

Farmland and Food Systems

With increased demand for fresh, healthy food and a historic transition in farmland ownership across the United States and Canada, we can evolve our local and regional food systems to meet community needs. Our Conservation Loan program provides bridge financing to protect working farms and ranchlands, improve agricultural production and distribution, enhance public health outcomes, and support local economies—all while advancing key land and water conservation efforts.



Boston Public Market – Boston, Massachusetts

For decades, Bostonians lacked a place to buy locally sourced food during the cold winter months. The creation of an indoor, 28,000-square-foot permanent market was made possible thanks to a coalition of public, private and corporate partners, including the state of Massachusetts and the City of Boston. Opened in 2015, Boston Public Market gives area residents access to fresh, local food year-round.

We provided a \$3 million loan to the Boston Public Market Association, the nonprofit that operates the market, to help get the project off the ground. By supporting the Boston Public Market, we are helping farmers and small green businesses, which advances our mission to blend economic vitality with environmental sustainability. In turn, this public market inspires people to eat locally produced food and support New England food entrepreneurs, while learning about where their food comes from.

“The Conservation Fund has been unflagging in their support of the Boston Public Market and our mission to support local farmers and connect urban dwellers with the agricultural bounty of our region. We are incredibly grateful for the Fund’s partnership and their unwavering commitment to protecting farmland across the Commonwealth. These conservation efforts have significant positive impacts on our regional food system, ensuring that our farmers can continue to harvest a robust bounty to provide to all of us.”

– Cheryl Cronin, Chief Executive Officer,
Boston Public Market



PCC Farmland Trust – Seattle, Washington

PCC Farmland Trust is a nonprofit that secures, preserves and stewards threatened farmland in Washington, ensuring that generations of local farmers can produce food for local communities using sustainable growing methods.

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When some of the best remaining farmland in the fast-developing central Puget Sound region came up for sale, the Trust knew it needed to act quickly. PCC Farmland Trust raised 25 percent of the land price through private donations, and we provided a three-year loan to cover the rest.

Using its “buy-protect-sell” model, the Trust is raising grant funds to place a conservation easement on the property to permanently protect the land. An organic dairy producer currently leases the land, and PCC Farmland Trust plans to sell the property to a farmer at a reduced price, thanks to the conservation easement.



Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust – Athol, Massachusetts

The former mill town of Orange, Massachusetts, is a food desert—a community that has little access to fresh, healthy produce. To address this, the fledgling North Quabbin Community Co-op sought an opportunity to relocate and expand its four-year old, volunteer run store. The Co-op proposed a partnership with Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust to convert the 5,000-square-foot former Workers’ Credit Union building into a food co-op to supply the community with locally grown food—some of which would be provided by farms protected through conservation easements.

Mount Grace needed funding to buy the building, and they turned to The Conservation Fund for immediate assistance and a loan tailored to meet their needs. Now, the large, centrally located Quabbin Harvest community market is top ranked for enrollment in the state’s fresh produce-based Healthy Incentives Program, distributes a CSA (community supported agriculture) share program, and includes a shared space for healthy food workshops, classes and more.

“[The Mount Grace] partnership with the Co-op is a strategic farmland conservation tool to address the gaps in our local food system and keep our region’s farmers on the land. Increasingly, land trusts are becoming aware that land conservation alone is only part of the solution to keep our farms in production.”

– Leigh Youngblood, Executive Director, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

“Knowing we have a lender who understands the complexity and unique nature of conservation projects means that the Trust can tackle complex deals with full confidence and that our partners at The Fund will work with us, every step of the way.”

– Melissa Campbell, Associate Director, PCC Farmland Trust

About The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect nearly 8 million acres of land.

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