It is no secret that American food policy, embodied by the Farm Bill, is practically incoherent.

The Farm Bill has been used to subsidize crop production (or not), support prices and distribution (or not), protect farmers from the vagaries of the market (or not). It has served as a vehicle for some of the most notorious pork-barrel policies of the last sixty years and has garnered attacks from left and right for myriad and seemingly endless reasons – few of which have anything to do with crafting a consistent, reasonable, and sustainable policy for ensuring the health and continued productivity of the agricultural sector and providing Americans with food for the future.

Of all this vast expenditure, barely 6% of the Farm Bill goes to conservation. Even smaller is the percentage dedicated solely to helping purchase easements on agricultural soils. In spite of that, the Farm Bill is the single largest piece of conservation legislation. More than half of the easements CFT has acquired have used some money from the Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) – it is our largest single source of leveraging for easement purchases.

The Farm Bill is sweeping. The Farm Bill is comprehensive. The Farm Bill is expired.

On October 1st, due to Congressional dithering, many of the Farm Bill’s programs were halted. Fortunately, FRPP has a special provision allowing it to run through 2014 with no additional action. So, for the near term, our work will be unaffected.

Although conservation spending is a tiny fraction of the law, we have had to be tenacious in defending that small slice of the pie during closed-door negotiations over the summer and early fall. Thanks to the persistence of the Land Trust Alliance and American Farmland Trust, we have largely succeeded in protecting important farmland conservation programs from deep cuts.

(continued on page 4)
Letter from the Executive Director

Whew! What a year.

2012 has been CFT’s 10th Anniversary and we’re as busy as ever.

We’re set to close out the year in celebration, with five farms on tap for protection. Elisabeth has been hard at work with these families and our partners for several years in some cases. That may seem like a long time, until you consider how long we intend to protect them.

Completion of those projects will run our total to 31 farms and over 2,600 acres. That is a tremendous testament to the support we’ve had from you – I hope you’re as proud of your work as I am of your support.

That support comes from all quarters – you can see the range of people and organizations at the back of this newsletter. I hope your name is among them.

This year, I’d like to specially thank the Connecticut Plein Air Painters Society. Once again they donated the lovely art used on invitations and prints for The Celebration of Connecticut Farms. CPAPS will also be donating a portion of the proceeds from their 2012 Annual Member Exhibition.

Thank YOU, Farmer’s Market Volunteers

We had a very successful first summer of our new outreach program- the 20 volunteers who attended markets around the state helped us find over 250 new friends of CFT!

If you are interested in sharing your commitment to farmland preservation at your local market next year, contact Collette via email (croy@ctfarmland.org) or at the office (860-247-0202 x223).

That show will be held from November 2 – January 19 at Hartford Fine Art and Framing, 80 Pitkin St., East Hartford.

As we head into the “lame duck” session of Congress, keep your eye on the progress of the Farm Bill. Calling your senators and congressmen is a good way to remind them that agriculture plays a huge role in the health of Connecticut’s economy and community.

Whatever happens in Washington over the next few weeks, depend on Connecticut Farmland Trust to fight for a strong and permanent future for our farms and farmers. Thank you so much for working with us.

Yours in the land,
Happy Anniversary- CFT celebrates its 10th Anniversary year with the expected preservation of five farms by year-end 2012, representing the diversity of Connecticut farmland we were created to protect.

Two of the farms are located in Lebanon, the town with more protected farmland than any other. Five years ago, CFT selected Lebanon as a “focus area;” our partnership with their planning department has been very fruitful. Because these projects are still pending, we refrain from naming them.

The first farm, a 22-acre goat dairy, is a good example of the smaller farms that CFT focuses on protecting. Sale of a conservation easement on their farm has enabled the owners to purchase more land so they can grow their operation and market presence. The second farm is in the middle of a quilt of more than 3,000 acres of active farmland, 1,620 of which are permanently protected. The historic 158-acre farm provides important hayfields for a local family dairy and is prominently located on the Lebanon Town Green, the only town green in the state that is still actively farmed.

