



How to Create Effective Online Property Postings for Farm Link Websites

By The New England Farm Link Collaborative
and the Land Access Project Listing and Linking Task Force

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Introduction

Organizations across the US manage programs that help connect farmers seeking land with landowners who have land available for agricultural production. These “farm link” or “land link” programs often have websites that serve as gateways for landowners and farm seekers to find each other. Conventional real estate listings don’t specialize in agricultural properties, and farm properties listed there typically lack the agricultural production focus useful for farmers and landowners. Farm link websites on the other hand, enable farmers and landowners to share and learn details about farm properties. Often, these programs offer a host of other services to help you meet your land seeking or offering needs.

Farm link websites can be very useful to landowners, land managers, real estate agents or farm seekers. However, not all postings are equal! Describing an agricultural property is not the same as listing a house. This guide will help you effectively describe and post your agricultural property to attract farming tenants or farmers as buyers.

The goal of this guide is to improve the quality of online postings of farm properties by providing constructive hints and tips for you as a landowner, real estate agent or farm representative. The guide will help you effectively communicate details about the property through online posting. The guide walks you through the typical components of a farm property posting piece by piece, and describes key information most relevant for farmers. A well crafted and effectively

communicated farm property posting enables farmers to better assess the offering. Thus, a well-done posting increases the landowner and land manager’s chances of finding the right farmer or farm operation for their property. Postings that provide farmers with the most relevant information are a key first step in generating productive inquiries that have the best chance of moving further toward forging a productive, sustainable rental or purchase agreement.

This guide was produced by the New England Farm Link Collaborative, a coalition of organizations working together across New England to improve access to land for farmers. This guide uses the New England Farmland Finder (www.newenglandfarmlandfinder.org) as an example, but covers the typical questions that might be asked when you go to post your property on any farm linking website.



Farm link websites are not meant to replace or compete with conventional real estate listings! Farm link websites can complement conventional real estate listings or any other type of real estate service that involves farm properties. This guide is for landowners, real estate agents, land managers and anyone else who might want to use farm link websites as a way to increase exposure and reach communities of farmers as potential clients, buyers or partners. The same farm property can be posted in multiple locations on the web using various farm property posting services.



What is New England Farmland Finder?

New England Farmland Finder (NEFF) is a regional farm property posting website for New England. It is managed by the New England Farm Link Collaborative, a group of farm link programs.

How properties appear on the site

To post a property, you must [sign up for an account on NEFF](#). Users will fill out a short form to create a username and password and to indicate whether you are a farm seeker or property poster.

Once approved, you can post a property by clicking on the “Submit a Property” link at the top of the [NEFF homepage](#). We have included a lot of helpful information to guide your path in posting a property. Please read through before you click on “Proceed to Posting Form” at the bottom of the page. On this next page you will find detailed steps about how NEFF works. Now that you’ve read through the instructions you’re ready to fill out the property posting form. Click on “Add a Property Posting” and the form to fill out will be the next page.

Each section of the property posting form has detailed instructions to help you maximize your farm property posting. The more details you include, the more attractive your posting will be to potential farm seekers. Once you complete this form, click on the “Save” button at the bottom of the page and the

NEFF administrator will publish the property within 2 business days. Once the property is published, active NEFF users will receive an email notification.

 *If you include photos in your posting, one photo will be featured with a link to your new posting on the homepage of the New England Farmland Finder website. This is great exposure!*

How seekers are informed about properties

Farm seekers are informed about new properties as they are published by the NEFF administrator. The website automatically sends an announcement to farm seekers when a new property is published. Seekers will not be able to view your contact information unless you list it in the custom description of your posting. They will be able to contact you by using the secure contact form via the website. Once you establish contact with the seeker, it is up to you to provide additional contact information to make communication easier off the website.

It’s difficult to predict how many inquiries you will get from farm seekers. Property posters typically can expect to get a higher volume of inquiries when they first publish their posting, and then communications might become fewer as time goes on. Please do your best to respond to farm seekers in a timely manner as you might expect them to do the same!

Creating Your Posting: Telling Farmers What They Need to Know

Farming has a language of its own. To relate to farm seekers, you need to speak the language of farming. If you're a farmer or have a farm background, some of this will be obvious to you. For others, soils and barn amenities, for example, might not be the first thing that comes to mind. A certain amount of technical soils information will help you describe the quality of land in a way farmers can understand. A basic understanding of water systems will help you accurately describe available water resources. A little bit of research goes a long way in noting the specifications of available machinery or equipment, and communicating what's important about available infrastructure. Farmers need to consider many variables that play into the viability of their farm business or operation. Most farm link websites give you the opportunity to address these variables. Your posting will be much more attractive if you attend to the suggestions below.

