

**STATE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**  
**GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTY**  
**COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLANS**

**Approved December 14, 2006**  
**Readopted as Amended: July 25, 2019**

The following guidelines provide uniform standards for the development of County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans. These guidelines supplement SADC regulations at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17 and incorporate recommendations from the Planning Incentive Grant Statute (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-43.1) and the 2006 edition of the Agricultural Smart Growth Plan for New Jersey. SADC and Department of Agriculture staff will work in partnership with county officials to provide and identify sources for the latest data with respect to agricultural statistics, water resources, agricultural economic development, land use and resource conservation.

County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans (Plan) shall be approved by the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB.) At least two (2) public meetings of the CADB are required; one early in the process designed to gather input and another later in the process to review the draft Plan. Where SADC planning grant funding is sought the Plan shall be approved by the CADB and adopted by the County Planning Board. Although not required, counties are encouraged to adopt their Plans as amendments to the County Master Plan.

**I. County's Agricultural Land Base**

The first section of the County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan shall provide a clear description of the agricultural characteristics and trends within the county over the last 20 years. SADC staff will provide each county with a County Agricultural Profile, combining Farmland Assessment, Census of Agriculture, Farmland Preservation, NJDEP Land Use / Land Cover, Building Permit and Census Bureau data. This data should be used by the county in preparation of its County Farmland Preservation Plan.

- A. Location and size of agricultural land base
- B. Description of important farmland soils within the county and a map showing the distribution of these soils in relation to remaining farmland within the county ADA.  
Important farmland soils include:
  - i. Prime soils
  - ii. Soils of Statewide Importance
  - iii. Unique soils
- C. Number of irrigated acres and available water sources

- D. Farmland Assessment and Census of Agriculture statistics and trends
  - 1. Number of farms and farms by size
  - 2. Average and median farm size
  - 3. Cropland harvested, pasture, woodland, equine, total for agricultural use

## **II. County's Agricultural Industry – Overview**

This section of the Plan shall provide a thorough overview of the county's existing agricultural industry, including historical crop trends and the market value of agricultural products over the last 20 years. This chapter shall also discuss the status of agricultural related industries from equipment and supply providers and services to food processors and distributors and direct marketing. The county shall include its observations about where the agricultural industry within the county seems to be heading.

- A. Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold
- B. Crop / Production Trends over the last 20 years
- C. Support Services within market region (equipment and seed dealers, fertilizer/pesticide suppliers, processing facilities, farmers markets, etc.)
- D. Other agricultural related industries

## **III. Land Use Planning Context**

This section of the Plan shall include the land use planning context for farmland preservation and agricultural retention in the county. Starting with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan Planning Areas, Designated Centers and Endorsed Plans, the county Plan shall discuss the relationship of land use, land value, infrastructure and development trends to the county Master Plan and county development regulations. An overview of municipal master plans, zoning and subdivision regulations, including the use of innovative planning techniques such as the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), mandatory clustering, non-contiguous clustering and lot size averaging, shall also be provided.

- A. State Development and Redevelopment Plan Planning Areas, Designated Centers and Endorsed Plans
- B. Special Resource Areas (Highlands, Pinelands, CAFRA, etc.)
- C. County Master Plan and Development Regulations
- D. Current Land Use and Trends
- E. Sewer Service Areas / Public Water Supply Service Areas
- F. Municipal Master Plan and Zoning – Overview
  - 1. General Use Type and Minimum lot size categories and distribution by municipality
    - a. Small lots (less than 1-acre minimum lots on sewer/water)
    - b. Medium lots ( $\geq 1 \leq 5$  acre minimum; septic/well)
    - c. Large lots ( $> 5 \leq 10$  acre minimum; septic/well)
    - d. Very large lots ( $> 10$  acre minimum; septic/well)

2. Description of Innovative Planning Techniques Employed
  - a. Cluster zoning
  - b. Non-contiguous cluster zoning
  - c. Lot size averaging
  - d. Transfer of Development Rights
  - e. Use of mandatory vs. voluntary options
3. Discussion of Development Pressures and Land Value Trends
- G. Discussion of Density Transfer Opportunities (Non-contiguous Cluster and Municipal and Regional TDR) including implementation strategy recommendations

#### **IV. County's Farmland Preservation Program – Overview**

The county's Farmland Preservation Program is presented in the fourth section of the Plan. In addition to a thorough description of farmland preservation program participation and expenditures by municipality and by program type, the county shall provide its latest Agricultural Development Area (ADA) criteria. A map depicting the boundaries of the ADA in relation to the county's existing agricultural land, including preserved farmland, shall also be provided. This section shall also compare the county's progress to date in relation to any municipal and / or county Planning Incentive Grant Project Areas or TDR programs in the area. Coordination with open space and recreational preservation initiatives as well as easement monitoring and enforcement shall also be discussed.

- A. Agricultural Development Areas
  1. Designation Criteria (see N.J.A.C. 2:76-1)
  2. Geographic Information System mapping / current location map
- B. Farmland preserved to date by program and municipality
  1. County Easement Purchase
  2. County Planning Incentive Grants
  3. Municipal Planning Incentive Grants
  4. SADC Direct Easement Purchase
  5. SADC Fee Simple
  6. Non-profit
  7. Transfer of Development Rights
  8. Other programs and partnerships
- C. Term Farmland Preservation Programs
- D. Coordination with Open Space Preservation Initiatives
- E. Farmland Preservation Program Funding Expended to Date by Source
- F. Monitoring of Preserved Farmland
- G. Coordination with TDR Programs

#### **V. Future Farmland Preservation Program**

Section five shall provide clear goals and objectives for the county's farmland preservation efforts over the next 10 years. County ranking and minimum eligibility criteria as well as county policies

with respect to housing opportunities, division of the premises and exceptions shall be presented in detail. This section shall also include a staffing and funding plan to ensure efficient and effective program implementation in the years to come. Efforts to develop and utilize a county Geographic Information System and Farmland Preservation Program database shall be described. Factors that would limit implementation of the Plan shall be identified with potential strategies provided to minimize their impact.

