

2009 NORTH STONINGTON FARM SURVEY

The Board of Selectman recently appointed an Agricultural Steering Committee to help promote agriculture in North Stonington. This Committee, which includes local farmers, applied for 25 hours of technical assistance being offered by the American Farmland Trust and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. Of the 169 towns in Connecticut, we were one of only five towns to receive a grant.

Our town has a deep interest to preserving and improving the agricultural resources we are fortunate to have. The Committee wanted to *clearly* identify these agricultural resources as well as provide opportunities for the farmers to voice their concerns. This committee seeks guidance on the *specific* and most effective ways in which we can help established farms remain active and viable as well as ways to attract new farms/farmers.

This survey was created to gather two types of information. The survey is not for tax information or any other such purpose. Part I of the survey asks for general information about the farm, and Part II seeks to gather input about the problems and concerns farmers face, and any plans they may have to expand or diversify and ways the town could help with this process. The responses we receive will help guide the town's efforts to plan for and promote agriculture in North Stonington. A general summary of the information gathered will be created, but no names or farm locations will be revealed in this summary.

Your answers and input are very important and we hope you will take the time to fill out the survey. All questions are optional, if you do not want to answer all the questions, then don't. Please answer only the questions you are comfortable with.

Please fill out the survey and return it to the Town Planner, Juliet Leeming, at the Town Hall or to one of the Agricultural Committee members listed below. If you would prefer to give your answers over the phone, or via e-mail, please call Juliet Leeming at the number provided below and she will be happy to help you. **Please return the survey by June 15, 2009.**

Thank you for your participation in promoting farming and making North Stonington an agricultural town!

The Agricultural Steering Committee

2009 NORTH STONINGTON FARM SURVEY

AGRICULTURAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS – CONTACT INFORMATION

Juliet Leeming – Senior Planner and Zoning Enforcement Officer

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Robert Miner – Farmer (Dairy)

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Chris Johnston – Member at Large

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NORTH STONINGTON FARM SURVEY

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1 Are you a: Farmer? _____ Horse Owner? _____
 (Check all that apply) Landowner? _____ Other? _____

2 How long has this property been used for agricultural purposes? _____

3 Do you have a "next generation" interested in operating the farm? _____

4 How would you best describe your agricultural activity? _____

5 How do you classify yourself as a farmer?

- a. Full-time: All income derived from farm _____
- b. Part-time _____
- c. Hobby: Agriculture is my hobby (little or no income derived) _____
- d. Other: Please Describe _____

6 What is the age of the primary operator of your farm? _____

7 How long has your family been farming this farm? _____

8 How many acres do you own? # acres

9 How many acres are actively used for agriculture? # acres

10 Do you lease additional land? # acres

a. Would you be interested in leasing town-owned land? Y N

11 Do you rent your tillable acreage or pasture to others? # acres

12 Please indicate the typical number and type of workers on your farm.

	#	Type
a. Owners	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>
b. Unpaid Help (i.e. friends/family)	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>
c. Full-time (including paid family)	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>
d. Part-time (including paid family)	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>
e. Seasonal	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>
f. Total number of employees	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 30px;" type="text"/>

13 Do you provide housing for employees? Y N

14 Do you offer any "Ag-tivities" associated with your farm? (i.e. pick-your-own, corn maize, festivals etc.) Y N

a. If yes, what? _____

15 Are you certified organic? Y N

Any additional information about the farm or farmer? Comments?

NORTH STONINGTON FARM SURVEY

Agricultural Activities....

16 What crops are produced on your farm? (Check all that apply and in box, please provide approximate acreage dedicated to each)

- a. Hay
- b. Sweet Corn
- c. Corn Silage
- d. Indian Corn
- e. Vegetables
- f. Christmas Trees
- g. Dairy Products
- h. Fruit Trees
- i. Herbs
- j. Fruit
- k. Wheat

- l. Honey
- m. Pasture
- n. Grapes
- o. Eggs
- p. Alfalfa
- q. Fire wood
- r. Wine
- s. Flowers
- t. Gourds/Pumpkins
- u. Other:
- v. Other:

17 Livestock? Check all that apply and provide approximate number of each in box)

- a. Dairy Cattle
- b. Beef Cattle
- c. Goats
- d. Sheep
- e. Bison
- f. Pigs
- g. Llama
- h. Chickens

- i. Turkeys
- j. Pheasants
- k. Guinea Hens
- l. Donkeys
- m. Ducks
- n. Oxen
- o. Other:
- p. Other:

18 Horses?

# Owned	# Boarded

Do you offer riding instruction?

