



Addressing Climate Change Through Connecticut's Working Lands

Climate destabilization threatens lives, livelihoods, food security, natural resources, and our economy across the State and Nation. Farmers, especially beginning and Black, Indigenous, and farmers of color, have been on the edge of financial viability, and disruptions to the food system during the pandemic hit them hard. The significant and undeniable changes in weather patterns are impacting growing conditions, in addition to the increased threat of natural disasters, which can destroy a producer's entire operation. At the same time, our farmers and the farmland they manage are a key part of the state's fight against climate change. Farmland soils and plants store carbon, manage stormwater, provide a more stable and just food system, and diversify our economy. Climate change is no longer a distant problem. There is no more time to waste.

The Solution

[Support SB 243: An Act Concerning Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices.](#)

If passed, this bill will update the CT Department of Agriculture's Farmland Restoration Grant Program Statute (Sec. 22-6c) to do the following:

- Change the name to the Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Grant Program.
- Update to the program to both pay and reimburse farmers who implement Climate-Smart Agricultural and Forestry Practices as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Priority funding for socially disadvantaged producers and new and beginning farmers as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Expand the program to pay service providers to provide technical assistance, distribute grant funds, establish farm equipment sharing programs, and coordinate programs to increase the number of farmers who are implementing climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resource Conservation Services.
- Remove the cap on how much funding the CT Department of Agriculture Commissioner can adequately reimburse or pay farmers who implement farmland restoration and climate resiliency practices.

Funding Opportunities:

Request for the legislature to invest a total of \$10 million in Climate Smart Agriculture utilizing current American Rescue Act Funding and general Bond funds.

Fast Facts

- Connecticut's 381,539 acres of cropland, pasture, and farm woodlands provide food and feed, habitat for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds, and maintain air quality.
- According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, woodlands represent about 29 percent of the state's total land in farms and can often not be easily separated from the total farm unit.
- Less than 3% of CT's producers are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), while the state's overall population is 20% BIPOC.
- If 100% of Connecticut farms incorporated better management practices that had the potential to remove carbon from the atmosphere including non-till, legume cover cropping, and spreading more compost, it would remove 94,902 (MTCO_{2e}) from the atmosphere or be the equivalent of taking 20,500 cars off the road annually.
- 31% of producers in the state are 65 or older while 27% percent of farmers in the state are young and beginning farmers.

“If U.S. farmers adopted cover crops on 25% of our cropland and conservation tillage on 100% of tillable acres, we could potentially reduce one-quarter of the total U.S. agricultural emissions.”

Dr. Jennifer Moore, soil health expert, USDA-ARS scientist, and prior climate director of American Farmland Trust, testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does the United States Department of Agriculture -- Natural Resources Conservation Service define Climate-Smart Agriculture?

USDA-NRCS has a comprehensive list of practices that qualify as Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices. The list of practices can be found on their website [here](#).

Can American Rescue Act Plan funding be used to invest in improving the infrastructure of our farmland soils?

Yes, according to the U.S. Department of Treasury Interim Final Rule governments are given a “wide latitude to identify investments in water and sewer infrastructure that are of the highest priority for their own communities,” and specifies that projects on privately-owned infrastructure are eligible. States like Vermont, Massachusetts, and California have allocated ARPA funds towards climate-smart agriculture and soil health investments.

To learn more about how ARPA funds can be allocated to climate smart agriculture, [visit our website](#).

For More Information

Please visit Governor Lamont's Council on [Climate Change Phase 1 Report](#)

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