AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

There are many different aspects of agriculture which could be evaluated as part of a discussion of this resource, farming practices, economic impacts, rural interaction, and aesthetics just to name a few. However, in evaluating those which can be influenced by local decision-makers it becomes immediately apparent that state and national policies have more impact on the future of agriculture than local land-use decisions. In spite of state and national influences, agriculture is still very important at the local level, whether as a "way of life," due to job impact, as a tax base or because of the aesthetic values of the rural scene. Therefore this section will look at the status of agriculture in the St. Croix County in general and the Town of Star Prairie specifically and discuss the ways in which local policy decisions can have an impact on this industry and resource.

It must also be noted, that in an evaluation of the agricultural data available there is very little reported at the town level. However, specific areas of Star Prairie, such as the Star Prairie flats along the Polk County border, have very high quality agricultural lands and therefore it can be deduced that county-wide agricultural data is representative of the best agricultural lands in Star Prairie. In fact the data may slightly under represent the significance of agriculture rather than over represent it because of the productivity of the soils in those areas. Therefore county-wide data is used when town level data is not available.

RECENT TRENDS IN ST. CROIX COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Lee Milligan, former St. Croix County UW-Extension Agriculture Agent, analyzed recent trends in St. Croix County agriculture as of August 2007.

The agricultural sector is a vital contributor to the economy in St. Croix County. It accounts for $524.4 million in economic activity. It provides jobs for 4,714 county citizens or about 13.6% of the workforce. It contributes about $142.3 million to the county's income or about 10% of St. Croix County's total income.

The agricultural sector in St. Croix County is an industry that is undergoing continual change. The question one can pose is "How is production agriculture changing in St. Croix County?" The changes can be summarized in the following list:

Changes in St. Croix County Agriculture

Value of Agricultural Sales	Stable
Farm Numbers	Stable
Avg. Size of Farm	Decreasing
Livestock Numbers	Increasing
Cash Grain Acreage	Increasing
Dairy Cow Numbers	Decreasing
Avg. Milk Production/Cow	Increasing
Avg. Dairy Herd Size	Increasing

Annual agricultural sales in St. Croix County typically are about $95 to $100 million in gross receipts from the marketing of commodities such as meat, milk, crops, vegetables and timber. However in 2007 this value will increase due to significantly increased milk, livestock and crop prices. This value does not include the economic impact of the farm supply and agricultural product processing industries. St. Croix County's marketing sales have been consistent in recent years as they have in Polk and Pierce counties. Barron and Dunn Counties have seen a decline in

agricultural sales in recent years. The chart below shows a comparison of agricultural sales in St. Croix County and surrounding counties based on the 2002 Census of Agriculture data.

Value of Agricultural Sales – 1997 & 2002
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

YEAR	COUNTIES				
	BARRON	DUNN	PIERCE	POLK	**ST. CROIX**
1997	$170,632,000	$117,939,000	$77,780,000	$70,546,000	**$96,151,000**
2002	$149,918,000	$103,519,000	$72,329,000	$72,492,000	**$97,863,000**

Source: Census of Agriculture 2002

The chart below shows the total annual agricultural sales for St. Croix County and surrounding counties. Approximately 70% of the total sales in St. Croix County are from the dairy and livestock industry and 30% from crops and greenhouse/nursery industry. Dairy sales represent over 50% ($50 million) of the total agricultural sales and about 73% of the total livestock sales. Grain sales represent about 20% of the total agricultural sales and 68% of the total crop/greenhouse/nursery sector.

Annual Agricultural Sales – 2002
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

PRODUCT	COUNTIES				
	BARRON	DUNN	PIERCE	POLK	**ST. CROIX**
Total Value Crops, Greenhouse & Nursery	$31,172,000	$34,048,000	$23,911,000	$19,434,000	**$28,618,000**
Total Value Livestock, Poultry & Their Products	$118,746,000	$69,532,000	$48,418,000	$53,058,000	**$69,245,000**

Source: Census of Agriculture 2002

The chart below indicates that the declining trend in farm numbers in St. Croix County and many of the surrounding counties reversed in the 1990's. In 1990 there were 1,690 farms and by 2002 1,864. Farm numbers had stabilized between 1997 and 2002.

Farm Numbers – 1969 to 2002
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

YEAR	COUNTIES					WISCONSIN
	BARRON	DUNN	PIERCE	POLK	**ST. CROIX**	
1969	2,306	2,026	1,652	2,101	**1,845**	N/A
1978	1,876	1,759	1,498	1,823	**1,734**	N/A
1987	1,659	1,515	1,240	1,467	**1,576**	N/A
1997	1,681	1,701	1,523	1,642	**1,895**	79,541
2002	1,647	1,683	1,510	1,659	**1,864**	77,131

Source: Census of Agriculture 1969 - 2002

The reason for the significant increase in farm numbers in the 1990's was the rapid increase in the number of small farms and an improvement in how the National Agricultural Statistics Service collects the data. A farm is defined by the National Agricultural Statistics Service as "any establishment from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or would normally be sold during the year." This includes livestock and livestock products, fruit, vegetables, crops, greenhouse and nursery products, Christmas trees, and government program payments. In St. Croix County there are a growing number of people purchasing smaller acreages that qualify as a farm. At the same time the number of large farms is growing and the number of midsize farms is declining.

Size and Number of Farms – 1997 & 2002
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

Acres	Counties									
	Barron		Dunn		Pierce		Polk		**St. Croix**	
	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	**1997**	**2002**
1-99	603	697	611	712	673	830	695	863	**922**	**1103**
100-179	321	326	366	333	309	241	378	357	**370**	**294**
180-259	289	189	205	229	211	165	197	135	**231**	**164**
260-499	358	281	358	244	227	181	262	177	**257**	**184**
500-999	87	120	117	108	73	60	91	90	**84**	**82**
1000-1999	18	27	34	39	25	23	19	33	**23**	**26**
2000 +	5	7	10	18	5	10	0	4	**8**	**11**

Source: Census of Agriculture 2002.

The chart above illustrates the shift to smaller and larger farms between 1997 and 2002. The number of farms between the acreage of 1 to 99 acres increased by 181 and over 1,000 acres increased by 6 between 1997 and 2002. The number of farms between 100 to 999 acres declined by 218 during that time. Surrounding counties are also showing this general pattern.

The average size of a farm in St. Croix County is declining. In 1987 the average size reached a high of 212 acres and declined to 166 acres in 2002. This is a trend seen in the surrounding counties of Barron, Polk, Dunn and Pierce and across the state. See the chart below.