Y	N
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19 Do you produce any "value-added" products? (Jams, baked goods, wreaths etc.)

Y	N
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a. If yes, what? _____

20 If you are considering developing (selling) a value-added product, what kind of information or assistance would be most helpful? (Check all that apply)

- a. brochures/manuals
- b. seminars/workshops
- c. collaboration with other farmers
- d. product development assistance
- e. Other: _____

Y	N
Y	N
Y	N
Y	N

21 How do you market your farm products? (Check all that apply)

- a. Farm stand
- b. Pick-you-own
- c. Wholesale
- d. Direct Sales to Stores
- e. Other?

- g. Cooperative
- h. Direct Sales to Restaurant
- i. Bartering Network
- j. Farmers Market
- k. Not Applicable

22 How would you like to market your farm products?

PART II: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

1 Do you have difficulty with any of the following:

a. Hiring help	Y	N
b. Availability of housing for farm workers	Y	N
c. Land-Use Regulations/Restrictions affecting farm operations	Y	N
d. Availability of technical assistance	Y	N
e. Trespassing/Vandalism	Y	N
f. Availability of machinery/parts	Y	N
g. Complaints from neighbors about farm operations	Y	N
h. Availability of veterinary services	Y	N
i. Marketing your products	Y	N
j. Insurance concerns	Y	N
k. Availability of pesticides/fertilizer	Y	N
l. Theft	Y	N
m. Wildlife	Y	N
n. Manure Disposal	Y	N
o. Other:	Y	N

2 What are the biggest problems that you encounter in farming? (i.e. weather, fuel costs, machinery costs, finding labor, taxes, etc.)

3 What changes would you like to make to your agricultural operation?

4 Are you interested in diversifying your farm activities? (i.e. add activity, soil manufacturing, farm stand, add new crop, etc.) Y N

a. If yes, how? _____

5 Are you interested in expanding farming operations? Y N

a. If yes, how? (i.e. acquiring additional land, equipment, etc.) _____

6 If interested in expanding, is there anything preventing it? Y N

a. If yes, what? (i.e. No land available, age, finances) _____

7 What changes would you like to see the town make that might help your agricultural operation?

8 What supporting business would you like to see in town: slaughterhouse, tack and feed store, equestrian center, farmers market, distribution center, compost farm, etc?

NORTH STONINGTON FARM SURVEY

9 What would make it easier for you to continue your agricultural operation in the future?

10 Would you be interested in any of the following?

- | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|
| a. | Learning more about succession planning? | Y | N |
| b. | Learning more about the possible options for preserving your farmland? (i.e. Transfer of Development Rights, Conservation Easements, Tax Abatement Programs etc.) | Y | N |
| c. | Attending a listening session designed to allow farmers to express any issues and concerns they may be having? | Y | N |
| d. | Serving on an Agricultural Commission if one were formed in town? | Y | N |

11 Would you be interested in attending or participating in any of the following?

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| a. | An agricultural Appreciation Day event (to bring visibility to our farms and highlight the benefits they bring to the community) | Y | N |
| b. | A town farmers market or farm store | Y | N |
| c. | Informational sessions on select topics related to issues and concerns raised by farmers | Y | N |
| d. | Other: (explain) | | |

12 If hiring labor is a concern, would you be interested in attending an informational meeting on:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|---|
| a. | Developing a labor pool | Y | N |
| b. | Insurance | Y | N |
| c. | Sharing labor | Y | N |
| d. | Other: (explain) | Y | N |

13 Would you like information on any USDA cost-share programs, loans or grants?

Y	N
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14 Are you interested in exploring the use of Wind Power, Solar or other alternative energy sources to supplement energy costs on the farm?

Y	N
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15 Do you use the internet for information or assistance with research on farm-related issues?

Y	N
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16 Have you considered applying to the Farmland Protection Program or sought out any other farm preservation options/programs?

Y	N
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THANK YOU!

