



Long Table Farm, Lyme

Small Farm, Big Impact

Next generation farmers innovate, tap into conserved land

“A lot of people get into farming because they are passionate,” says Baylee Drown of Long Table Farm in Lyme, Connecticut, “you need to create a sustainable business in order to survive.”

Baylee and her husband, Ryan Quinn, “Quinn,” combine passion with strategy. After leasing a 4.6-acre parcel of farmland on Beaver Brook Road for a few years, they purchased it with a clear business plan in mind, one that relied on the land being conserved with an agricultural easement.

Buying the land at its agricultural value, rather than the development value, made ownership possible.

Conserved land has become a key tool for many young farmers. In Connecticut, where farmland is some of the most expensive in the country and infrequently comes up

“We could not have afforded the purchase of the farm without the easement.”

– **Baylee Drown**
Long Table Farm

for sale, purchasing conserved land offers a rare opportunity.

Agricultural conservation easements — voluntary, long-term agreements that protect land for farming — help keep farmland in production and within reach for new farmers.

Baylee and Quinn’s farming story begins with Deb and Rob Hornbake, who purchased the parcel in 2012 to create a wholesome food producing farm on a former hayfield.

Motivated by a desire to preserve farmland to support young farmers, and provide healthy food for their community, the Hornbakes worked with Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) to conserve the land in 2017. They began leasing it to Baylee and Quinn in 2015, creating the path for Long Table Farm to take root.

With support from CFT and the generosity of our donors, the Hornbakes protected the land, with feedback and guidance on the easement from farmers Baylee and Quinn, ensuring the easement would work for a viable farm operation. Baylee and Quinn

continued inside

A Bit of Joy on a Blustery Day

It's been a cold spring. Heavy rains. Strong winds. Cold snaps. More wind. I don't know about you, but in April, I was wondering — will spring ever really come?

That's why being out on a farm was exactly what I needed.

Tromping through the mud, listening to the wind rattle the greenhouse plastic and birds calling overhead, I was reminded of something: for me, farms are landscapes of hope.

Inside the greenhouse, spring had already arrived. Tiny shoots of tomatoes and peppers were starting to push up — leaves still too delicate to face the cold but readying themselves for the season ahead. Summer's harvest, just waiting for its chance to take root.

And that's what gave me pause.

Conserving farmland is a lot like growing those seedlings. It starts with a quiet idea, then needs just the right conditions to take root.

For some families, that moment comes when they're passing the land to the next generation. For others, there is no next generation yet and they want to make sure the land stays available, a promise to the future.

Either way, it's an act of hope.

Each spring, new seedlings. Each year, more farmers reach out, looking for help to conserve the land they love.

And that's only possible because of you.

Conserving farmland isn't just about soil and crops. It's about honoring the past, sustaining the present, and planting something lasting for the future.

Thanks to you, we're protecting more than acres. Together, we're protecting a way of life — and offering a glimpse of the joy these farms can bring to all of us, season after season.

Warmly,

Elisabeth Moore
Executive Director



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purchased the land at its agricultural value, rather than the development value, and are now growing food, building community, and stewarding the soil for the next generation.

Long Table Farm is a model of innovation and thoughtful land use.

With just a few acres, Baylee and Quinn run a diversified business that includes farm market sales and a thriving Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

They also lease land from the nearby Lyme Land Trust to expand production. “With intensive, regenerative practices, you can produce an immense amount of food on very little acreage, while building biodiversity and soil health,” Baylee said.

The CSA program is a major success, in part because they know their customers. “You have to give people what they want and are familiar with,” said Baylee, “and also keep it interesting—no more than one weird thing a week.”

They’ve made the most of Connecticut’s unique geography — a blend of urban, suburban, and

rural areas — which supports strong direct-to-consumer sales. “Other states don’t have this dynamic geography — farmers here can benefit from diverse soil types and a resilient landscape rich in flood-preventing swamps and bogs,” Baylee noted.