Average Size of Farms (Acres) – 1969 to 2002
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

Year	Counties					Wisconsin
	Barron	Dunn	Pierce	Polk	**St. Croix**	
1969	178	207	187	180	**192**	183
1978	210	239	208	200	**211**	201
1987	226	264	217	215	**212**	221
1997	214	239	190	184	**181**	204
2002	214	237	177	177	**166**	204

Source: Census of Agriculture 1969 - 2002.

Crop acres in St. Croix County have declined approximately 14,000 acres since 1990. However, crop acres are 1,000 acres greater than 1970. The chart below illustrates the number of crop acres in St. Croix County and surrounding counties. Crop acres are defined as the sum of the acres of corn, soybeans, barley, oats and all hay. It excludes the 2007 Conservation Reserve Program enrollment of 30,485 acres, other small grains (1,600 acres), vegetable crops (4,300+ acres) and nursery crops grown in 2005.

Harvested Crop Acres – 1971to 2006
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

County	1971	2000	2002	2006
Barron	166,750	177,500	187,700	192,500
Dunn	163,800	193,500	196,900	210,500
Pierce	149,200	159,600	164,300	154,000
Polk	132,250	158,700	149,500	148,600
St. Croix	**181,550**	**196,600**	**187,900**	**182,500**

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service: Agricultural Statistics Data Base.

The number of acres of specific crops has changed dramatically over the years. The most dramatic change has been the huge reduction in the acres of oats grown and a corresponding increase in soybean acreage. In the early 1970's over 40,000 acres of oats were grown and only

3,000 acres of soybeans. In 2006, 41,300 acres of soybeans were grown and only 8,500 acres of oats. The amount of hay grown has declined reflecting a decrease in livestock numbers and a shift to row crops. Please see the chart below.

Crop Acres – 1970 to 2002
St. Croix County

CROP	1970	1990	2002	2006
Corn	51,800	84,800	86,000	77,500
Oats	47,000	29,100	12,600	8,500
Barley	850	1,700	1,000	NA
Soybeans	2,600	16,300	31,000	41,300
All Hay	79,300	64,700	57,300	55,200

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service: Agricultural Statistics Data Base.

Yields of corn and soybeans have almost doubled since 1970. This is a dramatic change in 35 years. The chart below shows the changes in yields between 1970 and 2006. Yields declined significantly from the trend due to a drought in 2006. St. Croix County has large areas of very productive, well drained, silt loam soils. The yield increases are due to improvements in crop genetics and management practices. There has also been favorable weather in years prior to 2006 and 2007 that has been an important factor in the increased yields.

Average Yield (Bushels/Acre) – 1970, 1990 & 2002
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

COUNTY	CORN					SOYBEANS				
	1970	1990	2002	2005	2006	1970	1990	2002	2005	2006
Barron	85	103	142	123	89	17	35	48	37	36
Dunn	85	120	141	143	100	20	37	46	35	35
Pierce	89	117	160	166	142	20	38	51	45	43
Polk	87	106	145	140	84	19	34	45	40	36
St. Croix	**79**	**115**	**150**	**158**	**90**	**20**	**37**	**49**	**45**	**34**

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service: Agricultural Statistics Data Base.

The dairy industry is the largest single enterprise in St. Croix County's agricultural sector. It will typically account for 55 to 65 percent of the total cash farm receipts in the county. There are about 21,900 dairy cows on 198 dairy farms in St. Croix County as of 2006. Since the early 1990's cow numbers have been slowly declining from 26,500 in 1995 to 21,900 cows in 2006. See the chart below.

Dairy Cow Numbers – 1975 to 2006
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

YEAR	COUNTIES					WISCONSIN
	BARRON	DUNN	PIERCE	POLK	**ST. CROIX**	
1975	48,800	41,000	26,300	35,200	**35,400**	1.81 million
1985	49,700	43,800	28,500	34,700	**36,900**	1.88 million
1995	37,500	32,000	21,500	24,000	**26,500**	1.49 million
2000	29,000	21,500	18,400	18,100	**24,200**	1.29 million
2003	27,000	21,000	18,000	17,500	**23,000**	1.26 million
2006	25,000	22,400	17,200	16,000	**21,900**	1.24 million

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service: Agricultural Statistics Data Base.

The average milk production per cow in St. Croix County is frequently in the top ten counties in the state according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The average milk production is consistently above that of the neighboring counties and the state average. See the chart below.

This is a reflection of the dairy producers management abilities with cows and producing, harvesting and/or purchasing quality feeds. There is also a strong support of agricultural equipment and input suppliers, livestock health care, dairy nutrition and education professionals.

Average Production Per Cow (Lbs) – 1975 to 2006
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

YEAR	COUNTIES					WISCONSIN
	BARRON	DUNN	PIERCE	POLK	**ST. CROIX**	
1975	10,200	10,200	10,600	10,300	**10,600**	10,430
1985	13,000	13,200	13,000	12,800	**13,700**	13,166
1995	14,900	15,800	15,300	15,300	**16,200**	15,397
2000	16,300	16,500	17,200	16,700	**18,400**	17,182
2003	16,300	16,900	17,300	17,400	**18,500**	17,728
2006	16,700	18,100	17,600	17,600	**19,300**	18,824

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service: Agricultural Statistics Data Base.

The number of cattle and calves in St. Croix County has declined from 92,000 in 1972 to 63,000 in 2007. This number includes beef and dairy cattle. Please see the chart below. This is a consistent trend reflected in surrounding counties and across the state.

Cattle & Calves – 1975 to 2007
St. Croix County & Surrounding Counties

COUNTY	1975	1985	1995	2003	2007
Barron	111,000	102,000	80,000	69,000	68,500
Dunn	105,400	105,000	77,000	62,000	64,500
Pierce	88,000	85,000	63,000	53,000	53,000
Polk	100,800	80,100	57,000	48,500	48,500
St. Croix	**104,500**	**95,000**	**72,000**	**60,000**	**63,000**

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service: Agricultural Statistics Data Base.

Swine numbers have also declined. There are about four major producers in the county and several farms with small numbers of swine.

Technology use in agriculture is also changing. It is becoming more diverse. For example, the production of milk may be done via grazing, confinement housing and stored feeds, or a combination of both methods. A producer may choose to be certified to produce the crops, milk or meat organically. Crop producers have the option of selecting genetically modified seed that has a level of resistance to specific herbicides or insects. Equipment is becoming more precise. Yields are being monitored as the combine crosses a field using yield monitors and global positioning equipment.

In summary, the St. Croix County agricultural sector provides over $524 million of economic activity to the St. Croix County economy. There are large areas of very productive, well drained silt loam soils in St. Croix County that are the basis to the dairy and livestock and cash crop industries of St. Croix County. The changes occurring in the agricultural sector are similar to what is occurring in surrounding counties. These include slowly declining dairy and livestock numbers and crop acres. The number of farms under 100 acres and farms over 1,000 acres are increasing. These changes are similar to what is occurring across the state and nationally. Technology is becoming more diverse. Producers are using various forms of technology to meet their personal and business goals.

