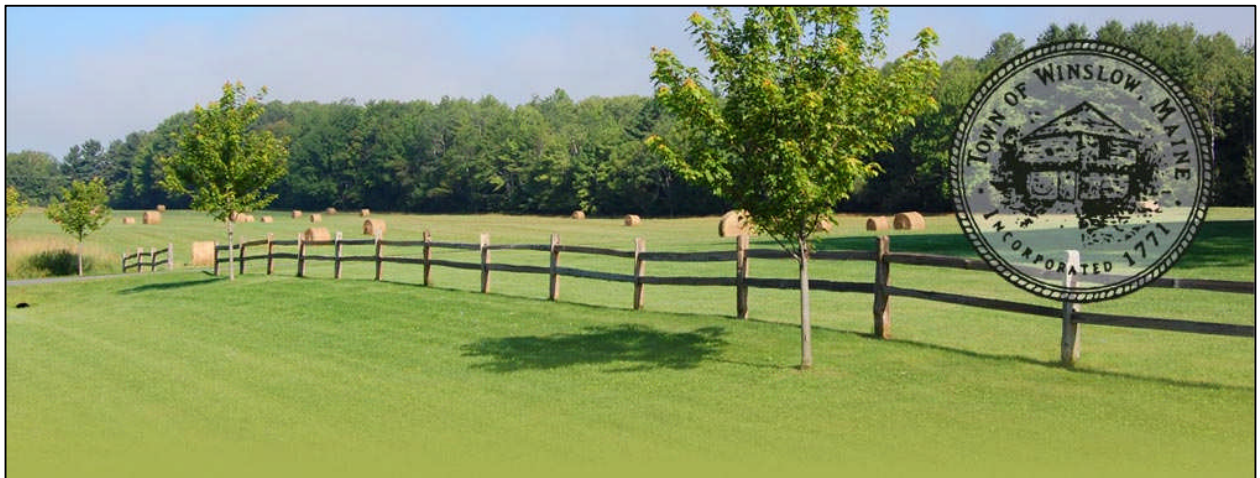


## **Cultivating Winslow's Agricultural Future**

*A Report by the Winslow Agriculture Working Group*

Presented to the Winslow Town Council

March 2014



*Photo by F. Stankevitz*

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## Table of Contents

Cultivating Winslow’s Agricultural Future.....	1
Introduction and Background.....	1
Working Group Formation and Process .....	2
Survey and Inventory .....	2
What We Found Out.....	3
Current Farming in Winslow.....	3
Ways Winslow Supports Farming .....	4
Ways Winslow Can Better Support Farming.....	5
Tax Incentives.....	5
Signage.....	6
Farm-friendly Building and Development.....	6
Building Broader Community Support.....	7
Next Steps .....	7
Winslow Agriculture Working Group’s Recommended Implementation Table.....	8
Appendix A. Farming in Winslow in 2013 – Summary Report of Survey Responses .....	A1
Appendix B. Proposed Agriculture Commission Charter .....	A2



Winslow Agriculture Working Group (*not all present*)  
Photo by Susan Morrill

## Cultivating Winslow’s Agricultural Future

### *Introduction and Background*

Across Maine, New England and the entire United States a movement is building to go back to growing, buying, and eating local food. Appreciation for farmers is rising, as is the recognition that farming is a significant part of Maine’s economy, with significant opportunity for growth.

Winslow has long been a farming community and has a strong agricultural heritage. The decline in traditional agriculture that began in the mid 1900’s has reduced the amount of farming infrastructure, and there remains a perception by many that farming continues to decline, yet Winslow remains a rural community with active farmland, livestock and pastures. Recently, increasing interest in local foods, the success of Johnny’s Selected Seeds and other farming businesses, and the growing number of small farms, present an opportunity for Winslow to take advantage of its land and industrial resources to help foster a renaissance of farming in the region.

One just has to look around to see that farming is still happening in Winslow and all around the region and State. According to *Cultivating Maine’s Agricultural Future*<sup>1</sup>, “Maine’s farms are a vital component of the State’s economy, annually generating over \$1.7 billion in economic impact.” In addition, farmers “spend over \$500 million annually on expenses such as feed, fertilizer, electricity, labor, rent, and fuel” as well as “pay over \$24 million annually in local property taxes”.

Though specific numbers are not available for Winslow, the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture reported that between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms in Kennebec County grew **13%**, from 575 to 649, and the market value of products sold rose **110%**, from \$30,229,000 to \$63,521,000, with 87% of the total value from sales of livestock and livestock products (e.g., dairy)<sup>2</sup>. The 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture data are not yet available, but experts expect these numbers to continue to rise.

