommendation
Farm-to-Institution A and B	Modify Connecticut General Statutes <a href="#">Section 4a-51(b)</a> to include the following: "At least 5 percent of purchases must be Connecticut Grown farm products" and implement a certification process for wholesalers.
Farm-to-Institution C	In Connecticut General Statutes <a href="#">Section 22-38b(d)</a> , change the name of the program "Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant" to "Connecticut Farm-to-Chef Restaurant" to better align with the Department of Agriculture's existing Farm-to-Chef Program, and work with the agency's Farm-to-Chef advisory group to develop criteria for implementation of a one-, two-, or three-fork restaurant certification within that program.
Consumer Education and Training	Create within the Connecticut State Department of Education a full-time agricultural education coordinator responsible for creating and maintaining a web-based tool kit of curriculum for K-12 educators to use in core subject examples and assignments.
Research	Create an agricultural innovation initiative that is a partnership among Connecticut's private industry, state government, and educational institutions, including both public and private colleges and universities throughout the state.
Food Security	Enhance enforcement of Connecticut General Statutes <a href="#">Section 22-38(b)</a> , and develop a pilot program to certify Connecticut Grown markets based upon Connecticut General Statutes <a href="#">Section 22-38b(c)</a> , changing the program name from "Connecticut Farm Fresh Market" to "Connecticut Grown Market," to better align with the existing Connecticut Grown Program, and revising the 15 percent stocking requirement to one appropriate for Connecticut Grown production.
Marketing	Conduct research that will enhance the multiyear, state-wide Connecticut Grown marketing and advertising campaign in Connecticut General Statutes <a href="#">Section 22-38a</a> .
Agricultural Business Environment	Support on-farm biomass energy projects that do not consume prime and important farmland and explore the carve-out of an AgREC within the LREC system.

Agricultural Business Environment Planning and Coordination	Improve coordination among all state agencies with involvement in agricultural issues through designation of an agricultural liaison in each.
Agricultural Resources and Investments	Inventory state-owned land and put an additional 4,000 acres into leases with farmers for agricultural production by the end of 2015.
Agriculture and Food Infrastructure	Explore potential at the state-owned Hartford Regional Market for light processing facilities that would enable Connecticut farmers to reduce waste, expand offerings, and augment income through production and sale of value-added products.
Producer Education and Training	Develop agricultural internship programs through partnerships between Connecticut's farms and educational institutions—including both public and private colleges and universities—and enhance Cooperative Extension focus on programs that educate farmers about continually changing challenges related to climate, insects, and diseases.
Farm to Institution A and B Food Security Agricultural Business Environment	Assist agricultural producers with Food Safety Modernization Act education and compliance through existing programs; consider development of a new program dedicated to this purpose.

Each recommendation is discussed in greater detail below.

## Recommendation from Farm-to-Institution A and B Working Groups:

Modify Connecticut General Statutes [Section 4a-51\(b\)](#) (as updated by [Public Act 13-72](#)) to include the following: “At least 5 percent of purchases must be Connecticut Grown farm products” and implement a certification process for wholesalers.

C.G.S. Sec. 4a-51. (Formerly Sec. 4-110). Duties of Administrative Services Commissioner re purchases. (a) The Commissioner of Administrative Services shall: (1) Purchase, lease or contract for all supplies, materials, equipment and contractual services required by any state agency, except as provided in sections 4-98 and 4a-57; (2) enforce standard specifications established in accordance with section 4a-56; (3) establish and operate a central duplicating and mailing room for state agencies located in or near the city of Hartford and such other places as he deems practical; and (4) establish and operate or have supervisory control over other central supply services in such locations as may best serve the requirements of the state agencies.

(b) The Commissioner of Administrative Services, when purchasing or contracting for the purchase of dairy products, poultry, eggs, fruits or vegetables pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, shall give preference to dairy products, poultry, eggs, fruits or vegetables grown or produced in this state, when such products, poultry, eggs, fruits or vegetables are comparable in cost to other dairy products, poultry, eggs, fruits or vegetables being considered for purchase by the commissioner that have not been grown or produced in this state.

Public Act 13-72: Section 1. Section 4a-51 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective from passage): (a) The Commissioner of Administrative Services shall: (1) Purchase, lease or contract for all supplies, materials, equipment and contractual services required by any state agency, except as provided in sections 4-98 and 4a-57; (2) enforce standard specifications established in accordance with section 4a-56; (3) establish and operate a central duplicating and mailing room for state agencies located in or near the city of Hartford and such other places as he deems practical; and (4) establish and operate or have supervisory control over other central supply services in such locations as may best serve the requirements of the state agencies.

(b) The Commissioner of Administrative Services, when purchasing or contracting for the purchase of dairy products, poultry, eggs, beef, pork, lamb, farm-raised fish, fruits or vegetables pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, shall give preference to dairy products, poultry, eggs, beef, pork, lamb, farm-raised fish, fruits or vegetables grown or produced in this state, when such products, poultry, eggs, beef, pork, lamb, farm-raised fish, fruits or vegetables are comparable in cost to other dairy products, poultry, eggs, beef, pork, lamb, farm-raised fish, fruits or vegetables being considered for purchase by the commissioner that have not been grown or produced in this state.

### Existing Conditions

- The current law mandates preference be given to specific farm products grown or produced in Connecticut when comparable in cost to those from elsewhere, but does not define “comparable” as equal in cost or within a certain percentage of the price.
- Most institutions purchase products through large wholesale distributors that serve as aggregators, rather than purchasing directly from Connecticut farms.

### Examining the Gaps

- State food contracts tend to be bundled into very large packages of products valued at millions of dollars,



*Institutional cafeterias provide opportunities for increased consumption of Connecticut Grown farm products*

making it impossible for a Connecticut Grown farmer to bid on them. Contracts often specify larger quantities than a farmer can supply and require diverse combinations of products that include many not produced on Connecticut farms. As a result, large wholesale distributors are the only purveyors who can bid on the contracts. Breaking contracts into smaller pieces would better enable not only Connecticut's farmers but also the state's smaller aggregators and wholesale distributors to compete for this business.

- While some wholesale distributors do carry products from Connecticut farms, there is no system in place that assures the farms receive a fair percentage of the price institutions pay for those products. Institutional buyers often think they are supporting Connecticut farms by purchasing their products through a wholesale distributor, but if too little of the price they pay trickles down to the farmers, the result is an unsustainable model for Connecticut agriculture.

