

Environment



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CWO

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CapeWomenOnline serves as a venue for the women of Cape Cod to share their ideas, experiences and resources while inspiring each other in their life's journey.



American Farmland Trust: Saving the Land that Sustains Us

It's hard to be a farmer on Cape Cod. Space is at a premium and land is expensive. Never has it been so important to support your local growers and farm stands. Without farmers there is no food.

Massachusetts has a rich and diverse heritage of farming, and agriculture continues to be important to our state's economy, culture and landscape. From cranberry bogs to apple orchards, dairy farms to greenhouses, vegetable fields to livestock operations, our agricultural industry is primarily family farms.

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1980 to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment.

AFT's New England Office is located in Northampton, Mass. AFT has been active in farmland protection efforts in Massachusetts for more than 20 years, promoting farmland protection, farm viability and farm conservation through research, outreach, advocacy and policy development at the municipal, state and federal levels.

There are 6,100 working farms in Massachusetts, with 519,000 acres of farmland. The benefits of these farms go beyond the scenic beauty of a pumpkin field in the fall and the availability of fresh-picked fruits and vegetables from June through November. Farmland contributes to water quality, flood storage and carbon sequestration. Neighbors and community residents often use these lands for hunting, walking, cross-country skiing or snowmobiling. Farms also help keep town budgets in balance.

Since 1971, Massachusetts lost more than 79,000 acres of cropland, pasture and "woody perennials," such as cranberry bogs, nursery land and Christmas tree farms. State records show that between 1997 and 2003, the state also lost 15,000 acres of forested land per year.

The current per-acre farm real estate value in Massachusetts is \$12,200, the highest in the country according to a 2008 USDA report. Massachusetts property taxes are also among the highest in the nation. High fuel costs also adversely impact farmers, with Massachusetts prices around 30% higher than the national average.

As unwise development strips farmland from local communities, many parts of America are becoming more dependent on food that travels from thousands of miles away. AFT is working to protect farms to ensure we always have access to fresh, locally grown food – after all, it's not local food without local farmland.

Support our local farmers!

Cape & Islands Farm Bureau



Member of Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation



Leo Cakounes pulls his daughter, Evangeline, across his Harwich cranberry bog.

For cranberry bog tours visit:
www.cranberrybogtours.com



Find out what action you can take today to support AFT & your local farms