While the total number of farms is growing, the trend is toward smaller, more specialized farming, with the average size of a farm in Kennebec County shrinking from 150 acres to 127 acres according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Farmland Trust et al, *Cultivating Maine’s Agricultural Future – A Guide for Towns, Land Trusts and Farm Supporters*. 2011. <http://www.maineFarmlandtrust.org/building-farm-friendly-communities/>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture 2007 Census of Agriculture County Profile for Kennebec County, Maine. [http://agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online\\_Highlights/County\\_Profiles/Maine/cp23011.pdf](http://agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Maine/cp23011.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

### **Working Group Formation and Process**

At the request of interested citizens, the Winslow Town Council appointed an Agriculture Working Group in the spring of 2013 to explore ways the town might better support local farmers and farming. Working Group members include local farmers and municipal officials, with technical assistance from Maine Farmland Trust's Municipal Outreach Contractor. The Working Group met regularly at the Winslow Town Office and invited municipal officials and others to participate as needed.

### **Survey and Inventory**

Members of the Working Group were provided copies of the Agriculture & Forestry Resources chapter of the Winslow Comprehensive Plan and relevant excerpts from the town zoning ordinance and building codes. Maps showing important farmland soils and the farms enrolled in the farmland current use tax program were made available as members worked to identify farming activities in Winslow.

The Working Group determined in its early meetings that it needed to hear from local farmers about what the town is doing right and where it might improve its support for farming. The Group decided to formulate and distribute an informal survey to farmers enrolled in the current use tax program for farmland and to owners of larger parcels in areas mapped as having good farm soils.

The goal of the survey was to help the Working Group:

1. Understand how much and what types of farming are happening in Winslow today;
2. Become aware of the more important issues that are related to farming; and
3. Identify ways the town could better support its farming community.

Approximately 60 surveys were distributed, with 17 surveys returned to the town office ( $\pm 28\%$ ). A summary report of the survey results is included in Appendix A.

In addition to the survey, the Working Group met with the Winslow Code Enforcement Officer to find out if there were any agriculture-related enforcement issues in recent memory. Several topics for discussion were identified, though no significant farming-related issues were reported. Paul Fongemie, Winslow's Public Works Director, also attended a meeting to discuss signage and public safety issues related to farming.

Stephanie Gilbert of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry attended a meeting and presented information about a new program called the Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program. A State law was passed in 2009 allowing towns to provide a higher level of tax relief to farmers beyond the current use tax program in

exchange for a 20 year non-development agreement. This program can provide relief from taxes on farm buildings, which often make up the bulk of a farmer’s tax bill.

Members also helped to plan a Kennebec Region Farming Forum. The goal of the forum was to bring resources and information to area farmers and residents. The event was held on October 25, 2013 at the Winslow VFW, and over 30 participants heard about and discussed local farming trends and issues. Speakers and panelists at the event included John Piotti, Executive Director of Maine Farmland Trust; Henry Perkins, Albion farmer; Bonita Nicolas, Quality Assurance Manager at Johnny’s Selected Seeds; Gail Chase, KVCOG; and Steve Russell, Winslow Town Councilor and dairy farmer.

During the course of the Working Group’s activities, Winslow acquired an actively farmed parcel through the municipal tax lien process. Working Group members were consulted about the value of the property for farming, and asked to make recommendations regarding the Town’s future actions regarding the property.



### *What We Found Out*

*Photo by F. Stankevitz*

### **Current Farming in Winslow**

As of April 2013, 31 property owners have enrolled property on 54 parcels in Winslow in the farmland current use tax program. Of the more than 3,300 acres enrolled, approximately 1,361 acres are designated as “pastureland” and 44 acres are designated as “cropland”. The remaining acres are mostly farm woodlands.

The survey results generally supported the Working Group members’ perceptions about farming in Winslow, with a few surprises. Of the 17 responses, 13 have actively farmed

properties. Hay is grown on all of the 13 actively farmed properties, with vegetables grown on six (6) of the farm properties. In addition to hay and vegetables, some respondents also produce/provide the following:

- Pasture – 3 responses
- Fruit/orchards – 2 responses
- Livestock, poultry, maple syrup, silage corn, herbs and lumber – 1 response each

One area where the survey responses were unexpected was the interest in conservation easements for farm properties. Six survey respondents indicated their properties are protected by conservation easements, and five additional respondents indicated they are interested in conserving the important farm soils on their property.

In addition to data collected, members relied on local knowledge to help understand local and regional farming activity. For instance, one member of the Working Group is an organic dairy farmer, with XX head of dairy cows. Another has a vegetable farm.

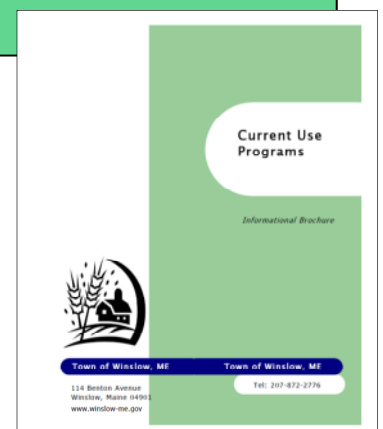
### Ways Winslow Supports Farming

After reviewing the survey responses, meeting with the Code Enforcement Officer, and hearing from farmers and others at the forum, Working Group members have concluded that though farmers face many challenges in their chosen profession, in general Winslow supports its farmers and does not have overly burdensome municipal barriers in place. The local zoning ordinance and building codes are not overly prohibitive for farming (though there is room for improvement), and the tax assessor actively educates farmers and others about the current use tax programs available to them (see sidebar).