### **Models to Consider**

- Massachusetts Chapter 7 Section 23B of the General Laws, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleII/Chapter7/Section23B> mandates that preference be given for agricultural products from Massachusetts farms unless the price of the goods exceeds, by more than 10 percent, the price of agricultural products grown, or produced using products grown, outside of the state:

Section 23B. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, and to the extent permitted by federal law, a state agency, authority or trustees or officers of a state college or university designated by such trustees when purchasing products of agriculture as defined in section 1A of chapter 128, including but not limited to, fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy products, meats, crops, horticultural products or products processed into value added products as part of a Massachusetts farm operation, shall prefer products grown in the commonwealth or products produced using products grown in the commonwealth as well as fish, seafood, and other aquatic products.

(b) To effectuate the preference for those products of agriculture grown or produced using locally-grown products, the state purchasing agent responsible for procuring the products on behalf of a state agency, authority or trustees or officers of a state college or university designated by such trustees shall, in advertising for bids, contracts or otherwise procuring products of agriculture, make reasonable efforts to facilitate the purchase of such products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown in the commonwealth.

(c) The state purchasing agent responsible for procuring the products on behalf of a state agency or authority shall purchase the products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown in the commonwealth, unless the price of the goods exceeds, by more than 10 per cent, the price of products of agriculture grown or produced using products grown outside of the commonwealth.

### **How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?**

- Connecticut farms that can sell to large institutions—either directly or through a wholesaler certified by the State of Connecticut—will be able to increase production, sales, and long-term stability.

### **Strategy for Implementation**

- A pilot program for the 5 percent Connecticut Grown mandate would be a logical starting point.
- A certification process for wholesale distributors will need to be developed through a cooperative effort between the Connecticut departments of Agriculture and Administrative Services.

### **Who Will Be Better Off?**

- People at institutions purchasing Connecticut Grown products will benefit from increased access to fresh local foods and farm products.
- Farmers will benefit from increased demand for and sales of Connecticut Grown products, and from working with wholesalers certified by the State of Connecticut to be fairly representing them, enabling those farmers to grow their businesses.

- The state of Connecticut and its residents will benefit from enhanced farm viability, additional land in production (and less lost to non-agricultural uses), and increased economic activity.

***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- State institutional purchases of Connecticut Grown will be tracked through regular reports to the Department of Administrative Services.

***How Much Can We Do?***

- Institutional purchasing of at least 5 percent Connecticut Grown products is achievable. As institutional demand for these products rises, farms will increase production. The upper limit of this production is not yet known, but as technology advances and more farmland comes back into production through Governor Malloy's Farmland Restoration Program, it is reasonable to expect Connecticut agricultural production can increase significantly.

## Recommendation from Farm-to-Institution C Working Group:

In Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(d\)](#), change the name of the program “Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant” to “Connecticut Farm-to-Chef Restaurant” to better align with the Department of Agriculture’s existing Farm-to-Chef Program, and work with the agency’s Farm-to-Chef advisory group to develop criteria for implementation of a one-, two-, or three-fork restaurant certification within that program.

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38b. Grocery or food store eligibility for state grant, financial assistance, loan or state-funded incentive. Certification as Connecticut Farm Fresh Market or Restaurant. Regulations.

(d) The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish and administer a program, within available resources, to promote restaurants in the state that serve farm products grown or produced in the state. The commissioner shall, upon receiving proof satisfactory to said commissioner that at least twenty per cent of food served by a restaurant consists of farm products grown and produced in the state, certify the restaurant to use the words “Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant” for promotional and marketing activities. No restaurant other than one certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant may use such words for promotional and marketing activities.

### Existing Conditions

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture’s Farm-to-Chef Program, a product of [Public Act 05-228](#) (commonly known as the Community Investment Act) has been helping to link Connecticut farmers with restaurant chefs and institutional foodservice professionals since 2006. Program components include online resources, one-on-one assistance, a winter networking event, and an annual Farm-to-Chef Week each September, during which participating venues feature special Farm-to-Chef menus created with Connecticut Grown ingredients.



### Examining the Gaps

- As interest in and demand for local food has increased in recent years, more restaurants have realized the value of promoting their use of local farm ingredients. While many of those involved in Farm-to-Chef Program are using the program logo on their menus and marketing materials to call attention to featured Connecticut Grown ingredients and the farms from which they are sourced, there is no process in place to measure the amount of Connecticut Grown ingredients they are using.

### Models to Consider

- The [Connecticut Green Lodging Program](#) offered through the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Office of Tourism uses a workbook that awards points based on the number of “green” practices at a participating facility. A similar point-based system could be used to certify dining establishments using Connecticut Grown ingredients as one-fork, two-fork, or three-fork Farm-to-Chef Restaurants, providing both an entry-level certification and incentive to achieve higher ratings based on increased use of Connecticut Grown products.

### How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?

- Restaurant sales provide an opportunity for farms to diversify their markets. Many chefs

seek out unusual, high-end products, allowing farmers to create niche product lines with less competition and higher margins than more commonly available products.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- The Farm-to-Chef Program advisory team can develop the criteria for a certification program.
- Department of Agriculture staff will be required to implement and manage the program.
- The Department of Agriculture can work with the Office of Tourism to promote the program to diners and with the Connecticut Restaurant Association to market the program to eateries across the state.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Diners at restaurants serving Connecticut Grown products will benefit from the increase in fresh, local foods on the menu.
- Restaurants will benefit by promoting their partnerships with local farms and their use of Connecticut Grown ingredients.
- Farmers will benefit from increased sales to restaurants and through the promotion of their farms by restaurants calling attention to those partnerships.
- The state of Connecticut and its residents will benefit from enhanced farm viability and increased economic activity.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The number of restaurants participating in the program will be tracked.
- The amount of Connecticut Grown products used by participating restaurants will be reported as a program requirement.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- According to the [National Restaurant Association](#), there were 7,323 eating and drinking locations in Connecticut in 2011. The same organization projects that Connecticut's restaurants will register \$6.1 billion in sales during 2013. Capturing even a fraction of a percentage of that market could translate into tens of millions of dollars in additional sales for Connecticut's farms.

## **Recommendation from Consumer Education and Training Working Group:**

Create within the Connecticut State Department of Education a full-time agricultural education coordinator responsible for creating and maintaining a web-based tool kit of curriculum for K-12 educators to use in core subject examples and assignments.

### ***Existing Conditions***

- While the GCAD's 2012 recommendations included a more general concept about the creation of such a position, an agricultural education coordinator currently does not exist in Connecticut. This year's recommendation provides more detailed suggestions for implementation.

