



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



FarmAbility Information Sheet

Leelanau County: You're talking; We're listening.

Leelanau has always been the right place for farming. Now is the right time.

- Farmers are saying they want to keep on farming and have more opportunities to prosper. They want the tradition of family farming to remain alive and strong in Leelanau County. And because the average age of farmers in Leelanau is 59, farmers are looking for ways to pass farms on within their families so that farming remains affordable for the next generation.
- The public is saying they want farm families to be able to continue that tradition. Agriculture is the "bread and butter" of our Leelanau economy. The scenic beauty and rural traditions created by farming are major reasons that tourists visit here. They want the security of knowing they can buy good local fruits and vegetables now and in the future.
- Our County Commissioners have been saying they want private-sector leadership to support farming. They want solutions through partnerships between like-minded organizations.

You're telling us what you want. And we hear you.

More than ever, our economic future depends on a strong agricultural-tourism sector. Farm families are great stewards of the land and integral to the fabric of our county's traditions. When farm families prosper, it benefits us all. The good news is that after more than two years of effort, the Leelanau Conservancy, the Leelanau Conservation District, the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station and Michigan State University Extension now present the FarmAbility Program. "FarmAbility" means doing *whatever it takes* to keep Leelanau farm families going strong, today, tomorrow and in the future.

Who: Any eligible farm family. Eligibility requirements are:

1. A farm of 40 or more acres in one ownership, with 51% or more of the land area devoted to an agricultural use. For purposes of the 51% calculation, woodlot acreage in a verifiable sustainable management plan will be counted as an agricultural use as long as no less than 35% of the total acreage is in active agricultural use with annually harvested crop.
2. A farm of 5 acres or more in one ownership, but less than 40 acres, with 51% or more of the land area in agricultural use, and which produces a gross annual income from agriculture of \$200.00 per year or more per acre of active farm land. Farm acreage enrolled in a federal conservation reserve program is considered to have met this income requirement.

3. A specialty farm under one ownership that has produced a gross annual income from agricultural use of \$2,000.00 or more. Specialty farms may include community-supported agriculture; greenhouses; the breeding and grazing of livestock, pheasants and other game birds; bees and bee products; mushrooms; and other similar uses and activities. Horse farms and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are not considered eligible farms for this program.
4. Farms which have already received value through purchase of development rights programs and/or federal income tax incentives are not eligible for this program.

What: On a “first-come-first-served” basis until 5,000 acres are enrolled, any eligible farm family may apply for a Ten-year Farm Conservation Agreement (similar to Michigan’s P.A. 116 Program) to maintain their farm in active agriculture during the term. The Agreement provides for:

1. Annual cash payments of \$10 per acre of active ag land; \$5 per acre for woodlots, wetlands and other acreage with conservation value. Payments will not be tied to household income or property tax rates
2. Discounts of up to \$250 annually on registration fees for approved workshops and seminars provided by sponsoring organizations
3. Up to \$1000 in matching funds over the 10-year term for estate and/or tax planning designed to help position the transfer of the farm to the next generation for farming
4. No financial penalties levied if there is no re-enrollment at the end of the 10-year term
5. Splitting one or more small lots to family members (case-by-case basis)
6. Transfer of the farm to family members or another farmer during the term who will continue to farm it in substantially the same manner
7. Permissible placements of wind generation and communications towers similar to the requirements of P.A. 116
8. Early termination of the Agreement under conditions similar to P.A. 116.

How: To enroll, a member(s) of the farm family owning the land signs a 10-year Farm Conservation Agreement which will be recorded, run with the land and includes a right for the Leelanau Conservancy to match a bona fide offer to buy the farm if the would-be purchaser intends to convert the farm to non-agricultural uses. In that event, the Conservancy will make every effort to permanently preserve the farm for ongoing agriculture and resell it for that purpose.

Why: To help farm families prosper by helping to defray the costs of farming, by enhancing operations and farming know-how, and by helping families position the transfer of their farms to the next generation for farming purposes.

When & Where: The FarmAbility Program Kickoff will be held at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station on **March 5, 2009 from 4:00pm-5:30pm**. Light refreshments will be served.

From March 9 until May 14, farm families may apply in person on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:00am and 11:00am at the Leelanau Conservation District Offices at 112 Philip Street, Lake Leelanau and Mondays and Wednesdays between 2:00pm and 4:00pm at the Leelanau Conservancy, 105 N. First Street, Leland (256-9665).

For more information, contact Tom Nelson, Director of Farm Programs, Leelanau Conservancy, at 256-9665 or tnelson@theconservancy.com; or Buzz Long, Executive Director, Leelanau Conservation District at 256-9669 or blong@leelanaucd.org