

NEW FARMER BUCKET LIST

Key Resources for Getting Started in Connecticut

Revised: SUMMER 2017

GETTING STARTED

1. The [CT Agricultural Business Management Guide](#) is a comprehensive business planning and management tool prepared by UConn Extension. A clear business plan will be required for most loans and grants. UConn Extension's [Farm Risk Management](#) program has business planning resources.
2. The [Connecticut General Statutes \(C.G.S.\) Sec. 1-1\(q\)](#) provides the legal definition of "farming" and "agriculture" in the State of Connecticut.
3. The [CT Dept. of Agriculture](#) has Programs, Services, and Grant Opportunities.
4. Visit a USDA Service Center and introduce yourself to staff at Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). You may be eligible for free conservation planning and technical assistance with NRCS as a first step toward financial assistance for conservation practices. FSA can provide free maps of the property you are farming. *TIP: Starting in your first season, be sure to record your production history, including acres farmed, pounds harvested and dollars generated. This will be very helpful in future years as you begin to explore agriculture loans, grants, and insurance.
5. Familiarize yourself at the outset with your town's zoning to see what is allowed for farming and retail operations. A few towns have Agriculture Commissions that can help orient you to farming in your community. The CT Farm Bureau Association's [Advocacy Toolkit](#) provides fact sheets on state and local tax programs, land use regulations, farm to market information and, more. If you have questions or concerns about local agricultural regulations, or local tax programs that you may be eligible for (including PA 490), contact Joan Nichols at CT Farm Bureau Association for help: JoanN@cfba.org
6. There are state associations for producers of poultry, sheep, fruit, honey, maple syrup, ornamentals, milk, timber, and more. Producer associations have very useful resources, expertise about crop-specific tools and infrastructure, and hold regular meetings, networking events, and trainings.
7. There are dozens of trainings offered each year by agriculture service providers, including UConn Extension's Solid Ground Farmer Trainings. Training opportunities are typically advertised via service provider e-news see page 2.
8. For smaller, diversified farms in Connecticut the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) administered by FSA might be of interest since it provides catastrophic coverage for crops not eligible for regular crop insurance. All crop insurance resources are available at UConn Extension's [Farm Risk Management and Crop Insurance](#) website.

FINDING FARMLAND

- A critical first step is learning how to understand your soils landscapes through free maps and data using the [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey](#).
- Soil testing is available through the [UConn Soil Lab](#) and the [CT Agriculture Experiment Station](#).
- Farmland listing services for sale or for lease are available through [Connecticut Farmlink](#). *TIP: If renting, secure a written lease since most grant and loan programs require a 5 year (or more) lease for eligibility. Consider adding language that permits you to install conservation practices and buildings if appropriate.

To view online go to: <http://ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu/>



CONNECT WITH NEW FARMERS

Get in the loop with [New CT Farmer Alliance](#), a farmer-led and farmer-driven group dedicated to supporting the next generation of diverse small-scale growers who market direct to consumer. NCTFA hosts farm tours, potlucks, and its annual Hootenanny. NCTFA is the state chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition.



Get involved in [CT Farm Bureau Association](#) to help advocate and educate on issues that support agriculture businesses. CFBA's Young Farmer Committee has opportunities for leadership development, legislative advocacy, and networking with other farmers. Join a County Farm Bureau to help shape policy agendas that will move up to the state capitol.



Explore Connecticut's Organic Farms and Related Businesses at [Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut](#).



FINDING FARMLAND (continued)

- Additional listings can be found at [New England Farmland Finder](#) and [New England Landlink](#).
- Loans to purchase farmland can be obtained from [USDA Farm Service Agency](#).
- See UConn Extension's resources on [farmland leasing](#) or consult the [Farmland ConneCTions](#) toolkit.
- [Land for Good](#) has tutorials, worksheets, as well as consulting to help farmers navigate the challenges of accessing farmland.
- Contact your Town Planner or local Agricultural Commission to enquire about available land for lease.

TAXES

- Register your business with [CT Dept. of Revenue Services](#) and obtain a Sales and Use Tax Permit ([Form Reg-1](#)). Certain items are taxable and you must collect state sales tax. The CT Dept. of Revenue Services can provide you with guidance on what is taxable. You are *not* required to obtain a sale and use tax permit if you raise and sell tobacco, fruit, vegetables, and board horses or are involved in dairy farming.
- Obtain a Farmers Tax Exemption Permit ([Form REG - 8](#)) from the CT Dept. of Revenue Services. This permit enables you to purchase farm business related supplies free of sales tax.
- Become familiar with [CT Department of Revenue Services](#) laws that apply to farmers ([Farmers Guide to Sales and Use Taxes, Motor Vehicle Fuels Tax, Estimated Income Tax, and Withholding Tax](#))
- Check with your town assessor to determine if your farmland is classified as farmland for property tax purposes. Review the [PA 490 Guide and the PA 490 webinar](#) developed by CT Farm Bureau Association.

REGISTRATIONS AND LICENSES

- Obtain a [Pesticide Applicators License](#) through the CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection in order to use herbicides and pesticides on your property.
- Obtain any and all CT Dept. of Agriculture [licenses and permits](#) that are required by your agricultural business. Also check with the Department for animal health, identification and interstate movement requirements if your business involves livestock, including equine, and/or poultry.
- Obtain other relevant state and municipal [licenses and permits](#), such as those required to control wildlife that damages your crops and those specific to [aquacultural businesses](#).

