

5.3 Develop Agriculture-Friendly Practices

5 – 65 Points

Action Updates

This action has been revised for the **current certification cycle**. A version of this action from the prior program year is [available for comparison](#). Edits are highlighted in yellow. (Last updated 2024)

Objective

Create an agriculture-friendly community through taking steps to actively support farms and farmers in your city or town.

Complementary Action:

- [Develop and Promote Community Growing Spaces](#)
- [Encourage an Equitable and Just Food System](#)
- [Support Equitable Food Access and Local Farmers](#)

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Adopt land use policies and regulations that promote and support active agricultural uses. Only one policy is needed to earn points. Such policies or zoning regulations should promote equity within agricultural zoning. **(20 points)**

These policies could include:

- Ensuring that zoning aligns with or builds upon the existing Connecticut "Right to Farm" Law.
- Allowing farm support activities (e.g., roadside farm stands) in certain zones, including in urban settings.
- Reducing barriers to and/or encouraging agri-tourism.
- Reducing barriers to and/or encouraging use of renewable energy on working farms, in accordance with state regulations addressing [solar siting](#) on prime farmland (see resources section).

Submit: A copy of the policy formally adopted by your governing body; and documentation that the policy has been adopted (such as meeting minutes, a copy of the municipal zoning regulations with relevant portions highlighted, a link to municipal ordinances, or similar verification)

2. Promote community access to land for farming and agricultural uses. Create a process and tools to facilitate community land access through one or more of the strategies listed below. Promote the selected strategy or strategies through municipal communications channels. **(10 points per strategy, up to 20 points)**
 - Collaborate with relevant municipal departments to identify and create a list of municipal land suitable for agriculture that could be used by the community. Work to make public or municipal land more available to community members.
 - Develop a toolkit (see resources section for example) to help community members in acquiring municipally-owned vacant or underutilized lots and lands for farming. Disseminate the toolkit through a community outreach process.
 - Allow active agricultural use of municipal land or provide outreach on [CT Farmlink](#), linking available

municipal or private land to farmers looking for land to farm.

Submit: A description of your municipality's specific action(s) to promote community land access, along with supporting documentation (for example, if your municipality conducted outreach and created a toolkit for community members to acquire municipally owned land for farming, submit the toolkit and a description of the outreach process); and at least one example of educational materials disseminated in the last three years, which could include flyers, articles, letters, newsletters, presentations, or digital communications. For websites, submit both a hyperlink and a screenshot of the relevant webpage(s).

3. Develop a Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights program. **(10 points)**

Submit: A description of your Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights program (and a hyperlink to the program if available).

4. Hold a farmer forum to identify critical needs or issues for agriculture in municipality. The farmer forum must have taken place in the last three years. **(5 points)**

Note: Activities that are used to earn points toward this Action may not be used to earn points toward any other Sustainable CT Action (i.e., "double-counting").

Submit: The date of the farmer forum, a brief overview of what was discussed (suggested 5 sentences maximum), and at least one additional piece of documentation related to the forum, such as a promotional flyer, an agenda, minutes, presentations, photographs, or digital communications. For websites, submit both a hyperlink and a screenshot of the relevant webpage(s).

5. Establish funding to acquire or preserve farmland. **(10 points)**

Submit: Documentation of the funding source, noting the current dollar amount available; and a brief description of the funding mechanism or program. If an open space acquisition fund is also used for farmland acquisitions, you must include a statement that the funds may be used for both farmland and open space.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the ["Partners Guidance Document"](#).

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Staff from the town council, planning and zoning, public works, parks and recreation departments and the agriculture, conservation, planning and zoning, and inland wetlands commission, as well as local farming advocates, and local land trusts could be helpful in implementing this action.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the [Sustainable CT Grants Portal](#), which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the [Support for Your Town](#) page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- [Urban Act Grant Program](#)
- [Municipal Grant Program \(MGP\)](#)
- [Sustainable CT Community Match Fund](#)
- [Rural Business Development Grants \(RBDG\)](#)
- CT Department of Agriculture, [Farmland Preservation Program](#), [Farmland Preservation Application](#), [Community Farms Preservation Program Application](#)

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- American Farmland Trust and the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, "[Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities](#)"
- Capitol Region Council of Governments, "[Regulating the Farm: Improving Agriculture's Viability in the Capitol Region](#)" Model Regulations
- [Cultivating Community: An Agricultural Master Plan for Bridgeport](#)
- CT Department of Agriculture, [On-Farm Energy Resources](#)
- CT Department of Agriculture, [Solar Energy Project Considerations](#)
- Healthy Food Policy Project, [Policy Database](#)
- Healthy Food Policy Project, [Case Studies](#)
- City of Boston, MA, [Urban Agriculture Zoning Regulations](#)

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- [AGvocate](#)
- [American Farmland Trust](#)
- [Connecticut Farmland Trust](#)
- [Connecticut Farm Bureau Association](#)
- [Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station](#)
- CT Department of Agriculture, [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in CT Agriculture](#)
- [Connecticut Farmlink](#)
- [CT Farm Energy Program](#)
- [Farm Service Agency](#)
- [UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research \(CLEAR\)](#)
- [UConn College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources Extension](#)
- [CT NEMO \(Non-point Education for Municipal Officials\) Program](#)
- [Working Lands Alliance](#)
- [USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Connecticut Office](#)
- [Connecticut Environmental Review Team](#)
- [Connecticut Conservation Districts](#)
- [Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.](#)
- [City of New Haven Food System Policy Division](#)
- [City of Pittsburg Adopt-A-Lot Program](#)

Why This Matters

Agriculture is part of the fabric of many communities in Connecticut. The state's agriculture industry is a \$3.5 billion industry, and it is invaluable to preserving our Nutmeg character. As municipalities grow and change over time, regulations and policies may limit agricultural development, or may make it challenging for farmers to diversify their income to stay viable and/or meet the needs of the ever-changing market.

Benefits

Farms provide a variety of benefits to a community and the state, from increasing access to fresh, local produce, dairy and meat; to preserving open space and providing habitat; to celebrating our historical and cultural practices; to providing opportunities for tourism. Farms provide an industry for many businesses such as food manufacturers and processors, garden centers, veterinarians, farm equipment wholesalers and repair shops. Amending existing regulations and creating new regulations to support farms, will help the agriculture sector flourish in your community.

CT Success Stories

- [Canaan \(Falls Village\) - Nov 2021 Certification](#)
- [West Haven - Nov 2021 Certification](#)
- [Glastonbury - Nov 2021 Certification](#)
- [New Milford - Nov 2021 Certification](#)
- [Portland - Nov 2021 Certification](#)
- [Westport - Nov 2021 Certification](#)
- [Coventry - May 2022 Certification](#)

- [East Haddam - Oct 2022 Certification](#)
- [Guilford - Oct 2022 Certification](#)
- [Middletown - Sep 2023 Certification](#)
- [Stonington - Sep 2023 Certification](#)