Q: How are farms chosen?

A: Farms are selected using a two-tier ranking system in conjunction with regional balance and other factors. The ranking system gives preference to those farms best suited to promote the program's priorities, made relevant throughout the application's distribution of points. Farm finalists are recommended by the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board and approved by the director of agriculture.

Points are awarded based on the following criteria:

TIER I (100 possible points)

- Valuable soil types (20 points)
- Proximity to protected land (15 points)
- Conservation planning (5 points)
- Development pressure (15 points)
- Local comprehensive planning (16 points)
- Other factors (29 points)

TIER II (50 possible points)

Applicant farm narratives scored by the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board focus on the following issues:

- Agricultural infrastructure
- Estate, farm succession, and business management planning
- Promotion of farmland preservation
- Local government support
- Sustainable agriculture

Ohio PRESERVED FARMLAND
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CleanOhioFund

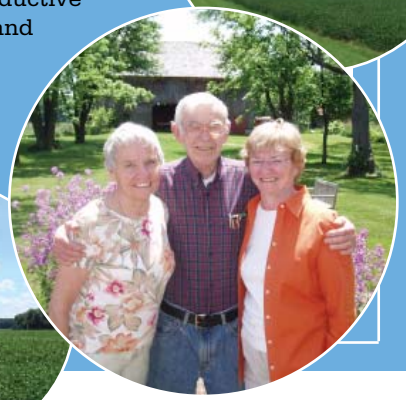
Farmland Preservation

Agricultural Easement Purchase Program

Program Overview

The **Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program** provides grants to farmland owners for placing an agricultural easement on their property. Awards are issued for up to 75 percent of the points-based appraised value of a farm's development rights. A payment cap has been set at $2,000 per acre, with a maximum of $500,000 per farm. All easement transactions are recorded on the property deed and transfer with the land to successive owners.

Governor Strickland and the General Assembly's Bipartisan Jobs Stimulus Plan, a $1.57 billion investment in Ohio's economy and infrastructure, includes a $400-million bond continuation of the Clean Ohio Fund. The fund, similar to its original form in 2001, will preserve farmland and greenspace, develop recreational trails, and clean up brownfield sites. It will allocate $25 million to purchase agricultural easements on productive farmland from willing landowners. The previous fund ran from 2002-2008 and set aside approximately $3.12 million each year to purchase agricultural easements. The department's Office of Farmland Preservation received more than 1,800 Clean Ohio AEPP applications throughout that time, and with available funding, the department preserved 135 of those farms, totaling 26,813.88 acres, which includes pending offers.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is an agricultural easement?

A: An agricultural easement is a voluntary and legally-binding restriction placed on a farm. The easement limits the use of the land to predominantly agricultural activity. The land remains under private ownership and management and stays on the tax rolls under Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV). The farmland can be sold or passed along as a gift to others at any time, but the restriction prohibiting non-agricultural development stays with the land.

Q: How does a landowner apply?

A: Landowners must apply for Clean Ohio funds through local governments (such as counties, townships, and municipalities), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), or a charitable organization. These entities are referred to as "local sponsors," and they have the ability to submit applications on a landowner's behalf to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) for consideration. Application opportunities are open for a maximum of 90 days. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact a potential local sponsor.

Q: What are the program requirements?

A: The following requirements must be met by the farmland and owner at the time of application submission:

- The farm must be enrolled in CAUV and the Agricultural District Program through the county auditor's office.
- The farm must be a minimum of 40 acres unless the farm is adjacent to a preserved farm, then it must be a minimum of 25 acres.
- The farmland owner must certify that the property does not contain hazardous substances.
- The farmland owner must have been in compliance with state and federal agricultural laws for the past five years.
- The farmland owner must have possession of the clear title to the applicant property.
- The local sponsor must agree to share monitoring and enforcement responsibilities.
- A minimum of 25 percent of the points-based appraised value of the agricultural easement must be provided either in cash match by the local sponsor, donation by the landowner, or a combination of donation and cash match.

For further requirements, refer to the application "2009 Guidelines and Policies" available at www.agri.ohio.gov. Click on "Clean Ohio AEPP Application."

Q: How is the value of the agricultural easement determined?

A: The agricultural easement's value is determined in the application using the department's points-based appraisal method. This method uses the county auditor's land valuation to establish a base value modified by the auditor's three-year appraisal and takes into consideration the farm's specific farmland preservation attributes.