

Agriculture

Connecticut's farming traditions date back hundreds of years, and continue to this day in the numerous small, family-owned farms throughout Northwest Connecticut. From vineyards to dairy farms, Connecticut's agricultural industry is part of our shared history and sustainable, environmentally-friendly future.

All across Connecticut, however, decreasing commodity prices, increasing farm costs, and inflating property values are driving too many farmers to sell their farms to developers. Every year, we lose thousands of acres forever, compromising watersheds and threatening wildlife habitats. We need to boost federal voluntary conservation programs so that farmers can adopt sound conservation practices or maintain the natural state of their land if farming is no longer viable.

Maintaining our food supply's delicate balance with nature is essential, and organic foods and organic farming play a vital role in that effort in Connecticut. This emerging field is critical for our nation's health, and the future of our farms. We need to make it less expensive for farmers that choose to go the organic route and certify that their food is indeed organic, and we need to improve existing market data collection about organic farming, ensuring that regulators and policymakers have the best available information on the evolving organic marketplace.

Farmers in northwest Connecticut have told me how unpredictable and financially difficult farming can be, which is why I support giving farmers a leg-up when prices drop precipitously. New England dairy farmers are particularly susceptible to these fluctuations, so we've expanded the Milk Income Loss Control Program to help them survive and ensure that local milk and other dairy products are available in our communities.

While our national agriculture policy has to sustain local farms, we cannot forget that we have a moral obligation to combat hunger in our own backyards. In a nation that is blessed with so much, it's a travesty that so many are allowed to go hungry night after night. Food stamps should be available to those who need them, and we should be mindful that this assistance is going to help families who are shopping in our supermarkets, where we see prices going up everyday.

More than two hundred years later, our country still relies on many of the same farming systems that fed us at our nation's founding. While so much has changed around us since then, we still fulfill our most basic need for nourishment from farming. Our health and our livelihoods are intertwined with the state of our agricultural sector, and our national policy should reflect a strong commitment to its future.

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