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Serving Kent & Washington counties

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Land Easements

In Rhode Island

Rhode Island Agriculture

Rhode Island agriculture is diverse and includes a variety of crop, livestock and specialty products. The value of Rhode Island's agricultural industry is nearly \$93 million.

Farms provide the fields, pastures, and meadows that buffer Rhode Island's residential and commercial development and offer spectacular views of our hills, valleys, and coastal waters. Without open farm land, there would be no greenbelts around our towns and cities and no barns, silos, or fields to give our state its special character.

Some 1,050 individual operations qualify as commercial farms in Rhode Island, managing 59,076 acres including crop, hay, livestock, sod, aquaculture, nursery and Christmas tree production, conservation and other agricultural uses.

Ocean State farms produce a wide variety of specialty and horticultural crops for markets both within and beyond the state, including nursery, sod, vegetables, potatoes, eggs, chicken, and oysters.





What are agricultural land easements?

USDA Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) help Rhode Island farmers keep their productive land in agriculture, protecting the land from development forever. NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland and shrubland. Eligible partners include American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland, rangeland or grassland protection programs.

Under the Agricultural Land component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. For areas that NRCS determines are grasslands of special environmental significance to be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

How does ALE work?

USDA Agricultural Land Easements establish partnerships with land trusts, state and local units of government, and other non-profit organizations, to facilitate and provide funding for the purchase of conservation easements on land in Rhode Island.

Landowners participate voluntarily and protected land remains in private ownership. The property owner still owns the land and retains the right to sell it, lease it, or will it to his or her heirs.

Participating landowners agree not to convert their land to commercial enterprises other than agriculture and forestry, and they develop and implement a conservation plan for any highly erodible land.

What land is eligible?

To qualify for ALE, the land offered must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Have a minimum of 50% productive agricultural soils; or
- Contain historical or cultural resources; or
- Protect grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring and conserving land; or
- Further a state or local policy consistent with



the purposes of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

The land must also meet all of the following criteria:

- Be privately owned and cannot be town, state, or nationally owned.
- Have the easement purchased through partnerships with state or local units of government, land trusts, or other non-profit organizations.
- Be owned by an individual or entity that does not exceed the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitation.
- Have less than $\frac{2}{3}$ forestland or have $\frac{1}{3}$ open land.

How much farmland has been protected in RI?

Since the ALE program began in 2014, NRCS in Rhode Island has provided over \$6.6 million to help purchase and provide permanent protection of about 400 acres of agricultural land on 19 farms across the Ocean State.

The \$6.6 million in Federal funds leveraged another \$6.6 million in local government and entity contributions for a total easement value of \$13.2 million.