

Prime and Other Important Farmlands

Barnstable County, Massachusetts

Map symbol	Map unit name	Farmland classification
220A	Boxford silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
220B	Boxford silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
225B	Belgrade silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
226A	Hinesburg sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
226B	Hinesburg sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
254A	Merrimac fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
254B	Merrimac fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
258A	Amostown sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
260A	Sudbury fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
265A	Enfield silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
265B	Enfield silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
380B	Nantucket sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
226C	Hinesburg sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
245A	Hinckley loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
245B	Hinckley loamy sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
254C	Merrimac fine sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
256A	Deerfield loamy fine sand, 0 to 5 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
264A	Eastchop loamy fine sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
264B	Eastchop loamy fine sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
264C	Eastchop loamy fine sand, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
265C	Enfield silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
380C	Nantucket sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
381B	Nantucket sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes, stony	Farmland of statewide importance
381C	Nantucket sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes, stony	Farmland of statewide importance
430B	Barnstable sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
430C	Barnstable sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
431B	Barnstable sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	Farmland of statewide importance
431C	Barnstable sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes, very stony	Farmland of statewide importance
53A	Freetown muck, ponded, coastal lowland, 0 to 1 percent slopes	Farmland of unique importance
54A	Freetown and Swansea mucks, coastal lowland, 0 to 1 percent slopes	Farmland of unique importance
55A	Freetown coarse sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes, sanded surface	Farmland of unique importance
66A	Ipswich - Pawcatuck - Matunuck complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes, very frequently flooded	Farmland of unique importance

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This table lists the map units in the survey area that are considered important farmlands. Important farmlands consist of prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide or local importance. This list does not constitute a recommendation for a particular land use.

In an effort to identify the extent and location of important farmlands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with other interested Federal, State, and local government organizations, has inventoried land that can be used for the production of the Nation's food supply.

"Prime farmland" is of major importance in meeting the Nation's short- and long-range needs for food and fiber. Because the supply of high-quality farmland is limited, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognizes that responsible levels of government, as well as individuals, should encourage and facilitate the wise use of our Nation's prime farmland.

Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Prime farmland is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. More detailed information about the criteria for prime farmland is available at the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For some of the soils identified in the table as prime farmland, measures that overcome a hazard or limitation, such as flooding, wetness, and droughtiness, are needed. Onsite evaluation is needed to determine whether or not the hazard or limitation has been overcome by corrective measures.

A recent trend in land use in some areas has been the loss of some prime farmland to industrial and urban uses. The loss of prime farmland to other uses puts pressure on marginal lands, which generally are more erodible, droughty, and less productive and cannot be easily cultivated.

"Unique farmland" is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, and other fruits and vegetables. It has the special combination of soil quality, growing season, moisture supply, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, and aspect needed for the soil to economically produce sustainable high yields of these crops when properly managed. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Nearness to markets is an additional consideration. Unique farmland is not based on national criteria. It commonly is in areas where there is a special microclimate, such as the wine country in California.

In some areas, land that does not meet the criteria for prime or unique farmland is considered to be "farmland of statewide importance" for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. The criteria for defining and delineating farmland of statewide importance are determined by the appropriate State agencies. Generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable. Farmland of statewide importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by State law.

In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered to be "farmland of local importance" for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This farmland is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance.