



April 26, 2018

Connecticut General Assembly
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Kennedy, Senator Miner, Representative Demicco, Ranking Member Stephen Harding, and members of the Environment Committee:

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is the only national organization dedicated specifically to protecting our country's farmland and rangeland, promoting sound farming practices and keeping farmers on the land. Since 1980, AFT has been the nation's leading voice for agricultural conservation. We do this through an innovative mix of research, policy advocacy, direct land protection, and programming—in collaboration with a wide variety of public and private partners.

AFT supports the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's efforts to engage in Buy/Protect/Sell - type farmland protection projects, and to seek a statutory clarification of its authority to do so. We believe this statutory change will give the Department needed flexibility to work with land conservation organizations on projects that both protect productive farmland and help to transfer farms and farmland to the next generation of Connecticut farmers.

Buy/Protect/Sell approaches have been successfully used by land trusts in conjunction with state farmland preservation programs elsewhere in New England and across the country. American Farmland Trust is working to encourage USDA's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program to support such approaches with its funding.

As the former President of Maine Farmland Trust, I led the development of MFT's Buy/Protect/Sell tool, which has resulted in over 35 highly successful projects. This tool has been invaluable, not just from Maine's older farmers and landowners who want to see their farm legacy continue, but to beginning farmers, since most of the properties are sold to new farmers. This tool also provides a way to reconfigure larger farms into smaller parcels that are more affordable to new farmers.

Connecticut is fortunate to have Connecticut Farmland Trust, which is interested in partnering with the Department of Agriculture on Buy/Protect/Sell projects. AFT stands ready to assist CFT and the Department with these projects as needed, and we are pleased that the Department is pursuing this important, additional flexibility. I encourage the Committee to support this statutory change.

Sincerely,

John Piotti
President & CEO