

Harford County Farmland Preservation

ECONOMIC BENEFITS



Promotes economic development

Farms are businesses. If retaining and growing local business is an economic development goal, *farmland protection is economic development*. Harford's approximately 580 farms generated \$46 million in market value in 2012.

Generates tax revenue

Compared to houses, farms generate more in local taxes than they demand in services. Harford County specific studies show that agricultural lands on average receive only \$0.91 in public services for every dollar they contribute; housing developments, on the other hand, receive \$1.11 in services for every dollar they contribute. Also, rating agencies including Fitch Group and Moody's have recognized farmland preservation in Eastern U.S. counties as a sound fiscal policy choice.

Protects local jobs

Working farms create more than 3,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities in Harford County. There are positions on the farms themselves—some jobs require are highly skilled workers, while other jobs are available to younger workers or those new to farming. Farms also create jobs in secondary markets such as food processing, retail stores, insurance, veterinary care, and equipment sales. Preserved farmland ensures these jobs will be there for the next generation too.

Ensures availability of local food

Availability of local food is vital to our health and wellbeing. As specialty crop production grows, Harford citizens will have more choices of fruits and vegetables, local meats, dairy, nursery plants and other products.

Promotes local investment

Farmland preservation spurs further investment. Independent studies in the Mid-Atlantic region show most proceeds of easement payments stay in the local economy to improve farm business infrastructure, buy machinery and land, and/or increase land leases.

Enhances Harford's quality of life

Studies demonstrate that open spaces can boost the value of neighboring commercial properties. Businesses seeking new locations report that quality of life is a major factor in their decision-making, and cultural and recreational open spaces are important components in creating that quality of life. Protected land generally enhances the value of nearby residential property too. In most cases, home buyers prefer a view of a farm or forest to a view of a developed property, and will be more likely to purchase if that view is guaranteed to remain in place.

Avoids costs through smart growth

Farmland preservation is a smart growth tool, saving taxpayers money by avoiding costs on expensive infrastructure and other municipal services required by residential property owners, such as schools, police, and fire protection. Haphazard development results in unpredictable and costly infrastructure and services. Concentrated development allows public services and facilities to be sited economically in population centers with the assurance that outlying farmland will not be developed.

Promotes tourism

The beauty of farmland appeals to many people. Agricultural-based tourism (known as agritourism) offers people a chance to enjoy open space in a variety of ways: they might pick their own strawberries in the summer, take a tour of a vineyard, or hold their wedding in a bucolic farm setting. This tourism provides income to the farmer, and has ancillary benefits for the community. When agritourists visit a farm, they spend money in the nearby hotels, stores, and restaurants.

Protects our natural resources

Preservation of fields, pastures, and woodlands means clean air, drinkable water, fertile soil, and flood protection. These natural resources can be viewed as capital assets—they have tangible real-world economic value, and, if managed properly, their value does not depreciate over time. Farmland preservation is also environmental stewardship, as natural resource protections such as stream buffers and prohibitions against dumping and pollutants are built into every farmland preservation easement.



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