This guide covers the common components of an online farm posting—the typical questions and requests for information asked of landowners when filling out the form to post their property details on a farm link website. Farm link posting services are different; they have different online forms and questions. Depending on the program, you might be asked for different or additional information.

The following page shows a sample of what a well-composed property posting looks like.



Most farm link websites are managed by a state agency or private organization.

Often, the site administrator can walk you through the logistics of posting your property and help you effectively describe a property using agricultural terms and in a way that addresses the interests and needs of farmers.

Try your best to fill in the details of your property on your own, but remember that there is usually someone to contact for assistance.

How to Create Effective Online Property Postings for Farm Link Websites

Sample Posting

15 acres of cropland, 5 acres of forest in Western Connecticut

POSTED ON JULY 19, 2017 · LAST UPDATED 4 MIN AGO

POSTING NAME OR PROPERTY NAME



PHOTOS

THE LAND

PROPERTY OWNER: Farmer or farm family

PROPERTY LOCATION: Roxbury, CT

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACRES AVAILABLE WITH THIS PROPERTY: 6-20

ACRES OF CROPLAND OR TILLABLE LAND: 6-20

ACRES OF PASTURE: 6-20

ACRES OF FORESTED LAND: 1-5

OTHER OPEN AND/OR NON-FARMABLE LAND
20 acres total. 15 acres of cropland and/or pasture, 5 acres of forest. Organic practices have been used on cropland for previous 5 years, not certified. Unmanaged forest with potential for small sugar bush.

IS THE PROPERTY ENROLLED IN A CURRENT USE OR OTHER STATE PROGRAM THAT AFFECTS PROPERTY TAXES?: Yes

IS THE PROPERTY PROTECTED WITH ANY TYPE OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT?: No

IS THERE A FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR FORESTLAND ON THE AVAILABLE PROPERTY?: No

IS THE PROPERTY CERTIFIED ORGANIC, OR DOES IT QUALIFY FOR ORGANIC CERTIFICATION UNDER FEDERAL ORGANIC REGULATIONS?: Yes

PROPERTY OWNER
STATE (OF FARM PROPERTY) & PROPERTY LOCATION

THE LAND

CURRENT USE TAX ENROLLMENT

CONSERVATION EASEMENT OR RESTRICTION

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

FARM INFORMATION

WATER SOURCES PRESENT
Available

WATER SOURCES DETAILS
Drilled well at the house, 5gpm. Small pond on the property near wood line that often nearly dries up in the dry summer months. Shepaug River flows through edge of fields usually providing adequate irrigation source throughout the summer.

BARN, SHEDS OR OTHER STRUCTURES
Available

FARM INFRASTRUCTURE DETAILS
10x10 chicken coop and fenced in yard. Two story 50'x75' barn in good shape to store equipment. Could be renovated to house animals of desired.

FARMER HOUSING
Available

FARMER HOUSING DETAILS
Farmer housing available. Renovated 19th century farmhouse with 4 bedrooms, 2 full baths, modern kitchen, wrap around porch, and flagstone patio. Detached 2 car garage with in-law apartment.

EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY
None available

WATER SOURCES

WATER SOURCES DETAILS

BARN, SHEDS AND OTHER STRUCTURES ("FARM INFRASTRUCTURE")

FARMER HOUSING

EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY

TENURE ARRANGEMENT

TENURE ARRANGEMENT
Property for sale
Property for rent

PROPERTY FOR SALE
Farm property and house for sale: \$495,000. We are willing to consider long-term lease options, including lease to own.

SALE PRICE
\$400,000-\$600,000

PROPERTY FOR SALE

PROPERTY FOR RENT/LEASE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION
20 acre farm for sale. 15 acres of tillable land with 5 acres of forest. Rotational grazing for livestock could be utilized in parts of the 15 acre tillable land. Organic practices have been used on the soil for the past 5 years. Farmer housing included: 4 bedroom updated 19th century farm house. Beautiful property with proven track record of vegetable production for the previous 15 years. Occum fine sandy loam and Pootatuck fine sandy loam soil, which are fertile river bottom soils on about 10 acres of the 15 of tillable acres. The remaining 5 acres are a Merrimac loam that is a bit rockier.

CUSTOM DESCRIPTION

The Basics: Name, Ownership, Location

Posting Name or Property Name

Please note, this is not necessarily the name of your farm, but the way your online posting is introduced. This serves as the eye-catching title of your posting. Most websites have a short word limit for your title, for example 10 words or less. This brief title is what appears on the home page and/or your property page. It's what will entice a seeker to check out your posting details. If the property has a unique name, you can keep it as simple as "Farm name in City, State." Consider short descriptions that highlight special aspects of the property or opportunity. For example "45 Acres of great soils in City, State," or "Affordable housing and farm lease in City, State." Consider adding whether the farm is for sale or for lease.

