

Preserving Wisconsin's Farmland

Between 2010 and 2021, Wisconsin lost nearly one million acres of farm land; this is a disturbing trend. While farmers are producing more and using fewer resources, it remains critically important that agricultural land does not slip out of production. Preserving farmland ensures the security of our food supply, provides stability to the farming community, and sustains an important tradition.

Representative Loren Oldenburg and I understand the need to protect Wisconsin's farmland. We've been working with members of the farming and conservation communities to craft an update to Wisconsin's farmland preservation program. This program, originally developed in 1977, provides tax credits to farmers who agree to be in the program for a specified length of time, submit a nutrient management plan, and meet soil and water conservation standards. Participation has declined in recent years because its current structure is no longer providing a suitable incentive for farmers.

Our bill fixes this by making a number of adjustments. First, we propose decreasing the minimum length of agreement between the farmer and the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection from fifteen years to ten years. Additionally, we increase the following per acre tax credits:

- From \$7.50 to \$10.00 per acre for acres that are located in a farmland preservation zoning district but are not subject to a farmland preservation agreement.
- From \$5.00 to \$10.00 per acre for acres that are subject to a farmland preservation agreement but not located in a farmland preservation zoning district.
- From \$10.00 to \$12.50 per acre for acres that are located in a farmland preservation zoning district and are subject to a farmland preservation agreement.

Finally, we create a new tax credit of \$10.00 per acre of \$10 per acre that may be claimed for farmland that is located in a farmland preservation area, but only to the extent that the acres are covered by an agriculture conservation easement.

Once farmland is developed for other uses it is rarely returned to agricultural production. By revitalizing this program, Rep. Oldenburg and I aim to strengthen Wisconsin's farm economy and its environment for future generations.