Cultivating America's working lands: a study of the sociocultural value of family farms

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Cultivating America's working lands

a study of the socioeconomic value of family farms [Karen L. Coenen] - Landscape Architecture [Eran Wizman]

conserving working and natural lands is a key strategy for protecting quality of life and building long-term economic viability of rural communities. [Regional Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Center]

introduction: the problem

In the United States, obesity and diet-related chronic disease rates are escalating, while the public’s health is further threatened by rising antibiotic resistance, chemicals, and pathogens contaminating our food, air, soil, and water; depletion of natural resources, and climate change. These threats have enormous human, social, and economic costs that are growing cumulative and unequally distributed. These issues are all related to food—what we eat and how it is produced. The U.S. industrial food system provides plentiful, relatively inexpensive food but much of it is unhealthy, and the system is not sustainable. Although most U.S. food consumption occurs within this industrial system, healthy and more sustainable alternatives are increasingly available. [APHA, 2007]

research questions

How can landscape architects enable sustainable farms to thrive, economically, environmentally, and culturally?

How do family farms that practice sustainable agriculture approach economic self-sufficiency within their local communities?

What can common agricultural practices (promote ecological health)?

What are common agricultural practices that promote ecological health?

How do family farmers engage with the public and local community?

What is the typical scale for an environmentally responsive family farm?

What is a family farm's proximity to its distribution sources?

What are common agricultural practices that promote ecological health?

How does the relationship between land uses affect a farm?

What are the overall trends for each issue: practices, access, education, and/or tax credits?

Introducing vertical economic relationships

sustainable = the capacity of the land to produce without harming the environment

local = engages farming community

stronger local economy = strengthens local economy

rehabilitates ecosystem = rehabilitates ecosystem

recharges resources = recharges resources

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