Property Owner

This question typically establishes the category or type of property owner a farmer would be dealing with, for example a private landowner, a cohousing community, or a municipality entity. This is different from a question that asks exactly who the landowner is, or who is listing the property (e.g., via a real estate agent a for-sale-by-owner listing).

State (of farm property)

Specify the state in which the property is located (not the state where the owner or contact is, unless that is what is specifically asked for). Sometimes the property and the owner are not in the same location..

Property Location

Follow the specific instructions as to how to complete this question. The format of the answer often depends on how a map is programmed into the website to display the farm location. Some websites do not require a great level of detail. In some cases, a landowner may prefer not to specify the exact address. (For example, they may not want "drive-by's" or to make their plans public.) Websites have different ways of enabling location information to show up on maps, depending on the level of detail provided by landowners.

Primary Farm Information

The Land

For each type of land, remember to specify only acreage for each type that will be available to the tenant or buyer.

- ✓ Total Number of acres available with this property
- ✓ Acres of cropland or tillable (able to be plowed) land
- ✓ Acres of hay land (sometimes this is included in cropland or tillable land)
- ✓ Acres of pasture
- ✓ Acres of forestland
- ✓ Other open or non-farmable land (e.g., conservation land, wetlands, other land off-limits to farming but would contribute to the overall feel or function of a property, or is simply included.)

If the entire property or discrete parcel is available, you can use the acreage listed in the public records in the town where the property is located. If only a portion of the property will be available, use your best estimate of acreage based on field or forest boundaries.

Keep in mind that if a field has not been actively used since it was last mapped, there is a good chance that boundaries have grown in and have shifted over time. Acreage is often misrepresented because it is difficult to measure exactly. Additionally, sometimes landowners are not clear whether the acreage they indicate includes just the actual cropped field or

also the field edges, for example. If exact acreage is not known, be sure to mention this somewhere in your posting that acreages are estimates and have not been verified by survey.

If the property has been historically farmed, your local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office may have a map of the farm noting field boundaries and acreages. [Click here to find FSA offices nearest to you.](#) If maps do not currently exist, FSA or USDA-NRCS staff may be available to assist in making maps or estimating acreages. Additionally, various online mapping tools, such as the [NRCS Web Soil Survey](#), can help with creating acreage maps. A tutorial on how to use the [Web Soil Survey can be found here.](#)

Water Sources

Farmers need to know what kind of water sources or systems are available or could be developed for use. This will give them a general idea of the potential to irrigate crops, water livestock, or conduct other water-dependent activities such as washing produce. Some potential choices to list are:

- ✓ Drilled well
- ✓ Shallow well or spring reservoir
- ✓ Existing irrigation system
- ✓ Pond
- ✓ River or stream
- ✓ Other (usually a place to describe what)

CONTINUED ▾

Primary Farm Information (continued)

Water Sources Details

The most important aspects of water sources for farmers are accessibility and reliability. Is the water source *within* the property you are posting? Is it always available [see below]? If available, other details such as the following, are helpful:

- ✓ The rate of potential water **flow**, usually expressed in gallons per minute
- ✓ The **amount** of water available in the source that could be pumped. For example if it is a pond, you can list an estimated amount of water in gallons that could be pumped before the source was depleted
- ✓ The estimated or known water **pressure** at certain rates of flow.
- ✓ Any difference in **seasonal availability**, e.g., whether there is a difference in flow, amount or pressure during different times of year.

Specific information that will be useful is the make and models of any water pumps, sizing of any existing water lines both in inches diameter of piping and length of runs of piping or irrigation tubing, and description of any other existing water infrastructure such as wells, springs, hydrants, spigots, etc. Old systems can be described as well if there is a potential to redevelop or renovate them. If you don't know these details, that's fine. You could simply note "irrigation equipment is available," for example.

Barns, Sheds and Other Structures ("Farm Infrastructure")

Some agricultural properties have "farm infrastructure." Some are only "raw" land. Depending on what the seeker is looking for, either might meet his or her needs. For some farmers, though, infrastructure is critical for a successful farm operation. Those farmers need to assess the available farm buildings other structures and infrastructure such as fencing, roadways, and parking areas for customers, farmers or farm labor.