### ***Examining the Gaps***

- Examples of agriculture in Connecticut's K-12 curriculum are limited. An opportunity exists to teach young people about the importance of agriculture—including its contributions to a healthy diet, environment, and economy—and about potential career options in the industry by integrating agricultural information into core subjects such as reading, writing, history, math, and science.

### ***Models to Consider***

- The [California Department of Education](#) has successfully developed and integrated a comprehensive agricultural education program that includes classroom instruction, leadership, and supervised agricultural experience programs. Components of this program could be adapted for Connecticut.
- Agricultural education positions and programs in other states also exist and should be studied further.
- The U.S. EPA's [SunWise Tool Kit](#) is an example of cross-curricular classroom activities for K-8.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Educating the next generation of workers and consumers will lead to an increased appreciation of and demand for locally grown farm products as well as an increase in the number of young people considering agriculture as an attractive career choice.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- A formal job description needs to be developed for an additional position within the Connecticut State Department of Education. If agency budgetary constraints prohibit creation of a new full-time position, re-allocation of existing staff within the Department of Education should be explored.
- The new position should work with the GCAD to develop and promote K-12 agricultural education standards, and develop and maintain an online tool kit for Connecticut educators that includes resources such as suggested reading lists for book reports, science fair projects, math problems, and history lessons that include agricultural subject matter.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Students will benefit by learning about the importance of agriculture in everyday life and by having new, interesting, and relevant agriculture-related examples and projects in existing classes.
- Students' families will benefit as students bring home their increased awareness of and appreciation for a healthy and sustainable diet, landscape, environment, and economy.
- Connecticut's educators will benefit by having an easily accessible tool kit as a resource for their lesson planning.



- Farmers in the state will benefit by the next generation's enhanced appreciation of agriculture.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The number of website visits and tool kit downloads will indicate the level of interest in and demand for the program as it evolves.
- Over time, results should be seen in a variety of areas, including improvements in standardized test scores, increased demand for Connecticut Grown products, and an increase in the number of young people choosing agricultural careers—but the direct effect of the program in those areas will be difficult to measure since many different factors contribute to these broader, long-term outcomes.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- The possibilities for integration of agriculture into core subjects are virtually endless and will be limited only by the agricultural education coordinator's creativity and educators' use of the resources developed and provided.

## Recommendation from Research Working Group:

Create an agricultural innovation initiative that is a partnership among Connecticut's private industry, state government, and educational institutions, including both public and private colleges and universities throughout the state.

### Existing Conditions

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [estimates](#) that nearly half the fruit and a fifth of the vegetables consumed in the United States are grown in other countries.
- Connecticut has more than [3.5 million residents](#) and is situated between two major population centers, New York and Boston, providing an enormous market for its agricultural products.

### Examining the Gaps

- Like all industries, agriculture must adapt to changing times and innovate in order to thrive. As competition for farmland from development and other industries continues—often resulting in permanent conversion of that land to non-agricultural uses—and as challenges related to climate, insects, and diseases change quickly, Connecticut farmers must have the knowledge and tools to be as productive as possible.
- Connecticut has a short growing season that makes it difficult or impossible to grow crops outside during much of the year.
- Many other countries, including Canada, the Netherlands, Israel, and Spain, have far outpaced the U.S. in developing and implementing highly productive greenhouse technology that allows them to grow produce year round, which they export and which is consumed by residents in Connecticut and beyond.
- Research at traditional institutions tends to be driven by funding. Projects are undertaken because funding is available for a specific agenda, but when the funding runs out, those projects are difficult or impossible to continue, even if no practical solution for overcoming a current challenge has been achieved. This top-down model often does not fit the needs of the agricultural community.



***Greenhouse technology provides opportunities for year-round production of Connecticut Grown produce***



### Models to Consider

- The [European Union's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research](#) helps coordinate agricultural research across the European Research Area. In a [March 2012 report](#)\* the committee's strategic working group on Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems stresses the importance of farmer involvement in setting research agendas. It states, "Education is often weakly connected to research, extension and business. Applied research is often reviewed on scientific output, much less on practical relevance," and advocates for a

more bottom-up, interactive approach to agricultural innovation.

- The [New York Farm Viability Institute](#) is a collaboration of farmers and other agribusinesses, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the State University of New York agriculture colleges, Cornell University and the Cooperative Extension service, and other government and nonprofit agencies. The institute works with farmers and others who provide support, expertise, volunteer service, and more. The farmer-led organization awards grants for applied research and outreach education projects that promote practical solutions to challenges faced by the state's farms.
- The [Georgia Centers of Innovation](#), operated by the state's Department of Economic Development, focuses on innovation in agribusiness as one of six strategic industries that also include life sciences and IT, aerospace, manufacturing, energy, and logistics. The center works with businesses to grow, problem solve, and compete globally.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Research and innovation that is driven by industry needs—rather than whatever targeted funding is available at any given time—and is better coordinated among all entities involved will allow Connecticut farmers to more quickly and effectively overcome the industry's ever-changing challenges and ultimately produce more of the food consumed by residents of the state and surrounding region.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- Continue to study and learn from models both within and outside of the U.S.
- Develop an organizational structure that involves farmers, other agribusiness members, representatives from key state agencies, and partners in myriad educational institutions around Connecticut, both public and private.
- Develop a needs-based resource model that provides funding and staff to develop practical solutions to challenges in a timely, complete fashion and develops cutting-edge technology so Connecticut agriculture becomes more competitive at all levels—state, regional, national, and global.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Connecticut's farmers will benefit from practical, timely solutions to the challenges they face daily and from technology that allows them to be more competitive in all markets.
- The state's residents will benefit from an increased supply and season of fresh, nutritious food and other farm products grown and produced right here in Connecticut, and through a much healthier economy fueled by a more competitive agricultural industry.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- One early measurement will be the number of producers and other industry-related members involved in the new innovation center.
- The number of practical solutions to challenges faced by Connecticut farmers will be measured as the center gets up and running.
- The increased market share that Connecticut farmers gain over time will be the greatest measure of success.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- It is [estimated](#) that only about 2.5 percent of Connecticut residents' food expenditures are for Connecticut Grown products, while 97.5 percent of that budget goes to products grown and produced in other states and other countries. The GCAD's goal is to increase the spending on Connecticut Grown farm products to no less than 5 percent by 2020, but much more can be achieved if Connecticut agriculture becomes truly competitive in national and international markets.

