

# CONNECTICUT FOOD & FARM FACTS

JUNE 2018



## KEEP AMERICA GROWING!

### FARM AID 2018: HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Farm Aid is proud to bring Farm Aid 2018 to Hartford, Connecticut, to shine a spotlight on the family farmers and ranchers whose livelihoods and innovations are essential for all of us. Farm Aid 2018 is Farm Aid's first festival in Connecticut, and its fourth festival in the Northeast region, including Farm Aid 2007 on Randall's Island in New York, 2008 in Mansfield, Massachusetts, and 2013 in Saratoga Springs, New York.



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### Hartford Area Food Systems

- According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, there are 899 farms in Hartford County, covering 54,062 acres of farmland. Hartford County represents a rare bright spot in the country, having gained 109 farms since the last census in 2007, a 14 percent increase.<sup>1</sup>
- The average farm in Hartford County is 60 acres, down 12 percent from the average in 2007, with average sales of \$126,691, down 25 percent from 2007. Average net farm income (sales minus expenses) in the county is \$16,095.<sup>2</sup>
- Hartford County ranks first in the state for sweet corn, tobacco, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, berries and nursery stock crops.<sup>3</sup>
- The Hartford Regional Market is the largest food distribution terminal between New York City and Boston, serving the greater Hartford area and surrounding states since 1951. The Market contributes \$165 million in annual gross sales to Connecticut's economy, 450 jobs to the labor force and houses nine wholesale businesses across its 32.7 acres and 144 stalls in its farmers market.<sup>4</sup>
- Food insecurity and diet-related diseases are entrenched problems for Hartford communities. Nearly one-third of Hartford residents live below the poverty line, while 1 in 4 live in a food desert. Food deserts are areas where people lack access to affordable, healthy food, often due to poverty and a lack of grocery stores, farmers markets and other healthy food retailers.<sup>5</sup> Food justice advocates use the term *food apartheid* rather than food desert to indicate the roles economic inequality and systemic racism play in depriving people of access to healthy food.

<sup>1</sup> USDA NASS. (2014.) [County Profile: 2012. Hartford County, Connecticut. 2012 Census of Agriculture.](#)

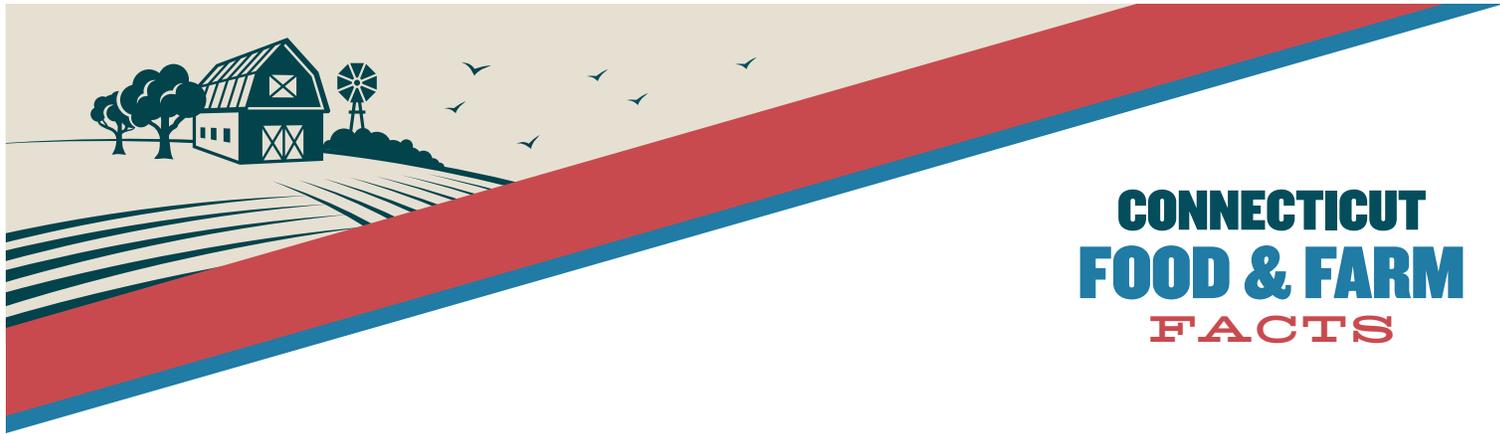
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Connecticut Department of Agriculture. [Facts About the Hartford Regional Market.](#)