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1 Overall Survey Response

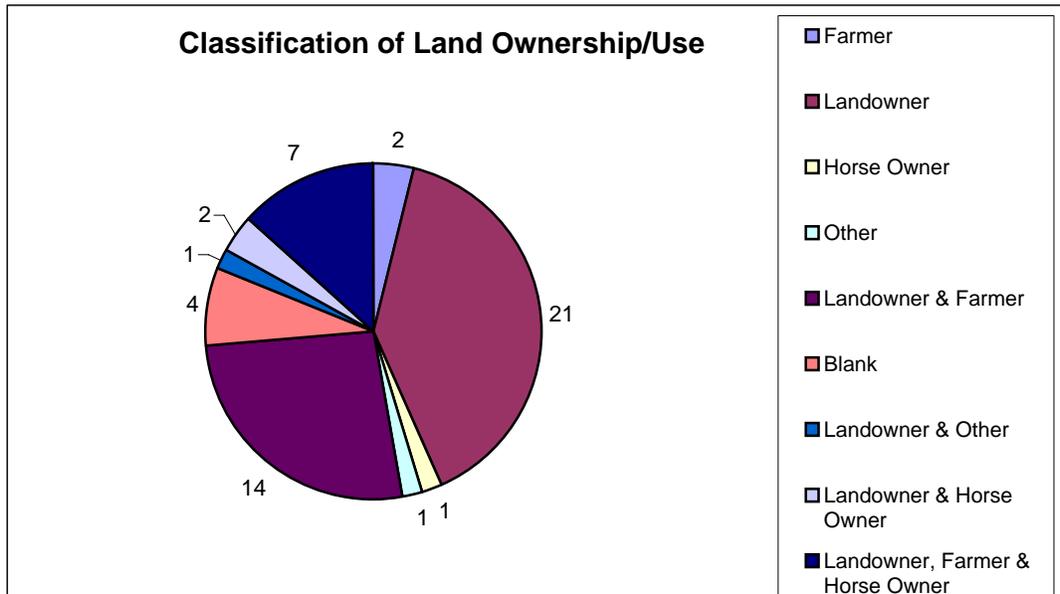
158 Surveys were mailed. A total of 53 surveys were filled out and returned as of this week in varying degrees of completeness. 4 surveys were returned completely blank. Most were only partially filled out. Most of the recipients with land classified as “forest” felt that the survey did not apply to them – and left most of it blank. 19 of the 158 surveys were sent to recipients who live out of the state. 3 were returned/undeliverable and only 4 of the 19 recipients responded. 23 of the 158 surveys were sent to other CT towns. 8 of the 23 responded. 115 were sent to N. Stonington recipients. 2 of the 115 were returned/undeliverable. I subtracted out the returned/undeliverable (158-5= 153) to determine the % response. **53/153 = 34.6% return**

Due to the incomplete nature of the responses, I was not able to get an accurate account of the number of acres actively used for agriculture, nor could I get a good sense of the number and type of employees working on a farm. With respect to employee housing, only 1 of the respondents provided housing to employees.

With respect to leasing land:

There was little interest in leasing town owned land. 7 respondents rent tillable acreage to others, 28 indicated that they do not, 18 left this question blank.

2



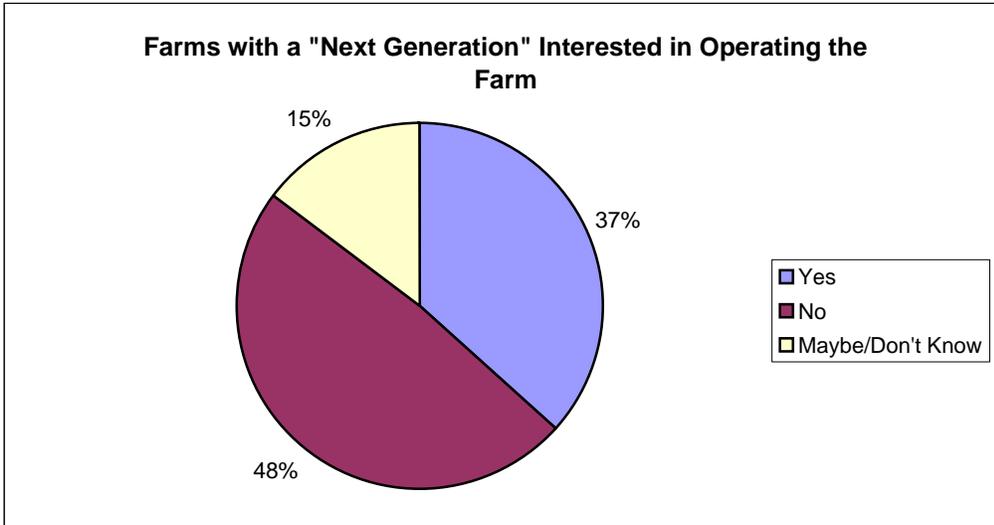
3 Length of time the property has been used for agriculture

