

A Look at Connecticut Agriculture



Capital: Hartford

Population: 3,590,000

Founded: January 9, 1788 (5th)

State Bird: Robin

State Tree: White Oak

State Flower: Mountain Laurel

Number of Counties: 8

Largest City: Bridgeport - 136,405

Nickname: The Constitution State

Number of Farms: 5,977

Average Farm Size: 73 acres

Total Farmland: 436,406 acres



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Climate & Soil

- Connecticut's weather is relatively mild
- Year round average temperature range is from 17° F to 85° F.
- The relatively mild climate allows for a long growing season with the first killing frost generally in mid-October and the last in mid-April.
- The growing season is fairly long, with the first killing frost generally in mid-October and the last in mid-April.
- Despite Connecticut's small size, there is some variety in climate, with temperatures in the northern hills as much as 10° lower than those in the central valley year-round.
- The state has moderate rainfall, with an equal distribution of precipitation among the four seasons.
- Connecticut soils are glaciated, formed by glacial processes.
- The state soil is Windsor, soils consisting of very deep, excessively drained, rapidly permeable solids formed in glacial meltwater sediments. These soils are important for the production of fruit and vegetable crops, silage corn and ornamental shrubs and trees.
- The richest soils in Connecticut are along the Connecticut River in the Connecticut River valley.

Crops & Livestock

- Nursery and Greenhouse products are the top crops in Connecticut accounting for 45% of farm receipts. Greenhouse and nursery products include ornamental shrubs, flowers, bedding plants, hanging plants, young plants, Christmas trees, sod and greenhouse vegetables.
- Top crop items include: Fruit crops (primarily apples and peaches), vegetables, tobacco, forage: hay, haylage, grass silage and green crop; and corn for silage.
- A listing of farm-raised livestock in the order of importance to the Connecticut economy is dairy cows, chickens, horses, beef, sheep, dairy and meat goats, as well as hogs.
- More than 70,000 acres of shellfish farms are now under cultivation in Connecticut's coastal waters accounting for \$30 million plus in farm-gate sales annually. These shellfish farms harvest 450,000 bushels of hard clams and 200,000 bushels of oysters annually.
- Connecticut's most valuable livestock products are dairy products (milk), cheese, chicken eggs and aquaculture products.
- Connecticut has 750 beekeepers reporting 6000 bee colonies. These bee colonies enhance the pollination of Connecticut's specialty crops. In addition, Connecticut has 9 semi-commercial beekeepers providing colonies to the orchards in the state. In 2013 orchard producers had to rely on out of state beekeepers to provide colonies for pollination.
- Niche markets exist for camelids: alpacas and llamas, broilers, buffalo (bison), turkeys and farm produced pheasants.
- Niche markets also exist for specialty crops, organic vegetables, pick your own (vegetables and fruits), goat milk, raw milk, maple syrup, tag and cut your own Christmas trees, and value added products such as jams, jellies, pickles and sauces.

General

- Connecticut's top agricultural commodities in 2012 were: greenhouse – nursery, dairy products, aquaculture, chicken eggs, fruits, vegetables, tobacco and cattle and calves.
- Connecticut agriculture adds 4.6 billion dollars to the state economy annually.
- 60% of the land area in Connecticut is in farmland, open space and forest: an important natural resource base and enhancement to the environment.