

FARMLAND PRESERVATION IN INDIANA



WHAT

Farmland Preservation is the act of protecting a section of prime farmland from development so that it can be preserved for future generations.

HOW

Most preservation methods are driven by local governments, but agricultural conservation easements are a way for local landowners to preserve farmland, pastureland, forests, etc.

- An agricultural easement is a voluntary legal agreement that allows landowners to permanently protect working farms and limit non-agricultural development.
- Easements can be purchased through various programs or donated by the land-owner to protect prime farmland and restrict future development on the land.

WHY

The amount of land in agricultural production continues to shrink each year. Conservation easements are one tool to ensure that farmland remains in agricultural production for the future.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- 24 million acres of farmland in the United States was lost between 1982 and 2012. That number includes 831,000 acres in Indiana.
- 96% of U.S. farms are family-owned, making them more susceptible to buy-out over time.
- We have seen record-high levels of urban sprawl over the past 10-20 years. As the population continues to grow, we can expect continued expansion into rural areas.
- There are 56,649 farms located in Indiana.
- Indiana is the 10th largest agricultural state in the nation.
- 65% of Indiana's land was marked as farmland in 2017.
- American Farmland Trust studied this issue and produced a "Farms Under Threat" document outlining concerns for urban sprawl and converted agricultural land. Indiana scored among the top states for being under threat of land conversion in the coming years.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ARE RIGHT FOR YOU?

- As urban sprawl and development continue to expand, and younger generations are moving away from the farm, agricultural land is being threatened.
- Conservation agricultural easements guarantee that prime farmland will be used for agricultural purposes.
- If you own land considered “prime farmland,” and are close to sprawling development, then you might be a prime candidate for consideration of an easement.
- Land eligible for an agricultural easement includes cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland and nonindustrial private forest land.
- If you think there is a possibility that you or future generations might not remain in agriculture, but you would like to guarantee the land remains in-use, then you might be a prime candidate for an easement.

WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO CONSIDER A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reimburses for up to half of an easement. The other half of the easement must be personally financed, donated, or covered through a land trust.
- If you are interested in pursuing a conservation agricultural easement, contact the NRCS state office to submit a proposal. You can call the NRCS Indiana office at 317-290-3200 or visit their website, www.nrcs.usda.gov.
- Landowners wishing to donate an easement should expect out of pocket expenses for items such as an appraisal.
- You can also seek assistance from American Farmland Trust or a local land trust to determine a plan and procedure for obtaining an easement.

RESOURCES

- American Farmland Trust
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Indiana Land Resources Council
- Purdue Extension Conservation Easement Resource
- Indiana Land Protection Alliance