The 2009 Winslow Comprehensive Plan<sup>4</sup> identifies specific policies and strategies related to farming. Many of the farming strategies relate to protecting important farming soils, both through zoning and subdivision requirements that help guide new development away from the farm soils and by working collaboratively with Maine Farmland Trust.

Recently, the Winslow Community Garden Committee, with assistance from the Sustain Mid Maine Coalition, created a community garden.

**One Strategy Implemented!**  
After reviewing the survey results and learning more about what might help local farmers be better informed, members asked the Winslow Assessor to prepare a brochure describing the current use tax programs and give some examples of how enrolling might provide some tax relief. The Assessor created the brochure, and it is now available at the Town Office and is being used as a model for other Maine communities.



<sup>4</sup> Town of Winslow Comprehensive Plan. Chapter on Agriculture and Forestry Resources. 2009.

Pesticide-free 4' x 8' beds for growing vegetables are available to Winslow residents at a low seasonal rental cost.

### *Ways Winslow Can Better Support Farming*

The Agriculture Working Group has concluded that though Winslow is somewhat friendly to its farmers, there are steps the Town could take to better support local farmers and help foster farming in the greater region.

### **Property Tax Incentives**

Winslow does a great job informing local residents about current use property tax programs and helping them enroll in programs that work for them as property owners (see sidebar above). The Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program could enhance property tax relief for local farmers if Winslow chooses to adopt such a program. Many communities provide property tax incentives for businesses through tax increment financing (TIF) districts. The Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program offers similar property tax relief to farmers. Through this program, eligible farmers can receive a rebate on some portion of their property taxes related to their farm's structure(s), providing much needed cash for their farm and perhaps even allowing them to grow their farm operations. Through this program, the additional property tax relief is granted in exchange for a commitment by the farmer to keep farming the land for at least 20 years. The more economically viable Winslow's farms are, the more attractive the occupation will be to the young farmers needed if Winslow's rural and agricultural heritage is to continue.

The Working Group recommends the following steps toward exploring local adoption of the Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program.

- Step 1. Work with Stephanie Gilbert of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to prepare a package of informational materials and presentation to the Winslow Town Council.
- Step 2. If the Town Council indicates general support for exploring the program, hold a public information meeting with focused invitations to local farmers.
- Step 3. If there appears to be broad public support and interest by local farmers in the program, work with the Department of Agriculture to develop a program for Winslow.

In addition, the Working Group recommends that Winslow explore creating a tax increment financing (TIF) district specifically targeting agricultural processing, storage, and/or distribution to help improve the regional farming infrastructure.

## **Signage**

One simple recommendation made in a survey response was to place farm equipment warning signs along town roadways where farm equipment often travels to help warn motorists and identify the area as a farming location. There are also places where farm animals regularly cross the road, and signage or other indicator mechanisms would improve safety for the farmer, the animals, and the traveling public. The Working Group met with Paul Fongemie, Winslow’s Public Works Director, and agreed to the following recommendations:

1. Ask the Police Chief and the Town-wide Public Safety Committee for input about where such signs are needed;
2. Once the list is developed, meet with the Maine Department of Transportation staff to discuss options for locations on State or State-aid roads (e.g., the Garland Road);
3. Check with MaineDOT and also the owner of Rainbow Valley Farm in Sidney about the costs and benefits of flashing signs for animal crossings.

The Working Group also recommends that Winslow erect signage or large banners at its highway gateways, promoting the community’s support for farming. Such signs could read “Winslow is friendly to its family farms” or something similar.

## **Farm-friendly Building and Development**

1. Work with the Code Enforcement Officer to amend Chapter 4 – Building and Plumbing Code to revise the building permit threshold (currently \$500.00 in value) to a square foot threshold.
2. Ensure the definition of “temporary” in building and plumbing ordinances allows for moveable greenhouses and chicken coops.
3. Work with the Code Enforcement Officer to identify ways to make it easier and less costly to obtain permits for agricultural structures like high tunnels (hoop houses), green houses, and chicken coops.
4. Develop standards for allowing some livestock in the HDR and MDR zones (e.g., poultry), with provisions for setbacks, lot sizes, head count limits, etc.
5. In order to help conserve important farm soils while respecting property rights, create a brochure with information highlighting town-wide goals about farmland protection and include suggestions about how to site a house on farmland and other information about living in a farm-friendly town.
6. Evaluate options for any farmland properties acquired by the Town, including consideration of farm easements and/or leasing or selling such land to a farmer.
7. Assess the use and management of the town forest and, if needed, make recommendations to the Town Council regarding its use and management.



8. Implement the strategies identified in the 2009 Winslow Comprehensive Plan related to protecting important farming soils.

### **Building Broader Community Support**

The Working Group recommends the following to help build broader support for farming in Winslow.

