



Organic Agricultural Conservation Easements - FAQs

HOW DOES THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROCESS WORK?

An organic agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation agency. Landowners can sell or donate an agricultural conservation easement to a qualified conservation organization or government body. In either case, it is necessary to determine the value of the easement to establish a price or to calculate tax benefits that may be available under federal and state law. The value of an agricultural conservation easement is generally the fair market value of the property minus its agricultural value, as determined by a qualified appraiser. In general, more restrictive agreements and intense development pressure result in higher easement values. When property eventually changes ownership, it remains subject to the restrictions of the easement.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN ORGANIC CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

- Permanently protects farmland to ensure that organic food can continue to be grown.
- Enables future buyers to purchase the land at agricultural value.
- Can provide farmers with tax benefits, including property and estate tax reductions.
- Organic certification ensures that no harmful pesticides, fertilizers, or animal hormones enter waterways or negatively affect wildlife.

ARE THERE DRAWBACKS?

- Easements permanently restrict the uses permissible for the property, and hence the land's market value. Any non-agricultural development or

division not addressed at the time of the easement will not be permitted.

- Monitoring and enforcing conservation easements require a serious commitment on the part of the easement holder
- Landowners are required to provide notice when making significant improvements to their property.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DONATED AND PURCHASED EASEMENT?

- Donated easements are treated as charitable gifts and landowners can deduct a portion of the easement value from their federal tax fillings.
- Purchased easements generally use government or non-profit land trust money to make up the difference between the appraised market value and the agricultural value.

WHAT ARE THE EASEMENT RESTRICTIONS ON PCC FARMLAND TRUST FARMS?

All conservation easements are tailored specifically to each property. In general, the Trust's easements require 1) farmland properties are enrolled in the Current Use Taxation Program 2) in certified organic production 3) annual stewardship visits 4) periodic events and educational farm tours.

WHAT ARE THE TRUST'S ONGOING LAND STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES?

PCC Farmland Trust develops a stewardship plan for each property and actively monitors and stewards each farm on an annual basis.