- A. Preservation Goals, (1, 5 and 10-year acreage targets)
- B. Description of Project Areas
- C. Minimum eligibility criteria
- D. County ranking criteria
- E. County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications, including:
  - 1. Approval of housing opportunities
    - a. Agricultural labor housing
    - b. House replacement
    - c. Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity allocation
  - 2. Division of the Premises
  - 3. Approval of exceptions
    - a. Severable
    - b. Non-severable
- F. Funding Plan
  - 1. Description of county funding sources (dedicated tax, bond proceeds, annual revenues (total), annual revenues dedicated to FPP)
  - 2. Financial policies related to cost-share requirements between county and municipal / other funding partners / installment purchases
  - 3. Cost projections and funding plan associated with 1, 5 and 10-year preservation goals
  - 4. Any other financial information as appropriate
- G. Farmland Preservation Program / CADB Administrative Resources
  - 1. Staff resources
  - 2. Legal support
  - 3. Database development
  - 4. Geographic Information System capacity and staff resources
- H. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation
  - 1. Funding (county or municipal)
  - 2. Projected Costs
  - 3. Land supply
  - 4. Landowner interest
  - 5. Administrative resources
  - 6. Other

## **VI. Agricultural Economic Development**

Agricultural economic development strategies of the county shall be described in section six. The county's agricultural industry retention, expansion and recruitment strategies shall be compared to the NJ Department of Agriculture's economic development strategies for consistency. Coordination with business and institutional support providers including marketing, public relations and education, estate planning, and community supported agriculture opportunities shall be discussed. To the greatest extent possible, the county's Plan shall also anticipate the needs of consumers, farmers and agriculture related industries in the years to come and discuss opportunities for new community markets, suppliers, processors and distributors.

- A. Consistency with NJ Department of Agriculture economic development strategies
- B. Agricultural industry retention, expansion and recruitment strategies
  - 1. Institutional
    - a. Farmer Support (e.g., Farm Link Program, Estate Planning)
    - b. Marketing / Public Relation Support (e.g., local use of the Jersey Fresh promotional program)
    - c. Community Farmers Markets
    - d. Community Supported Agriculture
    - e. Agricultural Education and Market Research Coordination
      - i. Rutgers Cooperative Extension
      - ii. New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
      - iii. Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
      - iv. Other
  - 2. Businesses
    - a. Input Suppliers and Services
    - b. Product Distributors and Processors
  - 3. Anticipated Agricultural Trends
    - a. Market Location
    - b. Product Demand
  - 4. Agricultural Support Needs
    - a. Agricultural Facilities and Infrastructure (e.g., farm markets, food processors)
      - a. Type
      - b. Placement / Location
    - b. Flexible Land Use Regulations
    - c. Agriculture Representation in Economic Development Organizations
  - 5. Agricultural Support Implementation
    - a. Cost
    - b. Funding Opportunities
    - c. Timeline

## **VII. Natural Resource Conservation**

The county's efforts to promote natural resource conservation shall be presented in section seven. The degree of coordination with established federal and state soil and water conservation programs, including landowner participation in conservation planning and matching grant programs shall be discussed in this section of the Plan. Special attention shall be paid to water conservation and allocation strategies in areas where water supplies are threatened by increasing competition from both agricultural and non-agricultural users. Non-traditional energy conservation and waste management efforts, as well as future conservation enhancements, shall also be presented.

- A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination
  - 1. Natural Resources Conservation Service
  - 2. Soil Conservation Districts
- B. Natural Resource Protection Programs
  - 1. SADC Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program
  - 2. SADC Deer Fencing Grant Program
  - 3. Federal Conservation Programs (EQIP, HFRP, CREP, WRE, ALE etc.)
- C. Water Resources
  - 1. Supply Characteristics
  - 2. Agricultural Demand & Supply Limitations
  - 3. Conservation & Allocation Strategies
- D. Waste Management Planning (e.g., animal waste, plastic mulch, tires, etc.)
- E. Energy Conservation Planning (e.g., solar, wind, etc.)
- F. Outreach and Incentives

## **VIII. Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion**

Section eight shall expand on the county's vision for farming and the agricultural industry beyond preservation of its agricultural land base alone. Right to Farm programming and agricultural mediation services shall be described including an inventory of municipal Right-to-Farm ordinances in relation to the SADC model. This section of the Plan shall also document the county's efforts to work with municipal partners on issues from permit streamlining to agricultural vehicle movement, labor housing and general agricultural education and promotion.

- A. Existing Agricultural Industry Support
  - 1. Right to Farm / Agricultural Mediation Programs
  - 2. Farmland Assessment
- B. Other Strategies, including:
  - 1. Permit streamlining
  - 2. Agricultural vehicle movement / routes
  - 3. Agricultural labor housing / training
  - 4. Wildlife Management Strategies
  - 5. Agricultural education and promotion

