



Farm Bill Priorities 2025

VISION

American Farmland Trust (AFT) has a vision for the future of agriculture: our best agricultural land remains available for production; farmers and ranchers operate thriving, resilient businesses that support strong rural communities; the agriculture sector offers opportunity for new farmers; and producers are supported in implementing conservation practices. This future is possible, but there are many challenges to overcome.

CHALLENGES

Farmland loss threatens the future of American agriculture. AFT's *Farms Under Threat* research shows that from 2001 to 2016, 11 million acres of agricultural land were paved over, fragmented, or converted to uses that jeopardize agriculture. It also indicates that without additional policy interventions, the U.S. is projected to lose 18.4 million acres more by 2040. Once this finite resource is developed, it never returns to farming.



With agricultural land at record prices, young, beginning, and underserved producers struggle to access land. At the same time, many senior farmers and farmland owners have no successor. With the current generation of farmers nearing retirement, our food system depends upon a new generation taking the reins.

Farmers and ranchers are facing higher input costs, more unpredictable seasons, flooding, drought, wildfires, and more. This is making the weather-dependent business of farming more difficult. Currently, the conservation practices needed to increase efficiency, improve resilience, enhance water quality and quantity, and increase soil health are only used on a small percentage of farms. NRCS staff reductions have reduced access to conservation technical assistance for farmers. We must help more farmers and ranchers adopt the practices that build resilience to extreme weather and increase farm profitability.



Many farms and ranches struggle to stay financially viable in today's economy. While there are federal resources to help farmers build their businesses and upgrade their operations, they can be limited and difficult to access. This is often especially true for small-scale and underserved producers who need additional support in the form of capital and business technical assistance.

AFT *Farms Under Threat 2040* solar modeling projects that, without policy intervention, 83% of new solar development is expected to occur on farmland and ranchland, with almost half on America's most productive agricultural land. This brings new steady revenue to landowners who operate farms but must be done in ways that maximize the benefits to farmers, private landowners, and rural communities while minimizing the conversion of productive land out of agriculture.

AFT is the only national organization that takes a holistic approach to agriculture, focusing on the land itself, the agricultural practices used on that land, and the farmers and ranchers who do the work. To learn more about these policy recommendations, contact Vice President of Policy Tim Fink (tfink@farmland.org); Cris Coffin (ccoffin@farmland.org) for farmland protection and land access policy; Samantha Levy (slevy@farmland.org) for conservation practice and Smart Solar policy; or Emily Liss (eliss@farmland.org) for farm viability and PFAS policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A **new five-year reauthorization of the Farm Bill** is our best chance to help farmers and ranchers respond to these and other challenges so they can produce the food, feed, fiber, and fuel we need. **AFT's top priorities for this reauthorization are:**

Meet Farmer and Rancher Demand for Oversubscribed Farm Bill Conservation Programs

- Retain all transferred IRA conservation funding in the Conservation Title to help meet farmer and rancher demand for popular, voluntary programs.
- Ensure successful program implementation by supporting a robust technical assistance delivery system comprised NRCS field agents, conservation districts, non-profit conservation organizations, technical service providers, and farmer-to-farmer support.



Protect our Threatened Agricultural Land Base

- Support voluntary private farm and ranch lands protection with reforms to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). (*House Farm Bill [H.R. 8467](#)*)

Increase Adoption of Conservation Practices

- Create a federal match for state and Tribal soil health programs to spur innovation and fill gaps in federal support for practice adoption. (*House Farm Bill [H.R. 8467](#), NO EMITs Act [H.R. 4163](#), Agriculture Resilience Act [S.1507 / H.R.3077](#)*)
- Increase cooperative agreements for farmer-led, experience-based conservation education and networking. (*Farmer-to-Farmer Education Act [S.1769 / H.R.8488](#), and PLACE Act [H.R.5500](#)*)

Support Producers in Accessing Land and Growing Viable Businesses

- Establish a Commission on Farm Transitions to study the needs of next-generation farmers and ranchers. (*Farm Transitions Act [S.4018 / H.R.7769](#)*)
- Establish an Office of Small Farms within USDA to ensure that federal support and services reach small-scale farmers, ranchers, and forest owners. (*Office of Small Farms Establishment Act [H.R.3877 / S.1809](#)*)
- Authorize the Regional Food Business Centers to continue providing business technical assistance and capital to farms and food businesses. (*American Food Supply Chain Resiliency Act [H.R. 8833](#)*)
- Invest in strengthening local and regional food systems through programs and/or partnerships that facilitate purchases from local producers for food distribution networks. (*Strengthening Local Food Security Act [S.2338](#), Local Farmers Feeding our Communities Act [H.R.4782](#)*)
- Provide relief, support, and additional research to help producers impacted by PFAS contamination. (*Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act [S.747 / H.R.1517](#)*)
- Authorize the Increasing Access to Land, Capital, and Markets program within the Farm Service Agency. (*New Producer Economic Security Act [S.1237 / H.R.2536](#)*)
- Clarify ACEP's Buy-Protect-Sell authority that enables land trusts to assist farmers and ranchers in purchasing land protected through the program.

Advance Smart Solar Development

- Incentivize development of properly-defined agrivoltaic projects that integrate agricultural production into solar arrays and advance agrivoltaic research. (*Protecting Future Farmland Act [S.2931](#), Agrivoltaic Research and Demonstration Act [S.1778](#), SUNRAY Act [H.R.7391](#)*)
- Ensure that federally-supported solar projects sited on high-quality farmland follow science-backed NRCS best practices to protect soils, conserve water, and plan for and fund decommissioning. (*House Farm Bill [H.R. 8467](#), Protecting Future Farmland Act [S.2931](#), SOLAR Act [H.R.7923](#)*)