



**A
GUIDE
TO
FARMING
IN**

Rhode Island

A GUIDE TO FARMING IN *Rhode Island*

Finding Land To Farm On

There are many things to consider when finding land to farm on, but one of the most important is your farming goals. This will help you determine what type of land you need and possibly determine what method (purchase, lease, rent) of acquiring land is most suitable to your needs. Below are various websites and documents that can aid you in the land-finding process.

The following link was created by New Entry to help beginning farmers locate available land for agricultural use:

[Farmland Matching Service](#)

The following link provides a platform for landowners and those seeking land to match:

[New England Farm Finder](#)

The following link is a website that requires an \$10 annual member fee. With this fee, members gain access to property listings and the contact information of the landowners.

[New England Small Farm Institute](#)

The following link describes the general resources needed when finding land to farm on, land listing services (regional and national), and LandLink programs by state.

[Beginning Farmers](#)

Farmer Resources

[Northern Rhode Island Conservation District](#)

[Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District](#)

[Southern Rhode Island Conservation District](#)

[USDA Farm Service Agency](#)

[USDA Rural Development](#)

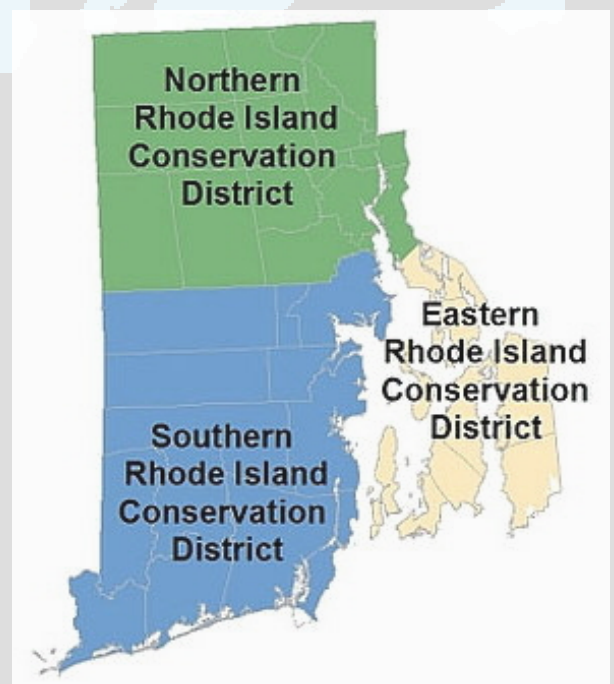
[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

[Contact Map for City & Town Halls](#)

[NIFA Cooperative Extension System](#)

[Penn State University Starting a Farm](#)

[Rhode Island Mediation Services](#)



Young Farmers Network

The goal of the [Young Farmers Network](#) is to create a strong social network between farmers, organizational links between farmers and so much more. To learn more about them and how they can help you develop your farm, follow the link above for the Southeastern New England chapter.

Zoning

Choosing the location of your farm may be dictated by local zoning. It would be smart to check the local code before purchasing a property to farm on.

For zoning ordinances per local town and city, follow the link below:

[Local Rhode Island Zoning](#)

Right To Farm Act

The Right To Farm Act was created to protect the farmer from nuisance complaints from the public, regarding commonly practiced and accepted farming techniques. For more information on The Right To Farm Act, follow the link below:

[Rhode Island Right To Farm Act Homepage](#)

For the specific statues regarding this subject, follow the link below:

[Rhode Island Right To Farm Act Statutes](#)

Getting a Farm Plate

You need to bring in the bill(s) of sale to your local DMV. You must bring in photos of the vehicle: front, sides, rear, and interior. Your application is subject to approval by the DMV's Enforcement Office.

You need to complete and sign the [Application for Registration](#).

You need to complete and sign the [Application for Farm Plates](#).

You need to complete and bring in the [Tax Exemption Form](#).

You need to complete and bring in the [Application for Certificate of Exemption for Farm Equipment](#).

For associated costs, follow the link below:

[DMV Fee Table](#)

For the specific statues regarding this subject, follow the links below:

[RIGL 31-1-8](#)

[RIGL 31-3-31](#)

Registering Your Farm

What is a farm number and why is it important?

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides and administers farm loans, crop insurance, and disaster assistance compensation but you must be registered in order to be eligible. When programs that could be beneficial to you become available, you'll be the first to know and can apply. You must also have a farm number to apply for programs that the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) offers, including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program.