*\*EU SCAR (2012), Agricultural knowledge and innovation systems in transition – a reflection paper, Brussels)*

## Recommendation from Food Security Working Group:

Enhance enforcement of Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38\(b\)](#), and develop a pilot program to certify Connecticut Grown markets based upon Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38b\(c\)](#), changing the program name from “Connecticut Farm Fresh Market” to “Connecticut Grown Market,” to better align with the existing Connecticut Grown Program, and revising the 15 percent stocking requirement to one appropriate for Connecticut Grown production.

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38. Advertising of Connecticut-Grown farm products. Advertising of locally-grown farm products. (a) For purposes of this section, “farm products” means products resulting from the practice of agriculture or farming, as defined in section 1-1 and “Connecticut-Grown” means produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut.

(b) Only farm products grown or produced in Connecticut shall be advertised or sold in Connecticut as “Connecticut-Grown”. Farm products grown or produced in Connecticut may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as “Native”, “Native-Grown”, “Local” or “Locally-Grown”. Farm products grown or produced within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale for such farm products may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as “Native”, “Native-Grown”, “Local”, or “Locally-Grown”. Any person, firm, partnership or corporation advertising farm products as “Native”, “Native-Grown”, “Local”, “Locally-Grown”, or “Connecticut-Grown” shall be required to furnish written proof within ten days of the sale of such products that such products were grown or produced in Connecticut or within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale, as applicable, if requested to do so by the Commissioner of Agriculture or said commissioner’s designee. Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be fined not more than twenty-five dollars for each product label in violation of this section.

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38b. Grocery or food store eligibility for state grant, financial assistance, loan or state-funded incentive. Certification as Connecticut Farm Fresh Market or Restaurant. Regulations.

(c) The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish and administer a program, within available resources, to certify grocery and food stores as “Connecticut Farm Fresh Markets”. A grocery or food store may be certified by the commissioner as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market if proof is submitted, to the satisfaction of the commissioner, that such store continuously stocks fifteen per cent or more of its shelf space for retail produce and dairy with farm products grown or produced in this state. Such products include, but are not limited to, dairy products, meat, poultry, seafood, nuts, eggs, fruits and vegetables. A grocery or food store certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market may use the words “Connecticut Farm Fresh Market” for promotional and marketing activities. No store other than a store certified as a Connecticut Farm Fresh Market may use such words for promotional and marketing activities.

### **Existing Conditions**

- State law defines the terms “Connecticut Grown,” “Native,” “Native-Grown,” “Local,” and “Locally-Grown,” as they pertain to farm products. State law also provides for the establishment and administration, through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and within available resources, of a program to certify grocery and food stores that stock a minimum percentage of these products.

### **Examining the Gaps**

- As interest in and demand for local food has risen, it has become more common to see produce and other farm products advertised and promoted in retail stores as “local,” “Connecticut Grown,” and/or any of the other above terms.
- While these descriptors are often used in accordance with state law, other times they are not. Violations can occur by those looking to unfairly capitalize on growing demand for local foods as well as by those who do not understand the law. Violations penalize both those people who abide by the law and the consumers who purchase products that are not what they believe them to be.
- While interest in and demand for local food has risen, the majority of consumers still purchase most of their food in grocery or other large retail stores. Even though some of

these stores carry Connecticut Grown farm products, the items are often not clearly or consistently identified as being grown in the state.

### ***Models to Consider***

- A program similar to that recommended for certifying Connecticut Farm-to-Chef Restaurants (see [Page 46](#)) would provide consumers an easy and convenient option for purchasing Connecticut Grown products and would provide retailers an incentive for carrying more of those products.
- Enhanced enforcement of the state law regarding advertising and promotion of these products should be concurrently implemented to strengthen the integrity of the Connecticut Grown brand and certification.



### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Development and implementation of a retail certification program will result in increased wholesale demand for Connecticut Grown products.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- A pilot program is a logical first step.
- Criteria will need to be developed for the certification program. A points-based system that results in a tiered certification would provide a level for entry as well as an incentive for retailers to achieve higher levels through the stocking of more Connecticut Grown products.
- Enhanced enforcement of state laws pertaining to advertising of Connecticut Grown products should be done in conjunction with the development and implementation of the certification program.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Connecticut farmers will benefit from increased demand for and sales of their products.
- Retailers participating in the certification program will gain a competitive advantage in attracting consumers seeking local food and farm products.
- The state's consumers will benefit from increased options for purchasing Connecticut Grown food and farm products.
- All of the state's residents will benefit from a stronger agricultural industry that feeds economic growth and creates more jobs.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The number of retailers participating in the certification program will be tracked.
- Increased sales and consumption of Connecticut Grown products over time will be another measure of success.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- Based on permits issued by the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, there are as many as 1,000 food retailers in the state.
- If only 5 percent of those retailers participate in a certification program, an additional 50 food stores would be consistently stocking Connecticut Grown farm products.

## Recommendation from Marketing Working Group:

Conduct research that will enhance the multiyear, state-wide Connecticut Grown marketing and advertising campaign in Connecticut General Statutes [Section 22-38a](#).

C.G.S. Sec. 22-38a. Promotion of Connecticut-Grown farm products. Regulations. The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish and administer a program to promote the marketing of farm products grown and produced in Connecticut for the purpose of encouraging the development of agriculture in the state. The commissioner may, within available appropriations, provide a grant-in-aid to any person, firm, partnership or corporation engaged in the promotion and marketing of such farm products, provided the words "CONNECTICUT-GROWN" or "CT-Grown" are clearly incorporated in such promotional and marketing activities. The commissioner shall (1) provide for the design, plan and implementation of a multiyear, state-wide marketing and advertising campaign, including, but not limited to, television and radio advertisements, promoting the availability of, and advantages of purchasing, Connecticut-grown farm products, (2) establish and continuously update a web site connected with such advertising campaign that includes, but is not limited to, a comprehensive listing of Connecticut farmers' markets, pick-your-own farms, roadside and on-farm markets, farm wineries, garden centers and nurseries selling predominantly Connecticut-grown horticultural products and agri-tourism events and attractions, and (3) conduct efforts to promote interaction and business relationships between farmers and restaurants, grocery stores, institutional cafeterias and other potential institutional purchasers of Connecticut-grown farm products, including, but not limited to, (A) linking farmers and potential purchasers through a separate feature of the web site established pursuant to this section, and (B) organizing state-wide or regional events promoting Connecticut-grown farm products, where farmers and potential institutional customers are invited to participate. The commissioner shall use his best efforts to solicit cooperation and participation from the farm, corporate, retail, wholesale and grocery communities in such advertising, Internet-related and event planning efforts, including, but not limited to, soliciting private sector matching funds. The commissioner shall use all of the funds provided to the Department of Agriculture pursuant to subparagraph (C) of subdivision (5) of subsection (a) of section 4-66aa for the purposes of this section. The commissioner shall report annually to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment on issues with respect to efforts undertaken pursuant to the requirements of this section, including, but not limited to, the amount of private matching funds received and expended by the department. The commissioner may adopt, in accordance with chapter 54, such regulations as he deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

