
Understanding Farmland Dynamics in Oregon

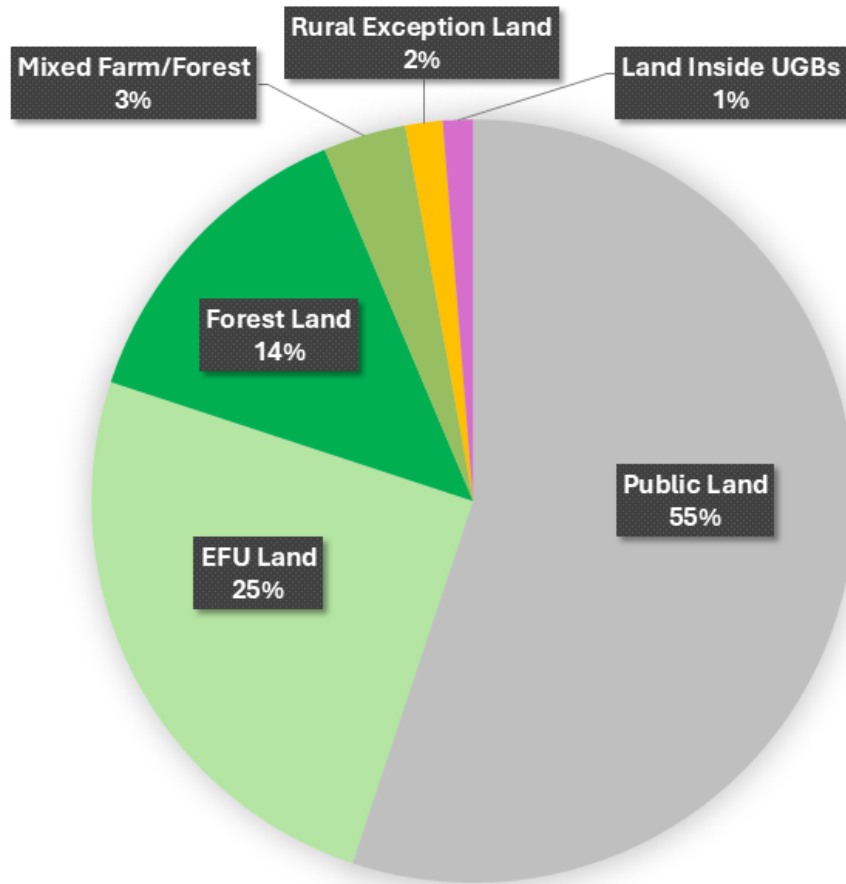
*Addressing Misconceptions and
Proposing Solutions*

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Analyzing Farmland Statistics

Understanding Oregon's Land Base



Oregon Zoning

Land in Oregon - 61,598,720 acres

Public Land

Over half of Oregon's land is publicly owned, mostly by the federal government.

Urban Growth Boundaries

Approximately 1.5% of Oregon's land is inside UGBs where nearly all industrial, residential, and commercial development occurs.

Privately Owned Resource Land

26.3 million acres of private land are zoned for natural resource use, including farms, forests, or a mix of both.

Most Private Land is Farmland

96% of privately owned rural land is zoned for farm, forest, or mixed-use.

Farmland Preservation

Statewide Implementation of EFU Zoning

By 1986, all 36 Oregon counties had completed agricultural land inventories and applied Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zoning to identified farmland.

Initial Farmland Protection

In 1986, approximately 16.1 million acres were protected under EFU zoning.

Minimal Rezoning

Since 1987, only 43,000 acres have been removed from EFU zoning due to urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions or other zone changes.

Long-Term Preservation

Today, 99% of land originally zoned EFU has remained under EFU zoning. At the current rate, Oregon's farmland wouldn't disappear for 14,884 years.