Their innovation also extends to sustainable practices. “Our farming practices are regenerative for soils, making them better than when we arrived,” Baylee said. “Our livestock are a source of pest control and fertility. Our composting operations draw in the entire Lyme community, and all our practices help us eliminate the need for any synthetic chemicals. When your soil is healthy, your plants are healthy.”

They’ve also tapped into solar energy, an imminent solar installation powering their farm and an electric truck.

High tunnels extend the growing season by trapping warmth from the sun earlier and later in the year. “You have to get good quickly at the things you are already good at, and keep innovating,” Quinn said. “After all, you only get maybe three dozen tries at getting it right in your lifetime.”



Conserved farmland gave Baylee and Quinn a viable path to ownership. They’ve turned that opportunity into a thriving, forward-thinking farm.

Baylee and Quinn’s work prioritizes soil health, biodiversity, and climate resilience—all rooted in a deeper mission: to serve their community and care for the land.

Conserved farmland gave them a viable path to ownership, and they’ve turned that opportunity into a thriving, forward-thinking farm.

Our challenge now is to increase the pace of conservation in Connecticut so that other farmers, throughout the state, can purchase and care for the land, for future generations.

Farmland at Risk, You Make the Difference

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Farmland protection has perhaps never been more important than it is now. From 1985 to 2015, according to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the state experienced a loss of approximately 45,000 acres of agricultural fields, representing about 16% of its farmland. This equates to an average annual loss of around 1,500 acres during that 30-year period.

As concerning as this is, the trend has continued. Between 2017 and 2022, Connecticut experienced an additional decline of farmland, losing approximately 460 farms and reducing the total number of farms to just over 5,050—a decrease of about 8%.

Now Is the Time to Take Action

A report by the American Farmland Trust suggests that if development is left to business as usual, Connecticut could lose up to a total of 55,000 acres of farmland by 2040. This projection underscores the need for state and local action. With federal funding in flux, the state’s farmland protection funding — and the support of communities and donors — are what will make the difference.

Conserving one’s farm is a big decision. We can’t assist local farmers without you.



Waldingfield Farm Conservation Laid the Ground for Future Success

In the rolling hills of Washington, Connecticut, Damaris and John Horan made a decision four years ago that will ripple across generations.

They chose to preserve 78 acres of their family farmland — a bold commitment at a time when development pressures loom large for most or all family farms in Connecticut. That act of conservation wasn't just about protecting land. It was about planting the seeds for the future they believe in.

The story really began three decades earlier with their oldest son, Dan, who returned from college in 1990 full of energy and ideas. Inspired by a passion for organic food and sustainability, Dan began farming just a quarter-acre of vegetables and coined the farm's now-iconic motto: "Listen to your mother, eat your vegetables."

Patrick and Quincy, the Horans' twin sons, joined in during summer breaks, initially drawn by the fun and freedom. But over time,

something deeper took root. "You really feel like you're making a difference here," Quincy says.

Today, the seeds of grit, determination, and conservation have blossomed into *Waldingfield Farm*, one of the state's most respected organic farms.

The Horans' conservation decision will prove critical for future farmers, too.

As Connecticut's farmland disappears at one of the highest rates in the country, land prices have skyrocketed. "Access to affordable farmland is the single biggest challenge for young farmers," Patrick explains. "Without preserved land, it would've been nearly impossible for us to build what we have."

But make no mistake, success didn't come easily.

Learning and Innovating: Making the Impossible Happen

"We had no idea how to farm when we started," Patrick admits, as he looks back more than 30 years. The brothers had to learn everything from the ground up, weathering storms both literal and economic.

"Farming in Connecticut means competing with states that can grow cheaper, year-round," he says. "But we found our niche. Our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model and local market presence have made our farm viable and resilient."

They now grow food for hundreds of families, as well as for multiple farmers' markets, and are an integral part of the community.