SELLING YOUR PRODUCT

- Ensure customers identify your products as local by branding them as Connecticut Grown, using the CT Dept. of Agriculture's [Identity Standards](#), and by using the agency's free [marketing resources](#), including price cards/point-of-purchase materials, directional signage, and programs such as farmers' market nutrition, and farm-to-wholesale (restaurants/schools/institutions/healthcare/retailers).

SERVICE PROVIDER E-NEWS

- Connecticut Department of Agriculture's *Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report*, send request to Steve.jensen@ct.gov.
- UConn *Crop Talk: CT Vegetable & Fruit Crops Newsletter*, send request to mackenzie.white@uconn.edu

Pest Messages

- Vegetable, send request to mackenzie.white@uconn.edu
- Fruit, send request to mary.concklin@uconn.edu
- Greenhouse, send request to leanne.pundt@uconn.edu
- UMass Veggie Notes listserv, subscribe at <http://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/>
- NE Greenhouse Update, send request to tsmith@umext.edu

Agricultural Messages & Updates

- Dairy & Livestock news, send request to joyce.meader@uconn.edu
- Soil Health, send request to raymond.covino@ct.usda.gov
- FSA State News Releases, go to <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/newsroom/news-releases/index>
- NRCS News Releases & Events, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/news/ct/newsroom/releases/>
- CT Farm Bureau's news magazines are available at www.cfba.org

GROWING YOUR PRODUCT

- [New England Vegetable Management Guide](#)
- [New England Tree Fruit Management Guide](#)
- [New England Small Fruit Management Guide](#)
- [New England Greenhouse Floriculture Guide](#)
- [UConn IPM](#)
- [UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#)
- [USDA Certified Organic Standards](#)

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES FOR GETTING STARTED

- [USDA New Farmers](#)
- [USDA-NIFA Farm Answers](#)
- [Cornell Small Farms Program](#)
- [Other State & Federal Agricultural Organizations](#)

FINANCING IMPROVEMENTS

- USDA Farm Services Agency has a selection of [loan programs](#), including loans for operation expenses and equipment. FSA's [Microloan Program](#) may be of particular use for start-up capital, inputs, and infrastructure. For more information about FSA loan programs, contact [Ron Clark](#), 860-319-8073.
- The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offers financial and technical assistance to address conservation improvements, including installation of high tunnel systems, energy efficiency systems, soil health practices, livestock practices, nutrient management systems, and water conservation irrigation systems. Program payment rates can reach 90% for Beginning, Limited Resource, and Socially Disadvantaged farmers. For more information about EQIP, contact [Joyce Purcell](#), 860-871-4028.
- The [Farmland Restoration Program](#) administered by the CT Dept. of Agriculture provides funding for qualifying projects that reclaim farmland through removal of invasive species, clearing of trees and stumps, exclusion fencing, pond renovation, erosion control, and more.
- The CT Dept. of Agriculture's competitive [Farm Transition Grants](#) provide matching funds to Connecticut farms and agricultural cooperatives to expand, diversify, and improve existing operations in conjunction with a sound business plan.
- The CT Dept. of Agriculture's competitive [Farm Reinvestment Grants](#) provide matching funds to established, working Connecticut farms to expand, diversify, and improve through capital investment projects with a lifespan of 10 years or more in conjunction with a sound business plan.
- The CT Dept. of Agriculture's competitive [Farm Viability Grants](#) can provide matching funds to your municipality, as well as associations of municipalities, regional planning organizations, and 501 c(3) agricultural non-profits, for qualifying projects that can directly benefit your farm, including implementation of local agricultural regulations and/or farmland protection strategies, educational workshops, marketing of local or regional agriculture, establishment of local farmers' markets, and more.
- The [Organic Cost Share Program](#), administered by the CT Dept. of Agriculture, can reimburse certified organic farms and processors up to 75 percent of their organic certification costs.
- The [FarmStart Program](#) of Farm Credit East offers seed capital (up to \$75,000 line of credit) to farmers in their startup years.
- USDA Rural Development offers [Value-Added Producer Grants](#) to help agricultural producers enter into activities that add value to their products (e.g. feasibility studies, business plans) and [Rural Energy for America Program](#) (REAP) Loan Guarantees and Grants that provide assistance for energy efficiency improvements.
- Northeast SARE (Sustainable Agriculture & Research Education) [Farmer Grants](#) are available to commercial farmers who want to test a new idea using a field trial, on-farm demonstration, marketing initiative, or other techniques.

FOOD SAFETY

- Learn about [Produce Safety, the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule and Good Agricultural Practices \(GAP\)](#) trainings offered by UConn Extension's [Food Safety Program](#).
- CT Farm Bureau Association has assembled [Resources for Processing Farm Grown Fruits and Vegetables in Your Farm Kitchen](#).
- Contact the CT Department of Agriculture for information regarding GAP Audits for producers. 860-713-2580

Contributors:

[UConn Extension](#)

[Connecticut Department of Agriculture](#)

[Connecticut Farm Bureau Association](#)

[New Connecticut Farmer Alliance](#)

[Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut](#)

[USDA Farm Service Agency of Connecticut](#)

[USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

Funding for this activity was provided by the University of Connecticut and the USDA Risk Management Agency as part of the Targeted States Crop Insurance and Information program for Connecticut Agriculture.



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