14 left this question blank; 4 wrote in "always"; 4 wrote in "never"; and the remaining 31 responses averaged 88+ years.

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

4 % of Farmers who have a "Next Generation" interested in operating the farm

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# Per Response	15	20	6	12
% of Total Response (#/53)	28	38	11	23
% of Actual response (#/41)	37	49	15	



5 Average Age of Primary Operator 64

6 Average # of years farming the farm they own now 57

Most respondents classified themselves as "Hobby" or "Part Time" Farmers

7 Types of Crops Produced on Farm

Hay	12
Sweet Corn	1
Corn Silage	3
Indian Corn	
Vegetables	4
Christmas Trees	7
Dairy Products	
Fruit Trees	2
Herbs	1
Fruit	3
Wheat	
Honey	2
Pasture	4
Grapes	1
Eggs	4
Alfalfa	3
Fire wood	7
Wine	2
Flowers	3
Gourds/Pumpkins	2
Written In:	
Other: Timber/Lumber	3
Other: Garlic (1), Greenhouse (1) Furniture (1)	

There were no Certified Organic Farms reported

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

8 Livestock Reported

Dairy Cattle	2
Beef Cattle	4
Goats	1
Sheep	3
Bison	1
Pigs	1
Llama	1
Chickens	4
Turkeys	
Pheasants	
Guinea Hens	1
Donkeys	1
Ducks	4
Oxen	
Other: Geese	2
Other: Rabbit	1
Other: Bees	3

9 Horses

# Owned	# Boarded	Riding Instruction
24	5	1

Note: One or more of the larger Horse Farms did not respond to the survey

10 # of Respondents indicating that they offered Ag-activities

7 13%

- Concerts
- Festivals
- Craft Shows
- Cut your own/Pick your own
- Open Farm Day
- "Summer Spin-in"
- Tasting room
- Agricultural Fairs
- Tours for non-profit groups
- Weddings
- Activities w/ special needs children

11 # of Respondents indicating they produce Value Added Products

6 11%

- Wine
- Baked Goods
- Jams/Jellies
- Pickles
- Frozen Food (for home use)
- Candles
- Hand Cream
- Lip Balm
- Wreaths
- Hot Sauce
- Wool Roving/Dyed Roving/Yarn

Helpful information/assistance when considering developing or selling a value-added product included: Farmers market in North Stonington, allowing farm stands, seminars and workshops, collaboration with other farmers and product development assistance.

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

12 Methods for Marketing Farm Products

Farm stand	2
Pick-you-own	3
Wholesale	5
Direct Sales to Stores	2
Cooperative	
Direct Sales to Restaurant	1
Bartering Network	2
Farmers Market	1
Not Applicable	6
Written In	
Word of Mouth	3
Direct (i.e. Tasting Room)	2
Internet	1
Fairs/Craft Shows	2

13 # Indicating problems with the following

	#/item	
Hiring help	6	Other: "Getting good breeding stock" "Hunters and dirt bikes", Loss of rental property, & "Getting animals butchered"
Availability of housing for farm workers	1	
Land-Use Regulations/Restrictions affecting farm operations	3	
Availability of technical assistance	2	
Trespassing/Vandalism	9	
Availability of machinery/parts	3	
Complaints from neighbors about farm operations	2	
Availability of veterinary services	3	
Marketing your products	4	
Insurance concerns	7	
Availability of pesticides/fertilizer	2	
Theft	4	
Wildlife	10	
Manure Disposal	2	

