

## **GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture is an important part of Bowdoinham's history and continues to be a strong economic sector. In addition to supporting healthy food access, agriculture also provides a multitude of cultural, practical, aesthetic, and ecological benefits, and is an asset for community resiliency.

#### Goals

1. To safeguard and enhance the viability of agriculture and related resources, so agriculture remains a resilient asset and economic strength for future generations.
2. To encourage economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially responsible agriculture.
3. To promote and enhance opportunities to obtain local agricultural products.
4. To continue current and expand effective town-level programs and policies that support and encourage growth of the agricultural sector.

#### Key Issues

Protecting natural resources, critical acreage, and good soil require town-level and other policies to keep farmland in farming.

The retirement of existing farmers increases potential for loss of farmland to other purposes.

Although proximity to major markets like Portland, Brunswick, and Bath increases the value of farmland and locally grown food, it also increases development pressure.

Increases in development must not compromise farmland and local food production.

#### Recommendations

1. Create and implement an Agricultural Conservation Plan that may include:
  - a. Development of an organic farm cluster.
  - b. Prioritization of conservation of contiguous farmland to enhance our regional agricultural opportunities.
2. Promote and recognize the benefits of agriculture for the economy and ecology.
3. Create maps of farms in town that delineates current use, soil designation, and those enrolled in the Farmland Tax Program.
4. Review the Farmland Taxation Program to ensure the program is beneficial to farmers and encourage owners of productive farmland to enroll in the Farmland Taxation Program as appropriate.
5. Create mechanisms to protect active agricultural activities and all farmlands from new non-agricultural development including:
  - a. Review and revise Land Use Ordinances to minimize non-agricultural and/or incompatible development on farmland soils and reduce lot fragmentation.

- b. Encourage and support the preservation of farmland soils.
  - c. Ensure that all farmers and those living on farmland soils or historical farm properties are aware of all options for protection and maintaining their farms as productive farms.
6. Increase support of farmers in a variety of ways that may include:
- a. Development of a Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program.
  - b. Support for the Bowdoinham Farmers Market and other local food access venues.
  - c. Formation of a farmers' alliance/group or agricultural conservation commission.
  - d. Create and maintain a farmer resource package for the website and distribution to farmers and consumers.
  - e. Explore interest and ability to create a Bowdoinham Brand for agricultural products.
  - f. Support development of new markets for Bowdoinham agricultural products.
  - g. Encourage, support, and participate in regional agricultural projects.
  - h. Support agricultural educational opportunities.
7. Protect and increase access to local food for all people with a focus on access for children for growth and development, for all people experiencing food insecurity, in schools as well as other settings which may include:
- a. Encourage and support gleaning groups.
8. Work with state level entities that also support farmlands and natural resources which may include:
- a. Consulting with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices to ensure regulations are agriculture friendly.
  - b. Encouraging Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and other landowners with prime farmland soils to lease the land for agricultural uses.