

November 3, 2023

# American Farmland Trust

That's because farmland and ranchland clean our drinking water and recharge our aquifers; provide safe habitat for countless wildlife species, plants, and trees; and absorb and store awesome amounts of carbon dioxide from our atmosphere — combating climate change in the process.

These benefits probably aren't the first things you notice when you visit a farmers market or well-stocked grocery store. Your eyes go directly to the tremendous bounty of tomatoes, corn, beans, berries, and other foods overflowing containers and displays.

These fresh and nutritious foods are a joy for us to behold. They help us appreciate all over again *how truly connected we are to the land for our health and security.*

## Continued Positive Impact from AFT's *Farms Under Threat Report*

AFT's massive undertaking to document farmland loss, pinpoint where it's happening, and underscore the consequences of inaction reached a major milestone with the release last June of *Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future.*

This tremendous research endeavor documented that the U.S. is on track to convert over 18 million acres of farmland and ranchland by 2040 — an area the size of South Carolina. And it could get worse: If rural sprawl accelerates, we could squander over 24 million acres of agricultural land by 2040.

But our research showed a better path, and policymakers are listening. If we embrace smart growth and minimize sprawl, we can save up to 13.5 million acres of the nation's irreplaceable farmland and ranchland for food production. With your renewed support today, we can increase the odds that this better path will be chosen.

As our population grows, America will certainly need more development in the coming decades. Many states already face a severe shortage of affordable housing. The solution is smart growth — ensuring development is done in the right way and put in the right places, including more "infill" and "compact" development that keeps people out of cars and reduces harmful emissions — all while protecting our agricultural land and minimizing sprawl.

At the same time, *Farms Under Threat 2040* makes the case that we must also meet our growing energy needs with renewable energy sources that benefit agriculture and rural communities, including what AFT calls "smart solar," which maintains our best, most productive farmland while providing much-needed renewable energy.



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Beyond this, we need to do more to bring a new generation of farmers and ranchers on the land to produce food and steward the environment as America's aging farming population retires. High-quality research like *Farms Under Threat 2040* is among AFT's most important efforts, with resonance that grows and expands. This invaluable research is possible because of members like you.