C.G.S. Sec. 4-66aa. Community investment account. Distribution of funds. (a) There is established, within the General Fund, a separate, nonlapsing account to be known as the "community investment account". The account shall contain any moneys required by law to be deposited in the account. The funds in the account shall be distributed every three months as follows:

(5) twenty-five per cent to the Department of Agriculture to use as follows:

(C) one hundred thousand dollars annually to encourage the sale of Connecticut Grown food to schools, restaurants, retailers and other institutions and businesses in the state;

### Existing Conditions

- State law charges the Connecticut Department of Agriculture with the promotion of Connecticut Grown farm products, including design, planning, and implementation of a multiyear, state-wide marketing/advertising campaign and management of an updated website in conjunction with that campaign.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has promoted Connecticut Grown farm products

for nearly 30 years through its Connecticut Grown Program. Program components include online and print listings of various categories of Connecticut farms and farmers' markets, both paid and earned media spots promoting Connecticut agriculture and its many different products, and a number of sub-programs such as Farm to Chef and Farm to School that link Connecticut farmers with restaurants, institutional foodservice, and other wholesale and retail purchasers of Connecticut Grown farm products.

### ***Examining the Gaps***

- Interest in and demand for local products has grown significantly since the birth of the Connecticut Grown Program, while technology has advanced at a nearly unimaginable rate. New technology and changes in media, combined with increased consumer demand, both warrant and present opportunities for an updated, creative and strategic approach to the Connecticut Grown Program.
- During the same period, staffing at the Connecticut Department of Agriculture has significantly declined as a result of attrition, placing increased responsibilities on those remaining. The agency's five marketing representatives administer several grants and other programs in addition to marketing Connecticut Grown farm products.
- As local food and agriculture have become increasingly trendy, other organizations, both within and outside of state government, have seen promotion of the industry and its products as an attractive endeavor. Those efforts often compete with the Department of Agriculture for resources and the time and attention of target audiences.

### ***Models to Consider***

- The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development has designed and implemented a comprehensive multi-media state branding initiative through its Office of Tourism. Its Connecticut - Still Revolutionary campaign presents both examples of successful marketing strategies and partnership opportunities.



### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- A revitalized and strengthened Connecticut Grown Program that makes use of new technology and strategic partnerships will increase interest in Connecticut agriculture and demand for Connecticut Grown farm products from both within and outside the state.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture should continue to strengthen its partnership with the Department of Economic and Community Development and its Office of Tourism. Promotion of Connecticut agriculture and its products is a viable component of the state's economic development.

- A fresh approach to the revitalization of the Connecticut Grown Program should include the following steps:
  1. Gather existing market research data.
  2. Conduct additional market research as needed.
  3. Identify existing consumer perception(s) of Connecticut Grown.
  4. Identify target audiences.
  5. Determine the marketing/re-branding message and sub-messages for Connecticut Grown.
  6. Identify the tools and resources available to disseminate those messages.
  7. Identify partnership opportunities with the Office of Tourism and other state programs.
  8. Identify components still needed after partnerships are developed and strengthened.
  9. Identify a marketing campaign budget.
  10. Determine the specific elements of a campaign within that budget.
  11. Execute that campaign through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Connecticut farmers will benefit from enhanced marketing and promotion of their products, businesses, industry, heritage, and innovation.
- Residents from within and outside the state will benefit from an increased awareness of and appreciation for agriculture's importance to the quality of life in Connecticut.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- Market research will be needed on a periodic basis to assess consumer perception(s) and determine the effectiveness of various components of the program. This research should be conducted by an objective third party having nothing at stake in the results of that research.
- Over time, growth of the agricultural industry and sales of Connecticut Grown products will be an indication of the program's success.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- The GCAD's goal is to increase spending by state residents on Connecticut Grown farm products to no less than 5 percent by 2020, but much more can be achieved, especially when factoring in the increased demand from those outside Connecticut.



## Recommendation from Agricultural Business Environment Working Group:

Support on-farm biomass energy projects that do not consume prime and important farmland and explore the carve-out of an AgREC within the LREC system.

### ***Existing Conditions***

- As the GCAD identified in 2012, anaerobic digestion and other on-farm biomass projects offer enormous potential for Connecticut's farms to use manure and food waste to produce clean energy for all of Connecticut's residents and businesses.
- Legislation passed in 2013 qualifies anaerobic digestion as a Class 1 renewable resource, allows for virtual net metering, and requires food sellers within 20 miles to ship organic waste to a composting facility. These changes present new and promising opportunities for on-farm biomass projects.



***Development and other non-agricultural interests compete for Connecticut farmland***

### ***Examining the Gaps***

- Biomass projects situated on farms have the potential to consume farmland consisting of prime and important soils. Because these soils have become increasingly limited through years of development and other competing non-agricultural interests, the state has aggressively pursued a policy of farmland protection, and more recently, farmland restoration. These prime and important soils are critical to the sustainability and productivity of agriculture in Connecticut.
- The current system of renewable energy credits, including ZRECs and LRECs, does not provide a credit specifically for agricultural energy production.
- On-farm biomass projects can potentially be built and operated by non-farm businesses that simply locate such a project on existing farmland.

### ***Models to Consider***

- Creation of an AgREC could require that a specific minimum percentage of the organic matter used in such biomass projects be derived from farming operations at the farm on which the project is located.
- A carve-out for AgRECs within the existing LREC project could specify a certain minimum percentage of LRECs procured by Connecticut utilities come from on-farm biomass systems.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Reducing energy costs for farms will lower total input costs, increasing farm profits and long-term viability.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture, GCAD, and agricultural community should continue to work closely with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to develop a workable AgREC.