[New Business Application & Registration](#)

[How To Get a Farm Number](#)

[Good Things To Know](#)

Insurance

Agents

There are many different insurance agents a farmer can utilize when looking to obtain farm insurance, follow the link below to learn more about the top crop insurance agents in the Rhode Island area:

[Top Rhode Island Crop Insurance Agents](#)

Crop Insurance

Crop insurance can be a great method of protecting the value of your crops in case of an uncontrollable instance (i.e. natural disaster, hail, excessive rain/temperatures, disease, etc) Click [here](#) to learn more About Crop Insurance.

[How It Works](#)

[Crop Insurance Facts](#)

[Rhode Island Crop Insurance Statistics](#)

Other Insurance Types

There are additional types of farm insurance you can get besides crop insurance; these insurances include dwelling, liability, other buildings and livestock. To learn more about these insurances, follow the link below:

[5 Types of Farm Insurance](#)

Taxes

As with all businesses, farmers must pay their taxes each year. Fortunately for farmers, there are many exemptions and tax breaks available if eligible. Here are a few resources that will be beneficial to you in planning for your financial future.

The following link provides a few resources to new farmers in regard to tax planning:

[Planning for Tax Responsibilities](#)

The following link details the classification of land in Rhode Island for tax purposes, how to enroll, how to maintain tax credit in years to come and the application for farmland designation.

[A Citizen's Guide to the Farm, Forest, & Open Space Act](#)

In terms of property tax incentives, achieving farm designation may allow your land to be taxed at the value of its current usage, as opposed to its full development value. Follow the link below to learn more about the program and how you can start your application.

[Is my Farm Eligible for Farm Designation](#)

[Information on Rhode Island Property Tax](#)

The following link describes the tax exemption related to the purchasing of farm related equipment and farm structure materials:

[Division of Taxation Regulations](#)

[Information on Rhode Island Farm Tax Exemptions](#)

The following link distinguishes food products based on their ability to be taxed:

[Taxable & Non-Taxable Foods](#)

Technical & Financial Resources

Most financial and technical resources are processed through the Farm Service Agency of Rhode Island.

To learn more about what resources are available, follow the links below:

[Farm Loan Program](#)

[Contact The FSA Staff](#)

Creating a Financially Effective Farm

Marketing

[USDA Agricultural Marketing Service \(AMS\)](#) is responsible for developing quality grade standards for agricultural commodities, administering marketing regulatory programs, marketing agreements and orders, and making food purchases for USDA food assistance programs.

[National Organic Program \(NOP\)](#) is a program run through AMS.

For some tips on how to successfully market your farm, follow the link below:

[11 Steps To Successful Farm Marketing](#)

Selling The Product

Farm Fresh Rhode Island has developed some tips to selling your your goods. Follow the link below to learn more:

[RI Farmers Market Vendor Guide](#)

We urge you to buy and sell your products locally to to support a sustainable industry!

Which Market is for You?

Farmers Market is a food market at which local farmers gather to sell fruit and vegetables and often meat, cheese, and bakery products directly to local consumers.

[List of Local Rhode Island Farmers Markets](#)

Farm Stands are stand alone entities that sells farm produce.

[List of Local Rhode Island Farm Stands](#)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), to learn more follow the link below:

[What is CSA?](#)

[List of Local Rhode Island CSA's](#)



Business Plan

A business plan is a necessary decision making tool that states your business goals, why you think you can achieve them, and describes your plan for doing so. A good plan is essential for an effective farm so it will often be referenced. Beginning Farmers does a great job in providing resources for developing a farm plan business plan and enterprise budgeting. For further planning advice check out the link below:

[Farm Business Planning](#)

Another useful resource to check out is the following video, it further describes what is needed for:

[Making a Farm Business Plan](#)

The following link describes some important steps for new farmers to take when starting a farm:

[New Farmer First Steps](#)

Organic Certification

The USDA does a great job in describing organic certification and organic accreditation. They describe the benefits as well as how to become certified or accredited. Please visit [USDA Organic Certification & Accreditation](#) to learn more.

To learn more about existing organic farms, follow the link below:

[List of Local Rhode Island Organic Farms](#)

Testing Your Soil

Soil testing is an important management practice on all farms, whether growing vegetables for fresh market or pasture for livestock. It's nearly impossible to determine what a soil needs to be productive, without a soil analysis. There are many types of soil analyses available depending on what information you are seeking. The most commonly requested analysis is for nutrient content, though you may wish to know what organisms are working in your soil, if there are pesticide residues or determine the particle size analysis. Listed below are several helpful links to soil testing.