OREGON

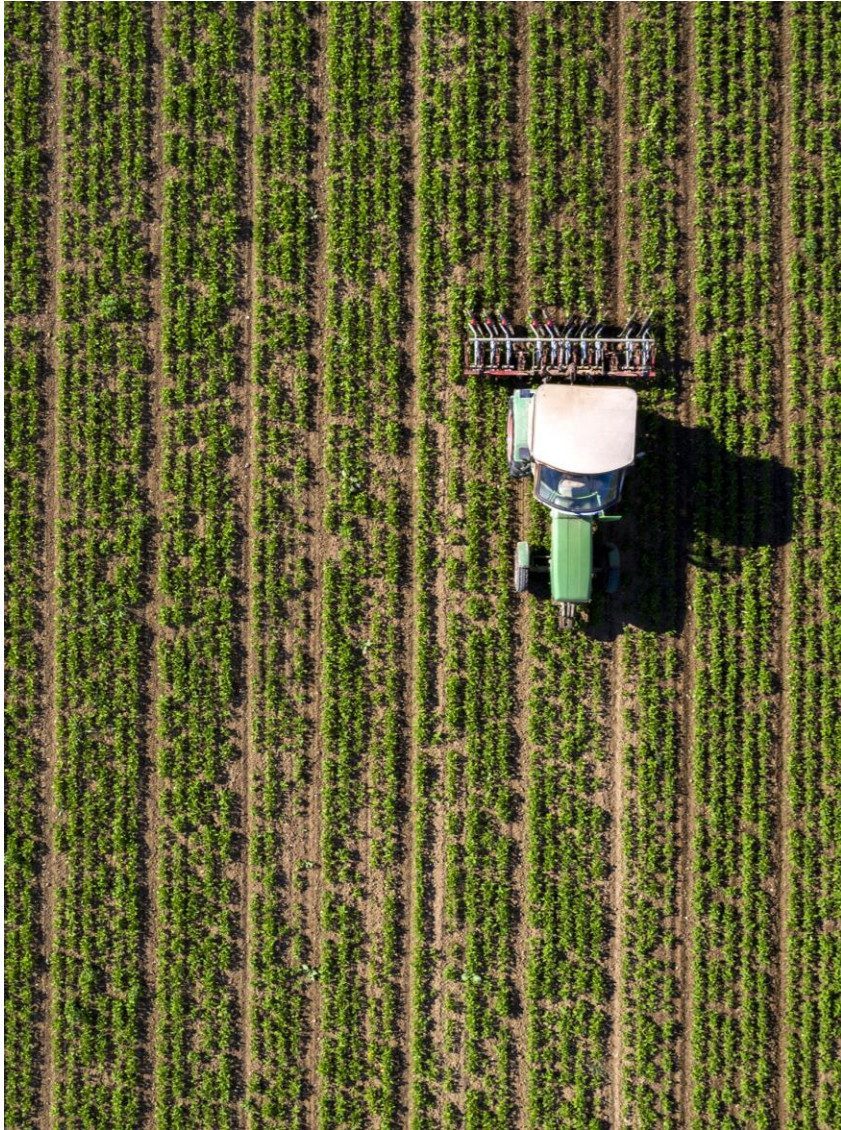
Department of Land Conservation & Development

OREGON FARM & FOREST LAND USE

2022–2023



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Understanding Farmland “Loss” Data

According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, over 600,000 acres in Oregon were “converted” to non-farm uses between 2017-22.

USDA Farmland Definition

The USDA Census of Agriculture counts any location producing or expected to sell \$1,000+ in agricultural products, regardless of zoning.

American Farmland Trust’s Warning

“Net changes in land in farms can be misleading. They provide one measure of the extent of agricultural activity, but do not tell us what is happening to the resource base. Decreases in land in farms do not necessarily indicate conversion; rather, they show that land has been taken out of active production.”

So, How Does Oregon Rank?

According to AFT, Oregon ranks 46th out of the 50 states in “threat to farmland”, trailing only South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming.

Farmer Statistics and Economic Trends

Oregon Is Losing Farmers, Not Farmland

Loss of Productive Farms

Between 2017 and 2022, Oregon experienced a loss of 2,069 farms, highlighting the increasing challenges faced by farmers.