- The same entities should actively provide information and education to farmers about legislative and policy changes to help them take advantage of new energy-related opportunities.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Farmers who generate energy on their farms with biomass projects will benefit through lowering of energy costs, efficient use of animal waste and other organic matter, and tipping fees generated from accepting organic waste from elsewhere for use in these systems.
- Neighbors of farms with anaerobic digesters will benefit from reduced manure odors.
- Other farmers, municipalities, and state agencies will benefit from the ability to purchase surplus energy generated through these on-farm biomass projects.
- All residents will benefit from the reduced dependence on fossil fuels—and associated economic and environmental effects thereof—for the generation of energy consumed in Connecticut.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The number of farm-based biomass energy projects not consuming valuable prime and important farmland will be used to measure success.
- The amount of energy produced through those on-farm generation systems will be another key indicator.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- Connecticut can significantly reduce dependence upon energy derived from fossil fuels, resulting in a healthier environment for all.
- The state can effectively lower energy and overall input costs for farmers, making Connecticut agriculture more competitive and sustainable.

## Recommendation from Agricultural Business Environment and Planning and Coordination Working Groups:

Improve coordination among all state agencies with involvement in agricultural issues through designation of an agricultural liaison in each.

### *Existing Conditions*

- Farmland is a limited and precious resource, especially in Connecticut, where population densities and real estate values are higher than in most other states. Finding suitable land on which to productively grow crops is a challenge faced by many of Connecticut's farmers.
- The State of Connecticut has identified farmland having prime and important soils as critical to the present and future health of the state's residents, environment, and economy. As a result, it has a program administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture that invests taxpayer dollars to preserve this resource in perpetuity to ensure its availability to all future generations.
- Connecticut funds programs in other agencies—such as those supporting solar arrays and related “green” energy projects—that see flat, open farmland as an attractive siting location, and at times destroy these critical prime and important soils.
- Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Advisory Board recommends significant mitigation of state-funded projects that consume cropland and high quality soils. That mitigation consists of the recipient of the state funds permanently preserving prime and important land in the community equal in acreage to four times the acreage of the prime and important soils that their state-funded project converts to non-agricultural use.



### *Examining the Gaps*

- While these state-supported programs all have merits and provide benefits to Connecticut's residents, a disconnect exists between them, resulting at times in conflicting outcomes.
- The Farmland Preservation Advisory Board's mitigation recommendations are not consistently followed.

### *Models to Consider*

- An agricultural liaison in each agency involved in land planning and other agriculture-related issues would help to prevent conflicting interests in state programs and taxpayer-funded projects.

### *How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?*

- Preserving the most productive soils for agricultural use will help ensure there will be land available to Connecticut's farm families, who earn their living working that land.
- An agricultural liaison in these various state agencies would also help farmers navigate through an often confusing regulatory environment that can result in unintentional noncompliance due to the system's complexity. This regulatory environment was identified by

stakeholders as one of the greatest obstacles to Connecticut agriculture, second only to input costs.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- Designation of an agricultural liaison in each state agency involved in land use decisions would help prevent these conflicts in objectives and would result in a much more responsible use of taxpayer's hard-earned dollars. An agricultural liaison in each of these agencies would help ensure other types of state-funded projects would be sited on lands less well suited for agricultural production.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Connecticut's farmers will benefit by the preservation of productive farmland for present and future use and through the assistance navigating a complex and confusing system of intertwined regulations and policies.
- Connecticut's taxpayers and citizens will benefit from the prevention of conflicting state-funded project outcomes.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The number of acres of prime and important soils maintained in Connecticut will be the indicator of success.
- Farmer feedback on the relative ease of navigating the system will be another measure of success.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- We can eliminate the state funding of projects that convert prime and important soils to non-agricultural uses. At the very least, we can follow the recommendations of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board regarding mitigation.
- We can make Connecticut a more business-friendly state for its farm families.

## Recommendation from Agricultural Resources and Investments Working Group:

**Inventory state-owned land and put an additional 4,000 acres into leases with farmers for agricultural production by the end of 2015.**

C.G.S. Sec. 23-8. Open spaces for recreation. State goal for acquisition of open space. State-owned lands valuable for conservation purposes.

(b) Twenty-one per cent of the state's land area shall be held as open space land. The goal of the state's open space acquisition program shall be to acquire land such that ten per cent of the state's land area is held by the state as open space land and not less than eleven per cent of the state's land area is held by municipalities, water companies or nonprofit land conservation organizations as open space land consistent with the provisions of sections 7-131d to 7-131g, inclusive. Such program shall not affect the ability of any water company to reclassify or sell any land, or interest in land, which was not acquired, in whole or in part, with funds made available under the program established under sections 7-131d to 7-131g, inclusive. The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Public Health and the Council on Environmental Quality established under section 22a-11, municipalities, regional planning agencies and private nonprofit land conservation organizations, shall prepare not later than December 15, 2012, and update not less than once every five years thereafter, a comprehensive strategy for achieving the state goal. Such strategy shall include, but not be limited to: (1) An estimate of the acres of land preserved by the state, municipalities, water companies and nonprofit land conservation organizations, (2) an evaluation of the potential methods, cost and benefits of establishing a system for increasing the accuracy of such estimate of acres of land preserved by encouraging the voluntary submittal of information regarding new acquisitions by municipalities, water companies and nonprofit land conservation organizations, including the relative costs and benefits of having a state agency, a constituent unit of higher education or a nongovernmental organization host and operate such system, (3) timetables for acquisition of land by the state, (4) plans for management of such land, (5) an assessment of resources to be used for acquisition and management of such land, and (6) the highest priorities for acquisition of land, including the wildlife habitat and ecological resources identified to be in greatest need for immediate preservation, and the general location of each high priority. On or before January first, annually, the commissioner shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment regarding the strategy and the progress being made towards the goals. For the purpose of this subsection, "to acquire land" includes, but is not limited to, the acquisition in fee simple of land and the acquisition of easements for the conservation of land.

(e) To further the efforts to preserve open space in the state and to help realize the goals established in subsection (b) of this section, on or before October 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with each state agency, shall identify lands owned by the state that are in the custody of each state agency and that are valuable for conservation purposes. Said commissioner shall consult with the Commissioner of Public Health about any lands owned by the state that are identified as water supply lands.

### ***Existing Conditions***

- The State of Connecticut has an Open Space Acquisition Program. State laws sets a goal that the state acquire and hold 10 percent (approximately 318,000 acres) of the state's land area as open-space land.
- State law mandates that the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with each state agency, must identify on or before October 1, 2014, state-owned lands that are in the custody of each state agency and that are valuable for conservation purposes.

### ***Examining the Gaps***

- This inventory has not been completed and makes it difficult or impossible to identify the most suitable parcels of state-owned land for agricultural use.
- Land availability was identified by stakeholders as the third-greatest obstacle to Connecticut agriculture. Leasing more state-owned land for agricultural production would be in keeping with the conservation objective of the Open Space Acquisition Program.