Located on Columbia-Lebanon town line, the third farm produces hay and corn for the owner’s dairy operation. Considered a town “gateway,” the 108.5-acre farm builds on 40 adjacent acres protected by the state’s Farmland Preservation Program. The fourth farm, located in Coventry, is leased to a local farmer for hay and corn production and pasture for his cattle. The 99.5-acre farm is part of a block of more than 290 acres of active farmland.

The purchase of conservation easements on these four farms is possible with funding from our partners the CT Department of Agriculture’s Farmland Preservation Program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Farm and Ranchland Protection Program as well as CFT’s Acquisition Fund. In addition, the Town of Lebanon is contributing to the preservation of the goat dairy and the Town of Coventry is assisting with funding conservation of the Coventry farm. The Town of Columbia is contributing to the easement purchase on the 108.5-acre farm.

Wike Brothers Farm in Sharon is the fifth family farm that we expect to protect this year. CFT preserved 144 acres of the 359-acre farm in 2010 and is now purchasing a conservation easement on an additional 132 acres. Owned and worked by the same family for almost 150 years, Wike Brothers Farm is one of Sharon’s oldest and largest family farms. A former dairy, the farm has evolved into a diversified operation raising free range chickens, pigs, and cattle. The farm fills a key gap in a 2,000+ acre block of protected land. Preservation of Wike Brothers Farm is funded by a grant from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s Open Space Grant Program, the Sharon Land Trust, and CFT’s Acquisition Fund.
Farm Bill and Conservation  (continued from page 1)

New England has different needs from other regions of the country when it comes to farming and a great deal of credit for defending our work must go to delegates from the six states who sit on the Agriculture Committee. Joe Courtney (CT), Chellie Pingree (ME), and Peter Welch (VT) worked well together to make sure FRPP survived committee negotiations with only slight reductions.

This win-by-not-losing (too much) success has never made it to the floor of the House for a vote. Although the Senate has approved a very similar version, House leadership declined to bring the legislation to the floor – according to Speaker John Boehner (R- OH) there were not enough votes for passage.

Both Boehner and House majority leader Eric Cantor (R-NY) have indicated that the Farm Bill may come up before the “lame duck” session of Congress.

The compromise legislation represents what most in the farmland protection community feel is a very favorable outcome under the circumstances. If the Bill isn’t brought to a vote during the lame duck session, it will likely be scrapped by the new Congress. New negotiations will be both unpredictable and urgent.

There are many other important programs folded into the Farm Bill. It remains far from perfect yet far preferable to the “hammer clause” it contains. When the Farm Bill expired on October 1st, national agriculture policy automatically reverted to two old bills: one passed in 1938 and another passed in 1949. While most of those changes won’t be felt by farmers until the spring, they represent drastic policy swings reminiscent of the Dust Bowl from which they were born: mandatory supply management, government quotas, and Federal control of production.

Connecticut dairy farmers were among the first to feel the impact, as the mandated cost of milk is currently lower than the cost of creating it and the subsidies that keep some dairies in business expired in October. That predicament could whiplash painfully on January 1st, as mid-century price calculations forced by the new/old law will drive the market price of milk dramatically up.

Representatives Bruce Braley (D-IA), Rick Berg (R-ND), Chris Gibson (R-NY), and Peter Welch (D-VT) are mounting a discharge petition campaign to force the Farm Bill to a vote. They will need to collect 218 signatures to succeed. This effort has support from such diverse quarters as the American Soybean Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the Land Trust Alliance. While no one is completely satisfied with the Bill, having it is immensely better than not having it.

If the Farm Bill fails to pass in the lame duck session, both agriculture and farmland preservation could look forward to a bleak 2013. If you want to help, you can: Call your Congressional Representatives and urge them to sign the discharge petition.