AGRICULTURAL INVENTORY

Acres in Farmland –1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

ACRES	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Total Farmland	365,832	352,472	334,028	308,460	312,076	310,178	308,275
% of County Land Area	78.4%	75.5%	73.7%	66.1%	66.8%	66.4%	66.0%
Total Cropland	281,165	267,724	262,347	244,807	237,069	232,792	222,427

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978-2007

- From 1978 to 2007 there has been a steady decline in total acres of farmland in St. Croix County. During that timeframe approximately 12 percent or 57,500 acres of land have been shifted to other uses. Farmland includes crops, pasture, woodland, land in the Conservation Reserve (CRP) and Wetland Reserve programs (WRP) and rented land.
- Cropland has seen a similar decrease. From 1978 to 2007, 13 percent or 58,700 acres of cropland have been shifted to other uses.

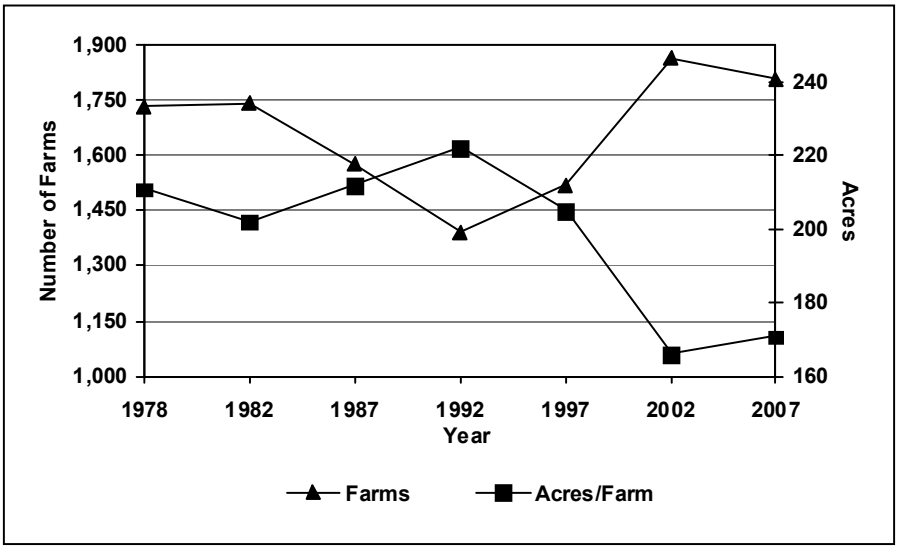
Acres of Farmland on Tax Rolls Including Improvements – 1997 to 2009
Star Prairie & Neighboring Towns

	TOTAL ACRES	FARMLAND ACRES ON TAX ROLLS			% CHANGE		% OF TOTAL ACRES TAXED AS FARMLAND	
TOWN	2009	1997	2002	2009	97-02	02-09	2002	2009
Star Prairie	**19,315**	**12,129**	**7,519**	**6,909**	**-38.0%**	**-8.1%**	**38.9%**	**35.8%**
Richmond	20,027	17,194	13,620	12,143	-20.8%	-10.8%	68.0%	60.6%
Stanton	21,243	16,682	15,126	14,320	-9.3%	-5.3%	71.2%	67.4%
St. Joseph	20,197	9,937	7,865	7,219	-20.9%	-8.2%	38.9%	35.7%
Somerset	29,942	16,241	10,782	10,620	-33.6%	-1.5%	36.0%	35.5%
Warren	21,143	16,681	14,247	13,280	-14.6%	-6.8%	67.4%	62.8%
St. Croix County	**408,554**	**319,670**	**260,646**	**257,931**	**-18.5%**	**-1.0%**	**59.5%**	**63.1%**

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue and St. Croix County Planning and Zoning.

- From 1997 to 2009 the acres of farmland on the tax rolls decreased by about 38 percent in the Town of Star Prairie.
- The acres of farmland on the tax rolls also decreased significantly in Richmond, St. Joseph and Somerset. They did not decrease by as much in Stanton and Warren.
- About half of this decrease has been due to the conversion of farmland to other uses; the other half has been caused by reclassification of land from farmland to swamp and waste and the increase in land classified as farmland because of the tax advantages of use-value assessment.
- Farmland is steadily being replaced by residential housing as the predominant land use in the western towns of St. Croix County, such as St. Joseph, Star Prairie and Somerset.
- In the towns of Richmond and Warren farmland is still the largest land use.
- Farmland is the predominant land use in the eastern towns of St. Croix County, including Stanton.

Number and Size of Farms -- 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978 – 2007

- The number of farms was steadily declining and the average size of farms was steadily increasing until the mid 1990's.
- From 1992 to 1995 there was a slight reversal of these trends. Then from 1997 to 2002 there was a sharp shift to smaller acreages and more farms. From 2002 to 2007 the increase in smaller acreages has declined somewhat. Several things caused these trends reversals.
- A general increase in affluence in the metropolitan area caused an influx of people who purchased small acreage farmettes in St. Croix County.
- Wisconsin adopted use-value assessment; this greatly decreased the holding cost of land and encouraged people to purchase additional acres when they could be identified as a farm.
- There has also been an increase in the market for horticulture products, organic vegetables and other non-traditional livestock that are produced on smaller acreage farms.
- From 2002 to 2007 the number of smaller farms began to decrease reflecting more changes in use-value assessment, stronger agriculture economy due to the production of ethanol and reinvestment in agricultural land by farmers.

Farms by Type - 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

FARM TYPE	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Livestock	454	498	422	397	392	398	401
Dairy	734	762	630	511	338	228	192
Other Animal & Poultry	84	86	88	103	101	216	211
Cash Grains	264	231	226	182	489	280	232
Field Crops (other than cash grains)	96	83	125	115	147	664	689
Other Crop	102	81	85	83	53	78	83
TOTAL	**1,734**	**1,741**	**1,576**	**1,391**	**1,520**	**1,864**	**1808**

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978 - 2007

Farms by Size -- 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

FARM SIZE	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
1-9 Acres	54	88	64	66	47	100	62
10-49 Acres	225	277	247	218	316	566	583
50 to 179 Acres	631	615	565	480	585	731	739
180 to 499 Acres	701	641	571	496	460	348	312
500 to 999 Acres	106	99	107	109	82	82	73
1000 or More Acres	17	21	22	22	30	37	39
TOTAL	**1,734**	**1,741**	**1,576**	**1,391**	**1,520**	**1,864**	**1808**