- Develop a page of farming information on the town website that provides information about farming. Approach the high school to see if students could help design the web page.
- Contact the Farmers Market Association for information and advice about the need for a market in Winslow. If there is interest in setting up a trial market (such as a one-time harvest market), consider the Marden’s parking lot on Benton Avenue, space by the mini-mall, or Fort Halifax Park if traffic safety issues can be mitigated.
- Work with the high school to determine interest in a school garden that would grow food for the school and local food pantries.
- Create a summary flyer of this report and include in a tax bill mailing to ensure a broad level of awareness about current efforts to support Winslow’s farmers and farm businesses.

### *Next Steps*

The steps described above are compiled in an Implementation Table (next page) that identifies priority and leadership. Working Group members recommend that the Town Council create an agricultural commission or similar group as a mechanism to oversee implementation of the recommendations, as well as allow those engaged in farming and agriculture to meet regularly to share ideas and resources, and get assistance.

The Agricultural Commission should meet at a minimum of four times per year to:

1. Check progress on implementing recommended strategies;
2. Revisit municipal policies as needed;
3. Respond to any agriculture issues that may arise; and
4. Hear reports from the CEO, the Assessor, local legislators, and farmers on issues relating to farming.

A proposed Agriculture Commission charter outlining roles and responsibilities is included in this report as Appendix B.

*Winslow Agriculture Working Group’s Recommended Implementation Table*

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Strategy Detail</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Priority</i>
<b>Form Agricultural Commission</b>	Develop a charter and identify membership	Town Manager/Town Council	High
<b>Tax Incentives</b>	Explore the Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program	Agricultural Commission/Town Council/Maine Dept of Ag	High
	TIF district for agricultural processing, storage or distribution facility	Town Manager/Maine DECD	Medium
<b>Farm-friendly Building and Development</b>	Amend Chapter 4 – Building and Plumbing Code to revise the building permit threshold (currently \$500.00 in value) to a square foot threshold.	CEO/Planning Board	High
	Ensure the definition of “temporary” in building and plumbing ordinances allows for moveable greenhouses and chicken coops.	CEO/Planning Board	High
	Work with the Code Enforcement Officer to identify ways to make it easier and less costly to obtain permits for agriculture structures like high tunnels (hoop houses), green houses, and chicken coops.	CEO/Planning Board	High
	Develop standards for allowing some livestock in the HDR and MDR zones with provisions for setbacks, lot sizes, head count limits, etc	CEO/Planning Board	Medium
	Create a brochure with information highlighting town-wide goals about farmland protection and include suggestions about how to site a house on farmland and other information about living in a farm-friendly town.	Agricultural Commission/High School class	Medium
	Evaluate options for the piece of farmland owned by the Town, including consideration of a farm easement and leasing or selling it to a farmer.	Town Council/Town Manager	Medium
	Assess the use and management of the town forest and, if needed, make recommendations to the Town Council regarding its use and management.	Agricultural Commission	Medium
	Implement the strategies identified in the 2009 Winslow Comprehensive Plan related to protecting important farming soils.	Agricultural Commission	Medium

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Strategy Detail</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Priority</i>
<b>Signage</b>	Identify farm-related sign needs and place signs where appropriate	Public Works Director/Public Safety Com	High
	Develop gateway signs highlighting that Winslow is farm-friendly	Agricultural Commission/Public Works Director	Medium
<b>Building Broader Community Support</b>	Develop a page of farming information on the town website that provides information about farming.	Agricultural Commission/High School Class	Medium
	Contact the Farmers Market Association for information and advice about the need for a market in Winslow.	Agricultural Commission	High
	Work with the high school to determine interest in a school garden that would grow food for the school and local food pantries.	Agricultural Commission	Medium
	Create a summary flyer of this report and include in a tax bill mailing to ensure a broad level of awareness about current efforts to support Winslow’s farmers and farm businesses.	Agricultural Commission	High

**Appendix A. Farming in Winslow in 2013 –  
Summary Report of Survey Responses**

**FARMING IN WINSLOW IN 2013**  
**Summary Report of Survey Responses**

**Informal Survey conducted Spring/Summer 2013  
by the  
Winslow Agriculture Working Group  
with Assistance from Maine Farmland Trust**

**October 2013**

**Working Group Members**

Sally Harwood, Chair  
Steve Russell  
Kate Newkirk  
Jim Veilleux  
Elery Keene  
Severn Towl  
Michael Heavener, Town

**Maine Farmland Trust**

Stacy Benjamin  
Municipal Outreach Contractor

## **Introduction**

At the request of interested citizens, the Winslow Town Council appointed an Agriculture Working Group in the spring of 2013 to explore ways the town might better support local farmers and farming. Working Group members include local farmers and municipal officials, with technical assistance from Maine Farmland Trust's Municipal Outreach Contractor.

The Working Group determined in its early meetings that it needed to hear from local farmers about what the town is doing right and where it might improve its support for farming. The Group decided to formulate and distribute an informal survey to farmers enrolled in the current use tax program for farmland and to owners of larger parcels in areas mapped as having good farm soils.

The goal of the survey was to help the Working Group:

4. Understand how much and what types of farming are happening in Winslow today;
5. Become aware of the more important issues are related to farming; and
6. Identify ways the town could better support its farming community.

