

Chapter 6: Agriculture and Farmland Preservation

A. Overview

Hartford County contains 44,720 acres of farmland dispersed across 739 farms which provide fresh food and other agricultural products for the region's residents and visitors (*Source: Census of Agriculture, County Summary Highlights: 2022*). In addition to the open space conservation methods previously mentioned, conserving and increasing the inventory of local and **protected farmland** in Connecticut is also of upmost importance. **Protected farmland refers to agricultural land that is restricted from non-agricultural development.** Limiting land uses on parcels with prime farmland soils (and parcels determined to be of local and statewide importance) not only provides economic security within the agricultural sector which is one of the top contributors to the state and local economy, but the preservation of these lands encourages agritourism, strengthens community ties, and maintains scenic and environmental resources.

East Granby has a long agricultural history, and many of the farms that exist today signal to the town's strong farming heritage. Various local farms provide the community with scenic value and access to locally grown fresh produce. Among the many farms in town as of the year 2026, Oxen Hill Farm - CSA, Kyle's Awesome Farm, Old Orchard Farm, Mullai Acres Homestead, Trusz Farms, Young Farms, Newgate Farms - CSA and Brignole Vineyards, help maintain East Granby's farming traditions and agricultural landscape.

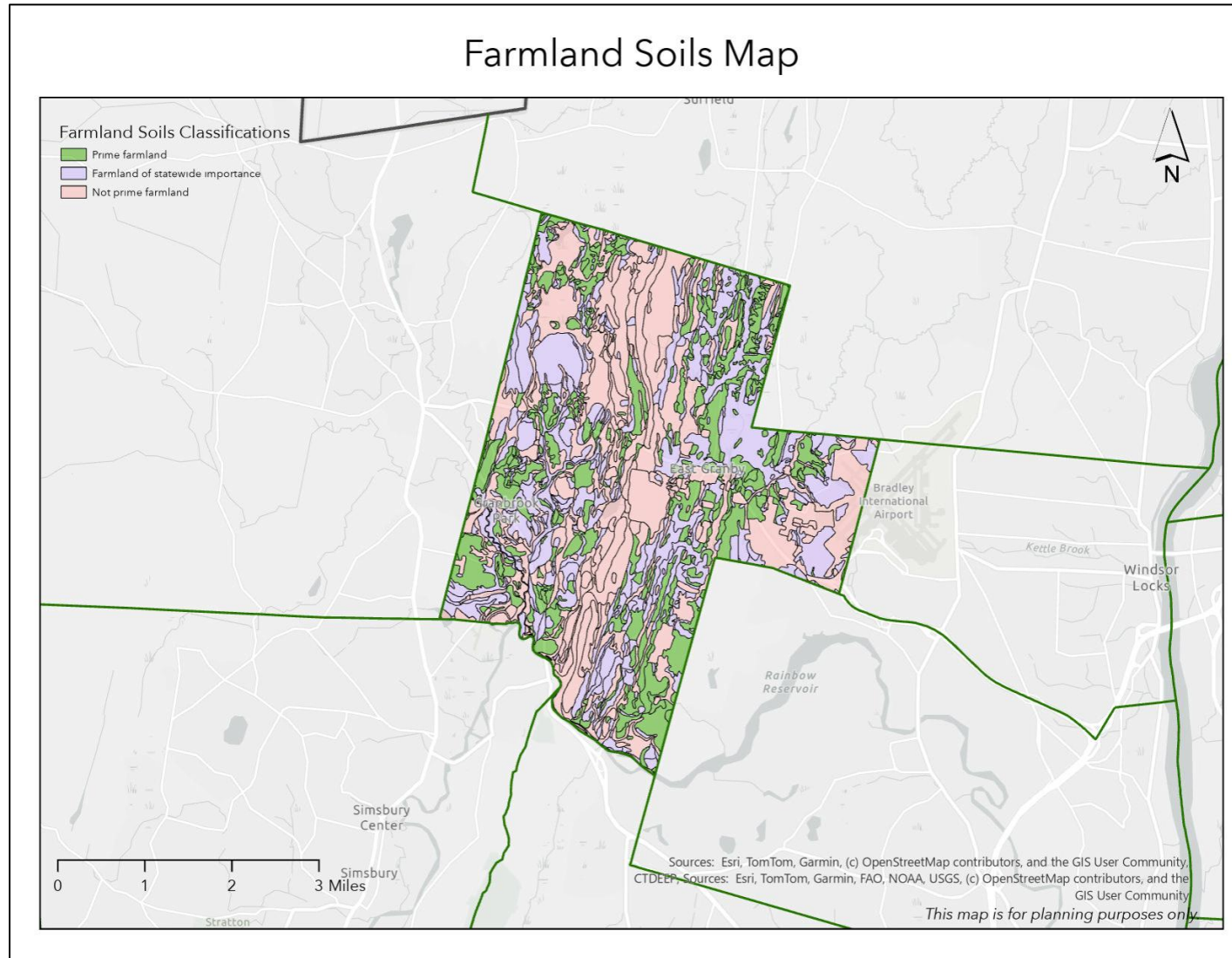
B. Local Farm Highlights

Oxen Hill Farm is a large family-owned and operated organic produce and flower farm located within East Granby and Suffield (*Source: [Our Story - Oxen Hill Farm](#)*). The property is located in Suffield with land extending into East Granby on Griffin Road. Oxen Hill Farm has been in operation since approximately the mid-1800s or shortly thereafter and is currently operated by the 11th generation of the Griffin family. The farm is a USDA Certified Organic vegetable farm that operates through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. CSA farms form mutually beneficial relationships between growers and consumers, leading to a strengthened sense of community ownership over the farmland. While growers benefit from a reliable customer base and upfront financial support, consumers secure access to fresh, locally grown produce and form stronger connections to local farmlands. In addition to growing vegetables, the farm also cultivates flowers, and offers a "Pick Your Own Flower Experience" as well as pre-made bouquets. The farm



Oxen Hill Farm

also supplies local grocery stores, restaurants and farmers' markets. Additionally, the farm is Certified Organic, meaning its produce is grown without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and genetically- modified organisms (Source: [USDA-Organic - Oxen Hill Farm](#)). The farm is currently in its fourteenth season of holding Organic produce certification and seventeenth season of organic vegetable management practices.





Oxen Hill Farm

Kyle's Awesome Farm is a small, family-run local egg-farm on Turkey Hills Road that provides fresh eggs to the community (Source: [EDC-Spring-Summer-List.pdf](#)). Nearby, Old Orchard Farm is a 'Choose & Cut' tree farm that gives residents and visitors the opportunity to harvest their own Christmas trees. The farm grows several species including Blue Spruce, White Spruce, Fraser Fir, and Concolor Fir trees,



