

# Land Investment Monthly - May 2020

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*Zaid Kurdieh, an organic farmer from upstate outside his stand at the Union Square Farmers Market. Taidgh Barron/NY Post*

## **Successful Farming: Universal Sustainability Standard launched by Leading Harvest**

Both farmers and the supply chain have had to manage a complex landscape of sustainability platforms, each using different data tools, metrics, and scorecards to address a single crop, issue area, or stakeholder interest.

Instead of improving outcomes, this approach has both discouraged participation in critical sustainability efforts and underperformed consumer expectations for tangible assurances of proper stewardship of our agricultural lands.

Leading Harvest resolves this stubborn barrier to sustainability with a universal standard that can be applied across all crops and geographies while addressing a uniquely broad spectrum of societal interests. [Read More](#)

## **The Fence Post: American Farmland Trust releases first-ever national report on non-operator landowners**

WASHINGTON — Today, American Farmland Trust, the organization behind the national movement No Farms No Food and the Women for the Land initiative, released “Understanding and Activating Non-Operator Landowners: Non-Operator Landowner Survey,” clearing up misconceptions and identifying opportunities to advance conservation on agricultural lands owned by those who do not farm it. The survey focused on individually or partnership owned lands, not institutions or trusts.

Around 40% of farmland in the U.S. is rented, in some U.S. counties that number is nearing 80%, and over a third of this land is owned by women. To date, we don't know that much about how these rented lands are integrated into farmer conservation strategies; however, we know that rented land is less likely to be managed with conservation goals in mind. Farmers have been reluctant or had difficulty communicating with landowners either because of distance, or because they are held back by their perception — proved unfounded by this survey — that landowners only care about rental payments, not long-term stewardship of the land. What's more, farm leases are typically verbal and only run for one year, making certain kinds of conservation investments risky.

Landowners on the other hand, are often not aware of available conservation programs and are unsure about broaching the topic with their farmers, particularly if they lack on-farm knowledge and experience, which we found is more common when the landowner is a woman. [Read More](#)

## **Successful Farming: What do Plant Closures Mean To The U.S. Food Supply**

With the recent closures of several meat processing plants ([Smithfield Foods](#), [JBS](#), [Tyson](#), and [Cargill](#), among others), what will it mean to the food supply system in America?

It could mean a significant change in how companies look at inventory, says Jack Bobo, the CEO of Futurity, a food and agriculture consultant. “There's going to be a need to rethink what inventory means,” Bobo says.

Today, companies have evolved into a just-in-time inventory system, in order to reduce costs, they increase efficiency and speed to market. This could change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and access to food supplies, according to Bobo. “There's a real danger in not having inventory on hand,” he says. Bobo made his comments April 14 on a webinar entitled, “Food & Supply Chain in a COVID-19 World” that was sponsored by The Land Report and Peoples Company.

Companies will think long and hard about not having inventory vs. the reduced risks of having inventory on hand coming out of this pandemic, he says. [Read More](#)

## **[Agri Investor](#): What does the \$19bn bailout for US farmers tell us?**

Following the unprecedented \$2 trillion US aid package signed into law on 27 March, farmers were given a better idea of the type of support they could expect from the federal government exactly three weeks later.

President Trump unveiled a \$19 billion program on 17 April to be delivered by the USDA, comprised of \$16 billion in direct payments to stricken farmers and \$3 billion for government purchases of meat, dairy and fresh fruit and vegetables.

While the size of the aid package is substantial and will be supplemented in July by an additional \$14 billion through a replenishment of the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation facility, there are signs the mixed fortunes narrative that has played out across the asset class globally is being reflected the US.

It's important to make clear that many US farmers are in need of aid and, as *Agri Investor* has learned even those faring relatively well have benefited from federal support. [Read More](#)

## **Land Report: City of San Angelo Parts with 864 Acres of Ranchland for \$1,500 per Acre**

San Angelo sold 846 acres of the Ford Ranch for \$1.296 million to a pair of limited liability corporations. According to the conditions of the sale, San Angelo retains 50 percent of the property's mineral rights along with all rights to the 2,000-foot-deep Hickory Aquifer, a key source of groundwater for the city. Those water rights were acquired by the city in 1971 from the heirs of G. Rollie White, a widely-respected Texas A&M alumnus. In 2015, San Angelo began pumping groundwater from the aquifer and transporting it some 62 miles to the municipality via pipeline. In July 2019, the entire 32,841-acre ranch was listed with King Land & Water for more than \$52 million. [Read More](#)

## **New York Post: Farmers who supplied five-star NYC restaurants now doing home delivery**

New York's farmers who can [no longer sell](#) crops to Big Apple restaurants are turning to a new business model: Boxing up produce for the growing hordes of home cooks.

Zaid Kurdieh, an organic farmer in Norwich, NY, used to rely on sales to top chefs and restaurateurs like Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Thomas Keller and Danny Meyer for 60 percent of his revenues. But with Gotham's dining scene shuttered, Kurdieh has pivoted from packing up "hundreds of pounds" of produce for restaurateurs to curating 12- to 24-pound food boxes for home chefs.

It's the same arugula he sells to Vongerichten and Keller — just in smaller bundles.

"The boxes to New York City are now our main business," Kurdieh said. "It basically saved our neck. We can't keep up with the volume at the moment. It is a good problem but a bad problem," he said. "I don't even have time to figure out if we are breaking even. But at least money is coming in and I can pay my employees." [Read More](#)

## **AZ Central: Facing water cutbacks, Arizona farmers 'in limbo' despite \$10 million federal package**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved \$10 million to help pay for water projects in the farmlands of central Arizona, where growers are bracing for their supply of Colorado River water to be shut off.

But those funds, conditionally awarded this month by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, are still subject to negotiations between federal and state officials. And leading representatives of irrigation districts in Pinal County say many details about the funding remain uncertain, including how much they may be able to spend on drilling wells to pump more groundwater, a central piece of Arizona's plan for implementing the

historic Colorado River drought deal signed last year.

“It's really up in the air as to what exactly we'll be able to get done with this funding,” said Paul Orme, a lawyer who represents four agricultural irrigation districts. “There's still a lot of uncertainty from the standpoint of the federal participation in this whole project at this point.” [Read More](#)