

What now?

Suggested next steps for designated Agricultural Enterprise Areas

An Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) is designated by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection in response to a petition submitted by landowners and local government. Each locally identified area has unique characteristics with distinct goals for preserving agricultural land and developing agriculture and agriculturally related businesses.

As you consider the next steps for your community now that you have received state designation of your AEA, it is important to pursue opportunities that will assist in achieving the goals identified as part of the petition process. Since your community has unique characteristics, not all of the ideas listed below may be appropriate or feasible. It is up to you to determine which strategies will help ensure a vibrant agricultural community.

OUTREACH

- ◆ Provide information on income tax credits available to landowners who have signed a 15 year farmland preservation agreement
- ◆ Establish an AEA Advisory Committee to oversee efforts in the area to meet stated goals (landowners, town and county board, county staff)
- ◆ Host landowner meetings in the area to foster communication and to explore opportunities for collaboration
- ◆ Install signage that identifies farmers within the designated area or that marks the boundary of the designated area
- ◆ Organize a tour to showcase agriculture within the AEA (“Bike the Barns” tour, culinary tour)
- ◆ Facilitate other opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between landowners within the designated area (bulletin board, e-mail list, listserv)
- ◆ Find opportunities to communicate with farm and non-farm neighbors about current and future activities in the area (newsletters, mailings, newspaper articles, town and county meetings, county fairs, rural living guides, local government websites)
- ◆ Partner with local school programs/FFA to help organize events and outreach activities (tours, guest lectures)
- ◆ Partner with local non-profits and county extension to help with outreach activities (tours, meetings, information and education sessions)

LAND USE TOOLS

- ◆ Get involved in local planning activities, such as the development of the Farmland Preservation Plan, to ensure that the importance of the AEA for future agricultural land use and agricultural development is recognized
- ◆ Encourage eligible landowners to sign-up for farmland preservation agreements
- ◆ Review and revise any existing land use ordinances (farmland preservation zoning, other local zoning, subdivision or land division ordinances) to ensure that agricultural land use in the designated area is protected
- ◆ Consider adopting local land use ordinances, if none exist, to help implement the farmland preservation and agricultural development goals of the designated area

- ◆ Consider the viability of developing a local PDR or TDR program to permanently protect farmland

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Develop individual or joint business plans for businesses in the area
- ◆ Update chamber of commerce, economic development corporation and local government websites and outreach materials to reflect the designation of the area as an AEA
- ◆ Consult with the local chamber of commerce or Resource Conservation and Development Councils to develop opportunities to promote and further market local products, to host agricultural based events or to provide agri-tourism experiences
- ◆ Develop a joint marketing strategy for products grown or produced within the area
- ◆ Consider opportunities to diversify agricultural business to take advantage of new markets
- ◆ Find opportunities to collaborate and share resources within the AEA (group contracts, shared equipment, shared skills)
- ◆ Evaluate options to increase consumer access to products (websites, new retail locations, Something Special from Wisconsin)
- ◆ Apply for grants and/or loans to support investment in local agricultural businesses
- ◆ Develop a county revolving loan program to provide low-interest loans for business investment
- ◆ Partner with an economic development body to conduct a study of economic development opportunities that may support farmers within the AEA and to identify ideas for growing the agricultural economy
- ◆ Evaluate the capacity of local agricultural infrastructure to support agriculture and related business needs and its potential to support future business needs

RESEARCH AND TRAINING

- ◆ Connect farmers with training opportunities to build operational, technical and/or managerial skills, or to help grow or diversify agricultural business (nearby colleges, universities and UWEX offices)
- ◆ Connect farmers with programs to assist with farm transition or farm succession (DATCP's Farm Center)
- ◆ Develop a partnership with local schools and local FFA to offer educational opportunities for young students which may help recruit farm workers and inspire future farmers
- ◆ Explore opportunities to partner with local school, colleges, universities to do agricultural research

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Work with local government to create additional incentives within the area (purchase of development rights programs, technical assistance)
- ◆ Develop cooperative boundary agreements with neighboring communities to support the goals identified by the AEA
- ◆ Target services, technical assistance and grant program funding within the AEA

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- ◆ Work with town and county boards, state and county agency staff, and extension to identify local business needs and develop opportunities to meet these needs

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

- ◆ Work with county land conservation department to meet soil and water conservation standards necessary to claim the income tax credit
- ◆ Work with county land conservation committees to apply for grants that provide financial assistance to farmers to install conservation practices and develop nutrient management plans (Multi-Agency Land & Water Education (MALWEG) grant)

STAY CONNECTED

- ◆ Stay connected with other designated areas to share ideas and resources
- ◆ Communicate with us about your activities
- ◆ Contact us with questions or for assistance; Coreen.Fallat@wi.gov; 608-224-4625