

## Providing for the Future of our Community

Farming is a significant part of New Milford's heritage and can be a valued contributor to our town's future.

As farm after farm disappears, preservation of those few that remain within our town borders has acquired a greater sense of urgency. In 2006, Mayor Patricia Murphy established the New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee, charging it with assisting the town in identifying and implementing strategies for acquiring and protecting farmlands.

The Farmland Preservation Committee has developed a strategic action plan, viewable on our website at [www.newmilford.org](http://www.newmilford.org), which provides a road map for joining the ranks of other farm-friendly Connecticut towns that have embarked on long-term efforts to help their communities preserve farms and farmlands.

We invite New Milford residents to learn about our goals, take part in our strategies and help preserve and support local, sustainable farming in our community.

## How New Milford Residents Can Help Preserve our Farms

- Offer your time as a volunteer for the New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee—there's lots to do!
- Ask your elected representatives to vote for farm preservation funding
- Patronize local farmers' markets, CSA co-operatives, and farm stands
- Urge your local grocers and restaurants to offer locally-grown produce
- Visit our website to learn more about ways you can support local programs that help farmers

Through establishment of the **New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee**, the Town of New Milford is signaling its conviction that a proactive and systematic approach to acquiring and protecting its few remaining farmlands needs to be implemented.

The Committee feels strongly that there is a state-wide resurgence in awareness of the important role agriculture plays. In addition to preserving farmlands, the Committee is committed to returning the lands to working farms that provide an economic and social benefit to our community.



### *New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee*

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(Follow the link to Farmland Preservation)

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*Fort Hill Farm, a local New Milford Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) cooperative*

**Before it's too late...**



## What Would Farmland Preservation Do?

- Reduce the rate of disappearance of farmland in New Milford
- Ensure survival of local farmlands for agricultural use
- Provide positive tax benefits—working farms can generate more in local tax revenue than they cost in municipal services
- Help limit residential sprawl, which burdens town services and schools
- Provide a local source of fresh, healthy produce that does not have to be shipped from great distances or from blended or unknown origins
- Allow opportunities for New Milford school children to visit working farms
- Preserve barns and silos, farm-houses, meadows, stone walls and rolling viewsheds
- Afford survival of wildlife corridors for birds and animals
- Offer opportunities for agro-tourism, a fast-growing Connecticut travel industry segment
- Strengthen the link with New Milford's rich agricultural heritage as our town celebrates its Tri-centennial birthday

## New Milford's Agricultural History

New Milford was a farming settlement before the American Revolution. Beginning in the first quarter of the 18th century, the rich alluvial and limestone-based soils of the Still River Valley and the East and West Aspetuck valleys provided the basis of a long period of agricultural prosperity.

Tobacco farming was particularly important in the 19th century. Although it ultimately declined, dairy and produce farming remained strong well into the first half of the 20th century.

**Today, most of our town's farms have disappeared. The New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee hopes that the rate of loss can be reduced and that farming can be strengthened.**

However, as new technology meant fewer farms were needed, as US cities grew and rural populations migrated into urban centers, and as US agriculture industrialized and shifted westward, farming in New Milford, as in many New England towns, began to shrink.

By the early 1900's, some farms had been acquired and transformed into summer homes. By the mid-20th century, many of New Milford's remaining farms and large tracts of land were being sold and subdivided, a trend that accelerated as the 21st century approached. The town's relatively lower housing prices continue to attract families employed in the expanding metropolitan areas to the south.

In 1990—almost 20 years ago—less than 2700 acres of New Milford's agricultural lands still remained in cultivation, employing less than one percent of the population.\*

*\*Historic data provided by the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials [www.hvceo.org](http://www.hvceo.org)*

## Strategies for Preserving our Town's Farmland

- Raise residents' awareness of the importance of saving farms
- Support the town and local farmers in obtaining grants from State and Federal funding programs.
- Help farmers access the professional expertise and private resources that may allow them, if interested, to preserve all or part of their farms
- Encourage the town and regional land trusts to make available preserved lands for agricultural use beyond simple haying
- Promote efforts by land use commissions to create more farm-friendly regulations
- Support the Economic Development Commission in identifying and recruiting investors interested in funding specialty farming ventures
- Persuade residents to buy and eat local by enhancing the success of the New Milford Farmers Market and the New Milford Hospital's Plough to Plate initiative

**It's not too late. We are still surrounded by living evidence of New Milford's agricultural heritage and its promise for our future. You can help us carry out our mission.**



*Stone wall ruins at Rosie's Dairy Farm provide a view of our town's agricultural heritage*