The Working Group carefully crafted each question, and developed a cover letter to send with the survey. Approximately 60 surveys were mailed out to the farmers and landowners identified. The survey was also posted at the town office and on the town website so any resident could complete and return it. Members of the Working Group followed up by calling many of the survey recipients, to thank them for returning the survey or provide encouragement to do so.

Seventeen (17) surveys were returned to the town office, and several requests for more information were received. In addition, two landowners requested an interview to respond to the survey.

## **Major Findings**

### *Question 1 – Is your land being farmed?*

Thirteen (13) of the 17 respondents have properties that are currently being farmed, with seven respondents farming their own land and 11 respondents allowing others to farm their land (several both farmed and allowed others to farm their land).

### *Question 2 – Is farming your primary source of income?*

Only one respondent listed farming as their primary source of income, with three others noting they would like farming to be their primary income.

*Question 3 – What do you grow or provide?*

- All 13 actively farmed properties grow hay.
- Vegetables are also grown on six (6) of the respondents farm properties.
- In addition to hay and vegetables, some respondents also produce/provide the following:
  - Pasture – 3 responses
  - Fruit/orchards – 2 responses
  - Livestock, poultry, maple syrup, silage corn, herbs and lumber – 1 response each

*Question 4 – What is your vision of the future for farming in Winslow and the surrounding region?*

Most respondents were quite hopeful about the future of farming in Winslow (13 of 17 responses). Three respondents were not hopeful about farming and one was not sure.

*Question 5 – Are there ways you can think of that the town supports your ability to farm?*

Respondents most often cited lower taxes on farmland as a way the Town supports farming. Good zoning was also mentioned.

*Question 6 – What could the town do better to help your ability to farm?*

Several ideas were suggested as ways the Town could better support farming, ranging from providing farm equipment signage on a busy road to preserving farmland. Several respondents suggested that the Town provide information about farming to property owners or “act as a clearinghouse” for information that might help support farming.

*Question 7 – Would the formation of a local agricultural commission, made up of mostly farmers and convened to discuss issues and implement strategies related to farming, be beneficial to you as a farmer?*

Respondents were split about whether an agricultural commission would be helpful in Winslow. Three respondents indicated a willingness to serve on such a commission.

*Question 8 – Are there places that are important to you as a farmer?*

Respondents noted equipment and supply stores most often in response to the question about places important to farming. Other places noted include a specific farm, hayfields, MFOGA, UMO, and the farmers market.

*Questions 9 & 10 – Definitions of “agriculture” and “farmer”*

Nearly all respondents who answered the question about definitions agreed with the definitions proposed for “agriculture” and “farmer”. There were several suggestions about how to improve the definitions.

*Question 11– What are your future plans for your agricultural lands?*

Ten respondents envision continuing to farm or expanding farming on their properties. Four respondents were not sure. One respondent mentioned selling if needed.

*Question 12 – Are you aware of programs that help farmers?*

Many respondents are aware of the farmland current use tax program, the Maine Cooperative Extension Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Other services and programs listed in the survey are much less known.

*Question 13 – Is your farm property currently conserved with a farmland easement?*

Six respondents indicated their property is protected by a conservation easement, with eight indicating “no” and one unsure. Five respondents indicated they are interested in conserving the important farm soils on their property.

*Question 14 – What’s your source of water?*

Most respondents have private wells with only one problem (bacterial contamination) reported.

*Question 15 – Is some portion of your farming organic or “natural”?*

Eleven respondents practice “natural” or organic farming on at least a portion of their land. Four responded “no” to this question.

*Question 16 – What are your thoughts about genetically modified organisms (GMO)?*

Respondents were split on genetically modified organism (GMO) use in farming, with emphatic responses at both ends of the spectrum.

*Questions 17 & 18 – Farmers markets*

- None of the respondents sell products at a farmers market.
- Eight respondents think Winslow should have its own farmers market, with Halifax Park the most often noted location and the weekend the most preferred time.

*Question 19 – Do you provide food for a local food pantry or soup kitchen?*

Six respondents currently provide food to a local food pantry, with two additional respondents indicating an interest in providing food.

*Question 20 – Do you need additional land for farming, or do you have land you might be willing to lease to a farmer?*

## DRAFT – Not Municipal Policy

No one needs additional land for farming at this time, but five respondents indicated they have land available to lease to a farmer. One respondent indicated they possibly have land to lease.

*Question 21 – Do you have any other thoughts or comments about farming in Winslow or the region?*

Respondents offered a variety of thoughts and suggestions at the end of the survey, including:

- A suggestion to share it with neighboring towns as “...farming exists within a regional setting, not within town boundaries, so it’s important that we all work together, sharing ideas, regulations, markets, etc. Good for Winslow for getting this started!”
- A suggestion to consider either revising the zoning code in the Rural District because it is so restrictive, or buying the development rights
- A suggestion for the Town to help with posting land, provide a number to call for enforcement, and educate folks about public use of land
- A suggestion to watch out for climate change
- The comment that “Our family farms have long been unvalued for their contributions to our society.”
- A comment that one respondent feels bad when they “see the waste of good farmland” and they would like to see it farmed
- Several expressions of thanks for doing the survey

## **Next Steps**

The Agriculture Working Group has identified the following next steps as follow up to this survey to further its work to identify ways Winslow can better support farming and its farmers:

1. Send this survey report to the mailing list of survey recipients, along with information about current use tax programs, conserving farmland, and local food pantries and soup kitchens;
2. Compile written feedback and suggestions from the upcoming October 25 farming forum;
3. Analyze and integrate the survey results and forum feedback; and
4. Prepare a report to submit to the Town Council with recommended strategies to help support farming that identifies priority, timing and responsible party.



