

So You Want to Start a Farm?

#1: Do you have land? Do you need land?

If you have land, is it currently in production or has it ever been? If so, there are a number of good resources linked below which can help with financing, programs, conservation plans, grants and more.

If you need land, you can go here: <https://rifb.org/farmland-opportunities/> to find different opportunities for available farmland for lease or for rent.

#2 How do I register my farm in RI? All Produce Farms in Rhode Island are now required to register annually with the RIDEM Division of Agriculture. If you grow, harvest, pack or hold produce for sale in Rhode Island you must register with the Division of Agriculture – Produce Safety Program on an annual basis. Registration can be completed easily on the [DEM website](#). You may also register by mail by completing the [Produce Farm Registration Form](#). If you have questions, please contact Ananda Fraser – ananda.fraser@dem.ri.gov

There is currently no requirement to register **non-produce** farms with the state. (I know, lousy terminology.) If you are operating a business, you should check with your town about registering your farm business. If you will be making sales at retail, you will likely need to register your business with the RI Division of Taxation.

#3 Do I need to join Farm Bureau if I have a farm? No, RI Farm Bureau is a non-profit, non-governmental membership organization with the purpose of supporting farmers in the state of Rhode Island. We lobby at the state-level to help support the right-to-farm, property rights and water rights, and at the national level as part of American Farm Bureau Federation. There are Farm Bureaus in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. As a membership organization we rely on memberships to help us with our annual operations and for the numbers we represent when lobbying the RI General Assembly on behalf of Rhode Island farms. We would love to have you as a member, you may join at <https://rifb.org/benefitsandresources/join/>

#4 Good Resources for New and Beginning Farmers:

[Farm Credit East](#) is part of the Farm Credit System, a nationwide agricultural network providing credit and affiliated services to those in agriculture and related industries across the United States. They serve the ag credit and financial services needs of producers in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey. **Farm Credit** has blog post titled [“Five Things to Consider when Starting a New Ag Business”](#) that is a great read if you are planning to market your product. <https://www.farmcrediteast.com/> .

[RI Department of Environmental Management Division of Agriculture](#) covers a myriad of things relating to agriculture in RI. This is where you will find out more about the Farm, Forest and Open Space Program (FFOS). Here is a link to the [Citizens Guide to the FFOS Program](#).

The [USDA Farmers Guide to Farm Bill](#) programs contains comprehensive information about all NRCS, FSA and RMA programs. You may call any of the offices below for program information.

- **Rhode Island USDA FSA County Office** can be reached at 401-828-1320 Option 2.
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Rhode-Island/index>
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** is a branch of the USDA that offers many types of cost sharing programs, grants and help with conservation plans. Rhode Island NRCS can be reached at 401-828-1300.
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ri/home/>
- **Risk Management Agency** can be reached at 919-875-4880. They provide crop insurance. <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/RMALocal/Rhode-Island>

The **New England Ag Exchange** is an online bulletin board of sorts to post what you need or have, from land to labor to advice. <https://exchange.farmfreshri.org/>

#5 How Do I get Farm Plates? Start with a Tax-Exempt Certificate

1. Farm tax exempt letter from the Rhode Island Division of Taxation (See link to application in the paragraph below).
2. Bill(s) of Sale.
3. Completed tax exemption form (found at registry).
4. Photos of vehicle: front, side, rear, and interior. *See below
5. Complete Application for Registration and Title Certificate (TR-1) form.
– Vehicles may only be registered in accordance with the entity/entities listed on the farm tax exempt certificate.
6. Requirement checklist approval by the DMV's Enforcement Office.

*Other items we have been made aware you may need:

Picture of the VIN# plate on the driver's side door or door frame.

A statement that you owe no taxes from your tax town.

The **Certificate of Exemption for Farm Equipment/Structure Construction Material** is from the RI Division of Taxation. You must attach the preceding year's Federal Tax Return along with the Schedule F. Level 1 Farmers must gross a minimum of \$2500. Level 2 Farmers must gross a minimum of \$10,000. The link to the application for the tax exempt certificate is here : <https://rifb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Farm-Tax-Exemption-Form-2019.pdf>.

Relevant RIGL

§ 44-18-30. Gross receipts exempt from sales and use taxes.

There are exempted from the taxes imposed by this chapter the following gross receipts: (32) Farm equipment. From the sale and from the storage or use of machinery and equipment used directly for commercial farming and agricultural production; including, but not limited to: tractors, ploughs, harrows, spreaders, seeders, milking machines, silage conveyors, balers, bulk milk storage tanks, trucks with farm plates, mowers, combines, irrigation equipment, greenhouses and greenhouse coverings, graders and packaging machines, tools and supplies and other farming equipment, including replacement parts appurtenant to or used in connection with commercial farming and tools and supplies used in the repair and maintenance of farming equipment. "Commercial farming" means the keeping or boarding of five (5) or more horses or the production within this state of agricultural products, including, but not limited to, field or orchard crops, livestock, dairy, and poultry, or their products, where the keeping, boarding, or production provides at least two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) in annual gross sales to the operator, whether an individual, a group, a partnership, or a corporation for exemptions issued prior to July 1, 2002. For exemptions issued or renewed after July 1, 2002, there shall be two (2) levels. Level I shall be based on proof of annual, gross sales from commercial farming of at least twenty-five hundred dollars (\$2,500) and shall be valid for purchases subject to the exemption provided in this subdivision except for motor vehicles with an excise tax value of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or greater. Level II shall be based on proof of annual gross sales from commercial farming of at least ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) or greater and shall be valid for purchases subject to the exemption provided in this subdivision including motor vehicles with an excise tax value of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or greater. For the initial issuance of the exemptions, proof of the requisite amount of annual gross sales from commercial farming shall be required for the prior year; for any renewal of an exemption granted in accordance with this subdivision at either level I or level II, proof of gross annual sales from commercial farming at the requisite amount shall be required for each of the prior two (2) years. Certificates of exemption issued or renewed after July 1, 2002, shall clearly indicate the level of the exemption and be valid for four (4) years after the date of issue. This exemption applies even if the same equipment is used for ancillary uses, or is temporarily used for a non-farming or a non-agricultural purpose, but shall not apply to motor vehicles acquired after July 1, 2002, unless the vehicle is a farm vehicle as defined pursuant to § 31-1-8 and is eligible for registration displaying farm plates as provided for in § 31-3-31.