### ***Models to Consider***

- The inventory of state-owned land should identify any restrictions in place on that land and determine which parcels are best suited for agricultural use. Those parcels should be made available to Connecticut farmers through leases administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Access to additional productive farmland will provide new and beginning farmers an opportunity to start agricultural businesses and will enable existing Connecticut farmers to expand their businesses, improving both short- and long-term growth of agriculture in the state.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- Inventory state-owned land, starting with that held by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.
- Identify current uses (including existing agricultural leases) and any restrictions on that land, and transition existing agricultural leases to one agency—the Connecticut Department of Agriculture—for improved coordination and efficiency.
- Identify which state-owned parcels are best suited for agricultural production.
- Offer those parcels to Connecticut farm families for agricultural production through leases with the state, administered by the Department of Agriculture.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- The State of Connecticut will benefit from a comprehensive inventory of the land it owns.
- Connecticut taxpayers will benefit from increased efficiency of their state government.
- Connecticut farmers will benefit from the increased availability of productive farmland.
- Residents of Connecticut will benefit from the increased supply of Connecticut Grown farm products.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- Completion of the implementation steps above and the acreage of state-owned land under new agricultural leases will be the measurements.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- An additional 4,000 acres of state-owned land in agricultural leases by the end of 2015 is the short-term goal.
- A total of 5 percent (about 16,000 acres) of all state-owned open-space land in agricultural production is a realistic long-term goal that would improve Connecticut's ability to feed its residents and reduce its dependence on imported food and other farm products.

## **Recommendation from Agriculture and Food Infrastructure Working Group:**

**Explore potential at the state-owned Hartford Regional Market for light processing facilities that would enable Connecticut farmers to reduce waste, expand offerings, and augment income through production and sale of value-added products.**

### ***Existing Conditions***

- The state-owned, 32-acre Hartford Regional Market is the largest perishable food distribution facility between Boston and New York, and serves as a hub for agricultural products grown and produced both within Connecticut and outside the state.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Marketing Authority, which oversees the Hartford Regional Market, are in the early stages of developing a master plan for revitalization of the 60-plus-year-old facility.
- Responding to the GCAD's prioritization of this issue, the state Department of Agriculture has obtained federal funds through USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to undertake an assessment of Connecticut's institutional demand for and production capacity of Connecticut Grown produce, along with an inventory of available resources for connecting that supply and demand.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has secured additional funding through USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to begin a second project researching processes, equipment, and facilities to add light processing and storage capacity at the Hartford Regional Market.

### ***Examining the Gaps***

- The infrastructure at the Hartford Regional Market has served the state well but is in need of major repair and renovation. Its renovation should include equipment and services well suited to the current and anticipated future needs of Connecticut's farmers and dynamic food system.
- Licensed, inspected processing facilities in which farmers can create value-added products from their produce are not widely available. Commercial kitchens in local churches, VFW halls, and other locations, often suggested to farmers for this purpose, have limitations related to equipment, space, and food-safety requirements.

### ***Models to Consider***

- The [Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center](#) is operated by the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. Through a membership structure, it offers kitchen and storage facilities, as well as training and technical consultation, to farmers and other food manufacturers.
- Rutgers University's [Food Innovation Center](#), part of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, provides business and technology expertise to farmers, agricultural cooperatives, retail and foodservice business seeking additional New Jersey grown products, and new and established food manufacturers.
- Public-private partnerships, cooperatives, and other business models for the operation of the processing facilities should be explored.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Centrally located, publicly owned processing facilities would enable farmers to use surplus produce—as well as “seconds,” which now often end up as waste—in value-added products that would provide enhanced, diversified, and year-round income for Connecticut's farm families.



**Processing equipment at the Western Massachusetts Food Processing Center**

### **Strategy for Implementation**

- Different types of processes, facilities, services, and business/operational models should be carefully studied and evaluated to determine individual benefits and drawbacks and how they could provide new opportunities for Connecticut’s farmers and other food businesses.
- Processes for consideration include peeling, chopping/slicing, dehydrating, freezing, canning, saucing, and others. Facilities to consider include equipment for various processes, dry and cold storage, office space, etc. Services could include aggregation of raw product, training, labor, business and technical consultation, brokering, marketing, and more.
- Connecticut farmers and food businesses should be surveyed about their need for and interest in using such facilities and services.

*As noted above under Existing Conditions, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture has begun implementation of this strategy.*

### **Who Will Be Better Off?**

- Farmers and other food businesses will benefit from the availability of these centrally located facilities and services.
- The City of Hartford and State of Connecticut will benefit from the economic and job growth these facilities will provide.
- Wholesale purchasers—including institutions, other foodservice providers, and grocery stores—and end consumers will benefit from the increased offerings of Connecticut Grown and locally manufactured value-added products.

### **How Will Results Be Measured?**

- The number of farmers and other food businesses that indicate interest in and ultimately use these facilities will be one measurement.
- The overall output of the facility will be another indicator of success.

### **How Much Can We Do?**

- With nearly 5,000 farms in the state and high demand for local food from both retail and wholesale customers, there is significant potential for extensive use of these facilities to enhance farm profitability and increase economic growth in Hartford, central Connecticut, and beyond.



## Recommendation from Producer Education and Training Working Group:

Develop agricultural internship programs through partnerships between Connecticut's farms and educational institutions—including both public and private colleges and universities—and enhance Cooperative Extension focus on programs that educate farmers about continually changing challenges related to climate, insects, and diseases.

### *Existing Conditions*

- In-state educational opportunities for those interested in pursuing a career in agriculture are few.
- The number of Extension educators who provide expertise on pests, climate, and other topics related to growing and production techniques does not meet the needs of Connecticut's diverse agricultural industry.

### *Examining the Gaps*

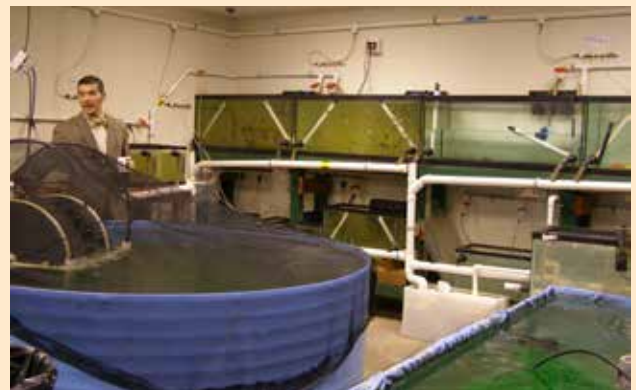
- Connecticut's high school agriscience centers are highly regarded by the state's agricultural industry but students are turned away each year due to funding constraints.
- Many of Connecticut's successful farmers attended out-of-state colleges and universities to study agriculture because the classes, majors, and job-experience programs they sought were not offered here. Connecticut's options for higher education in agriculture remain limited despite interest in farming among the state's young people today.
- Educators who provide technical production expertise to farmers are regarded as the backbone of other state's Extension systems by many in the industry. The GCAD has heard repeatedly from farmers about their frustration regarding the lack of Extension services available in Connecticut needed to stay current on emerging pests, diseases, and production techniques.