Market & Regulatory Challenges

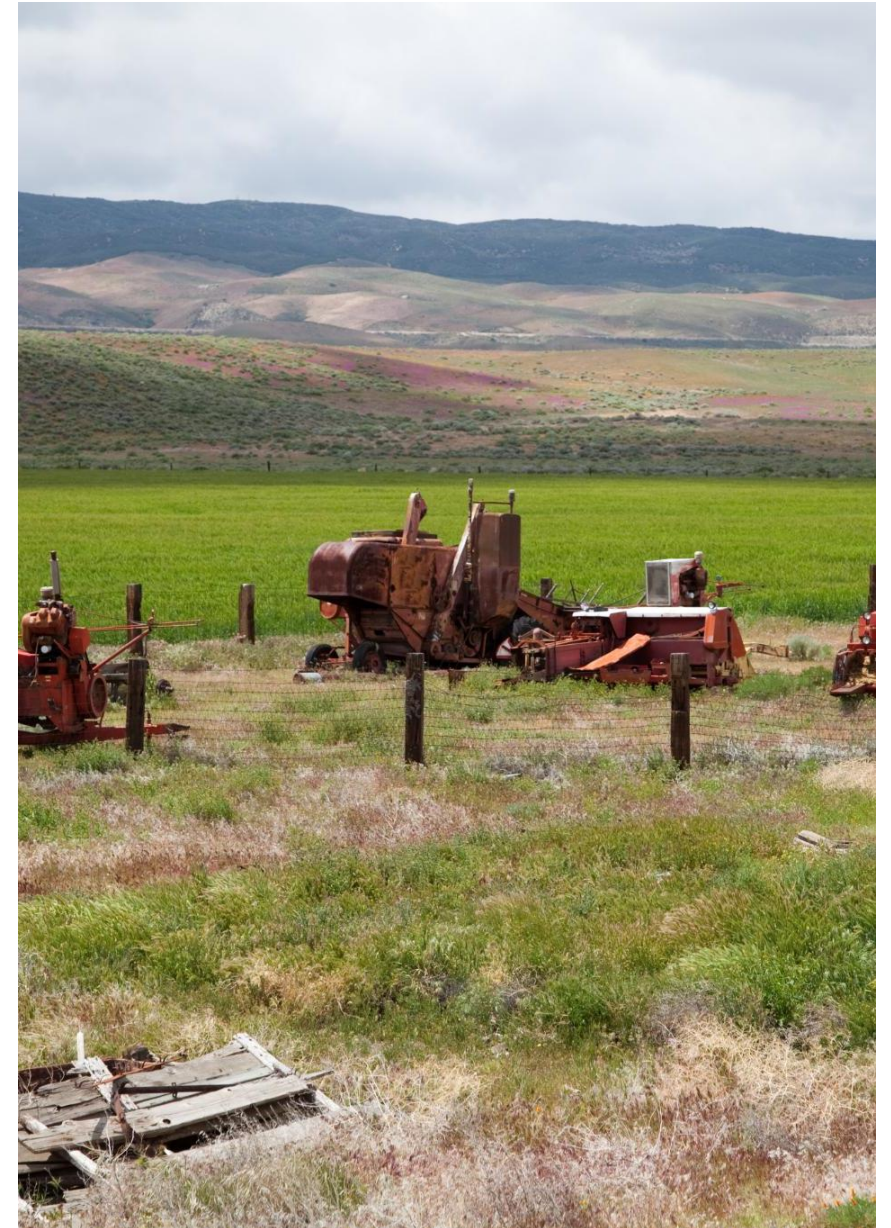
Escalating expenses for equipment, labor, and supplies are diminishing farming profitability. Additionally, shifts in global trade and competition are putting additional pressure on small farms.

Limited Options

Farmers encounter restrictions on land usage, which hampers opportunities for diversification, agritourism, and alternative income sources.

Bottom Line

Oregon farmers are not losing land; they are losing the ability to sustain their businesses due to economic challenges and restrictive regulations.



Challenges for New & Young Farmers

Young People Cannot Afford Property In Oregon

Like most young people in Oregon, young farmers are struggling to afford property that they can live and work on.

Limited Purchasing Power

Economic constraints and weak borrowing capacity hamper young farmers' ability to finance their agricultural ventures.

Restrictive Land Use Laws

New farmers must also navigate restrictive land use laws, including minimum parcel sizes and farm income requirements.

- Minimum parcel size for farmland or forestland: **80 acres**, preventing smaller purchases.
- Farm income requirement: Must earn **\$80,000 for two consecutive years** before building a home on the property.



Clarifying the Impact of “Non-Farm Uses”



Essential Uses

Many "non-farm uses" support agriculture, including on-farm processing facilities, farmstands, agritourism, farmworker housing, wineries, etc.

Zoning Realities

Over 96% of private land in Oregon is zoned for farm or forest use, meaning non-farm activities **must** be placed on farm or forest land. Some uses are also not compatible in urbanized areas. Non-farm activities like rock pits, landfills, water treatment facilities, and campgrounds must be sited on "farmland."

Policy Challenges

Conditional non-farm uses require proof they won't disrupt farming, making approvals difficult despite their benefits.

Land Prices Are Rising Everywhere

Between 2017-2022, residential land prices increased by 52% in the Portland/Metro area, 63% in Hood River, 71% in Salem, 79% in Bend, 75% in Boardman, 79% in Baker City, and 72% in Wallowa.

Solutions

Allow More Opportunity, Not Less

- 1. Allow Diverse Land Uses:** Expanding permitted land uses enhances agricultural productivity and economic sustainability, benefiting farmers and rural communities.
- 2. Support Innovation in Agriculture:** Advancing farming techniques and practices helps farmers adapt to changing conditions and evolving market demands.
- 3. Create Opportunities for New Farmers (Without Punishing Existing Ones):** Allowing diverse land uses creates new markets and revenue streams, supporting both established farmers and newcomers without restrictive policies.
- 4. Modernize Our Land Use Planning System:** Updating zoning and land use policies ensures they align with today's agricultural and community needs, fostering economic growth and flexibility.
- 5. Allow for Better Planning:** Better planning balances community growth and farmland protection, ensuring we address modern challenges with flexibility and innovation—because poor planning only creates obstacles instead of solutions.

