



PRESERVING WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

With the unprecedented changes over the last three months and the difficulties facing many of us, the board and staff of Connecticut Farmland Trust hope you and your family are safe and healthy. The challenges of this moment remind us how important connections to each other are and how much we depend on one another, including the farm families here in Connecticut whose work is truly essential.

The Future of Farming Begins Now

When you picture a Connecticut farm, what do you see? Do you see innovative young farmers working the land? We hope you do — because that is the reality we're building together in Connecticut.

In recent months, your support has helped Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) protect two farms that will forever be available to future generations of farmers. From watching a 300-year-old farm be prepared for new farmers, to seeing land formerly slated for mining restored for agricultural use, CFT is proud to have helped the owners of these farms fulfill their visions to permanently protect their land for farming.

Preservation with Future Farmers in Mind

When asked what he sees for the future of his farm, John Wright says, "That's up to the people who come after me." Thanks to John's foresight and CFT's help, John can look to the future with confidence.

Wright Farm is a hidden gem in rural Ellington owned by John and Gloria Wright, a future-minded couple who donated the development rights of their farm to CFT. Their donation created a conservation easement on the land, which allows the Wrights to retain ownership of their farm and sell it in the future without worry that it will be taken out of agricultural use.

John's parents bought 70 acres of farmland on a dirt road with only two houses on it in 1956, for \$12,000. They raised Hereford cattle and produced eight to ten thousand pheasants a year. The farm

began to transition away from pheasants and beef cattle in the 1970s, and since then, John has continued to work the land as a hay operation.

As the decades went by, John saw the dirt road he grew up on change. He wanted to make sure his family's farm would not be targeted for a subdivision and instead would remain available as a resource to the next generation of farmers in Ellington. So, the Wrights entrusted the development rights of their farm to CFT, ensuring the land's farming heritage would be honored going forward.

"The protection of this farm preserves some of Connecticut's best agricultural soils in a rapidly developing area of the state and allows for continued farming opportunities in the years to come," said CFT's Executive Director, Elisabeth Moore. *Continued on next page.*

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— CFT's Executive Director,
Elisabeth Moore



Corn Field.

Continued

With the farm preserved, John and Gloria aim to sell the land and farmhouse to a beginner farmer so the land can continue to be cultivated. CFT has helped the Wraights enroll in the Connecticut FarmLink program to connect their property to its next farmer. The Connecticut FarmLink program, which CFT administers, is a clearinghouse to assist farmers in finding land to sell, buy and lease. Farmers and farm owners can also get support, resources, and consultations for free through the program to help them connect with the right buyer or seller.

"In Connecticut and across the country, the biggest challenge facing beginner farmers right now is access to good, affordable land," says CFT Conservation Manager Kathleen Doherty. "For the Wraights to not only preserve their land, but also to be thinking about who will be farming it after them, is very forward-thinking. This farm and its soils will be an amazing resource for the next farmer."

Preparing Pheasant Farm for First-Generation Farmers

In a twist of fate, Ken Sigfridson bought an overgrown property to mine for gravel, but ended up restoring the land to create a high-quality farm and then protecting it for the next generation — his grandchildren.

"The farm will always be there, should they want it for any agricultural endeavor that they wish to pursue," said Ken.

Back in 2006, Ken bought a 104-acre former pheasant farm, which spans land across Lisbon into Canterbury. The land was overgrown, and Ken planned to dig up the soil and gravel to sell for profit. Then the economic downturn in 2008 forced him to think about other options for the future of his land. Instead of mining it, he went the opposite route. He decided to restore the land, enrich the

soils, and clear the fields.

Ken received multiple grants from the Farmland Restoration Program, a state program that helps farmers cover the cost of clearing and improving farm fields. He has greatly expanded the tillable acreage on the property over the years. In 2016 Ken reached out to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program to help make his vision happen, and the State in turn asked CFT to be their partner in protecting the farm.

"The permanent protection of Pheasant Farm highlights the importance of ensuring agricultural farmlands will forever be available for current, and future, farmers in Eastern Connecticut," said Bryan P. Hurlburt, Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture. "It also showcases the value of our Farmland Restoration Program to bring vital acreage back into production."

Now that the farm is preserved forever, Ken is excited about the possibilities it provides to farmers in the area. His land is already an asset to the Eastern Connecticut farming community.

The farmland is leased by Tyler Brothers-Ledgebrook Farm, which uses it to grow corn for their dairy cows. Despite not coming from a farming family or personally working his land, Ken's vision and forward thinking, along with the resources of CFT and the state's Farmland Preservation Program, have restored a resource for the whole community.

