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# REMOVING THE FarmLAND ACCESS BARRIER

### The Land Connection and the Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network host a field day featuring local farmland experts

Champaign, April 20, 2014: With recent years’ double-digit increases in farmland prices, access to farmland has become a major barrier for new farmers. To assist farmers who want to buy or rent farmland, The Land Connection, a central Illinois educational nonprofit, is partnering with the Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network and Eric Marshall of Homestead Harvests, LLC to present a comprehensive Farmland Access Field Day on May 10 at Homestead Harvests, a farm near Heyworth.

“Many young and beginning farmers feel that because they cannot afford to buy farmland, they cannot farm,” says Terra Brockman, founder of The Land Connection. “That is not necessarily true, as there are more and more creative lease options, and “incubator farm” situations, especially for farmers who do not need large acreages.”

Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, Small Farms and Local Food Specialist at the University of Illinois Extension says that the May 10 field day “will allow attendees to ask questions of an impressive line-up of local experts, including a bank loan officer, an attorney, a farm appraiser, a soil specialist, and representatives from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.”

Brockman will begin the event by discussing the pros and cons of owning vs leasing land. She will provide examples of sustainable lease, rolling lease, and long-term lease options. She will also provide some examples of agricultural easements that can permanently protect your farmland.

Attorneys Dan Deneen and John Pratt will answer questions on various farmland legal issues, including easements, zoning, flood plain, and other concerns.

Deborah Clairmont, a soil conservationist with the USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service, will talk about soil types and answer soil quality questions.

District conservationist Darryl Coates (Illinois Department of Natural Resources), will speak about conservation programs and resources and answer questions about wildlife habitat.

Lance White, loan officer of the State Bank of Lincoln, will answer questions about farm financing costs and options, and how to establish a working relationship with a bank loan officer

Dale Aupperle, President of the Heartland Ag Group, Ltd., and member of the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, will answer questions about farmland values and trends in Illinois.

Rounding out the expert line-up, Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, Local Food Systems and Small Farms Educator with the U of I Extension, will answer questions about putting small acreages to work, and about how to access and use soil maps and plat maps. “People will leave this workshop with many ideas about ways they can access farmland and start farming,” says Cavanaugh-Grant.

“This field day is an incredible opportunity for people to learn about creative farmland access options,” says Eric Marshall, who is hosting the field day on his farm, and who has himself accessed parcels of farmland south and east of Bloomington-Normal.

Following the expert presentations and question/answer session, Marshall will take attendees on a tour of his farm’s grass-fed beef and apple enterprises, and the prairie and wildlife habitat he has established.

The farmland access field day is free to members of the Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network (CISFN.org), and $5 for non-members. Advance registration is required, and can be done online at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/lms> or by contacting Magdalena at The Land Connection, 217-840-2128.

**Farmland Access Field Day**

**Saturday, May 10, 3pm-5:30pm**

**Homestead Harvests, LLC, 14861 Enterprise Road, Heyworth, IL 61745**

**Contacts:** Magdalena Casper-Shipp, 217-840-2128 or Terra Brockman 847-338-1861 Magdalena@thelandconnection.org or terra@thelandconnection.org

**About The Land Connection**

The Land Connection is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting farmland, training sustainable and organic farmers, and promoting a vibrant local food system. For more information visit [www.thelandconnection.org](http://www.thelandconnection.org) and <http://thelandconnection.org/farmland/access/workshops>