

PECONIC LAND TRUST



Peconic Land Trust
Farm Incubator Program
Application Packet
(as of February 17, 2012)



Quail Hill Farm, Amagansett, NY

Background and Purpose:

The mission of the Peconic Land Trust is to conserve Long Island's working farms, natural lands, and heritage for our communities now and in the future. Since 1983, the Trust has worked diligently with landowners, communities, municipalities, and partner organizations to protect more than 10,000 acres of land, conserving more working farms on Long Island than any other private conservation organization, and securing millions of dollars from public and private sectors for land protection.

At the same time, the Trust is aware of the urgent need to assure that farmland, once conserved, continues in agricultural production. If our communities are going to have viable, productive farms in the future, we must take steps now that go beyond the protection of farmland itself. Farmers, now and in the future, face complicated issues of farmland accessibility, affordability, and sustainability. These issues threaten the viability of the agricultural industry in general and the security of our food supply systems on Long Island and across the country. To this end, the Trust has been developing a "Farms for the Future" initiative.

As part of our ongoing Initiative, which includes making farmland available to farmers and promoting economic viability as well as sustainable agriculture practices, the Peconic Land Trust is developing and implementing an incubator for the next generation of farms and farmers. *The Farm Incubator Program formalizes this work and provides farmers that have an emphasis on food production and who are looking to start or grow their commercial agricultural operations with access to productive farmland.* It also helps them establish viable agricultural operations by offering advice, guidance, and educational opportunities. Over time, the Program will also provide farmers with access to other important agricultural infrastructure including barn space, greenhouse space, retail space, and shared equipment.

The Farm Incubator Program would principally be carried out at Peconic Land Trust's Agricultural Center at Charnews Farm in Southold and the Deborah Light Preserve in Amagansett. The following overview of the Trust's Farm Incubator Program provides information on the specific offerings and benefits that are included in the program.

Program Objectives:

- To keep agricultural land, once conserved, actively farmed
- To create opportunities for farmers to start or expand their commercial agricultural operation
- To promote the diversity of farming and farmers on Long Island
- To support and develop agricultural operations with an emphasis on food production farming
- To ensure that these properties stay available and affordable for farmers

Application Process

Below is an outline of the application process. After reviewing the information below, applicants should fill out and submit the attached application form and submit a resume and business plan. Any specific questions can be addressed to Stephen Searl, Project Manager, at 631.283.3195, ext. 22, ssearl@peconiclandtrust.org or Dan Heston, North Fork Stewardship Manager, at 631.734.5630, dheston@peconiclandtrust.org.

- Application Timeframe:
 - Applications due March 31, 2012
 - Peconic Land Trust to respond by April 15, 2012 (see application process below)

- Application requirements:
 - Fill out program application (attached)
 - Submission of:
 - Resume
 - Business plan

- Application process and criteria:
 - A Committee made up of staff, existing farmers, and/or other professionals/officials with experience and expertise in agriculture will review the applications and, if necessary, meet with applicants
 - The Committee will assess applications based on the following:
 - Sound business plan that demonstrates good market opportunity and measurable financial goals
 - Minimal 1-3 years of farm experience and have never owned farmland
 - Strong awareness of sustainable agricultural practices
 - Emphasis on food production farming
 - Personal capacity to cover living expenses
 - Compatibility of resource and equipment needs with existing farm operations
 - Market focus and competition with existing farms
 - Traffic and land use issues
 - Openness to feedback and recommendations
 - Connection to community
 - Land capacity
 - Alignment with the overall mission and goals of the Peconic Land Trust and Farm Incubator Program
 - The Committee will make recommendations to Peconic Land Trust's Board of Directors which will make a final determination

Farm Tenure

If asked to join the Peconic Land Trust's Farm Incubator Program, farmers will first be asked to attend an orientation about the Trust and the Farm Incubator Program and then sign a lease (the "lease"). The lease is granted for a five year term but is subject to annual review. Yearly review of the leases ensures that the lease and policies/procedures laid out in this application packet are not violated. It also provides farmers with the flexibility necessary to grow their farm operations.

After five years, farmers enrolled in the Program are required to relocate their farm operation off farmland designated for the Farm Incubator Program. If farmland is still available, the operation can continue to lease for short term periods (1-2 years). Ideally, graduates of the Farm Incubator Program would either enter into leases under the Trust's existing and more conventional Farmland Lease Program or work with the Trust and other farmers/landowners to buy/lease another farm.

Farming Practices

Farm operations will need to abide by sustainable farming methods in order to maintain and improve the health of the existing soil, neighboring farm operations, and the larger community. Farmers will work with the Peconic Land Trust to incorporate the following best management practices into their farm operations:

- Soil testing
- Cover cropping*
- Crop rotation and soil management
- Insect and disease management

**If a farmer chooses not to cover crop by November 1st of the growing season, the Peconic Land Trust has the right to plant a cover crop at farmer's expense.*

Farmland Availability

Peconic Land Trust will work with accepted applicants to place them on available farmland on a first come first serve basis. Most of the farmland will be located at the Trust's Agricultural Center at Charnews in Southold and Quail Hill Farm in Amagansett, though there may be other opportunities on other Trust owned land or with other landowners and/or partner organizations. In an effort to maximize farmland productivity, the Trust will make every effort to provide farmers with access to farmland that has irrigation and deer fencing.

Available Infrastructure and Annual Rates

The following infrastructure and corresponding annual rates are available to farmers in the Farm Incubator Program on a first come first serve basis. The first 3 items – land rental, irrigation, and deer fence – will be required for participation assuming they are available. *In addition, there will be an initial one time fee of \$100 to cover the costs associated with processing and placing accepted applicants in the program. This initial fee is due upon execution of the lease.*

The cost of land, irrigation and deer fencing is computed on a per acre basis and is due in installments throughout the growing season as per the lease. Note also the difference in rates depending on how long a farmer is in the program. Farmers in their 4th and 5th year will pay 20% more than those in the first three years. For example, the minimum that a first year farmer would pay for an acre of land with irrigation and deer fencing is \$350 (exclusive of the initial \$100 processing fee). A farmer in their 4th year of operation that is leasing 5 acres of farmland with irrigation and deer fencing would be charged \$2,100. The last 3 items (barn, greenhouse and retail stalls) are subject to availability on a first come first serve basis.

Below is a listing of infrastructure and associated costs. Not included in this list is the initial one time fee of \$100 for processing and placing applicants.

	Years 1-3	Years 4-5
Land Rental (per acre)	\$150 per acre	\$180 per acre
Irrigation (per acre)	\$ 140 per acre	\$ 168 per acre
Deer Fence (per acre)	\$ 60 per acre	\$ 72 per acre
Barn Space (per sq ft)	\$ 1.60 per sq ft	\$ 1.90 per sq ft
Greenhouse (per sq ft)	\$ __ per sq ft	\$ __ per sq ft
Retail Stalls (per stall)	\$ __ per stall	\$ __ per stall

Farmer Meetings

The Peconic Land Trust will invite participants of the program to attend monthly morning meetings (first Monday of every month at 9am for approximately 30 minutes) to talk about their farm operations and to address any and all questions/concerns that may arise during the course of the growing season. It will also provide farmers with an opportunity to network with each other and learn about ongoing local and regional agricultural issues.

Farmer Training/Education

The Peconic Land Trust will host ongoing training and education opportunities for startup farmers enrolled in the Farm Incubator Program.

Organizations/entities/individuals such as but not limited to Long Island Farm Bureau, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Cornell Cooperative, and already established farms and farmers will present on topics such as business planning, lease basics, tractor training, best management practices, and marketing. This training would be free for farmers enrolled in the Program and accessible (at a cost) to the general public.