The approximate size, past and current use(s), and condition of the structures are extremely helpful. Do the buildings have power and/or water? Especially important to farmers is the number of animals the structure does or could potentially house, and available space for other activities such as sorting/packing, equipment storage, processing or other farm activities. Be succinct, but also provide enough detail about capacities to be meaningful. For example, "a tie-stall dairy barn with capacity for 60 milkers", "Working milking parlor", "existing 3-season, retail farmstand", "6-bay equipment shed", "farmshop with concrete floor", etc.

Describe what is known about feed and crop storage infrastructure and capacity such as "4-ton grain bin," "hay loft stores 12,000 square bales" or "100 sq ft walk-in cooler." You should note if fields are fenced for livestock or for deer exclusion, and the type of fencing. What are the specifications of electric

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Primary Farm Information (continued)

fencing energizer(s)? Note any drainage systems such as tiling or ditching. Note also manure and compost storage facilities including capacities if known.

The age and condition of the infrastructure can be useful information. A three-year old farm stand is different from one in poor condition.

If you are not conversant with farm infrastructure, don't fret. You can note the basic type of structure, its size and condition; any such detail helps. If you can locate someone to help you fill in some farm-specific detail, that's great. Most important is to not mislead the seeker--or sell your property short--with wrong or inadequate information.

Farmer Housing

Describe farmer and/or farm labor housing on the property. Include number of bedrooms, bathrooms, recent renovations, needed improvements, and other details. Unlike a house listing, however, this is not the place to go into detail about crown molding, swing sets, or brand of appliance. Seekers will want to know the basics, and many will be especially curious about basic utilities, energy efficiencies, and Internet access, for example. If there's no housing, point out other options - e.g., build, bring mobile housing, rent nearby, etc.

Equipment and Machinery

Describe any equipment and machinery that may be available for sale, lease or use.

A consideration for farmers is the condition of the equipment and machinery and how much money or time, if any, they might need to spend in order to refurbish, repair or maintain the equipment in order to use it. Special stipulations for use of the equipment are also important. Any details, such as makes, model numbers or specifications can be provided. Photos are very useful as well. Note if the equipment that is not for sale will be shared or if availability will be otherwise limited.

Other Farm Information

Soils and Soils Maps

The quality of the soils is one of the most important considerations for most farmers. Soils differ greatly in their suitability for different crops and productivity. Soils can vary significantly even across small fields. The USDA has mapped the soils of most of the land in New England. If you have—or can obtain—a soils map indicating different soils types mapped by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), please upload it.

Some farm link programs assist with creating soils maps that can be uploaded as a JPG or PDF file. Consult with your farm link website administrator to see which programs in your area might provide this service. USDA NRCS, the agency responsible for mapping all soils in the U.S., might assist you to generate a map of your property. [Click here to find NRCS offices](#) nearest to you.

USDA FSA offices can also sometimes provide soils maps. There are various online mapping tools you can use to create soil maps, such as the [NRCS Web Soil Survey](#). A [tutorial on using the Web Soils Survey](#) can be found here.

For VT Properties, alternatively the [VT Natural Resources Atlas](#) can be used and [a tutorial is available](#). In NH, [Granit View II](#) may be used to generate maps and [a tutorial is available](#).

If you cannot obtain a soils map to upload to your posting, consider naming the dominant soils on the parcel. If you don't have this information, you might at minimum indicate what the property was used for in the past. You might indicate, for example, which portions are steeply sloped, wet or very stony. Any such accurate description is better than none.

Current Use Tax Enrollment

All states have programs, typically administered by departments of taxation, that offer reduced property taxes for land managed for agricultural or forestry use. Contact local assessors or the relevant department in your state to learn more about eligibility requirements and enrollment. This is important because a change in tenure or farm/forestry management can often affect enrollment status. Also, if a property had not been enrolled previously, certain types of leases or management scenarios can enable the property to become eligible for substantial property tax savings.

Conservation Easement or Restriction

If development rights on the property are removed or restricted, farm seekers will want to understand the details and implications. This legally binding agreement is typically called a

Other Farm Information (continued)

conservation easement or conservation restriction. Sometimes it is more specifically an agricultural easement or restriction. Easements/restrictions vary in what they allow or restrict. Certain terms might affect the suitability of the property for a farming operation or at least certain farming activities. Many agricultural easements are written to help preserve and foster future farming. The land trust (or other entity) that holds the easement will monitor to make sure that the landowner is in compliance with the easement terms. Local land trusts or state agencies (registry of deeds) can provide copies of the easements if needed. It's prudent for the landowner or representative to be conversant with the terms of the document.

Forest Management Plan

A forest management plan is usually developed by a consulting forester in order to provide the woodland manager information about the commercial and ecological characteristics of a given woodland. They are also used to make recommendations for the management of the forest based on these characteristics and the goals of the property owner. Forest management plans are sometimes linked to the "Land Use" property tax programs, but property owners not enrolled in these programs can still benefit from having a forest management plan. Potential farm buy-

ers may be interested in the commercial potential for woodland portions of the farm and a forest management plan can provide that information. A seeker will want to know if there is active or potential sugar bush, or other forest products.

Organic Certification

The USDA provides for a legal definition of land which can be considered "organic" under federal organic regulations. Land that is not certified organic should not be represented as such. However, land that will be eligible for organic certification under the restrictions of these regulations can be advertised as "eligible for organic certification." It is important to be able to verify eligibility; for example that no prohibited substances have been applied to the land within the previous 3 years. Contact your local or state organic certification agency or organization for more information about organic certification requirements. If this information cannot be obtained, note whether, to your knowledge, prohibited substances have been used. That may give the seeker enough initial information.

Tenure Arrangement

Property for Sale

You can post the specific asking price or a range, and indicate whether the property is being sold at fair market value, agricultural (restricted) value, or bargain sale. State whether there is possibility for owner financing and/or other creative ways to transition ownership. Refer to the form's specific instructions for the level of price detail that is required in listing.

Property for Rent/Lease

Indicate all options you are willing to consider, such as short-term (1-3 years) lease, long-term lease, or ground lease. (A ground lease is where the land is rented and the building(s) are purchased or placed and owned by the tenant. It is not common among private parties, but is sometimes used by conservation organizations. It can be an attractive option.) Indicate whether you are interested in offering a purchase option or right of first refusal.

Numerous resources are available on the topic of crafting sustainable lease arrangements and maintaining good landlord/tenant relationships with farmers. A comprehensive list or "[toolbox for leasing farmland](#)" with educational resources can be found at www.landforgood.org.

Other Tenure Arrangements

This includes any other arrangement that can enable a farmer to utilize the land for farming activities. Examples are: potential farm transfer or succession arrangements, farm manager; work into an existing operation; license or permit, etc. Many farm posting forms give you the opportunity to explain briefly and also include more detail in a "Custom Description" (guidance below).

Alternative tenure arrangements can be complicated, and property owners are encouraged to seek additional assistance or resources available on other pages of the website, or through farm link program staff or partnering service providers.

Other Information

Custom Description

Use this text box to describe the property and opportunity or arrangement you are offering. This is a great place to give this property some personality! Consider including information not already included above on:

- ✓ Current use(s)
- ✓ Quality and condition of the land
- ✓ Unique features (e.g., number of maple taps available)
- ✓ The neighborhood and community
- ✓ Restrictions not already described
- ✓ The landowner
- ✓ Any other significant attributes of the property or arrangement

The quality of land is especially important to incoming farmers. Use the custom description section to give a bit of history such as how long it has been since the land has been cropped, grazed or worked in other ways. Describe any limitations that might need to be addressed to make the land more productive. State whether some areas are more productive than others and for what possible reasons.

Use the custom description to include any important information not included above, and also to emphasize any outstanding or unique features of the opportunity.

If you wish to make your contact information public, include it here. It is not required by all farm listing websites.

Is the property listed elsewhere?

If the property is contracted to be sold through a real estate agent, you can provide name of the agent or agency and/or the MLS #. We recommend that your real estate agent post the property, thereby becoming the contact person.



Remember, many farm link websites are not meant to replace or compete with conventional real estate listings. They are complementary ways to share information about farming opportunities with farmers.

Photos

Upload any photos or other image files or pdfs that you did not add in any of the form fields above. Uploading photos is usually strongly encouraged.

Photos are a great way to generate interest in the farm opportunity; sometimes a photo makes all the difference

Other Information (continued)

to a seeker. Include at least two photos of the property and infrastructure. Show the property's prominent features and whatever you think will generate interest and augment your written description. Additionally, if you did not upload other pertinent image files or pdfs, such as aerial photos, google maps images, or Web Soil Survey images, you can add them here.



Some farm link websites reward property posters who include photos in their postings. The postings might be featured on the website homepage, or highlighted in other ways. [New England Farmland Finder](#), for example, will feature recent postings with photos on the homepage slideshow. This is great exposure. Postings without photos, on the other hand, do not get featured.

You're ready!

Congratulations! You're taking an important step in making your farm property available to a farmer or farm family. While there's no guarantee of a successful "match," posting your property is an effective way to find a farmer to rent or purchase your property. You are playing a critical role in keeping your community's agriculture thriving and in helping farm seekers address their biggest challenge--finding land to farm. Equally important, you are meeting your goals as a farmland owner or manager.