For the Horans, conserving their farm isn't just about keeping



development at bay. It's about sustaining a way of life and securing local food for future generations. That's true for many of the farms that Connecticut Farmland Trust has conserved over the past 23 years.

It often takes years for a farm family to decide if conserving their land is right for them. There are important questions to be answered, conversations about future goals and how to enhance the soil and farm viability. It's a process

that can't be rushed. Our staff is only able to spend that time with these farm families thanks to the contributions of our community, people like you.

"Once farmland is gone, it doesn't come back," Patrick observes.

"Preserving land means giving the next generation a fighting chance. It's how communities remain connected to the land and their food."

From squash to tomatoes, the decision to grow everything organically came from both personal values and the pragmatic demands of running a farm business.



Dick and Sally Jaynes
Broken Arrow Farm

Is Conservation Right for Someone You Know?

Waldingfield Farm stands today not only as a model of agricultural innovation and determination, but also proof of what's possible when land is protected and removes unrelenting development pressure for new farmers. For aspiring farmers, and for families wondering what legacy they want to leave, farmland conservation can make that possible.

If you—or someone you know—want to reduce your federal and state income taxes, protecting your land can help. You would continue to own and manage the land and can sell or bequeath the land knowing that your conservation agreement (conservation easement) will run with the land forever. We are available to discuss the details, please contact Elisabeth Moore at emoore@ctfarmland.org or 860-247-0202, ext. 224.

Connecticut is losing farmland at a rate of more than 2,300 acres/year.

But there's good news.

Thank you to farmers who have taken action with CFT to conserve their land. We look forward to working with more in the coming year.

Town	# of farms	# of acres protected
Ashford	1	212
Berlin	1	41
Bethany	1	133
Bethlehem/Washington	1	61
Bolton	2	89
Branford	1	37
Canaan	1	37
Canterbury	1	184
Canton	1	27
Colchester	1	75
Columbia	1	113
Cornwall	2	64
Coventry	2	108
Durham	1	43
East Haddam	1	55
Easton	1	37
Ellington	2	292
Enfield	1	147
Glastonbury	1	16
Griswold	1	86
Hamden	1	54
Lebanon	14	818
Lisbon/Canterbury	1	104
Lyme	1	5
Meriden	1	76
Middletown	1	41
Morris	1	137
New Hartford	2	280
New Milford	1	44
Newtown	1	31
North Canaan	2	202
North Stonington	1	69
Norwich/Franklin	1	181
Salem	2	282
Sharon	1	268
Southbury	3	277
Stafford	1	24
Stonington	3	181
Thompson	1	123
Vernon	1	49
Vernon/Tolland	1	21
Voluntown	1	498
Washington	2	129
Washington/Woodbury	1	64
Watertown	2	340
Watertown/Bethlehem	1	40
Woodstock	1	13

6,208 total acres preserved



A Lifetime of Loving Farms, Conserving it for the Next Generation

Dick and Peggy Ann Kuss didn't grow up on farms — but that didn't stop them from becoming farmers.

In their late 30s, the couple shifted careers from running a school bus business to pursuing Dick's lifelong dream of working the land.

"From a young age, I knew that I wanted to farm," Dick said. The Kusses balanced their business with farming—growing hay during the summer and gradually acquiring farmland across Woodbury and Bethlehem.

Peggy passed away in 2021 and Dick continues to honor her love of the farm by continuing their high-end hay operation and is committed to preserving the land they built together.

Over the past several years, Dick has already protected four parcels of farmland, with more in the pipeline. For the most recent two parcels, we worked alongside the state of Connecticut to secure matching funds from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and now share stewardship of those permanently protected lands.

"Dick is a committed and conservation-minded farmer who works tirelessly to maintain his farm," said our Executive Director, Elisabeth Moore. "Thanks to his foresight, these lands will stay in agriculture and could one day support the next generation of farmers."

We believe Connecticut has a unique opportunity to preserve farmland that not only honors a community's agricultural legacy but also creates space for new and innovative farmers to grow. While land access remains one of the biggest challenges for beginning farmers, landowners like Dick—and supporters like you—are helping change that.

