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 2022-2026

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026***
Farms Preserved	49	60	39	35	-
Acres Preserved	3434	5,353	2,199	2,824	-
State Funds	$7,985,856	$19,422,858	$9,958,726	$11,768,298	-
Federal Funds	$1,628,585	$1,213,557	$245,874	$356,861	-
County/Other Funds	$200,000	$1,646,355	$657,666	$2,242,925	-
Legal and Survey*	$235,235	$250,000	$175,000	$175,000	-
Total Funds	$10,049,676	$22,532,770	$11,037,266	$14,543,084	-
Cost per Acre**	$2,858	$4,163	$4,940	$5,088	-

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.
*** Data for FY26 is currently pending, once data is available it will be shared.

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 2022-2026

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Farms Preserved	2	2	1	0	2
Acres Preserved	250	248	104	0	56
State Funds	$837,679	$862,832	$500,000	$0	$396,068
Legal and Survey*	$10,000	$10,000	$8,877	$0	$10,695

Total Funds	$847,679	$872,832	$508,877	$0	$406,763
Cost per Acre**	$3,351	$3,519	$4,808	$0	$7,073

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 2022-2026

	FY 2022	FY 2023 *	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026***
Forest Tracts Preserved	2	0	1	1	-
Acres Preserved	107	0	63	58	-
State Funds	$248,002	$0	$57,341	$533,895	-
Federal Funds	$0	$0	$0	$0	-
Local Funds	$0	$0	$57,341	$0	-
Private Conservation Funds	$0	$0	$0	$0	-
Legal & Survey**	$9,218	$0	$5,000	$5,000	-
Total Funds	$257,221	$0	$119,682	$538,895	-

Source: Delaware Department of Agriculture
* No Forestland Preservation bids received in FY23
** State Funds
*** Data for FY26 is currently pending, once data is available it will be shared.