Learn more: go to wwwLandTrustAlliance.org/policy/public-funding/farm-bill
Introducing CFT Board Member, Joshua Welch

Joshua Welch, graduated from Williams College in ’86 and Columbia Business School in ’90, followed the advice of professor Jim Rogers who said, “You need an industry and a mentor.”

He found mentors in Larry & Tom Tisch, covering bank stocks in NY. In 1998 Josh opened Vicuna Advisors with business partner Matt Bruno. The pair have met with great success.

Originally from Cambridge, Massachusetts, Josh lives with his wife, Alejandra, and children Emilia (17), Nicolas (15) and Mateo (11) in Stonington, CT. “There aren’t many places between New York and Boston where you can farm close to the ocean. I first saw Stonington when I was doing a boat delivery for someone while in college. In 2002, we bought a one-hundred fifty acre defunct dairy farm here.”

What brought him to agriculture: “‘Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without!’ My first exposure to agriculture was splitting wood with my grandfather. I’m from New England and have always believed in making the most of our natural resources.”

“Our place was a typical small-scale New England dairy which simply couldn’t compete with larger grain-fed dairy operations. We have 40-50 acres of pastures, the key ingredient for successful agriculture in New England. ‘Stupidly, I thought, ‘how hard can this be?’’”

“Beginning with four animals in 2008, we now have one of the largest herds of Australian lowline Angus beef cattle in New England. This breed does exceptionally well on grass, their smaller size makes them simple to handle, and they calve easily. Our 100% grass-fed beef product is of an exceptionally high quality. In my mind sustainable agriculture = profitable agriculture; if it doesn’t turn a profit, it’s probably not sustainable. The challenge is to figure out the best use of our natural resources so that a return can be earned on a given amount of investment.”

On how he heard about CFT: “Susan Lockwood, a fellow board member, brought me to CFT. In my experience, organizations that are focused perform better than those whose attention is scattered, and CFT is focused. CFT’s accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission is important. We are here to stay and perpetuity is a long time...particularly at the end! CFT’s focus on conserving working farmland in Connecticut is unique, important and is probably the most efficient use of precious conservation dollars.”

Favorite CT food: “My favorite CT grown item is a burger from one of our steers. My wife is Peruvian, and I believe that the best food in the world is found in Peru; my favorite fruit is the avocado and favorite vegetable is whatever comes from our garden.”
You’ve heard us talk about this before – well, this time it’s for real. Just before the Celebration, CFT received official notice that it has been Accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. In early October, Nick Moore accepted that certification in a ceremony at the Land Trust Alliance Rally in Salt Lake City.

This third-party audit of our standards and practices is perpetual insurance: we’re doing things right so that we can do them forever. It’s a tangible indication to you that we’re on the right track. CFT is one of only 6 accredited Land Trust’s in CT, and one of just 181 nationwide.

“Accreditation is important because it stamps us as being conservation leaders and quality conservation partners,” Nick told us. “It makes us part of the solution instead of the problem, with a nod to the IRS. It keeps us firmly in the peer loop as far as seeing pitfalls, problems, and solutions sooner rather than later.”

To mark this achievement, you’ll start seeing the “Accredited Seal” on our materials and website. But the work is ongoing – every five years our operation will be audited again. Our promise to you is that we’ll always make the grade.

For more information about Accreditation, please visit the Land Trust Accreditation Commission at www.LandTrustAccreditation.org.
Making Cheese at Cato Corner Farm

Cato Corner Farm is a 75-acre national award winning dairy farm run by Liz MacAlister and her son Mark Gillman. They have been producing artisanal raw milk cheeses from their herd of Jersey cows since 1997. Liz sold a conservation easement on 31.5 acres of the farm’s pasture and grassland to the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2006 in the first phase of Cato Corner Farm’s preservation.