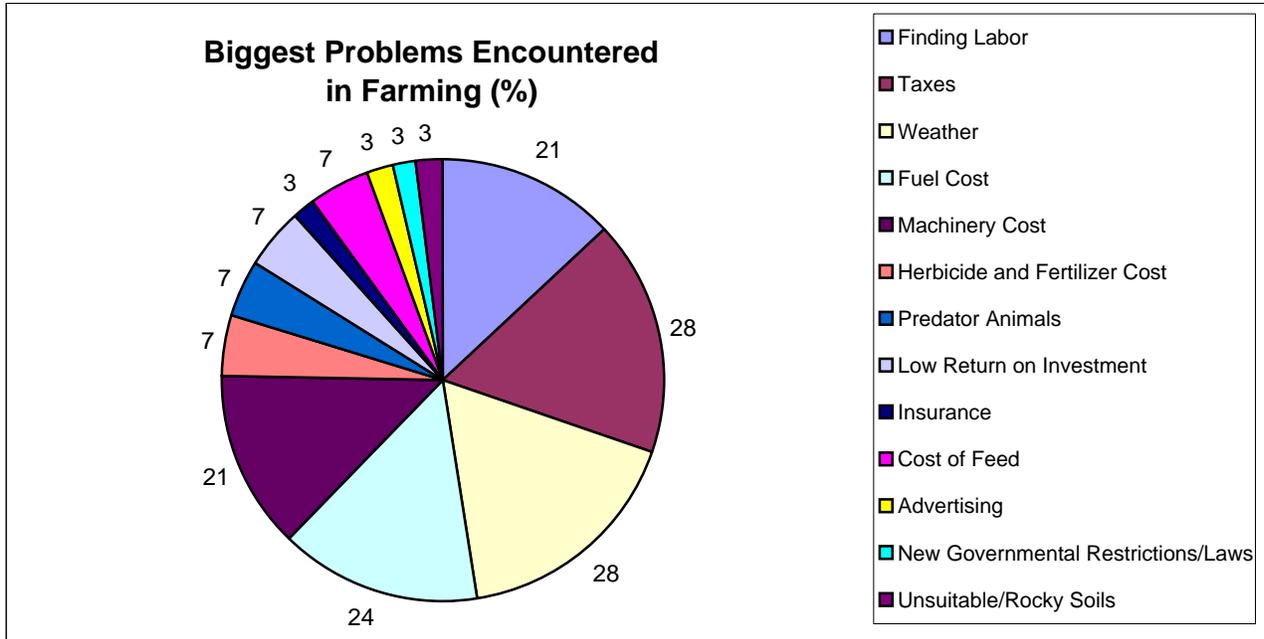
Some selected more than one item

14 Biggest Problems Encountered in Farming

	29 Actual response (AR)	
	#/item	% AR
Finding Labor	6	21
Taxes	8	28
Weather	8	28
Fuel Cost	7	24
Machinery Cost	6	21
Herbicide and Fertilizer Cost	2	7
Predator Animals	2	7
Low Return on Investment	2	7
Insurance	1	3
Cost of Feed	2	7
Advertising	1	3
New Governmental Restrictions/Laws	1	3
Unsuitable/Rocky Soils	1	3

Some selected more than one item.

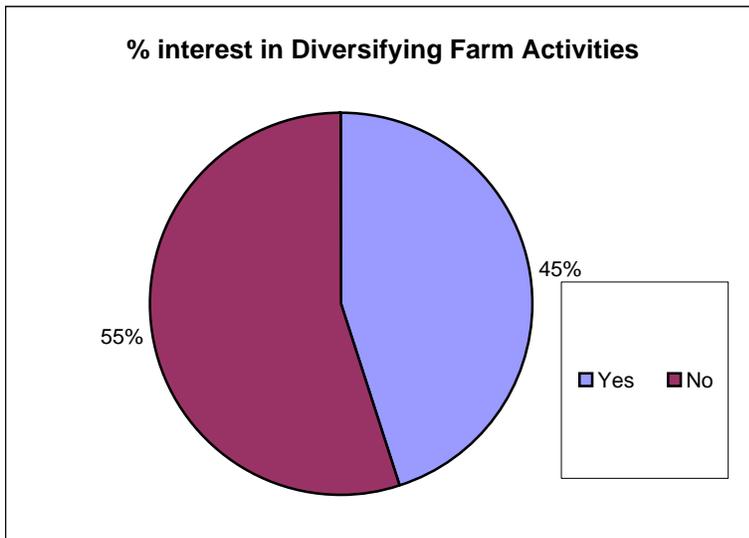
FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS



15 Interest in Diversifying Farm Activities

29 Actual Response

	Yes	No	Left Blank
# per Response	13	16	25
% of Total Response (#/53)	25	30	47
% of Actual Response (#/29)	45	55	



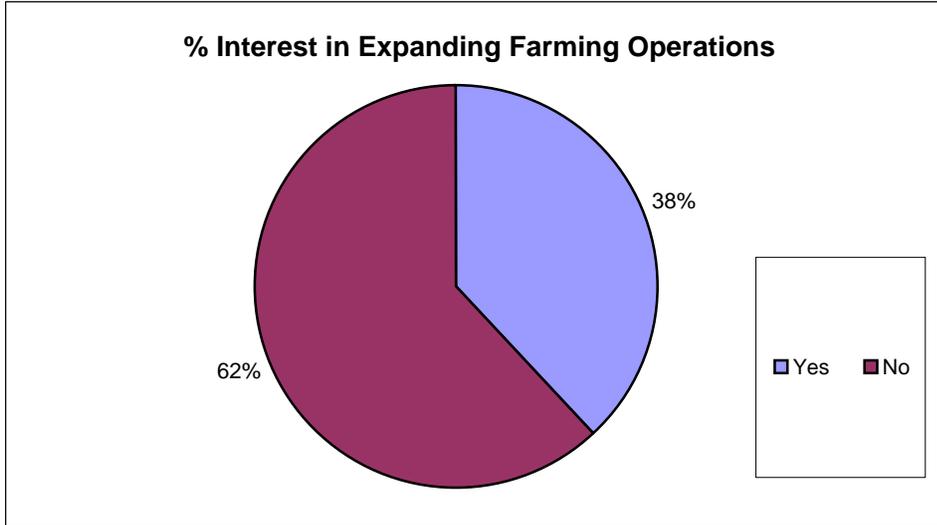
Desired ways to Diversify: Soil manufacturing, opening a farm stand, add more x-mas trees and a shop, raising pheasants or exotic birds, helping injured wild birds.

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

16 Interest in Expanding Farming Operations

29 Actual response

	Yes	No	Left Blank
# per Response	11	18	24
% of Total Response (#/53)	21	34	45
% of Actual Response (#/29)	38	62	



Desired Ways to Expand: New equipment, lease additional land, devote more time to farming

17 Things that are preventing expansion

- Costs
- Finances
- Age
- Know How
- Time to devote to Agricultural Activities
- High cost of feed
- No housing for farm help

18 Respondents indicated the following "things" would make it easier to continue their agricultural operation in the future:

Tax abatement, confidence that the town supports agricultural activities, lower expenses, higher income and less regulation, finding the "fountain of youth", more energy, government support for bee keeping and the loss of hives.