# **FARMING IN WINSLOW IN 2013**

## **Summary Report of Survey Responses**

### **Appendix**

#### **Survey and Consolidated Responses**

**Dear Farmer or Landowner:**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey.** *Please circle your answer where appropriate. Either hand written or typed answers are welcomed. Please feel free to write on the back or add additional sheets.* **Please return your completed form to the Winslow Town Office as soon as possible** in the envelope provided to make sure your opinions are included in the Working Group’s report and recommendations.

1. Is your land being farmed? Yes - 13 No -4  
If so, is it being farmed by: You -7 Someone else - 11
  
2. Is farming your primary source of income? Yes - 1 No - 14  
If not, would you like to make a living from farming? Yes - 3 No – 7 Maybe -1
  - I am too old to farm
  - ?-some future time
  
3. If you farm, do you grow or provide: *(Please check all that apply)*

<input type="checkbox"/> Hay-13	<input type="checkbox"/> Poultry -1
<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetables-6	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery crops
<input type="checkbox"/> Pasture -3*	<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit/Orchards-2
<input type="checkbox"/> Dairy	<input type="checkbox"/> Maple syrup -1
<input type="checkbox"/> Livestock -1	<input type="checkbox"/> Other_•silage corn • herbs•wood-lumber
<input type="checkbox"/> Grains	

\*horses, sometimes
  
4. What is your vision of the future for farming in Winslow and the surrounding region?
  - My vision is that human food will be the most important ag crop of the future. We have things that the rest of the country will eventually run out of, most importantly, water. Winslow has an opportunity to be part of the future.
  - Small and/or small part time dairy, beef, sheep, vegetable and herb farms – organic and non-organic
  - Not very good
  - Not sure
  - Protect the farmland for: beautiful open space; support nature, wild animals; stop ??; grow your own food
  - Farming-growing specialty crops/organic for restaurants – farmers markets. Try to preserve what dairy farms are left.
  - I see local food & fiber as being a major component of a food system in Winslow. This includes not just grown but processed food.
  - Hopefully with support the family farm will continue to be a major part of our community

## 17 Surveys returned as of 7/30/2013

- Preserve remaining farmland
  - I hope to see food production activities increase throughout the area, for both local and area wide markets.
  - Will continue to diminish
  - Farming will increase – buy local
  - Very discouraging – can't make enough \$ - equipment costs too much
  - It would be good to keep people farming what is already being farmed – keeping local farm products in the local stores if possible
5. Are there ways you can think of that the town supports your ability to farm?
- Lower tax rates
  - Farmland tax exemption
  - A sympathetic tax assessor – one that isn't always trying to find ways to reclass farmland to some other higher tax classification
  - No
  - Good zoning; keep neighbors actively informed
  - Not sure
  - Tax relief for farmers preserving green space
  - Lower taxes
  - ?
  - Reduction in property taxes for land being farmed
  - No
  - No
  - Tree growth tax; Farmland tax – not houselot
6. What could the town do better to help your ability to farm? (*e.g., permitting or zoning issues, enforcement issues, municipal policies, etc. – please be as specific as possible*)
- “House in a hayfield” permitting of new construction for residential sprawl must be stopped somehow so farmers don't pay houselot prices for farmland. “Grandfathering” works for non-conforming uses on existing lots. Can it be transferred for the preservation of farmland?
  - The traffic by my place is insane. The speed limit needs to be enforced. Signage would be helpful, showing that there is slow-moving equipment in the area.
  - Not farming
  - Zoning protection from developers; conservation easements; protect the land; technical know-how to farm correctly
  - Not sure if there is anyone on the planning/zoning board with farming experience – can't find a list of members on website
  - Encourage preservation of undeveloped land + hold tax rates to a level that allows owners to retain their land for future generations.
  - Provide services to help with better land management and farming practices.
  - N/A
  - ?
  - Lower the taxes on the land; Buy land – lease to farmers
  - Since I don't farm – I am not sure if there are any tax breaks as there are for woodlot owners if they choose to enter the system

## 17 Surveys returned as of 7/30/2013

7. Would the formation of a local agricultural commission, made up of mostly farmers and convened to discuss issues and implement strategies related to farming, be beneficial to you as a farmer?

Yes - 7 No -6 Possibly - 1

- Could be, maybe a better place for farmer(s) is on planning/zoning board
- Not now
- Ester Cayouette's son in Vassalboro – yes
- I would like to learn more about our farming community

Would you be willing to serve on such a commission? Yes - 3 No – 9

- Not now

8. Are there places that are important to you as a farmer – other farms or businesses that help you farm or that you believe are important to keeping farming part of Winslow's economy?

