









## Agriculture

Farming is Wisconsin's number one industry, by some estimates accounting for \$6 billion in business sales, providing 21,038 jobs, and contributing \$1.6 billion in income within Brown County each year.<sup>1</sup> Continued support of agricultural activities is one key to the state's and county's continued prosperity. Agricultural production should continue to be the primary economic development focus in the Town of Holland. For this to happen, it is necessary for Holland to consistently apply its zoning ordinance and other Town ordinances and policies in a manner that, at a minimum, does not harm, but preferably enhances the agricultural economy.



As a means to determine an approximate value of agricultural activity within the Town of Holland, a rough analysis was completed utilizing the number of farms and participants in the State of Wisconsin Farmland Preservation (Working Lands Initiative) Program and the average total market value of agricultural products sold per farm in Brown County. In order to receive the Farmland Preservation Tax Credit, a participant must have over \$6,000 in gross farm receipts (exclusive of rent), be in compliance with all agricultural conservation standards, have land zoned for exclusive agricultural use, and be current in tax payments. There is no requirement that farmers must participate in the program. According to Brown County Land Records data and Working Lands Initiative data, there are currently a total of 327 landowners covering 21,033 acres in the program.

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Brown County's total market value of agricultural products sold was over \$307 million, and that the average WLI acreage per farm was 215 acres and yielded \$276,792 in annual sales, or about \$1,264 per acre. Utilizing the current total of 21,033 acres of land included in the WLI, the Town of Holland farms participating in the WLI yielded a total market value of approximately \$27,069,400. Although this is only an estimate of the economic impact of farming in Holland, it does provide an indication of how important agricultural activity is to the Town. Besides the economic benefits that the agricultural economy brings to the community, it is important to understand that agricultural production does not require the public services that are typically required by an industry with \$27 million in sales, while certainly helping to maintain the Town's rural character. The Town of Holland should support active farmers by discouraging new development that negatively impacts agricultural activities.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) administers the Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) program, which according to DATCP, "...is a tool that can help communities meet their identified goals for preserving agricultural land and encouraging agricultural economic development. Lands in an AEA, within a certified farmland preservation zoning district, and having a signed 15-year farmland preservation agreement with the State of Wisconsin are eligible for a \$10/acre farmland preservation tax credit as opposed to \$7.50/acre for just being within the zoning district. AEA's are intended to identify large tracts of generally contiguous agricultural lands that will continue to be used for agricultural purposes for at least the next 15 years. In order to create an AEA, the following issues must be addressed in a competitive application process to DATCP:

- A petition must be signed by at least five qualified farm owners.

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 Brown County Agriculture: Value & Economic Impact; UW-Extension.

