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

19 Types of supporting businesses to have in town

23 Actual Response

Suggested Businesses in Survey

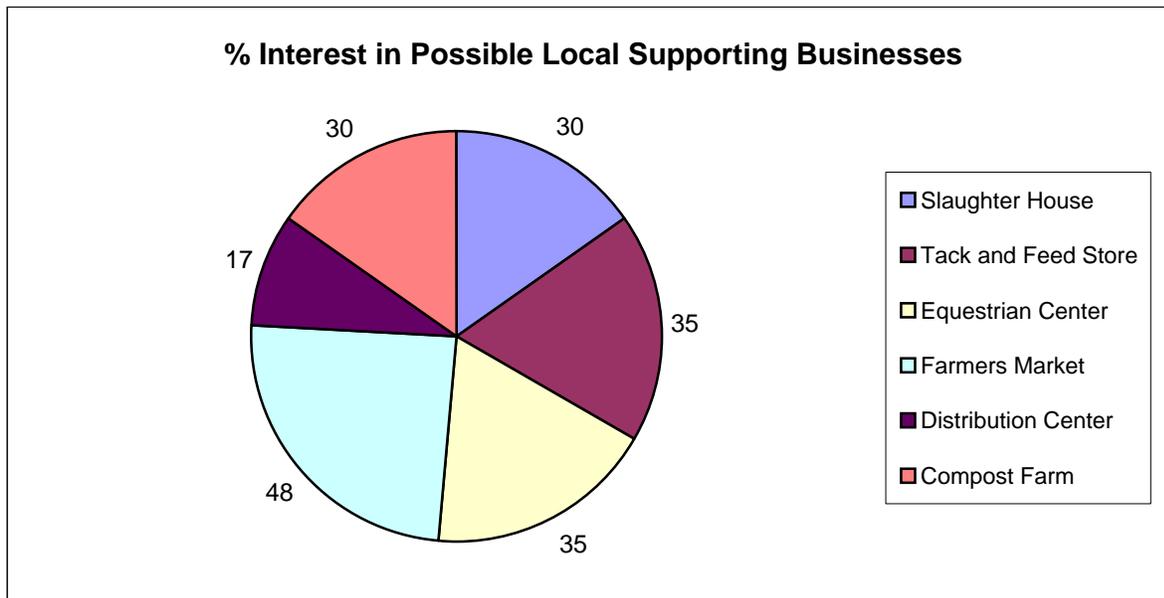
- Slaughter House
- Tack and Feed Store
- Equestrian Center
- Farmers Market
- Distribution Center
- Compost Farm

# per response	% of Actual Response
7	30
8	35
8	35
11	48
4	17
7	30

Additional written-in responses

Grocery Store	1
Equipment Dealer/Parts Store	1
Machinery Repair	1
Bulk Grain Depot	1
Large Dairy Products Production Facility	1
Farm Store	1
Financial Advisors/Tax Preparation	1

Some selected more than one item



20 Desired changes the town can make to help agricultural operations:

- Purchase temporary easements to provide income,
- Create less restrictive zoning regulations for farming,
- Provide more control of poor driving and excessive speed on roads, provide more road signs - caution signs alerting drivers to farming activity,
- Provide by-product feed at wholesale prices,
- Give continued or more support for rural farming activities and support against nuisance claims
- Set up an Agricultural Information Office in town (in conjunction with UCONN) to help start-up activities
- Encourage or set up programs in schools to educate kids about agriculture and provide opportunities to allow kids to work on a farm for credit.
- Provide more tax incentives/tax breaks for agriculture, i.e. a freeze on property tax for survivor
- Do nothing... Leave us alone!

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

21 Interest in the Following:

Percentages are of Total Response (53)

a. Learning more about succession planning?

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	10	12		31
% of Total Response	19	23		58

b. Learning more about the possible options for preserving your farmland? (i.e. Transfer of Development Rights, Conservation Easements, Tax Abatement Programs etc.)

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	20	10		23
% of Total Response	38	19		43

c. Attending a listening session designed to allow farmers to express any issues and concerns they may be having?

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	19	11		23
% of Total Response	36	21		43

d. Serving on an Agricultural Commission if one were formed in town?

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	8	15	4	26
% of Total Response	15	28	8	49

e. An agricultural Appreciation Day event (to bring visibility to our farms and highlight the benefits they bring to the community)

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	18	11		24
% of Total Response	34	21		45

f. A town farmers market or farm store

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	24	6	1	22
% of Total Response	45	11	2	42

g. Informational sessions on select topics related to issues and concerns raised by farmers

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	23	9		21
% of Total Response	43	17		40

FARM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

22 With respect to hiring labor: Interest in attending an informational meeting on:

a. Developing a labor pool

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	8	13		32
% of Total Response	15	25		60

b. Insurance

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	10	12		31
% of Total Response	19	23		58

c. Sharing labor

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	5	13		33
% of Total Response	9	25		62

d. Information on any USDA cost-share programs, loans or grants.

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	16	14		23
% of Total Response	30	26		43

e. Exploring the use of Wind Power, Solar or other alternative energy sources to supplement energy costs on the farm.

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	18	12		23
% of Total Response	34	23		43

f. Those who use the internet for information or assistance with research on farm-related issues.

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	24	10		19
% of Total Response	45	19		36

g. Those who have considered applying to the Farmland Protection Program or sought out any other farm preservation options/programs.

	Yes	No	Maybe	Left Blank
# per Response	10	19		24
% of Total Response	19	36		45