

1. There can be both synergies and tensions between biodiversity conservation and agricultural productivity on lands protected by agricultural conservation easements.
2. The primary purpose of most agricultural conservation easements is to protect the agricultural use and future viability of the land subject to the easement.
3. Agricultural conservation easements are not prescriptive about agricultural practices, which allows agricultural practices to evolve and keeps the regulation of agricultural practices in the hands of state and federal policymakers.
4. Agricultural conservation easements usually allow for the conversion of forestland to agriculture.
5. The terms of agricultural easements open the door to agricultural practices and land conversion that can have negative impacts on biodiversity in certain circumstances.

6. There are major practical limitations associated with the conversion of the majority of land associated with Vermont's agricultural conservation easements to annual production models.

7. Practical limitations associated with the conversion of lands to annual agricultural production include soil type, slope, hydrology, access and land use regulations.

8. Vermont has approximately 225,000 acres protected by agricultural conservation easements. Of those acres, xx percent are considered tillable lands (estimated to be less than 50 percent).

9. Lands that are not tillable are very unlikely to ever be brought into annual agricultural production.

10. At present, lands protected by agricultural conservation easements are xx percent forestland [estimate is 30-40 percent), xx percent pasture/hayland, and xx percent in annual production (estimate is less than 40 percent). Statistics to be created using GIS analysis and presented to the agriculture working group at next working group meeting).

11. All lands that are not in annual agricultural production are likely helping to support and restore biodiversity, although the type and degree of biodiversity support and restoration will vary depending on the successional state and management regime.

12. Given the present makeup of our conserved agricultural lands, at minimum xx percent of the land is presently supporting and restoring biodiversity (estimate is greater than 50 percent). Given the practical limitations associated with the conversion of land to annual agricultural production along with the trajectory of agricultural practices and Vermont's regulatory environment, it seems nearly certain that this percentage will either remain steady or increase over time.

13. Productive agricultural lands are a critical natural resource that must be preserved and as these lands tend to be more easily developed than other types of land, they are being lost to development at a dramatic pace.

14. Maintaining productive agricultural lands is crucial for Vermont's future food security and preserving our working agricultural landscape is therefore a critical aspect of Vermont's climate resilience.

15. Conserved farmland along waterways provide critical flood storage, which is an ever-increasing need as we grapple with the effects of stronger and more frequent storms due to climate change.

16. The conservation of agricultural lands prevents those lands from being developed and provides the opportunity for the implementation of conservation practices that benefit biodiversity on these farms

17. The majority of the acreage associated with agricultural conservation easements supports and restores biodiversity and will continue to do so indefinitely. Those lands that are not presently supporting and restoring biodiversity are an important and highly threatened natural resource that is crucial to Vermont's future food security and climate resilience. Therefore, all land protected by agricultural conservation easements should be included towards the achievement of the conservation goals outlined in Act 59

Other questions to be answered in the Inventory Report

1. What **existing ag conservation practices**, both permanent and intermediate, are available for reaching Act 59's goals – what do they do and what metrics are available to quantify them? (2803(b)(3))
2. What existing **agricultural conservation programs** will be used to meet the conservation goals of this chapter, and recommendations for new programs, if any, that will be needed to meet the goals? (2803(b)(7))
3. What **funding exists for agricultural conservation** and what are recommendations for new funding sources that will be needed? (2803(b)(8))
4. How well are existing agricultural land protection and conservation strategies **addressing the needs of historically marginalized groups**? (2803(b)(9))
5. What opportunities exist related to **intergenerational land transfer of farmland** and how can the State proactively direct resources to achieve conservation at the time of transfer? (2803(b)(10))