and operates on weekends beginning the weekend after Thanksgiving (Source: [Old Orchard Farm - CCTGA](#)). These kinds of farms, also known as "cut-your-own" Christmas tree farms contribute a range of social, economic and environmental benefits to their communities. In addition to supporting family traditions and seasonal recreation, they contribute to the local economy through the creation of seasonal employment opportunities and benefit the environment by providing wildlife habitat and preserving green space, as the trees are replanted and renewed annually.

Old Orchard Farm

Mullai Acres Homestead is a local farm operation located on Newgate Road in East Granby that offers fresh eggs, micro-greens and other small-scale farm goods.

Young Farms is another longstanding farm in town that is located on Route 189 and has carried a variety of crops including carrots, squash, sweet corn, green beans, grains, and more (Source: [Young Farms](#)).

Trusz Farms, located on South Main Street, also represents an important part of the town's agricultural history. Now recognized as a "Historical Homestead", the property was once a thriving tobacco farm from the 1930s through the 1950s. Today, the farm serves the community through its farm stand, which offers fresh vegetables and other products including corn, tomatoes, squash, zucchini, garlic, peppers, jalapenos and fresh eggs (Source: [Farm Stand | Trusz Farms](#)).

Brignole Vineyards, is a family-owned vineyard located in town that has been in operation for approximately 15 years. The property spans over 480-acres and the vineyard serves as a family-friendly destination and supports the town's agritourism offerings through its wine tastings and other visitor experiences (Source: [Brignole Vineyards | Connecticut vineyard | 103 Hartford Ave, East Granby, CT 06026, USA](#)).

Newgate Farms, also operating under a CSA model, is a family-owned farm that has been in operation since 1933; and has agricultural land in Suffield and East Granby. Although it began as a wholesale and pick-your-own farm, the business has grown into a retail farmer's market agribusiness that provides a variety of fruits and vegetables, cut flowers, and specialty goods such as tomato sauce, soups and salsas, honey and maple syrup (Source: [Newgate Farms - Fresh Connecticut Farm Produce, CSA & Farmers Markets , CT Grown](#)).



Brignole Vineyards

C. Local Initiatives

Other important initiatives that connect residents with local agriculture include the East Granby Community Garden and the East Granby Farmers Market. The Community Garden, located on North Main Street provides residents with the opportunity to grow their own vegetables, flowers and herbs in a shared garden space. Plots are reserved for East Granby residents only and are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

The East Granby Farmers Market runs for approximately six weeks each season, taking place at the East Granby Public Library parking lot on Center Street. The market features a variety of locally grown and produced goods from farmers and artisans in the area. Community-oriented activities including scavenger hunts, and other interactive programming is also showcased. The farmers market provides residents and visitors with their pick of fresh herbs and vegetables including spinach, lettuce, kale, radishes, beets, mint, chives, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, peas, greens beans, garlic, green onions, potatoes and turnips.

