

# Handout for Fraying Legacies: The State of Indiana Agriculture, 1985 to Today



SOUTHEAST

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## Agricultural Land Conversion (ISDA 2024)

- 350,000 acres converted to non-agriculture use
  - Residential development on city outskirts
  - Hamilton (-18,571), Hendricks (-13,674), Lake (4,914) converted acres
  - 71% of converted lands are expected to occur on Nationally Significant land (Freegood et al. 2020)

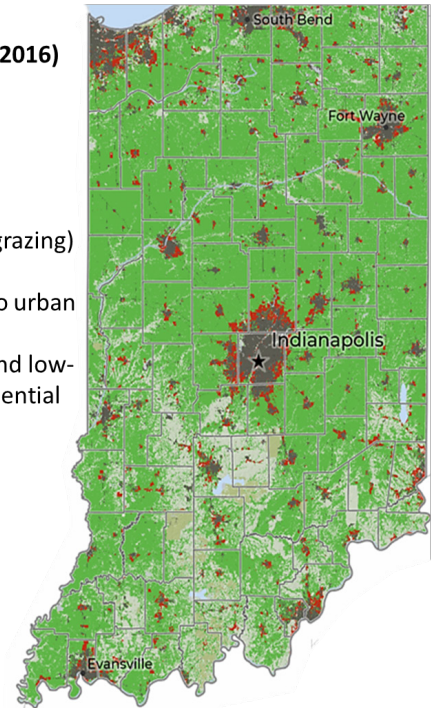
## **Agricultural Land Easements**

- Protects productive, versatile, and resilient lands (Freegood et al. 2020)
- Conservation of Agricultural Land (Culp 2025)

## **Table 1. Projected Agriculture Land Conversion 2016-2040 (AFT 2020)**

**Land Cover (2016)**

- Farmland
- Forestland
- Urban areas
- Water
- Other lands
- Federal (no grazing)
- Projected conversion to urban and highly developed and low-density residential



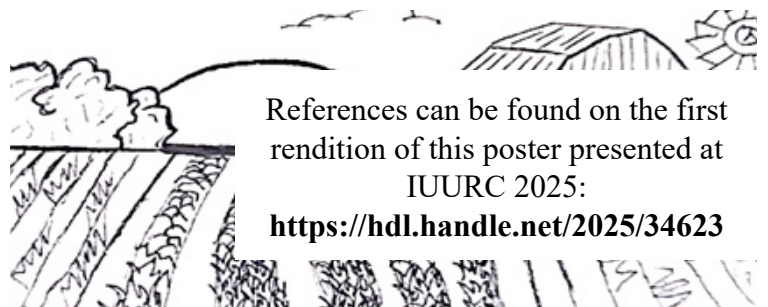
## 53,599 Agricultural Operations

- Around 94,000 farmers in Indiana
  - Farmers 65+ years make up 1/3 of Hoosier farmers (Gerber 2024)
  - 10% of retirement aged farmers are Hoosiers

## **Retiring Farmers Tax Credit (Culp and Criswell 2025)**

- Addresses aging workforce by giving tax credit to retirement age farmers who partner with young farmers (Pfeiffer 2025)
- Successful models in Iowa and Minnesota (Smith 2025)

To mitigate Indiana's agricultural sacrifice zones, policy solutions like the **Retiring Farmers Tax Credit** and **Agricultural Land Easements** are essential.



References can be found on the first rendition of this poster presented at IUURC 2025:  
<https://hdl.handle.net/2025/34623>

# Brief Timeline of Agriculture in Federal Legislation

1852 & 1890

Morrill Acts  
(land &  
funding)

## Morrill Acts of 1852 and 1890

- Granted land to states to form secondary education schools around agriculture and mechanics

1862

USDA  
Established

## Establishment of USDA or “The People’s Department” 1862

- Original purpose to improve American farming productivity
- Added the Forest Service in 1905 and the FDA in 1906
- Added the Soil Conservation Service in 1935, now Natural Resources Conservation Service

1914

Smith –  
Lever Act

## Smith-Lever Act 1914

- Formally established agricultural extension work through Land-grant colleges and universities

1933 & 1938

Agriculture  
Adjustment  
Acts

## Agriculture Adjustment Acts 1933 and 1938

- Crop insurance program, parity payments, production control, and soil conservation
- Jones-Connally and Jones-Costigan Acts 1934, Kerr-Smith Tobacco Control Act, Warren Potato Act 1935

1935

Soil  
Conservation  
Act

1973

Omnibus  
Farm Bill

1976

US-Soviet  
Union Grain  
Deal

1985

Farm Aid  
Established

This project applies the concept of **sacrifice zones** — areas exploited for profit/progress (Hedges and Sacco 2012) — to analyze how decades of **consolidation**, an **aging workforce**, and **uneven investment** have **reshaped Indiana's farming landscape**.

Policy history, census data, and industry reports reveal how economic and technological forces have **transformed family farms into contemporary sacrifice zones**, highlighting challenges like **generational turnover**, **farm closures**, and **rising start-up costs**, and considers what the state's sustainable agricultural future might look like.