



Statement of
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before the
Legislative Program Review Committee / Connecticut General Assembly
Farmland Preservation Study

September 25, 2012

We welcome the Committee's study of the farmland preservation program, perhaps the state's top investment in agriculture — over \$130 million in the past 34 years.

This is an important program to all of agriculture in the state. Nursery and greenhouse should not be excluded, as it has throughout the program's history. The current program needs not just to preserve land, but ensure that all land stays in profitable agricultural production.

The Department of Agriculture should endorse research by scientists at the University of Connecticut and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station that sets best management standards for our nursery and greenhouse growers to operate on preserved lands. Also, the Commissioner of Agriculture should be empowered to approve a soil remediation or replacement program for horticultural industry farms on preserved lands, based on the research findings.

Like any good farmers, our horticultural industry growers are committed to preserving precious farmland soils. No greenhouse or nursery can operate without not just preserving, but also enhancing the soils they grow on/in. Land is simply far too expensive in Connecticut. Many nurseries have large composting programs to replenish their soils, even taking autumn leaves, grass clippings, and manure from entire towns. Many ornamental plants today aren't even grown in the ground anymore, but on top of it in containers—which would do absolutely no damage to preserved farmland. And there are new technologies to cover some of the demand for larger plants, such as pot-in-pot, which would have negligible effect on farmland soils.

The state could also consider establishing a separate farmland preservation program devoted to the horticultural industry.

We are one half of all of agriculture in Connecticut today. Such an important component of

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agriculture must be included in farmland preservation programs in Connecticut.

Lastly, there is a need to partner between the UConn and Rhode Island Colleges of Agriculture with ongoing agronomic research that will benefit not only nurseries but all ag commodities in using and developing healthy soils. Our full-time participation on the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development shows us it is becoming clear that a lack of affordable and available farmland is a major stumbling block for agriculture to expand. Utilizing good solid research data, coupled with modern agricultural innovations and tech improvements, will further insure that farmland is profitable.