Together, the Community Garden and the Farmers Market foster opportunities for greater community collaboration while improving access to fresh and nutritious foods for residents. Efforts like these in addition to encouraging participation in state programs will help preserve valuable farmlands in town. The Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) is one of two programs run by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoA) that is dedicated to preserving farmlands across the state. By partnering with landowners, the Department of Agriculture acquires development rights to agricultural properties and ensures these parcels are permanently protected from non-agricultural development. Participation in these programs is voluntary, and the land remains privately owned and still contributes to the local tax base. Additionally, the Community Farms Preservation Program (CFPP) protects smaller farms. Farms in this program typically contain less than 30 acres of cropland but are active in food or fiber production and are of statewide or local importance. In 2024, the FRPP and CFPP preserved more than 50,000 acres of farmland statewide (*Source: Connecticut Department of Agriculture*). Over the next decade, encouraging participation in programs like this can be instrumental in encouraging private landowners of farmland to secure higher levels of protection on their land.

Another notable statewide farmland preservation initiative is the CT Farmlink Program which provides crucial connections between generations of farmland owners in an effort to maintain productive farmlands statewide. The program provides succession planning resources to farmers and farmland owners to help facilitate the transfer of farmland from current or retiring landowners to the next generation. Spreading awareness of and encouraging participation in programs that encourage the sustainable management of agricultural lands in East Granby can greatly benefit and preserve the town's natural environment while supporting local agribusiness and should be a priority of farmland preservation efforts over the next ten years.

Additionally, the CT Department of Agriculture supports local farmers through the Connecticut Grown (CT Grown) program. CT Grown is a multifaceted initiative that promotes the consumption and accessibility of fruits, vegetables and agricultural products produced in the

state through various initiatives in local, state and international markets. In East Granby, Brignole Vineyards, Old Orchard Farms, and Newgate Farms participate in CT Grown. The protection and promotion of the farms in East Granby provides opportunities for its people to connect and share locally grown and sourced goods, and farmlands in town should be a key focus of conservation effort looking ahead. Ensuring the town's zoning regulations continue to support agricultural and farmland preservation, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas, is key. Recently the Town has established an Agricultural Impact Commission to . Lastly, these efforts will be instrumental in supporting the community's natural stormwater management infrastructure.

D. The Value of Agriculture

Many Connecticut towns are interested in preserving their agricultural heritage and exploring new ways of expanding agriculture and supporting access to local agricultural products. Supporting local agriculture can strengthen community resources, improve environmental sustainability, and expand access to healthy, locally sourced foods. An additional benefit, which is often overlooked, is that agricultural lands and other open spaces typically have a net positive impact on a town's budget because they require little in the way of services. The Town of East Granby protects agricultural land and other open spaces through Public Act 63-490 (PA 490), Connecticut's use-value assessment law (Connecticut General Statutes §12-107a through 12-107f). PA 490 allows a town to assess a qualified property's value based on that land's present use, as opposed to "highest and best" use, which results in lower property taxes. East Granby has over 122 properties, some of which may not be operating as active farms, registered under the P.A. 490 use-value law as Agricultural properties.

While the Town of East Granby has not adopted a "Right to Farm" ordinance as allowed by [CGA § 19a-341](#), the Town's recently established Agricultural Impact Commission assists in promoting and maintaining agricultural practices within the community. A Right-to-Farm ordinance reinforces that agricultural or farming operations are not deemed a nuisance, recognizing the importance of protecting our local farms as communities and housing continue to grow. With support from the town, opportunities to support agriculture, develop agriculture-based businesses, and protect farmland by fostering agricultural uses and related activities in East Granby can be greatly increased.

E. Opportunities

According to the 2022 U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Census, Connecticut lost 919 farms between 2012 and 2022, falling from 5,977 to 5,058 (an 18% decrease). In 2022, Hartford County had approximately 739 farm operations with total sales generated by these operations coming in around \$98.2 million. The average farm size is approximately 61 acres.

Farms in Connecticut are trending smaller and with more diversified crops than in the past. Increased support for modern farming practices such as vertical farming (which allows for year round production) or digital irrigation systems (which save water by using

technology to optimize irrigation schedules based on environmental conditions) should be more distinctly recognized by the community in order to continue to support local farmers. The current zoning regulations should be reviewed with the assistance of the Connecticut Farm Bureau to ensure they facilitate farming operations and encourage their growth. Guidance can be provided regarding acreage requirements for farm animals, best management practices for the keeping of livestock and crops, manure management and more.

F. Goals

1. Promote sustainable agricultural practices.
2. Advocate support for local farms.
3. Identify issues which affect local farms such as business education, promotion via local events and social media, providing access to State information regarding grant programs, start-up assistance and development rights opportunities.
4. Adjust Zoning Regulations to promote Agricultural Practices and still reduce conflict with residential properties.

G. Actions

1. Consider a Right to Farm Ordinance.
2. Review Zoning Regulations to promote agriculture with the assistance from the Connecticut Farm Bureau.
3. Encourage the purchase of locally grown products by continuing to support the Farmer's Market and spotlighting local farms.
4. Encourage a stronger sense of community with local farms and Town Government.
5. Create a list of all local farms to be highlighted on the Town's website with information concerning what products they sell or produce and how the community can support them.
6. Promote the use of the Connecticut Farmlink Program.