### *Models to Consider*

- Funding Connecticut's high school agriscience centers at the same rate as the state's technical high schools would provide more students with the opportunity to enroll in these outstanding programs and consider careers in the industry.
- Connecticut's successful advanced manufacturing program in the community college system can serve as a model for the development of an advanced agriscience technology program that would provide practical, technical education to those interested in various aspects of agriculture—including mechanics, processing, and marketing, as well as crop and livestock production.



***Greenhouse facilities at Nonnewaug High School, above, and aquaculture facilities at Bloomfield High School, below, two highly regarded state agriscience centers***



- Internships and work-study programs, common for other programs of study, should be developed through partnerships between Connecticut's agricultural businesses and the state's public and private colleges and universities so students can obtain practical, hands-on experience while still in school.
- Cornell University's Extension services and information are often used by Connecticut producers and can serve as an example of the kind of programming Connecticut could provide its farmers.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Better educated farmers have a greater chance of success.
- Development of a well-educated agricultural workforce will provide skilled workers and businesspeople for both today's farms and for generations to come, ensuring the long-term viability of Connecticut's agricultural industry.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- Pursue additional financial support for Connecticut's high school agriscience centers.
- Work with the Connecticut Board of Regents to explore and develop an advanced agriscience technology pilot program and possible certificate programs in various sectors/specialties of agriculture, such as mechanics, processing, food safety, etc.
- Survey Connecticut's farms and agribusinesses for interest in developing hands-on internships and work-study opportunities for students interested in agriculture, and share that information with the state's public and private colleges and universities.
- Seek a greater focus on Extension education that provides farmers with production and technical expertise in all sectors of Connecticut agriculture.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Young people interested in agriculture as a career will benefit from better educational opportunities.
- Existing farmers will benefit from the help of student interns, from better Extension services, and from the development of a more skilled workforce.
- The State of Connecticut and its residents will benefit from an increase in students who stay in state for higher education and to begin careers.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The successful creation of an advanced agriscience technology program will be one measure.
- The number of agricultural internships and work-study programs at Connecticut



***Specialized agricultural equipment requires skilled mechanics to keep it operating efficiently***

colleges and universities will be tracked.

- The number of students enrolling in Connecticut's agricultural education programs will be another indicator.
- The number of Extension educators dedicated to providing technical production expertise to farmers in the many different sectors of Connecticut agriculture also will be tracked.

***How Much Can We Do?***

- Connecticut can and must do a much better job of educating its existing and future agricultural workforce if it wants to sustain and grow this industry.

## **Recommendation from Farm to Institution A and B, Food Security, and Agricultural Business Environment Working Groups:**

**Assist agricultural producers with Food Safety Modernization Act education and compliance through existing programs; consider development of a new program dedicated to this purpose.**

### ***Existing Conditions***

- Compliance with existing food safety certification requirements, such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), can be costly for farmers but typically does not bring those farmers a higher price for their products. As a result, some Connecticut farmers have opted out of wholesale markets that require these certifications.
- Implementation of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s proposed new rules under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) will impose more complex and stringent requirements on all food producers. Opting out will no longer be an option for farmers.

### ***Examining the Gaps***

- Proposed FSMA rules are so complicated that few farmers or other industry members understand who is affected, what they require, when they go into effect, or how to achieve compliance.
- Compliance with the new rules may be expensive, depending on what infrastructure, equipment, and systems upgrades are required.

### ***Models to Consider***

- Existing state programs can be adapted and resources shifted to assist farmers with understanding and complying with the new food safety rules.
- A new program specifically designed around food safety education and compliance warrants consideration.

### ***Strategy for Implementation***

- Work now with FDA officials to interpret the proposed rules and share this information with Connecticut farmers. Once the rules are finalized, educate Connecticut farmers on the new requirements and how to comply.
- Determine which state programs are best suited to educate farmers on the new rules and assist them with compliance, and then adapt those programs for the purpose, reallocating resources as needed.
- Examine the feasibility of creating a new program specifically focused on food safety education and compliance for Connecticut farmers.

### ***How Will This Enhance Farm Viability?***

- Compliance with any and all applicable new rules will be necessary for farms to stay in business.

### ***Who Will Be Better Off?***

- Connecticut's farmers will benefit from the education and assistance in achieving compliance.
- The public will have increased confidence in the safety of Connecticut Grown farm products.

### ***How Will Results Be Measured?***

- The number of farmers participating in the program and achieving compliance will be the measure of success.

### ***How Much Can We Do?***

- Connecticut can educate all of its farmers about the new rules and how to comply with them.

## NEXT STEPS

As 2013 winds down, the council is reviewing and reflecting upon its work and recommendations from the past year and determining its top priorities for 2014.

The council's working group structure is likely to change somewhat based on those priorities. Some groups may continue in their current form, some may merge with others, and one or more new groups may be formed based on the council's sharpened focus.

While the exact number and structure of working groups is still to be determined, what is certain is that the council will continue to look to farmers and other stakeholders from all sectors of agriculture and from all regions of the state who have specific experience and expertise to help guide the council's work. Connecticut's strategic plan for agriculture must and will be shaped by the state's working farm families.

The working groups for 2014 are expected to convene early in the year to take advantage of Connecticut's generally slower agricultural season, when farmers have more time and energy to contribute.

Each working group will report back to the full council at its quarterly meetings. The council will again digest, deliberate, and distill the data delivered by each group, ultimately developing another set of formal recommendations to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture by next fall, when it will issue another annual update.

All working group and full GCAD meeting agendas and minutes will be posted with other council information at [www.CTGrown.gov/GovernorsCouncil](http://www.CTGrown.gov/GovernorsCouncil).





**Connecticut's  
strategic plan for  
agriculture must  
and will be shaped  
by the state's  
working farm  
families.**



# GROW



# CONNECTICUT



# FARMS