Ken has six grandchildren between the ages of 4 and 13 and he wants them to have the option to work the land in the future. He's created a path that will allow them to become first-generation farmers if they choose and preserved his land for future farmers if his grandchildren decide to pursue a different path.

CFT Executive Director Elisabeth Moore said the Trust is pleased to once again partner with the State of Connecticut and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service to protect another family farm.

"Pheasant Farm is just the type of farm that CFT wants to protect. The high-quality soils and location in active agricultural communities make it a high priority for both us and our partners. It is a pleasure to work with landowners like Ken who are so committed to protecting their land for future generations."

Events

For the safety of everyone — farmers, guests, volunteers, and CFT staff — CFT will not host farm tours or farm dinners in 2020. Please stay tuned for virtual and online events.

"The farm will always be there, should they want it for any endeavor that they wish to pursue."

— Ken Sigfridson of Pheasant Farm



Sigfridson Farm on a misty June day.



PHOTO: CANVA

A farm ready for the next generation.



Farmland after Preservation: New Farmer Starts His Own Dairy

"I'd like to think that there will always be a place for small farms," says Ethan Coutu of Maplecroft Farm in Morris. Luckily, there will be. Ethan is a young farmer carrying on the legacy of the nearly 300-year-old farm, which was preserved by CFT in partnership with the Morris Land Trust in 2017.

The 138-acre Farnham Farm has been passed down to a single family member for eight generations since 1735. The farm, currently owned by Anne Howson Fellows, sits amidst a patchwork of agricultural fields intersected by the well-known Mattatuck Trail.

Anne, who is not a farmer, was "very excited about the future of the farm" when she was in negotiations with Ethan Coutu to begin dairy farming and living on the property. Now Ethan, a Morris native and graduate of the SUNY Morrisville Dairy Management Program, leases the farm and is investing his skills in the property.

"I milk my own twenty cows and work full time at Arethusa," says Ethan, referring to Arethusa Dairy in Litchfield. At Arethusa Farm, Ethan oversees the heifer barn and the dry cows. He takes care of cows between the ages of five months and five years, ensuring that they are fed, cleaned, and living their best lives — just like the cows he manages at home on Farnham Farm. Under Ethan's management, the land is now known as Maple Croft Farm.

At just 22, Ethan has his whole farming career ahead of him. For now, he hopes that he will be able to keep growing his skills while developing his dairy operation on Maple Croft Farm.



Justified and Vera, two dairy cows at Maplecroft Farm

PHOTO: ETHAN COUTU



PHOTO: CFT

COVID-19 Resources

How can I support local farmers now? Where can I find help if I'm a farmer?

During this unprecedented time, people are looking for ways to support local farmers, farm businesses, and emergency food relief. Farmers need information on financial, employment, and other issues related to operating their businesses during this pandemic.

Many organizations throughout our region and state, including CFT and our partners, are coming together to support farmers and maintain emergency food supplies.

CFT has a list of some of these efforts and resources on www.CTFarmland.org under the COVID-19 Resources tab.

More Ways You Can Support CFT

You can help protect family farms in Connecticut in many ways.

Workplace Giving

If you work for, or are retired from, one of the many companies with a matching gift plan, your contribution to Connecticut Farmland Trust could have **TWICE the impact**. Your employer may match your gift dollar for dollar — at no cost to you. Ask your employer or Human Resources department to see if they can magnify the impact of your giving.

Recurring Monthly Giving

You can opt to make a recurring monthly donation to CFT. You select the amount and it will be automatically charged to your credit card. You can stop at any time. Monthly donations provide steady financial support to CFT, which is especially important now. To sign up, go to the donate tab on our website (www.CTFarmland.org).

Enhanced Federal Charitable Deduction

The CARES Act expands charitable giving incentives for donors who make cash contributions during 2020 to qualified charities like CFT:

- Individuals who do not itemize can claim an above-the-line deduction of up to \$300 (\$600 for a married couple) for such contributions; and
- Individuals who itemize can deduct such contributions up to 100% of adjusted gross income.

Note that contributions to donor advised funds are not eligible. This is not tax advice. Please consult your tax advisor for guidance on how you may benefit from these incentives.

We thank you for your ongoing support and look forward to securing even more of Connecticut's farmland for future generations.



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PHOTO: CANVA

You Can Help Your Local Farmers

Many Farmers Are Being Hit Hard By The Shutdown.
We Encourage You To Support Local Farm Businesses
And Buy Directly From Farmers Near You.

We Need Each Other.

Learn More At <http://ctfarmland.org/site/covid-19-resources/>