



Farmland Protection

Update for the Natural and Working Lands Work Group

Chris Cabot

Co-Director of Farmland Protection

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We are a member-powered statewide organization that works to protect farmland, support farmers, and advance the future of farming.

Hope Orchards, 45 ac, Hope



Halledge Farm, 186 ac, Windham

Brookings Farm, 231 ac, New Gloucester



Frost Meadow Farm, 50 ac, Gorham

- Maine has approximately 1.23M acres of farms (*according to the Ag Census*), of which approximately 60,000 acres (~400 farms) have been protected.
- That includes approximately 25,000 acres of open field (4.8%).

MFT's Farmland Protection Efforts			
Year	# of Farms	Acres	Open Acres
2021	24	2552	767
2022	12	1183	383
2023	13	1619	608
2024	11	1598	559
2025	8	1290	450

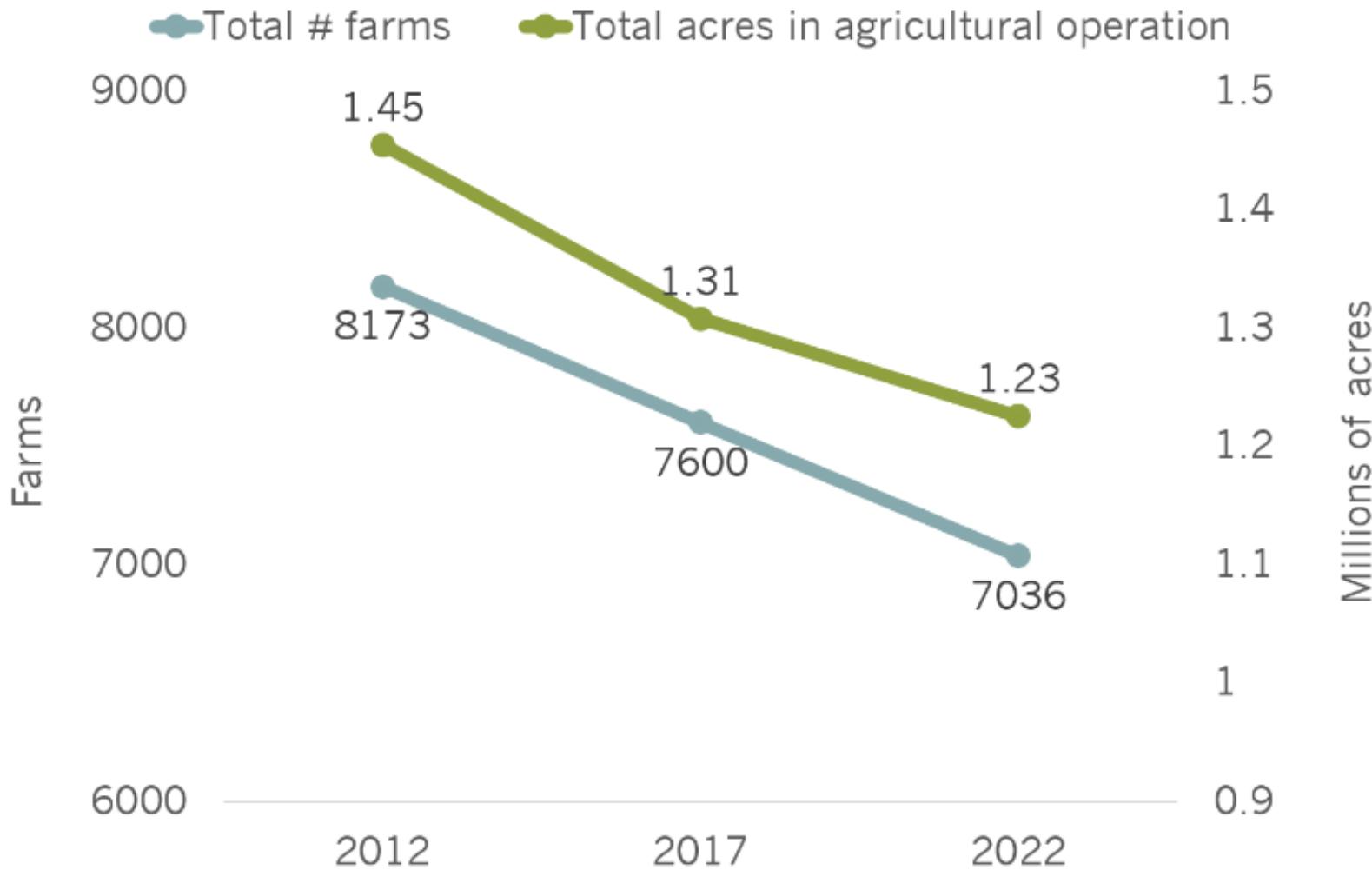


Farmland Protection

- Maine lost almost 230,000 acres of farmland between 2012 and 2022 (*2022 Ag Census*)
- Low-density residential development is one of the biggest threats to farmland in Maine (*American Farmland Trust*)
- Additional threats include infrastructure (e.g. roads, transmission lines), commercial solar development, reforestation/succession, and other development types.



The Rapid Pace of Farmland Loss



Farmland Protection Funding*			
State	Total Funding	State Funding	Other Funding
Massachusetts	\$328,333,316	\$249,189,465	\$79,143,851
Vermont	\$231,122,176	\$95,532,538	\$135,589,638
Connecticut	\$191,997,482	\$138,554,256	\$53,443,226
Rhode Island	\$123,193,645	\$39,523,630	\$83,670,015
New Hampshire	\$61,775,802	\$22,497,708	\$39,278,094
Maine	\$53,706,622	\$12,706,622	\$41,000,000**

Sources:

•American Farmland Trust (2024), *Status of State PACE Programs*

•Estimate based on Maine Farmland Trust spending analysis

Maine lags behind due to lack of public investment in farmland protection:

*Sources: *Farms Under Threat, A New England Perspective* (American Farmland Trust, 2020), *Status of State PACE Programs* (American Farmland Trust 2022)

