

Agriculture

Delaware has one of the best-regarded and most productive farmland preservation programs in the nation. Administered by the Department of Agriculture, farmers and other landowners sell easements to their land to the state, which essentially extinguishes their right to develop the land, but continues to allow a wide range of agricultural uses.

The Agriculture Lands (Aglands) Preservation Program chooses farms to preserve based on the percentage discount that the owners offer from the appraised value of their farms' development rights. The farms with the highest percentage discounts are preserved.

Table A.8 Farmland preservation by easement, fiscal years 2021-2025

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Farms Preserved	46	49	60	39	43
Acres Preserved	3,563	3434	5,353	2,199	3,309
State Funds	\$6,162,976	\$7,985,856	\$19,422,858	\$9,958,726	\$12,107,958
Federal Funds	\$2,537,607	\$1,628,585	\$1,213,557	\$245,874	\$518,400
County/Other Funds	\$1,527,626	\$200,000	\$1,646,355	\$657,666	\$1,036,829
Legal and Survey*	\$239,242	\$235,235	\$250,000	\$175,000	\$280,294
Total Funds	\$10,467,451	\$10,049,676	\$22,532,770	\$11,037,266	\$13,943,481
Cost per Acre**	\$2,871	\$2,858	\$4,163	\$4,940	\$4,023

Source: Delaware Department of Agriculture

* State Funds - Estimated values for settlements that have not occurred.

** Cost per acre paid to land owner excludes legal and survey costs.

Young Farmer Loan Program

The Young Farmer Loan Program was established in FY 2012 by the Department of Agriculture to help individuals acquire farmland. Applicants who meet the criteria for the program (age 18 to 40, net worth not exceeding \$300,000, and at least three years of farming experience) can apply for a loan to help purchase a farm (the property must have at least 15 acres of cropland). If approved, an applicant can receive a thirty-year, no-interest loan for up to 70 percent (not to exceed \$500,000) of the appraised value of the property's development rights.

Table A.9 Young Farmer Loan Program, fiscal years 2021-2025

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Farms Preserved	0	2	2	1	0
Acres Preserved	0	250	248	104	0
State Funds	0	\$837,679	\$862,832	\$500,000	\$0
Legal and Survey*	0	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$8,877	\$0
Total Funds	\$0	\$847,679	\$872,832	\$508,877	\$0
Cost per Acre**	N/A	\$3,351	\$3,519	\$4,808	N/A

Source: Delaware Department of Agriculture

* State Funds

** Cost per acre paid to landowner excludes legal and survey costs

Forestland Preservation

The Forest Preservation Program was established in FY 2010, and nine forest tracts were preserved at that time, totaling 872 acres. The funding for these easements included state funding combined with funding from The Nature Conservancy, a private conservation organization.

Table A.10 Total forest preservation easements, fiscal years 2021-2025

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023 *	FY 2024	FY 2025*
Forest Tracts Preserved	4	2	0	1	1
Acres Preserved	432	107	0	63	58
State Funds	\$393,064	\$248,002	\$0	\$57,341	\$533,895
Federal Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0
Local Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$57,341	0
Private Conservation Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0
Legal & Survey**	\$12,000	\$9,218	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total Funds	\$405,064	\$257,221	\$0	\$119,682	\$538,895

Source: Delaware Department of Agriculture

* No Forestland Preservation bids received in FY23 or FY25

** State Funds