<sup>5</sup> Hartford Food System. (2017) [City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy: Annual Report and Policy Recommendations.](#)





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## Connecticut Agriculture

- Connecticut is home to 6,000 farms. Between 2007 and 2016, the state added 1,084 farms — a 22 percent increase. Between 2007 and 2012, average net cash farm income dropped by a dramatic 83 percent to just \$4,300 per farm.
- Despite its small size, Connecticut agriculture ranks third in New England in farm sales. Agriculture contributes up to \$4 billion to the state economy, generates 21,000 jobs and provides environmental and social benefits that significantly enhance Connecticut residents' quality of life.
- Connecticut's top agricultural products according to market share include nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod products (42 percent of sales), poultry and eggs (15 percent), dairy (13 percent), vegetables and melons (8 percent), fruits (7 percent) and tobacco (6 percent).
- Farmland preservation is a top priority in the state. Connecticut's Farmland Preservation Program preserves land for agricultural use in perpetuity, with a long-term goal of preserving 130,000 acres. As of December 2015, the program has preserved more than 41,500 acres over 315 farms.
- Connecticut's Fresh Match is a nutrition incentive program that provides a \$1 for \$1 match for shoppers using SNAP/EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/Electronic Benefit Transfer) to buy fruits and vegetables. During 2016 and 2017, nearly 3,000 SNAP households purchased fruits and vegetables at 22 Fresh Match locations and farmers across the state took in an extra \$96,000 in sales generated from SNAP and nutrition incentives!
- The local food movement is growing in Connecticut, with increases in farmers markets, farm stands, agritourism and Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) programs. In 2015, these local food avenues yielded \$90 million and created approximately 800 jobs and \$30 million in wages.
- According to the 2015 USDA Farm to School Census, 70 percent of surveyed Connecticut school districts participate in a farm to school program, investing more than \$7 million in local food and bringing fresh, local produce to 355,489 students.

## Food System Leaders in New England

- [Connecticut Farmland Trust's](#) mission is to permanently protect Connecticut's working farmland. Its nationally accredited land conservation program has protected 3,436 acres on 44 farms and assisted partners in the preservation of 1,000 additional acres.
- [Wholesome Wave](#) makes fruits and vegetables affordable through two flagship programs: They [double the value of SNAP](#) when spent on fruits and vegetables, and they work with doctors to literally [prescribe produce](#) for better health. Wholesome Wave is helping these innovative programs spread across the country.
- [Food Solutions New England](#) is a regional, collaborative network organized to support the continued viability of a New England food system that is a resilient driver of healthy food for all, racial equity, sustainable farming and fishing, and thriving communities. Its [A New England Food Vision](#) sets an ambitious goal for New England to produce at least 50 percent of its food by 2060.
- New England is home to some of the most innovative models for scaling up the local food movement. Since 1997, [Red Tomato](#) has worked to deliver fresh, great tasting produce while cultivating a more sustainable, ethical food system. Rooted in fair trade, Red Tomato strives to bring fairness, transparency and sustainability to every aspect of their business, working with trusted distributors and grocers to bring farm-identified, ecologically grown, fairly priced, seasonal and local produce to consumers throughout the region.

<sup>6</sup> USDA NASS. (2012.) [Connecticut: Historical Highlights 2012 and Earlier Census Years, 2012 Census of Agriculture.](#)

<sup>7</sup> USDA NASS. (2012.) Table 5. Net Cash Farm Income of the Operations and Operators: 2012 and 2007. [2012 Census of Agriculture.](#)

<sup>8</sup> Lopez, R. A., Boehm, R., Pineda, M., Gunther, P., & Carstensen, F. (2017). [Economic Impacts of Connecticut's Agricultural Industry: Update 2015.](#) *Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy Outreach Report No. 6.* University of Connecticut.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Farmland Preservation Program.

<sup>11</sup> Lopez, R. A., Boehm, R., Pineda, M., Gunther, P., & Carstensen, F. (2017). [Economic Impacts of Connecticut's Agricultural Industry: Update 2015.](#) *Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy Outreach Report No. 6.* University of Connecticut.

<sup>12</sup> USDA FNS. [Connecticut Districts.](#) The Farm to School Census.

<sup>13</sup> Includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.

