

**PRESS RELEASE**

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REPORT SHOWS THAT SAVING FARMLAND MAKES "CENTS"
Culmination of 80 Studies Helps Make the Case for Land Conservation

Washington, D.C., January 13, 2003—Few local leaders typically think of their communities' working lands as a fiscal boon. But a new report by American Farmland Trust features a body of work demonstrating that privately owned farm, ranch and forest lands boost community coffers by contributing more in tax revenues than they require back in public services.

Cost of Community Services Studies: Making the Case for Land Conservation is an evaluation of 83 studies conducted in 19 states that compare the net fiscal contribution of different land uses. The studies have found that on average, residential development generates significant tax revenue, but requires costly public services that surpass its tax contributions. In contrast, farm, ranch and forest lands consistently generate tax surpluses.

"Cost of community services studies show that farm, ranch and forest lands are important commercial land uses that help balance community budgets," said Julia Freedgood, director of American Farmland Trust's Technical Assistance Services division. "They challenge the assumption that working lands are just vacant lands waiting around for development."

"While these studies are useful at the community level, taken as a whole, they're important nationally because they consistently show the fiscal benefit of sustaining the working landscape," said Doug Lawrence, team leader of farmland protection and community planning staff for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Making the Case for Land Conservation describes what COCS studies are and how they are performed. It shares lessons from AFT's experience conducting COCS studies and evaluates the methodology in terms of other types of fiscal analyses. The report also provides examples of how communities have used the results of COCS studies and helps readers assess whether a COCS study would be useful in their community.

The report demonstrates how findings of COCS studies have helped communities improve dialogue about land protection strategies, build support for farmland protection strategies, defend use assessment tax policies, and improve local planning and zoning for agriculture.

"Results of the COCS study helped inform members of our community of the economic value of farmland conservation," said Margaret Graves, executive director of The Bluegrass Conservancy, a land trust based in Lexington, Kentucky. "The COCS study done by AFT ultimately helped convince our local officials to adopt a purchase of development rights program in order to protect our regional economy and rural character."

Cost of Community Services Studies: Making the Case for Land Conservation can be purchased for \$16.95 by calling 800-370-4879. An order form is also available on American Farmland Trust's Web site at www.farmland.org.

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Reporters wishing to review Making the Case for Land Conservation can e-mail gbrockwell@farmland.org for a complimentary PDF file of the report.

American Farmland Trust is a private, nonprofit farmland conservation organization founded in 1980 to stop the loss of productive farmland and to promote farming practices that lead to a healthy environment. Its action-oriented programs include public education, technical assistance in policy development and demonstration farmland protection projects.

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