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978 - 2007

Farms by Value of Sales -- 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

SALES	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
$0 to $4,999	427	459	392	374	624	1,088	1041
$5000 to $9,999	208	178	168	149	141	138	159
$10,000 to $24,999	228	172	220	192	199	200	169
$25,000 to $49,999	265	194	197	144	132	105	97
$50,000 to $99,999	468	472	299	221	164	116	99
$100,000 to $249,999	122	226	263	246	185	137	124
$250,000 to $499,999	13	39	29	51	55	53	71
$500,000 or more	3	1	8	14	20	27	48
TOTAL	**1,734**	**1,741**	**1,576**	**1,391**	**1,520**	**1,864**	**1808**

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978 - 2007

- From 1978 to 1997, livestock, dairy and poultry farms were generally decreasing in farm numbers while crop farming was increasing in farm numbers.
- However, between 1997 and 2002 all types of farms have increased in number along with the general increase in farm numbers.
- From 2002 to 2007 dairy, poultry and cash grain farms have decreased while slight increases were experienced in livestock and crop farms.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of small farms, less than 50 acres, and large farms, over 1000 acres, while mid-size farms and the more traditional sizes, have been steadily declining over the past three decades.
- Farms less than 50 acres account for 36 percent of farm numbers.
- Also over the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the number of farms in the lower sales brackets and in the upper sales brackets while there has been a steady decrease in the number of farms in the middle sales brackets.
- Farms with sales over $500,000 nearly doubled from 2002 to 2007.
- These trends correspond to the increase in smaller acreage farms and possibly relate to the increase in farm operators who are not principal operators.

Farm Operator Characteristics -- 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Total Farms	1,734	1,741	1,576	1,391	1,520	1,864	1808
Ownership							
Individual/Family Farms	1,537	1,505	1,346	1,193	1,341	1,672	1580
Partnerships	167	178	175	127	99	109	121
Corporation-Family	23	50	51	59	54	64	75
Corporation-Other	1	1	2	5	7	3	11
Other (Coop, trust, etc.)	6	7	2	7	19	16	21
Principal Occupation Farming	1,107	1,076	974	819	733	941	747
Principal Occupation Other	627	665	602	572	787	923	1061
Average Years on Present Farm	16	16	19	21	22	21	21
Male Operators	1,689	1,682	1,528	1,317	1,386	1,643	1542
Female Operators	45	59	48	74	134	221	266
Average Age	48	47	49	50	51	53	56

Source: Census of Ag, 1978 - 2007

- Farm ownership has not varied much in St. Croix County over the past 20 years. Family farms continue to predominate.
- The number of farmers whose principal occupation is farming remained fairly constant from 1978 to 2002.
- However from 1997 to 2007 the number of farmers claiming a different principal occupation has increased steadily to nearly 60 percent of all farmers in 2007.
- This increase correlates to the increase in smaller acreage farms and the increase in the total number of farms in St. Croix County.
- The number of years on the present farm has been very consistent over the past 20 years, but the average age of the owner/operator has been steadily increasing.
- There has also been a significant increase in the number of female operators since 1992, a 260 percent increase since that time.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Farm Crop Production -- 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

HARVESTED CROPS	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Corn for Grain (bushels)	7,015,000	5,019,000	7,269,000	5,875,900	9,844,000	8,593,600	5,353,544
Corn for Silage (tons)	204,000	283,000	162,400	211,100	206,500	240,900	222,851
Wheat (bushels)	64,500	39,400	31,600	20,700	16,000	202,900	46,644
Barley (bushels)	47,600	48,100	95,900	87,900	131,400	25,700	30,689
Oats (bushels)	1,569,000	1,402,000	896,400	726,900	536,000	351,000	295,036
Soybeans (bushels)	127,000	221,000	370,300	360,600	709,100	1,451,100	949,282
Forage All - Hay, Haylage, Silage & Green Chop (tons)	NA	293,500	237,300	183,300	243,700	194,900	123,470

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, 1978-1997, U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1987 -2007

- Crop production has shifted dramatically over the past 20 years.
- Corn grain and soybean production have increased while oats, barley and hay have all decreased. Corn silage has increased a little. The shift in crop types away from forage and feed to grain production is related to the decreasing number of farm animals.
- Wheat had a considerable increase from 1997 to 2002 but a return to previous numbers in 2007.
- From 2002 to 2007 crop production in St. Croix County experienced significant decreases in all areas except barley.

Farm Livestock Production -- 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

LIVESTOCK	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Milk Cows	35,500	36,800	35,500	29,600	24,000	21,800	21,600
Milk (1000 pounds)	415,350	474,720	521,860	461,760	415,200	428,400	419,040
Milk Per Cow	11,700	12,900	14,700	15,600	17,300	18,000	19,400
Cattle & Calves	91,000	94,900	92,000	79,000	62,800	59,800	59,400
Hogs and Pigs Sold	31,863	35,593	35,900	22,400	11,100	13,700	14,700

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service 1978 - 2007

- Despite a decreasing number of milk cows, production per cow has continued to climb so that in general milk production in St. Croix County has remained relatively constant over the past 30 years.
- Other livestock categories have decreased dramatically over the same timeframe.
- These changes reflect the changes in technology and farm labor costs and conflicts between residential property owners and livestock production.

State and National Ranking by County -- 2007
St. Croix County

CATEGORY	QUANTITY	STATE RANK	NATIONAL RANK
Oats (acres)	4,369	**10 of 70**	**62 of 1,957**
Grain, oilseeds, dry beans and drypeas	$23,647,000	26 of 71	923 of 2,933
Soybeans (acres)	36,019	12 of 66	641 of 2,039
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture & sod	$4,067,000	18 of 70	542 of 2,703
Corn for grain (acres)	66,522	17 of 68	475 of 2,634
Corn for silage (acres)	16,097	15 of 70	**64 of 2,263**
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, & sweet potatoes	$2,115,000	33 of 71	564 of 2,796
Other crops & hay	$2,153,000	21 of 72	811 of 3,054
Total Value Of Crops Incl. Nursery & Greenhouse	$32,269,000	33 of 72	1,157 of 3,072
Turkeys Inventory	Not Available	**6 of 70**	Not Available
Aquaculture	$457,000	**9 of 58**	351 of 1,498
Horses & Ponies Inventory	3,389	**6 of 72**	202 of 3,066
Horses, ponies, mules, burros & donkeys	$353,000	**9 of 70**	687 3,024
Poultry & eggs	$11,443,000	**9 of 72**	533 of 3020
Hogs & Pigs Inventory	8,053	14 of 71	746 of 2,958
Hogs & Pigs Sold	$1,794,000	15 of 71	783 of 2,922
Milk & other dairy products	$80,409,000	22 of 70	**82 of 2,493**
Total Value Of Livestock And Their Products	**$110,252,000**	**25 of 72**	**337 of 3,069**
Total Value Of All Ag Products Sold	**$142,521,000**	**31 of 72**	**577 of 3,076**

Source: US Census of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service.