The following link is a guide to collecting soil samples for farms and gardens:

[Guide to Collecting Soil Samples](#)

The following link provides information about the different elements in soil composition and how they can be beneficial to your farm:

[Soil Test Interpretation Guide](#)

Testing Your Soils (continued)

URI Master Gardeners Program is a volunteer service with soil testing (pH levels only).

[URI Volunteer Soil Testing Service \(pH levels only\)](#)

[RI DEM Soil Testing Application](#)

Composting

Composting is a great way utilize waste on your farm and can also be economically beneficial. If you would like to learn more about composting processes and ways it can be beneficial, follow the link below:

[How to Make and Use Compost](#)

Protecting Water Resources

Protecting our water resources is a major concern in today's agricultural environment. There are large amounts of fertilizers, pesticides, and livestock fecal matter that have the potential to end up in our run off and pollute our local water sources. Here are a few steps you can take to protect the water sources near your.

EPA's ideas on protecting water resources from agricultural runoff

[Protecting Water Resources From Agricultural Runoff](#)

University of Florida's suggested management practices for protecting water resources against agricultural pesticides

[Protecting Water Resources From Agricultural Pesticides](#)

Food Safety

The following page on Food Safety describes in further detail why food safety is important and provides tools and resources for helping achieve this goal.

[USDA Food Safety](#)

Rhode Island's Department of Health also has a very helpful page on Food Safety that has tools getting a food safety license, finding food safety managers and training/education options.

[RI Department of Health Food Safety](#)

Rules, Laws, & Regulations

It is important to recognize the difference between federal, state, and local hierarchy in terms of jurisdiction and how their influence plays a role in the interest of a farmer.

The following links will guide you to the Rules & Regulations you need to be aware of and follow accordingly in order to support a sustainable operation:

[Department of Environmental Management Regulations](#)

[Pesticides](#)

[Composting](#)

[Enforcement of the Farm, Forest, & Open Space Act](#)

The following links will guide you to the Laws you need to be aware of and follow accordingly in order to support a legitimate operation:

[General Statues](#)

[Prohibited Plant Species](#)

[Restricted Use Pesticides](#)

[Ordinances by Town & City](#)

Permits & Applications

Depending on the purpose of the farm, the following information will be relevant in some or all cases. The information below should serve as a good guideline and set a farmer in the right direction to support a "by the book" operation.

The following link is provided by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and it serves as a great resource that will be able to direct the farmer to any specific area of focus they may need access to:

[Department of Environmental Management Permits & Applications](#)

The following links are some of the areas most commonly used and all applications are to be completed and delivered to the entities in accordance with the purpose of each document:

[Wetlands](#)

[Exotic Animal](#)

[Fertilizer](#)

[Pesticide](#)

Farming Education

Farming education can be achieved through a variety of methods including apprenticeships, university training, and farming classes. Listed below are a few organizations that offer farming education as well as descriptions of the programs they offer. The farming degrees listed below are the most notable and local to our region but similar programs are offered nation wide at a variety of higher education schools.



[University Of Rhode Island](#)

University of Rhode Island, Offers specializations: Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (SAFS) part of the Biological and Environmental Sciences M.S., PH.D. Graduate Programs. The Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (SAFS) graduate specialization takes a systems-based, interdisciplinary approach to the biological and environmental sciences as applied to agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, nutrition, and food safety. Our diverse group of faculty, with contributors from both the natural and social sciences, use a broad array of approaches to help achieve economically and ecologically sustainable production, management, consumption, and utilization of plants and animals for the development of healthy communities.



[Johnson & Wales University](#)

Johnson & Wales University, offers associates and bachelors degrees in 2 agriculture programs. Johnson & Wales University Providence agriculture program ranks #114 (out of 677; top 20%) in USA and The Second Best in Rhode Island. Major competing agriculture schools for this college are University of Massachusetts Amherst in Amherst and University of Connecticut in Storrs.



[Bristol Community College](#)

Bristol Community College, offers an Associates in Science in General studies for (Sustainable Agriculture.) The goal of this program is to provide the practical training and experience for sustainable farming and gardening and is directed towards new farmers, gardeners, landscapers, nursery producers, and farm managers. Graduates will be prepared to enter farming, gardening, community organizations, agricultural businesses, or to continue their education in sustainable food production and agricultural professions.

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The creation of this document has been a collaborative effort between the Northern Rhode Island State Conservation District and a student group from Roger Williams University.

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Roger Williams University