- The Eames Farm on Eames Road
- Yes
- Not farming
- Not yet
- MOFGA, UMO, farmers market
- Farm supply stores; equipment sales and service businesses; independent repair shops
- Although many local businesses mainly serve need of urban consumers (Agway, Central ME Equipment) these are important for farmers. One need is to bring back fast infrastructure that helps farmers move products to markets
- Hay is used by other farmers who have animals
- Abutting fields and farms
- Local feed stores, nurseries, greenhouses i.e., Agway and FEDCO
- Buy equipment – repair – need better grain

9. Do you agree with this definition of agriculture? *Agriculture: The production, keeping or maintenance for sale or lease of plants and/or animals, including but not limited to: forages and sod crops; grains and seed crops; dairy animals dairy products; poultry and poultry products; livestock; fruits and vegetables; and ornamental and greenhouse products.*

Yes - 14 No – 1

How might you change the definition?

- I would add that ag includes a love of the land and how it is cared for
- I think the definition from Merriam-Webster captures agriculture – cultivating the soil, producing crops, & raising livestock for food and fiber; Agribusiness: industry engaged in producing operations of a farm, the manufacture and distribution of farm equipment and supplies, and processing, storage and distribution of farm commodities.
- No change
- Incomplete- personal use of food
- Add forestry activities

## 17 Surveys returned as of 7/30/2013

10. Do you agree with this definition of farmer? *Farmer: Anyone who grows food or fiber for personal consumption or for sale to others.*

Yes – 15 No - 0

How might you change the definition?

- Or to feed others in need
- I would add that ag includes a love of the land and how it is cared for (same as #9)
- Ok as is
- Add – grows food, fiber, animal or vegetable products...

11. What are your future plans for your agricultural lands?

- Growing vegetable gardens for ourselves and others; keeping our acreage open for the Eames Farms use of hayfields & the enjoyment of friends and acquaintances
- It varies. It depends on which parcels you are talking about. In my family, there has always been a plan to sell certain parcels if need be. Another will never be sold in my lifetime no matter what.
- None
- The land is in a holding pattern
- I have no plans
- Christmas tree farm; fruit trees; fruit bushes
- Might try tree farm
- Would like to grow grains
- For now hay but may consider vegetable crops in the future
- Try to maintain and pass on to our children
- I would like to improve my maple grove and establish a small poultry operation for family use. Also maintain hay fields in their current status.
- Maintain and improve my pasture and hayfields. Grow my sheep flock.
- Not sure
- For the children – for farming
- I would like to be able to use some of my land to grow crops for food kitchens – but I am limited because I do not have all the equipment needed. If there are like minded individual it would be beneficial to have some sort of commission that people could pool together & work out ideas & logistics of doing things

12. Are you aware of tools and programs available to help farmers keep farmland in farming, including financial tools? (*please check all tools you are familiar with*)

- Farm and Open Space Current Use Tax Program - 9
- Maine Farms for the Future Program -1
- Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund
- Get Real! Get Maine! - 2
- Agriculture Development Grant Program - 1
- Farm Business Planning -1

- UMaine Cooperative Extension Service -9
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service programs - 7
- Maine FarmLink
- Beginning Farmer Program -1
- Conservation easements -3
- MOFGA programs for farmers -5

13. Is your farm property currently conserved with a farmland easement? Yes - 6 No -8  
Unsure or ? – 2

- I think it is [noted as a “yes”]

If not, are you interested in conserving the important farm soils on your property?

Yes -5 No -5

14. What’s your source of water? (Town water, private wells, public water supply, other)  
Have you experienced problems in the past? How might your water supply affect future plans?

- Private well – 12+ gpm good for garden irrigation
- Private well – no past problems – in the short run water shouldn’t affect my future plans
- Town water - 3
- Private well - 6
- Private well – bacterial contamination
- Well water – too small at this time to evaluate
- Well
- Drilled well. I have more than adequate supply of quality water.

15. Is some portion of your farming organic or “natural” (meaning no additional use of chemical pesticides, GMOs etc.)? Yes – 11\* No – 4 N/A – 1

- \*Land I own in Sidney

16. What are your thoughts about genetically modified organisms (GMO)?

- They worry us
- Anti GMOers too vocal and becoming too influential – a high number of people in the world would die if not for the GMO food. Food production would diminish significantly if agri reverted back to heirloom crop production solely.
- I don’t know enough about GMO to pass a[n] opinion
- I think they serve a very useful purpose
- Good question – guess do it naturally
- None
- No!

- GMOs have their place but not in our food supply or that of the animals. Keep for uses such as medical.
- Don't know enough to have a valid opinion.
- Absolutely despise them!
- None
- Do not purchase food that has been modified
- Horrible

17. Do you participate in any farmers market(s)?    Yes – 1\*    No - 15

- As a consumer now
- We sell via CSA shares, or give away to Muskie Center etc.
- Grow my own food
- Maybe in the future
- \*once a week
- Shop at Waterville's farmers market
- Shop at them at times

If yes, please list the market or markets: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you think Winslow should have its own farmers market?    Yes - 8    No – 4

- “No” response comment – Yes should the Waterville market fold
- “No” response comment - Too much overlap with Waterville

If yes, do you have an idea about where it should be?