- The chart above shows St. Croix County's rank for the top commodities. Rankings in the top 10 counties for the State of Wisconsin and top 100 counties for the nation are marked in bold.
- Turkey, aquaculture and poultry production are among the highest in the state. Horses and pony inventory and value are also among the top.
- Nationally, St. Croix County ranks highest in oats and corn for silage relative to crop production.
- Despite a decline in the number of dairy farms, St. Croix County ranks 82 of 2,493 counties nationwide in the value of milk and other dairy products sold.
- There are five dairy farms in St. Croix County with permits for over 1,000 animal units. The farms are located in the towns of Emerald, Hammond, Pleasant Valley, Rush River and St. Joseph. Emerald Dairy, in the Town of Emerald, at present has 1,600 animal units, although it is permitted for up to 3,400.
- There is also a large turkey operation in the Town of Richmond with over 1,000 animal units.

Commodity Values (in Millions) - 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

CATEGORY	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
All Livestock, Poultry & Products	$55.6	$82.8	$75.2	$79.1	$65.8	$69.2	$110.3
Dairy Products	$37.6	$59.4	$53.5	$55.5	$49.7	$51.2	$80.4
Cattle and Calves	$10.4	$13.9	$14.0	$17.8	$11.4	$12.1	$15.4
Poultry & Eggs	$4.3	$5.4	$3.9	$3.1	$2.2	$3.9	$11.4
Hogs & Pigs	$2.8	$3.8	$3.4	$2.2	$1.3	$1.0	$1.8
All Crops	$11.4	$10.8	$14.0	$14.5	$25.8	$28.6	$32.3
Corn for Grain	$6.8	$6.8	$8.6	$8.6	$14.4		
Soybeans	NA	$1.1	$1.6	$1.9	$4.0	$19.5*	$23.6*
Oats	NA	$0.5	0.4	$0.3	$0.3		
Hay, Silage	$2.2	$1.2	$2.0	$2.0	$2.8	$2.1	$2.2
Nursery & Greenhouse	$0.1	N/A	$0.4	$0.6	$2.4	$3.3	$4.0
Vegetables, Melons	$0.9	$0.7	$0.8	$0.9	$1.7	$3.5	$2.1
Total All Sales	$67.0	$93.7	$89.2	$93.6	$91.6	$97.9	$142.5

**Categories combined for 2002 & 2007. Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978 - 2007*

- Total commodity sales in St. Croix County has remained relatively constant for approximately 25 years, with a considerable increase in 2007 which can be attributed to an increase in milk and dairy prices.
- Commodity values reflect the decreasing importance of livestock farming in the County and the increasing importance of crop farming, especially corn and soybeans.
- Also gaining significant market share are nursery and greenhouse and vegetable and melon farming.
- Despite these shifts, dairy products have continued to account for over 50 percent of all commodity values for the past 20 years.

Farm Income - 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

AVERAGES	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Average Sales/Farm	$38,638	$53,799	$56,625	$67,295	$60,267	$52,502	$78,828
Average Expense/Farm	NA	NA	$44,105	$56,786	$49,059	$45,695	$69,521
Average Net Cash Return on Ag Sales/Farm	NA	NA	$12,230	$12,877	$10,455	$10,795	$17,298
Average Net Cash Return on Ag Sales/Farms > $10,000 in Sales	NA	NA	$27,976	$39,386	$40,772	NA*	NA

*Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1978 – 2007 * The information is not available.*

- Overall, farm income decreased for about 15 years from 1987 through 2002.
- Farm income for farms with ag sales greater than $10,000 increased during that same 15-year timeframe, but was not available after 2002. This dichotomy may be due to the increase in farm numbers, many of which are probably emerging market or hobby farms.
- Net farm income saw an increase of about 60 percent from 2002 to 2007.

AGRIBUSINESS ACTIVITY

Types of Agribusinesses - 1978 to 2007
St. Croix County

TYPE	1978	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Agricultural Services	**12**	**15**	**23**	**28**	**41**	**60**	**69**
Animal Product Support	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	6	6
Veterinary	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	16	18
Landscape & Horticulture	NA	NA	NA	NA	23	38	45
Manufacturing	**9**	**10**	**10**	**11**	**14**	**15**	**18**
Food & Kindred	8	9	9	10	12	13	15
Farm/Garden Machinery	1	1	1	1	2	2	3
Wholesale Trade	**22**	**26**	**17**	**19**	**21**	**18**	**12**
Farm/Garden Machinery/Equipment	11	15	6	6	9	9	2
Farm Product Raw Material	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	4	3
Farm Supplies	11	11	11	13	9	5	7
Total Agribusinesses	**43**	**51**	**50**	**58**	**76**	**93**	**99**
Total Businesses	**736**	**793**	**1,041**	**1,247**	**1,584**	**1,895**	**2,187**

Source: U.S. Census, County Business Patterns, 1978 – 2007

- From 1978 to 2007 agribusiness services have continued to increase in number.
- There have been related increases in the manufacturing industry.
- However during this same timeframe the wholesale services related to the agricultural industry have decreased in number.

It is important to recognize the nontraditional farming activities that are developing in St. Croix County. As the above statistics illustrate, small farms are growing in number and acreage. Many are horticulture-related businesses, which is a strong emerging market. There is also a growing consumer interest in buying locally grown, low or pesticide-free fruits and vegetables, free-range chickens, organic and grass-fed beef and lamb and minimally processed foods.

The reuse, maintenance and redevelopment of existing farm structures is also growing as more and more traditional farms are consolidated into larger or smaller operations. The existing farm buildings are an important economic and cultural resource in the rural areas and should continue to be utilized. Many of these structures are used for covered storage of seasonal equipment such as boats, recreational vehicles, snowmobiles, etc. These structures have also been converted to other uses such as a meeting hall, recreation facility or clubhouse.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Prime farmland is the land that is best suited to food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. It may be cultivated land, pasture, woodland or other land, but it is not existing urban and built-up land, or water areas. The soil qualities, growing season and moisture supply are factors needed for a well-managed soil to produce a sustained high-yield of crops in an economic manner. Prime farmland produces the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming it results in the least damage to the environment. Historically, soils that fall into classes I, II, and III of the Soil Conservation Service's capability unit classification system are considered prime agricultural lands. The value of these lands for agriculture is associated with not only their soil class, but also with their size, present use and any regulatory framework for their protection.