In 2008, the Connecticut Farmland Trust helped Liz and Mark complete the second and final phase of preserving Cato Corner Farm. Liz donated a conservation easement on her 75-acre farm which includes extensive pasture and woodlands, a farmstead, and a farm store. By protecting the entire farm, including the pasture and grassland already preserved by NRCS, CFT ensures that the farm’s land and agricultural infrastructure, which are both critical to the operation’s sustainability, cannot be split apart.

Volunteer photographer, Patrick Lee, visited two of our farms this summer and produced lovely images. Both sets of photos will be made into a photo essay, available soon.

You can find more of Patrick’s work on his Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OrbisPhotos
Saturday, a fierce storm ripped through Connecticut. A tornado was spotted in Waterbury and rain sheeted down and wind ripped at the trees. But by noon on Sunday, September 9, the pastures at Ashlawn farm had dried under a bluebird sky and crisp, clear air crackled with the energy of nearly 700 people -- chefs, farmers, volunteers, and guests. Winding up Bill Hill Road from the south, arrivals were treated to a beaming vista of New England farm beauty. Fields framed by stone walls recalled the long agricultural history of Lyme, a fieldstone setting for jewel-white Celebration tents.

The Celebration of Connecticut Farms is nothing if not a spectacle of taste, music, and festivity. Joining us this year were 26 chefs and their staff (including 3 food trucks), 51 farms with samples of food raw and refined, 9 wineries, 2 breweries, 1 fine spirit maker, 1 moonshiner, and 3 cheese-makers, as well as other vendors including bakers, local milk and juice providers – all from Connecticut, all dedicated to producing the best food from local farms.

Thanks to the masterful organization of John Turrene of Sustainable Food Systems, fresh local food of all kinds arrived on-the-day from all corners of our state and was turned by the chefs into a dizzying and satisfying array of incredible cuisine. The Connecticut Plein Air Painters Society and the band “Bone Dry” delivered fine art and fun music throughout the day.

Honorary Chairperson Faith Middleton of CT Public Radio deftly MC’d a brief slate of speakers, including surprise guest Steve Liesman of CNBC’s Squawk Box. Steve spoke movingly about the unquantifiable rightness of investments in our past and future and the undeniable visceral connection we feel to the land that feeds us. We were lucky to have him speak.

Steve was in town visiting his friend and our host, Chip Dalhke. Chip’s family had the foresight to protect Ashlawn in the 70s. Becoming the steward and caretaker of his landscape has worked personal good in himself, said Chip. Everything he gives to his farmland is returned to him tenfold.

That message is the essence of our work. As they say at Jones Family Farm, “Be good to the land and the land will be good to you.”

To everyone who participated in the day’s event – attendees, chefs, organizers, and especially volunteers – we thank you.

Thank You!

Many people work tirelessly to make the Celebration of Connecticut Farms so successful. We would like to give special recognition to the following for their generous gifts of time, resources, and talent for the 2012 Celebration and for their work over the past 12 years.

- Boy Scouts of America, Troop 4, Wallingford
- Bone Dry
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- John Columbus
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- Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association
- Connecticut Farmland Trust Board Members
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- Crystal Rock Bottled Water
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- John Turrene
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- Allen Zeiner
- Nunzio Corsini & Chris Bourne
- Jennifer Weymouth
- Participating chefs, farmers, and other producers
- Scotts’ Yankee Farmer LLC
- Jansky Rubbish Removal Co.
- Our generous sponsors
- Everyone who volunteered their time to make the day a success
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To further this mission, Connecticut Farmland Trust:

• Promotes farmland preservation education through presentations and outreach.
• Shares our expertise and technical knowledge to assist landowners, land trusts, towns, and officials, and sites agencedes in protecting agricultural lands.
• Works with Connecticut farmers to protect their land for agricultural use by acquiring agricultural conservation easements and farmland; and
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Our Mission: To permanently protect Connecticut’s working farmland.