



# Learn About Marin Agriculture From Marin Agricultural Land Trust

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## Fact Sheet

**Marin Agricultural Land Trust** is a private, member-supported, nonprofit organization created in 1980 by a coalition of local ranchers and environmentalists to permanently preserve Marin County farmlands for agricultural use. MALT eliminates the development potential on farmland through the acquisition of conservation easements in voluntary transactions with landowners. MALT also encourages public policies that support agriculture and promotes public awareness of its importance. As the first land trust of its kind, MALT is a model for communities across the nation, preserving 30,000 acres on 45 family farms and ranches.

### **Marin County Agricultural Statistics**

- Average farm size: 600 acres
- Acreage devoted to agriculture: 168,000 (40% of total county acreage)
- Farm products by percent of total: livestock products (57%); livestock & poultry (23%); field, fruit & vegetable crops (15%); aquaculture (3%); nursery crops (2%)
- Milk production alone: 20% of Bay Area's supply
- Economic value of farms and ranches: \$48 million in direct production and several times that in total economic contribution

**Why Preserve Farmland?** Marin's agricultural landscape is an essential part of the character and environmental quality that make the county such an extraordinary place to live, work, and visit. As open space, farmland is more compatible with the conservation of natural resources such as wildlife habitat and watershed than any alternative private land use. Loss of agriculture would result in sprawl development that would affect water quality, visual and aesthetic quality, and biological, archaeological, and historical resources.

**What is an Easement?** An agricultural conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and MALT which prohibits non-agricultural residential or commercial development, subdivision, and uses or practices which would be destructive to the agricultural value of the land. The easement is recorded, and future owners are bound by its terms in perpetuity. The land remains privately owned and on the tax rolls. The value of a conservation easement is the difference between the land's restricted and unrestricted value.

**Funding Sources:** Conservation easement acquisitions are funded by individual contributions and by grants from foundations and state and local government agencies. The operating budget is supported by a Marin Community Foundation grant and by 4,600 members and donors who contribute over \$475,000 annually.

**Stewardship:** MALT monitors and enforces the agricultural easements it holds, and provides technical assistance to easement landowners on resource conservation and enhancement.

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