SUITABILITY FOR AGRICULTURE

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in establishing a uniform, national identification of productive farmlands created a soil classification system that categorizes soils by their relative agricultural productivity. There are two categories of highly productive soils, national prime farmland and farmland of statewide significance. National prime farmland is well suited for the production of food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops, and has the soil qualities, available moisture and growing season required to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when properly managed. Farmland of statewide significance are those lands in addition to national prime farmland which are of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. Soils that fall into classes I, II, and III of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's capability unit classification system are considered prime agricultural lands.

In 1981, NRCS developed a new system for evaluating agricultural lands, "Land Evaluation and Site Assessment," (LESA) which uses more detailed considerations of soil capability and potential yields, and provides for the assessment of factors beyond soil productivity in the determination of agricultural potential. The system is now widely used throughout the U.S. The LESA system presents the opportunity to define agricultural lands that have the most productive potential.

LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT FOR AGRICULTURE

The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system is a point-based approach that is generally used for rating the relative value of agricultural land resources. In basic terms, a given LESA model is created by defining and measuring two separate sets of factors. The first set, **Land Evaluation**, includes factors that measure the inherent soil-based qualities of land as they relate to agricultural suitability. The second set, **Site Assessment**, includes factors that are intended to measure social, economic and geographic attributes that also contribute to the overall value of agricultural land. While this dual rating approach is common to all LESA models, the individual land evaluation and site assessment factors that are ultimately utilized and measured can vary considerably, and can be selected to meet the local or regional needs and conditions a LESA model is designed to address. The LESA methodology lends itself well to adaptation and customization in individual states and localities. Also in addition to ranking soils for agricultural potential, the LESA system can provide a systematic and objective way to evaluate and numerically rank soils for their relative value for any specific use.

The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system is an analytical tool used to assist decision makers in comparing agricultural sites based on their agricultural value. The LESA system provides an objective and consistent tool to aid decision-makers in evaluating the relative importance of specific sites for continued agricultural use. In this sense, it is a tool for

determining the best use of a site. While in some cases the best use may be some type of development, there are many other situations where the best use is to remain in agriculture. Also, there may be instances where the land is not suitable for agriculture, but neither is it a suitable location for development. In such situations the LESA system is a valuable tool for determining the use with the least detrimental impact to the environment, economy and aesthetics.

As noted earlier, there are two components to the LESA system; the **Land Evaluation** (LE) portion of the system, which is based on soils and their characteristics, and the **Site Assessment** (SA) portion of the system, which rates other attributes affecting a site's relative importance for agricultural use. The Land Evaluation portion is stable and unchanging because the soils do not change and the data relative to those soils takes a long time to accumulate. The Site Assessment is dynamic and changes on a continual basis because there are regular changes in development, property ownership, roadway improvements, sewer expansions, etc. happening throughout an area.

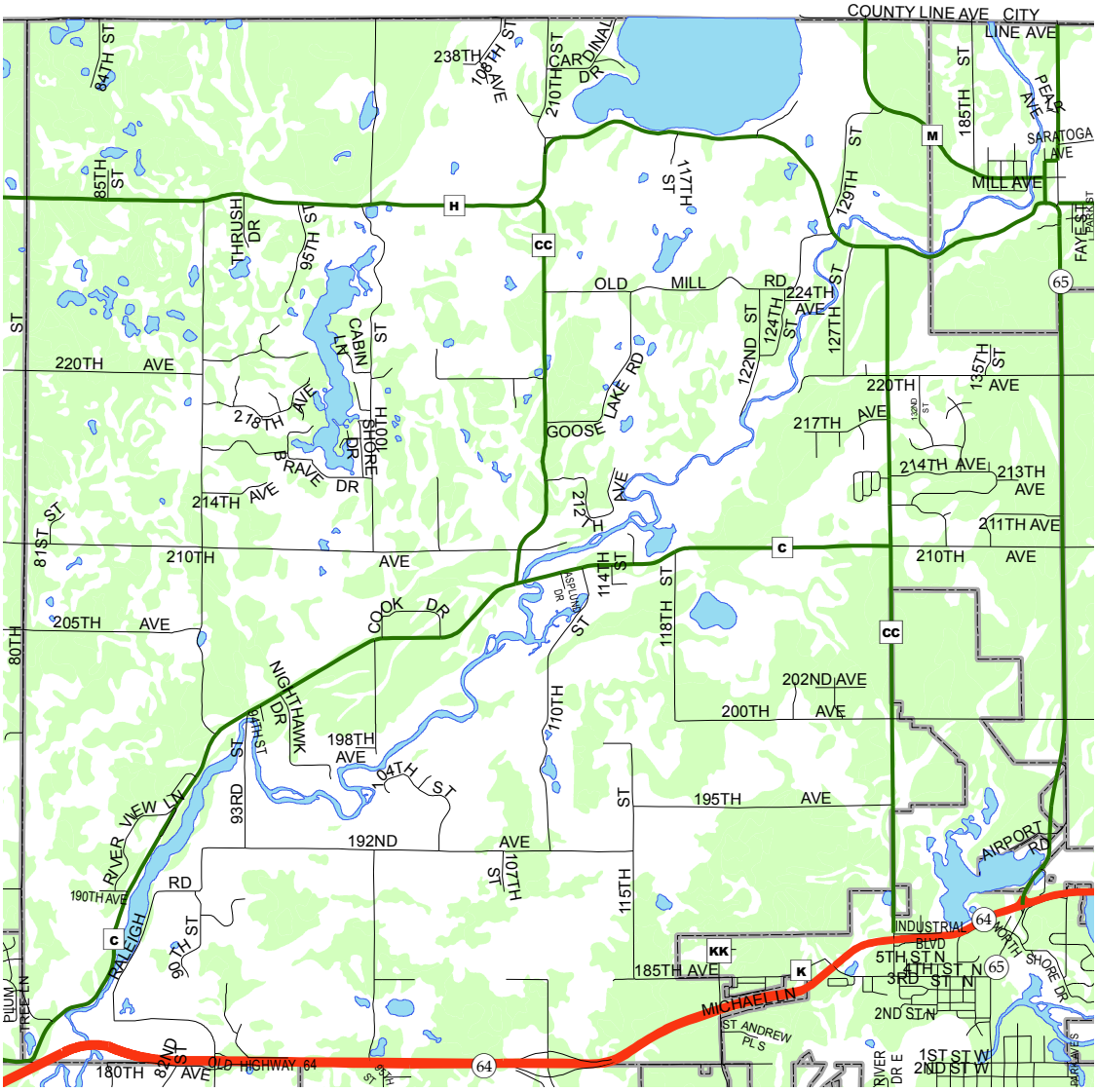
A LESA system was developed for St. Croix County by a committee consisting of members of the Land and Water Conservation and Planning and Zoning committees; citizens; town officials; county staff from the Land and Water Conservation, Zoning and Planning departments; and NRCS staff. A detailed manual describing how the County's LESA system works and how it was developed is available from the St. Croix County Land Conservation Department. As an appropriate base of information for the agricultural productivity of land in the Town of Star Prairie only the Land Evaluation component of LESA is discussed here.

