



Top Ten Tips for a Successful Land Search

- (1) **Dream Big!** A land search is a big undertaking! And something that could potentially take a lot of your time and energy until you find the right piece of land. Know what your goals are and what your vision is, and take strength from them as your progress with your search, particularly if you become discouraged. Your goals and vision may change over time, and that is okay.
- (2) **Take stock of your resources and consider all of your needs in the context of your farming dreams, including:**
 - **Family Needs:** do you want or need to be located near any existing family members? Are you looking for land in close proximity to a good school? Do you need childcare and will that be available? Does a partner in the farm or the family need to be close to an existing job?
 - **Social:** what kind of social interactions do you desire, and what does that mean for your land search? Are you prepared to move to a rural location? Are you looking to be located near a community with lots of cultural opportunities?
 - **Financial:** are you going to have to use credit to establish access on a farm? Do you have family and friends that could assist you with a land purchase? Will you support a mortgage with off-farm income? Are you financially ready to build or renovate infrastructure if needed?
- (3) **Know what you have to offer:** whether you are talking with a landowner, or a loan officer, any interaction is an opportunity for you to make a positive impression and share your passion and excitement for your farm plans. Treat these types of interactions like job interviews. Consider putting something down on paper or your digital medium of choice that you can share with others you meet along the way that will leave them with a memorable impression.
- (4) **Focus on building relationships:** whether this is with a landowner, with folks in the community where you would like to be located, or service providers from which you'd like to seek assistance, building relationships could be a big key to your success! Think about how many more farming options might come your way when there are others out there that are keeping your interests in mind, and their eyes open for opportunities that would appeal to you.
- (5) **Research your tenure options:** purchasing a piece of land is NOT the only way to establish access on a piece of land. There are lots of opportunities out there to lease land, and/or to work with a landowner to transition farm ownership over time. Do your homework and learn about alternatives to the standard sale; study lease agreement templates.

- (6) **Know where to look:** Maine FarmLink and New England Farmland Finder are two web-based land linking programs in Maine. You can also use real estate websites as a tool for your search. Other human land search resources could include a local land trust, community members in your target area, and officials at the town office.
- (7) **Know what you can afford:** this advice applies to leasing situations as well as a farm purchase, and is a function of closely tracking income and expenses and knowing where all those pennies are moving from day to day (both business and personal). Set up a financial tracking system if you don't have one already. Make up a budget and stick to it. Do your homework: read-up on financing options, loan eligibility requirements, and strategies for acquiring necessary funding to support your land access plans.
- (8) **Put in the time:** you're far more likely to be successful if you are out there actively looking for land access opportunities, rather than waiting for opportunities to come to you. Proactively looking for opportunities takes a lot of time and effort. It's worth it!
- (9) **Balance the dream with reality, and keep the hope alive:** keep the big dream alive, but also ensure that you are translating that dream into a practical reality: is this farm really affordable for you? Does the infrastructure meet your actual needs? Are you prepared to invest in improving the soils if need be? It may take a while to find the right piece of land that marries your dreams and reality, but hang in there. You can do it!
- (10) **Reach out for help.** There are many willing people that can help you at any and every stage of your land search, including ag. service providers, real estate agents, and community members. Do your home work and learn about who these service providers might be, and don't be afraid to reach out and contact us. We want to help you!