

# Our Response to *Farms Under Threat*

## Our Goal for Saving Farmland Is Ambitious, Necessary, and Doable

American Farmland Trust’s *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* is the most comprehensive analysis of U.S. agricultural land use ever undertaken. The study’s sobering statistics and pressing challenges demand action.

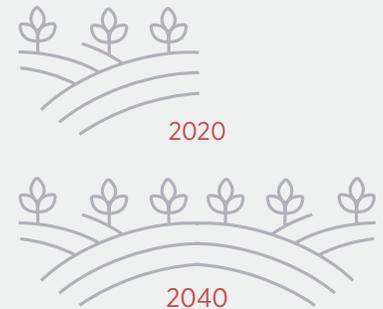
Just as AFT’s *Farming on the Edge* study two decades ago inspired action at the local, state, and national levels, this new analysis is poised to catalyze the next wave of farmland protection. *NOTE: We use the term “farmland” to cover all agricultural land, whether farms or ranches.*

In response to these findings, AFT is taking decisive action to slow the loss of farmland to development and to permanently protect vulnerable land with agricultural conservation easements.

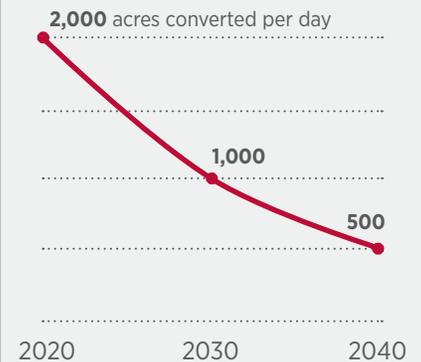
We are announcing a bold new goal: (1) double the amount of permanently protected farmland by 2040; and (2) drastically reduce the rate that farmland is converted to other uses: 50% by 2030 and 75% by 2040. And do it all with a priority focus on our best agricultural land: the most productive, versatile, and resilient.

### OUR GOAL

**DOUBLE THE AMOUNT OF PERMANENTLY PROTECTED FARMLAND**



**DRASTICALLY REDUCE THE RATE THAT FARMLAND IS CONVERTED TO OTHER USES**



### WE LAUNCHED AND CONTINUE TO LEAD AMERICA’S FARMLAND PROTECTION MOVEMENT

To save farmland at the scale needed will require a highly effective army of government entities, nongovernmental organizations, and committed farmers and ranchers. As we have for 40 years, AFT will actively support these players, providing information and assistance in numerous ways wherever we can.

**Specifically, we are taking the following steps:**

#### 1. Establishing the National Agricultural Land Network

With help from USDA NRCS, AFT has created a new network that formalizes and elevates the work that AFT has long undertaken with land trusts and government entities to protect farmland. The network will:



- ▶ Offer training and learning opportunities, peer networking, collaborative research, and a shared communication platform.
- ▶ Host state-specific webinars to share *Farms Under Threat* findings and help states develop effective strategies that respond to these threats.

## 2. Providing New Leadership in Key Locations

The need to protect farmland is particularly urgent in the South and Midwest. To catalyze more activity, AFT will:



- ▶ Launch a Southeast Regional Program to catalyze efforts to protect farmland across the region, including a formal affiliation with the Georgia Agricultural Land Trust.
- ▶ Engage partners in Texas, the state that converted the most acres of agricultural land from 2001 to 2016.
- ▶ Enhance efforts to protect farmland in Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

## 3. Protecting More Farmland Ourselves and with Partners

As the only agricultural land trust with a national reach, AFT pioneered the use of agricultural conservation easements in much of the country. But we do fewer deals than we once did. It's time to change that. We will:



- ▶ Ramp up our own land protection efforts by strategically securing easements in regions with unmet need.
- ▶ Partner with other land trusts that want help with complex projects.
- ▶ Partner with The Conservation Fund, another national leader, to protect farmland in a way that also supports new farmers, advances regenerative practices, and enhances local food production.
- ▶ Expand the reach of our Farm Legacy program, which keeps land in farming as it transitions to the next generation.

## 4. Advocating for Stronger State and Federal Policies

While every state has taken some steps forward, all could—and must—do more. We will:



- ▶ Help ANY state interested in improving how they retain and protect farmland or advance companion efforts to increase land access or enhance farm viability.
- ▶ Engage agriculture and conservation partners to advance policy solutions in the more than 20 states served through our regional offices.
- ▶ Continue advising the 24 states in the U.S. Climate Alliance on how to combat climate change by saving farmland, promoting compact development, and advancing regenerative practices.

On the federal level, we will build upon our proven record of policy advocacy to:



- ▶ Double federal easement funding through ACEP-ALE.
- ▶ Limit federal actions that pave over farmland.
- ▶ Develop federal policies that facilitate transfer of farmland to a new generation.
- ▶ Increase support for programs that keep farms and ranches economically viable.
- ▶ Provide new support for “Planning for Agriculture.”

## 5. Promoting Research-Based Decision Making

AFT's groundbreaking research offers a treasure trove of data. In keeping with our role as a trusted source of information, we will:



- ▶ Widely disseminate the findings from *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* through e-mailings and e-newsletters, webinars, conferences, social media, and a new interactive website ([www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat](http://www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat)).
- ▶ Provide direct technical assistance to anyone with questions about our research and materials through AFT's Farmland Information Center (FIC; [www.farmlandinfo.org](http://www.farmlandinfo.org)). A partnership between AFT and USDA NRCS, the FIC provides an answer service and online clearinghouse of information about farmland protection and stewardship.

**Farms Under Threat** is American Farmland Trust's multi-year initiative to document the status of and threats to U.S. farmland and rangeland and to identify policy solutions to ensure the protection and conservation of America's diverse agricultural landscape. For more information about AFT, visit [www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org). If you have any questions about the analysis methods or would like access to data, please contact AFT's Farmland Information Center: [www.farmlandinfo.org](http://www.farmlandinfo.org) or (800) 370-4879.

To explore interactive maps and the policy scorecard, visit [www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat](http://www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat).