

# Advancing Agricultural Solutions to Climate Change in California: A Policy Update



## Farmland Conservation

AN IMPORTANT PART OF CALIFORNIA'S CLIMATE RESILIENCY STRATEGY



# American Farmland Trust

- Non-profit 501 (c) 3, established 1980
- Mission: Protect farmland, promote sound farming practices, and keep farmers on the land.

**No Farms  
No Food<sup>®</sup>**

  
American Farmland Trust

  
American Farmland Trust

# Farmland loss in the United States

**40+**

ACRES OF FARM AND  
RANCH LAND

developed every hour in  
the U.S.

**24**

MILLION ACRES

of agricultural land  
developed since 1982

**37%**

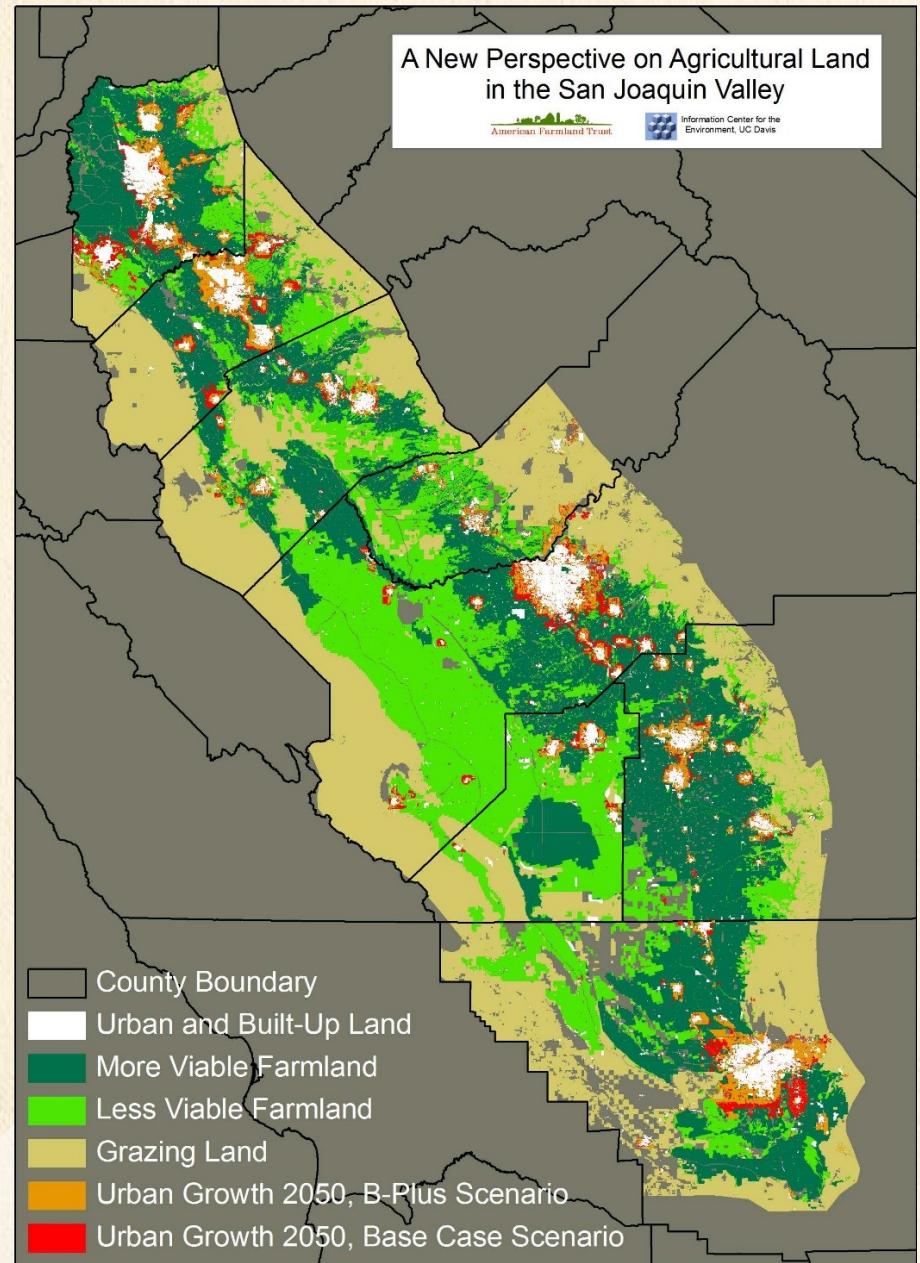
OF AMERICA'S DEVELOPED  
LAND

converted in the last  
three decades

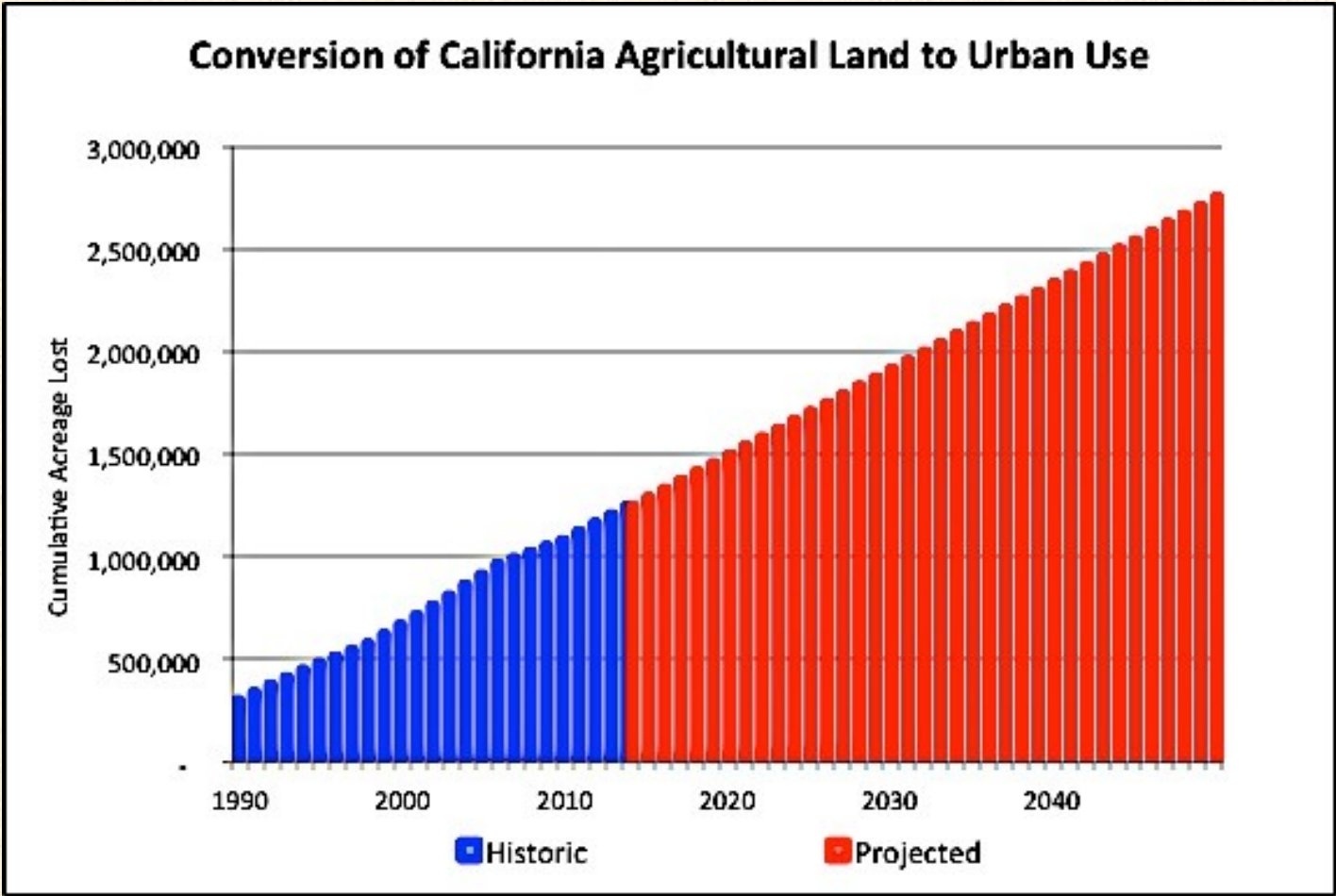
For more info visit [www.farmlandinfo.org](http://www.farmlandinfo.org)

# Urban growth in California's San Joaquin Valley

- Of farmland converted to non-agricultural use, 2000-2008, 61% was high-quality farmland
- The average development density was 6 people per acre



# Conversion of CA ag land to urban use



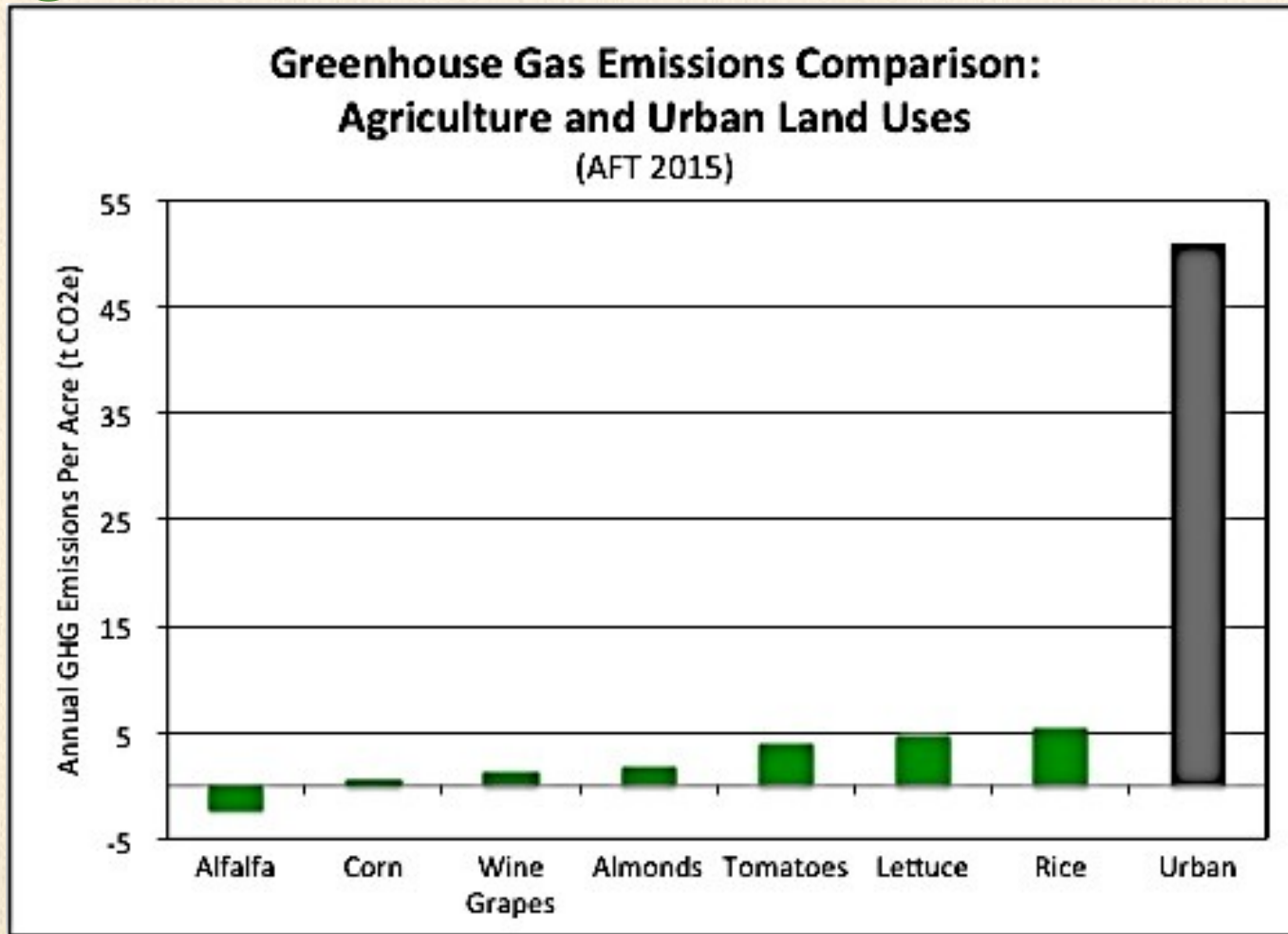
# Climate Connection

- Dr. Jackson, UC Davis: “emissions from crop and rangeland several orders of magnitude lower than urbanized land”
- Urban uses roughly 70 times greater per acre

See: Louise Jackson, Van R. Haden, et al., *Adaptation Strategies for Agricultural Sustainability in Yolo County, California: A White Paper from the California Energy Commission’s Climate Change Center*, U.C. Davis, July 2012.



# Agriculture vs. urban emissions

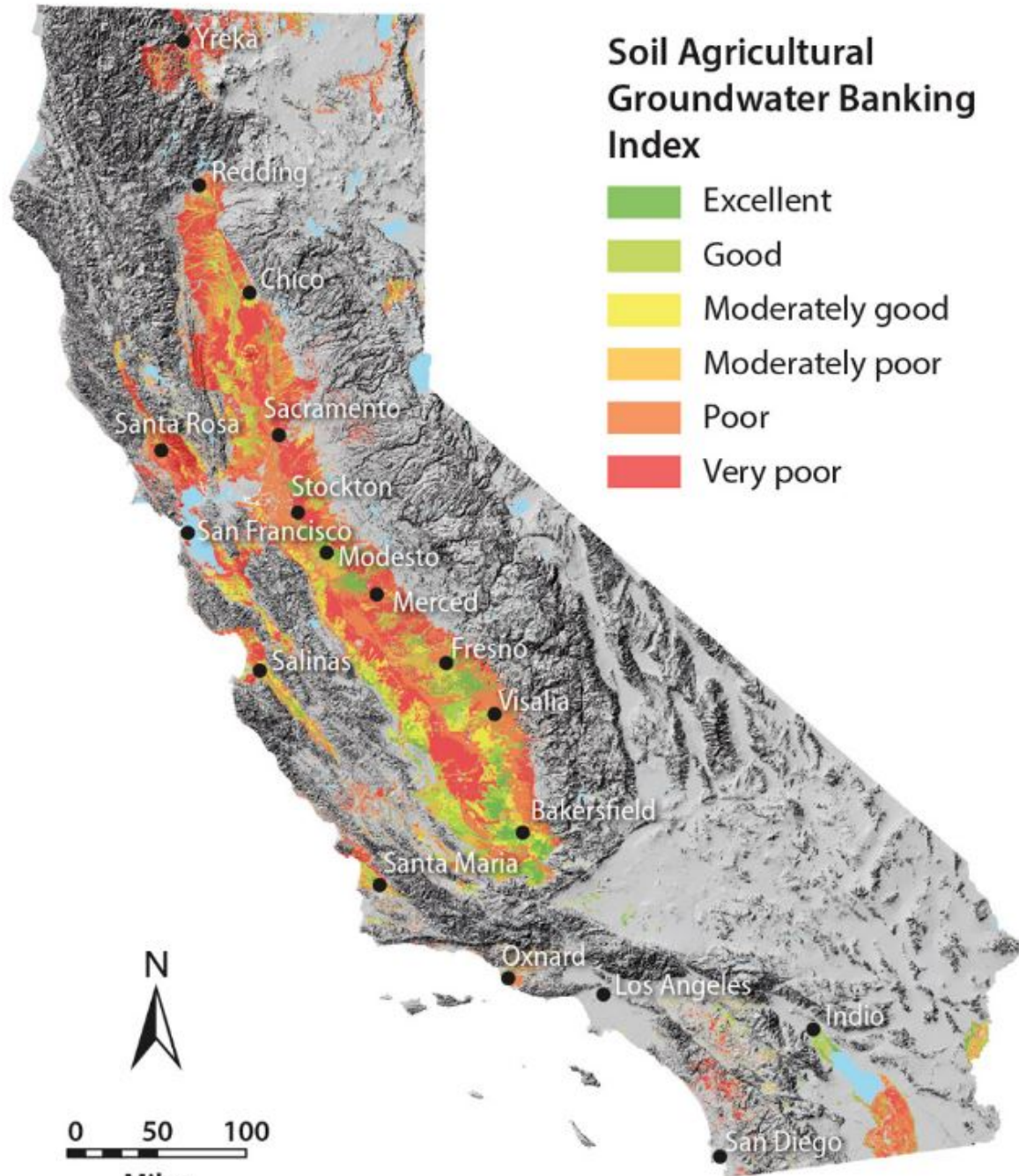


Steve Shaffer and Edward Thompson, Jr., *A New Comparison of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from California Agricultural and Urban Land Uses*, American Farmland Trust, February 2015.

# Farmland for Climate Resiliency

- Food security
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Microclimates
- Maintaining geographic connections of pollinator species





California Soil Resource Lab

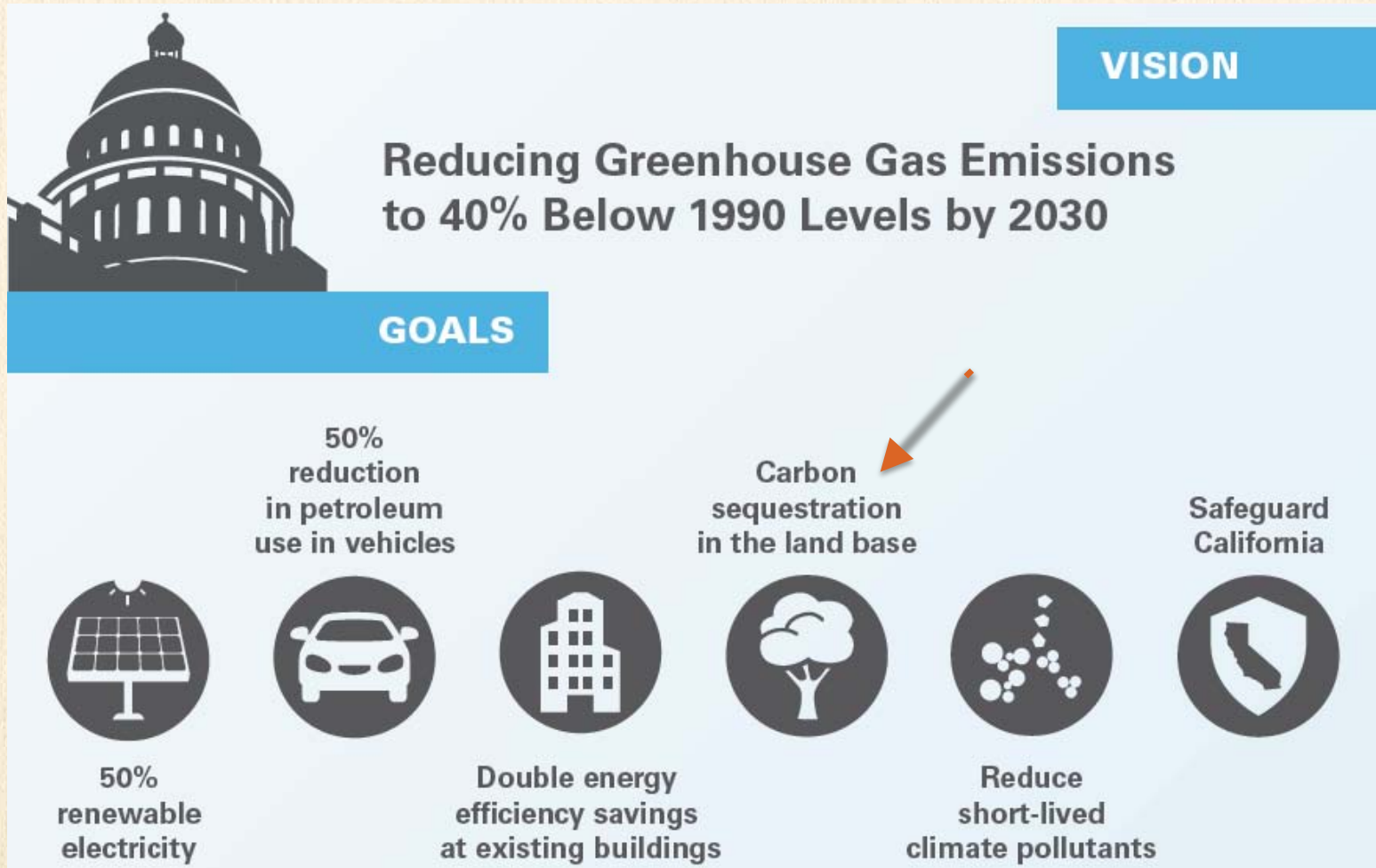


and Trust

CA: 20/24 climate zones defined in the Western Garden Book, 16/20 zones defined by USDA



# California's Climate Strategy



# Funding CA Farmland Conservation

CA Farmland Conservancy Program

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program  
(NRCS)

AB 32 Global Warming Solutions Act

-> Sustainable Ag Lands Conservation Program,  
or SALC has thus far provided nearly \$41  
million in funding for ag land protection

SB 375 – Sustainable Communities Strategies –  
result in some farmland conservation

# AFT estimates:

Reducing farmland conversion by 50% by 2030 and 75% by 2050, GHG savings comparable to:

- Taking 1.9 million cars off the road
- Reducing VMT by 767 billion miles
- Save 700,000 acres of farmland



Duke Nicholas School for Environmental Policy Solutions: “farmland preservation, more than any of the other [agricultural] management activities, will likely have the single greatest impact in stabilizing and reducing future emissions across multiple land use categories.”



# Take-aways:

- Avoidance as important as mitigation
- Must reduce per-capita land consumed for development
- Must set goals for farmland conservation
- Must prioritize the conservation of high-quality farmland



“The nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself.”  
– Franklin Delano Roosevelt

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Saving the Land that Sustains Us



American Farmland Trust

[www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org)