"There are a lot of young people with an interest in farming," Dick said. "But they can't farm because there's no land available for them. Maybe young people can use this farm in the future."

With federal funding currently in flux, we are assessing local funding and state funding options, including community donations and donated conservation easements.

Over the next several years we will be assisting local farmers throughout the state to conserve additional lands, identify opportunities for innovation and farm viability, and promote our state's agricultural economy. It's community support that makes this possible and will keep Connecticut's agricultural future growing strong.

You Can Help Conserve Farmland

Sometimes it can seem overwhelming. What can one person do in the face of accelerating development pressure? How can a non-farmer assist a farmer or aspiring farmer? What can be done in the face of extreme weather and national challenges?

The good news is that everyone can play an important part. Sometimes it's leasing your land to a farmer or conserving it. Other times, it may be as simple as providing a tax-deductible contribution to increase the pace of farmland conservation throughout the state.

Tax-friendly Ways to Give

- Contribute a one-time special gift, including by check or online. You may find that donating **appreciated securities**, like stocks, help you avoid capital gains tax.
- Make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your **IRA** and reduce income tax on your required minimum distribution.
- **Give monthly** to make an impact all year long, while supporting your budget. People contribute anywhere from \$5 to \$500 or more per month.

“Giving monthly was easy to set up and it feels good every month to see that I’m protecting more farmland. Because I do it through my work, my employer matches me 100%!”

– **Aimee Hoben**, donor for 20 years and employee at The Hartford

Cash-free, Tax-savvy Ways to Give

- Include a gift to Connecticut Farmland Trust in your **will or living trust**. For bequest language and more information, Kimball Cartwright at kcartwright@ctfarmland.org.
- Name Connecticut Farmland Trust as a beneficiary of your **retirement plan, life insurance policy, or financial account**.
- Recommend a gift to Connecticut Farmland Trust from your **donor-advised fund (DAF)** or name Connecticut Farmland Trust as a successor of interest.

Other Ways to Give

Please visit our website at ctfarmland.org, or call Kimball Cartwright at 860-247-0202, ext. 223 or email kcartwright@ctfarmland.org to brainstorm about other ways you can help, including gifts of land or underwriting a program.



Business Leaders Show Up, Make a Difference

Community wellbeing. Local food.

A strong agricultural economy. Cultural heritage

All across the state, businesses recognize the importance of conserving farms and connecting people to those farms.

Thanks to these businesses, we are able to help local farm families to explore conservation options, support local land trusts that are advancing farmland protection,

and develop partnerships to ensure the future viability of farming in CT.

If you know of a business that would like to help sponsor a program or join us in conserving farms, please be in touch with Kimball Cartwright at kcartwright@ctfarmland.org.

Please join us in thanking the following businesses for their 2025 support:

- Cork and Antler Club
- Farm Credit East
- Harney & Sons Fine Teas
- Long Table Farm
- Northwest Community Bank
- United Ag & Turf
- White Flower Farm

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**YOU CAN
PROTECT
FARMLAND
FOREVER**

with a gift in your will.

We are inspired by your stories and reasons for wanting to protect farmland. Please contact Kimball Cartwright anytime for a confidential discussion regarding how you can protect CT farmland forever.

You're Invited to... OUR UPCOMING EVENTS



BAYLEE DROWN, LONG TABLE FARM

A Farm Tour You Won't Forget

June 7 • 12:30-2:00 pm
Long Table Farm, Lyme

Innovative always, "Farmer Baylee" shares how she has built systems at her small farm to mitigate climate change and yield an abundant harvest.



BRIAN WILCOX-CONNECTICUTPHOTO.COM

Love the Land

September 20 • 2:00-4:00 pm
Sharon

Join us in the beautiful Northwest Corner for an on-farm harvest celebration that will feature locally grown food and great company. Save the Date!

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Visit our website CTFarmland.org to learn more details.