State	Total Farmland Protection		Other Funding
	Funding	State Funding	
New Jersey	\$1,845,914,559	\$1,194,385,386	\$651,529,173
Pennsylvania	\$1,156,534,321	\$1,105,213,366	\$51,320,955
Maryland	\$1,018,134,473	\$986,023,683	\$32,110,790
Massachusetts	\$319,623,984	\$243,135,421	\$76,488,563
Delaware	\$264,455,368	\$172,300,005	\$92,155,363
New York	\$230,145,489	\$230,145,489	\$0.00
Vermont	\$215,378,925	\$88,794,121	\$126,584,804
Connecticut	\$179,215,249	\$131,842,666	\$47,372,583
Rhode Island	\$117,549,027	\$37,143,700	\$80,405,327
West Virginia	\$79,470,398	\$49,118,007	\$30,352,391
Maine	\$50,222,483	\$12,574,122	\$37,648,361



Recommendations from NWLWG in 2024:

The state's 2024 update to the ***Maine Won't Wait*** climate action plan established new targets specific to farmland protection. The Plan and the NWLWG recommendations in the May 2024 report called for Maine to:

- **Secure and commit to ongoing, dedicated funding for farmland conservation to double the amount of permanently protected, open farmland in the state by 2030**
- **Annually invest \$20 million in state funding toward farmland protection (separate from other LMF funding)**
- **Commission a Maine Farmland Action Plan**

Select Farmland Protection Strategies

- Agricultural conservation easements and Buy/Protect/Sell
- State policy efforts
 - Increase public investment in farmland protection
 - Increase ability to match federal funds
- Municipal planning, programs, ordinance development and implementation
- Multifaceted efforts to support farm viability



A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there's a green grassy field with a few scattered trees. In the middle ground, there's a large, red brick barn with a white roof and a smaller white building attached to it. To the left of the barn is a white house with a dark roof. The background is filled with tall trees, some of which have turned yellow and orange, indicating autumn. The sky is a pale, overcast grey.

Thank you.