Many physical and chemical soil properties are considered in the LE rating, either directly or indirectly, including soil texture and rock fragments, slope, wetness and flooding, soil erodibility, climate, available water capacity, pH (alkalinity versus acidity), and permeability. Three soil property indexes are combined to produce the LE soil component rating, Productivity Index for corn and alfalfa, Land Capability Class and National Prime Farmland. This produces a rating that reflects the most important soil considerations for agricultural use in St. Croix County. Higher numbers mean greater value for agriculture. LE ratings reflect this productivity potential, as well as the economic and environmental costs of producing a crop. Possible LE ratings range from 0 to 100.

The LESA Committee with assistance from the St. Croix County Land Conservation Department and the District NRCS Soil Scientist selected soils with a score of 50 or more as the soils with agricultural production potential. The Potentially Productive Agriculture Map of the Physical Features map series depicts the LESA Agricultural Soils with a score of 50 or more. Please see the map below.

The LESA system is very flexible. It could be adapted to fit the needs of decision-makers at the local level. Procedures, and information on developing entire LESA systems, are in guidebooks, manuals and other literature, which are available from the NRCS. Local decision-makers can use the guidance to develop a LESA system, which evaluates land, based on local objectives for preservation and management. The Town of Star Prairie may want to address potential application of the LESA system in its goals, objectives and policies and may want to explore and evaluate its potential use within the town as part of the implementation section.

Potentially Productive Agriculture Land
TOWN OF STAR PRAIRIE



LESA

Score > 50

0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles

SOURCE: NRCS AND ST. CROIX COUNTY LESA

WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE

The Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative was passed as a part of the state's 2009-2011 biennial budget process. The initiative can be found primarily in Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. The goals of the initiative is to achieve preservation of areas significant for current and future agricultural uses through successful implementation of these components:

- Expand and modernize the state's existing farmland preservation program.
- Establish agricultural enterprise areas (AEAs)
- Develop a purchase of agricultural conservation easement matching grant program (PACE).

Expand And Modernize The State's Existing Farmland Preservation Program

- Modernize county farmland preservation plans to meet current challenges
- Provide planning grants to reimburse counties for farmland preservation planning
- Establish new minimum zoning standards to increase local flexibility and reduce land use conflicts; local governments may apply more stringent standards
- Increase income tax credits for program participants
- Improve consistency between local plans and ordinances
- Simplify the certification process and streamline state oversight
- Ensure compliance with state soil and water conservation standards
- Collect a flat per acre conversion fee when land under farmland preservation zoning is re-zoned for other uses

Establish Agricultural Enterprise Areas

- Maintain large areas of contiguous land primarily in agricultural use and reduce land use conflicts
- Encourage farmers and local governments to invest in agriculture
- Provide an opportunity to enter into farmland preservation agreements to claim income tax credits
- Encourage compliance with state soil and water conservation standards

Develop A Purchase Of Agricultural Conservation Easement (Pace) Grant Program

- Protect farmland through voluntary programs to purchase agricultural conservation easements
- Provide up to $12 million in state grant funds in the form of matching grants to local governments and non-profit conservation organizations to purchase agricultural conservation easements from willing sellers
- Stretch state dollars by requiring grants to be matched by other funds such as federal grants, local contributions and/or private donations
- Establish a council to advise the state on pending grants and proposed easement purchases
- Consider the value of the proposed easement for preservation of agricultural productivity, conservation of agricultural resources, ability to protect or enhance waters of the state, and proximity to other protected land
- Ensure consistency of state-funded easement purchases with local plans and ordinances

The Working Lands Initiative is still in the development stage. Up-to- date information is available from the State's website: http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/workinglands/index.jsp.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION & EXCLUSIVE AG ZONING

This section would not be complete without a discussion of farmland preservation and exclusive agriculture zoning in St. Croix County. In 1980 the St. Croix County Board of Supervisors adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan. The Plan was intended to guide development away from the most valuable agricultural resources in the County. The plan was written with extensive input from citizens and local officials, especially towns. The Farmland Preservation plan identified several tools for farmland protection. The only tool that was implemented was exclusive agriculture zoning. The other tools, identifying growth areas and setting development density in conjunction with smaller lot sizes, were not accepted. The plan was developed between 1978 and 1980 as a result of development pressures that had been accelerating since 1975. A Farmland Planning Advisory Committee was formed in September 1977. This committee met monthly for two years to apply for a grant, and develop the farmland preservation plan.

It is interesting that 25 years ago citizens were concerned with the same issues that are discussed today. The following are quotes from the Farmland Preservation Plan that illustrate some of the discussions and conclusions.

"Alarmed by rapid changes in the landscape, residents have expressed concern for controlling development."

"The survey results confirm popular support for land use planning to preserve farmlands."

"Development in rural areas has resulted in repeated conflicts between farm and nonfarm neighbors—complaints by nonfarm residents about odor and noise, increased valuations on farmland which can't be offset by increased production, dogs running loose bothering livestock—to name a few."

"A farming area can comfortably withstand a certain amount of development. However, when the balance shifts away from agriculture, farmers left in the area often lose the alternative to continue farming. Farm service businesses move out of local communities and farmers find themselves having to drive several miles to replace parts, repair machinery and obtain supplies."

"There are also social and environmental costs of rural nonfarm development."

"From an environmental standpoint, land, once developed, is essentially lost forever to agriculture. Land being a finite resource, wise stewardship would dictate that the most productive land be saved to produce food for this and future generations."

"In St. Croix County, there is still time to take measures to protect land and guarantee an agricultural community for future generations."

"Throughout the last five years (from 1975 to 1980) citizen interest has been the key moving force behind the concern over loss of farmland, and the planning process."

"The entire farmland preservation issue was initiated by citizens. Citizens have fostered measures to preserve agricultural land through the Task Force and the Advisory Committee."

"There are many hard questions to be answered. The public good must be weighed against the presumed right of owners to use the land however they, as individuals, see fit."

In a review of the community input from that time, it is clear that a substantial majority of rural residents supported protection of agricultural resources. Prior to 1974, St. Croix County ordinances required public sewer and water for all lots between one and five acres in size. In 1974, the County enacted a new set of ordinances that allowed one acre unsewered lots and set distinct requirements for minor and major subdivisions. As a result of these changes rural residential lot creation rose dramatically between 1975 and 1979. As a result, many towns took several steps to slow residential development.