- In the park
- Down by the fort
- Fort Halifax Park
- Halifax Park
- No

If yes, do you have an idea about what day of the week is best?

- Friday
- Weekend
- No
- No opinion
- Saturday
- Friday or Saturday
- No

19. Do you provide food for a local food pantry or soup kitchen?    Yes - 6    No - 3

- I have in the past –not presently

If not, would you consider donating some of your products to one of these programs?

Yes - 2 No -2

- Have donated some in the past
- Have donated in past – don't grow as much due to age
- I would like to grow food for these places

20. Do you need additional land for farming, or do you have land you might be willing to lease to a farmer?

Need additional land - Yes - 0 No - 13

Have land to lease - Yes - 5 No – 6 Possibly - 1

- Land is currently being used by local dairy farmer
- Possibly in the future

21. Do you have any other thoughts or comments about farming in Winslow or the region not included in this survey? *(Please use additional sheets if needed)*

- This is an excellent survey form. I suggest you share it with neighboring towns (Benton, Albion, Vassalboro) – farming exists within a regional setting, not within town boundaries, so it's important that we all work together, sharing ideas, regulations, markets, etc. Good for Winslow for getting this started!
- In Chapter 14 Sec 46, "Rural District" of the Winslow Zoning Ordinance states, "Proposed development that might create traffic impacts, environmental damage, loss of farmland, increased traffic, suburban land use and loss of rural character shall not be permitted in this district" Should this be revised? It sounds like all you can do is farm in this district anyway. This brings up questions like... do we need to buy development rights on this land. Should we back off on the Code or definition of Rural District some. Seems to be a contradiction possibly.
- I have 9 acres of farmable land. I have 2 streams that run through it. I also have unwanted "guests" who come on land to harvest fiddleheads and to fish. I've only had a handful ask permission. So help with posting land, give me a number to call for enforcement and educate folks about public use of land.
- Watch out for climate change!
- No
- Thank you for working on this project. Our family farms have long been unvalued for their contributions to our society.
- Thank you
- No
- No
- Feel bad when see the waste of good farmland. Would like to see it being farmed – grew up on Winslow farm



**Appendix B. Proposed Agriculture  
Commission Charter**



## Town of Winslow, Maine Agricultural Commission Charter

Adopted by Town Council on \_\_\_\_\_

In recent years, farming as a way of life has experienced a resurgence in our community and across Maine. Winslow residents have expressed an interest in reviewing and enhancing municipal policies, practices, and ordinances relating to agriculture, with a goal of ensuring that the town is friendly to agriculture while continuing to protect the health, safety and welfare of all residents.

The Winslow Town Council hereby creates an Agricultural Commission to undertake this work. The Agricultural Commission shall be comprised of 5-7 members appointed for three (3) year terms by the Town Council. Members shall represent a broad spectrum of active and retired farmers, and include a representative from the Planning Board and one or more residents with knowledge of forest management.

### **Agricultural Commission Roles and Responsibilities**

- Act as an advisory and recommending body to the Town Council, Planning Board and other municipal committees on matters relating to agriculture and managed woodlands in our community.
- Implement the recommendations, as approved by the Town Council, from the Agriculture Working Group's *Cultivating Winslow's Agricultural Future* report to the Town Council dated March 2014.
- Periodically review the comprehensive plan and land use ordinances for provisions that relate to farming in order identify potential barriers for farming and identify opportunities to modify the documents to better support farming.
- Propose modifications or amendments to the comprehensive plan and ordinances to better support farming while protecting the health, safety and welfare of all residents.
- Recommend and facilitate broad public participation in changes to municipal policies and ordinances that affect farming, and provide multiple opportunities for public input as each change is proposed.
- Research methods other communities are using to support agriculture and share information and ideas with community leaders.
- Sponsor events related to local farming such as community suppers, farm forums or workshops, or a harvest festival.
- Facilitate as practicable the distribution of locally grown food to schools, families, institutions and those dealing with food insecurity.
- Work with the Parks and Recreation Committee to manage the Winslow Community Garden.

### **Procedures**

The following guidelines and procedures are intended to guide the Agricultural Commission in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities.

1. The group should elect a chair and agree to a committee structure and process for decision-making.
2. A detailed work plan and timeline will be developed that reflects any priorities agreed to by the Commission members. This work plan and timeline will be distributed to the Town Council, Planning Board and other committees as appropriate for comments.
3. The Commission should strive to achieve consensus on all recommendations while remaining sensitive to diverse citizen views.
4. The Commission should keep any proposed changes or amendments to municipal documents as simple and straightforward as possible while ensuring that all proposed changes meet minimum State requirements for land use regulation.
5. All meetings of the Commission must be posted with required public notice and open to the public with the appropriate level of public participation to be decided by the Commission. At a minimum, an opportunity for public comment should be provided at each meeting.
6. Written minutes of each Commission meeting must be available to the public.
7. An annual report of the Commission's activities must be prepared and presented to the Town Council, and included in the annual town report.