The towns of Baldwin, Cylon, Kinnickinnic, Stanton and Warren adopted subdivision ordinances prohibiting major subdivisions unless they were located on municipal sewer and water. The towns of Cylon, Stanton, Baldwin and Pleasant Valley also adopted larger lot size provisions in their subdivision ordinances. Finally, the towns of Cylon, Stanton, Star Prairie, Somerset, St. Joseph, Erin Prairie, Baldwin, Troy, Pleasant Valley, Rush River and Eau Galle towns implemented exclusive agricultural zoning, in conjunction with the County. In one case the adoption of exclusive agriculture zoning occurred even before the Farmland Preservation Plan was adopted by St. Croix County. The Town of Star Prairie's exclusive agriculture zoning was adopted on November 12, 1986.

Historically there has been some confusion about the difference between exclusive agricultural zoning, farmland preservation contracts and the income tax incentive associated with each. The farmland preservation contracts are a contract between the farmer or landowner and the state, in return for agreeing not to develop his land the owner gets tax rebates based on a formula. The tax rebates are increased if a farmland preservation plan is adopted and certified by the state.

The farmland preservation plan was certified by the state for most of the towns in St. Croix County, including the Town of Star Prairie. Under the contract, the landowner can not get 100 percent of the formula, he can only get 50 or 70 percent.

Exclusive agriculture zoning is also based on the farmland preservation plan, it is adopted by ordinance enacted by both the town and county. With exclusive agriculture zoning a landowner may receive tax rebates at 100 percent of the formula. The chart at right shows the amount of land in exclusive agricultural zoning in Star Prairie and the other towns in St. Croix County.

Acres in Exclusive Ag Zoning -- 2009
St. Croix County

Town	Exclusive Agriculture		Ag Residential	
	Acres	% of Town	Acres	% of Town
Baldwin	14,827	71.8%	5,257	25.5%
Cady	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Cylon	14,641	63.1%	4,855	20.9%
Eau Galle	4,958	23.6%	15,687	74.8%
Emerald	0	0.0%	22,385	100.0%
Erin Prairie	19,806	86.9%	2,231	9.8%
Forest	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Glenwood	0	0.0%	21,985	93.2%
Hammond	0	0.0%	20,943	98.9%
Hudson	0	0.0%	10,969	68.2%
Kinnickinnic	0	0.0%	22,070	98.2%
Pleasant Valley	8,718	75.6%	2,615	22.7%
Richmond	0	0.0%	19,249	93.2%
Rush River	9,254	81.3%	1,462	12.8%
Somerset	4,922	15.8%	25,270	81.4%
Springfield	0	0.0%	21,252	96.8%
Stanton	17,919	84.3%	1,196	5.6%
Star Prairie	**3,547**	**17.5%**	**16,375**	**80.9%**
St. Joseph	1,821	8.2%	18,405	83.3%
Troy	10,899	45.9%	12,598	53.1%
Warren	0	0.0%	21,332	96.2%
St. Croix County	**111,782**	**25.0%**	**266,260**	**59.6%**

Source: St. Croix County Planning & Zoning 2009

AGRICULTURE GOALS, OBJECTIVES & POLICIES

Goal: Preserve the town's agricultural character while allowing residential development. Protect high quality agricultural resources and farming as an occupation in the Town of Star Prairie.

Objectives:

1. Allow development in locations, forms and densities, which supports the preservation of agriculture and rural character.
2. Preserve highly productive farmlands for continued agricultural use.
3. Encourage land preservation programs.
4. Discourage land uses that conflict with agriculture.
5. Encourage traditional and nontraditional farming.
6. Manage the pace of growth to help limit conflicts between agriculture and non-agricultural land uses.
7. Develop and support policies that strengthen and maintain a farm operator's right to farm with farm practices that do not threaten public health or safety.
8. Support preexisting farm operations in conflict with non-farm uses.
9. Protect surface and groundwater quality.

Policies:

1. Support the continued operation and/or expansion of existing farms in Star Prairie.
2. Support exclusive agriculture zoning, agricultural enterprise area designation and other land use measures, which discourage non-farm development in identified Agricultural Preservation Areas, specifically the Star Prairie Flats in sections 4, 5, 6, & 7, the west half of section 14 and the east half of section 15 up to the Apple River, and the west half of section 1 and east half of section 2. Please see the proposed Squaw Lake Agricultural Enterprise Area narrative and map on the Star Prairie Town website.

Traditional agricultural is still an important part of the economy and landscape in the Town of Star Prairie. Photo by Kathy Mlynarczyk.

3. Support buffer zones around agriculture preservation areas and between these areas and rural residential subdivisions consisting of gradually larger lot, lower density development. The variety in zones will increase compatibility with agricultural uses, provide a range of agriculture uses and greater choices in

housing options in the town. Work with St. Croix County to implement these buffer zones through amendments to the zoning ordinance.

4. Support farmland tax credits, use value assessments, and other programs that encourage the continued use of land for farming.
5. Promote agricultural practices, which protect surface and ground water quality, including proper erosion control, manure management and storm water management strategies.
6. Support the economic health of alternative agriculture in the Town of Star Prairie.
7. Support fruit, vegetable and tree farms and greenhouses in the town, designed to supply food to local farmers markets and grocery stores in the area.
8. Discourage factory-type, large-scale farms such as confinement hog, poultry and others that have the potential to degrade the air quality, water quality and current character of the town.
9. Develop and support policies that strengthen and maintain a farm operator's right to farm with farm practices that do not threaten public health or safety.

Crop production is still viable in Star Prairie. Larger farm equipment and field sizes mean changes in the types and number of farms. Photo by Kathy Mlynarczyk.

10. Notify all new building applicants about the Right to Farm Law and that this is a farming area with associated smell, noise and dust.
11. Require that new residents receive a copy of St. Croix County's Rural Living Guide that outlines the traditional community norms and expectations for rural residents.
12. Develop a Rural Living Guide insert and provide copies to all new residents as part of the building permit/inspection process.
13. Promote use of the forestry "best management practices" as minimum standards for logging and encourage forest landowners to enroll in the State's Managed Forest Land Program.
14. Restrict residential and commercial development to areas least suited for agricultural purposes because it is unproductive soils, there is no history of farming or it is inaccessible.
15. Direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas and productive farm and forest lands.
16. Promote conservation design development/clustering as a method to preserve open agricultural ground.

17. Protect the visual quality of scenic roadways through site planning, driveway location, landscaping, signage, and other standards.
18. Prevent the layout of streets or driveways across and adjacent to agricultural land in order to reach non-farm development, unless no other alignment is possible. Place driveways along property lines, fencerows or existing vegetation wherever possible. Avoid stubbing roads for future development to agricultural land, especially agricultural preservation areas. Decrease conflicts between agricultural uses and non-farm uses by directing traffic to alternative routes.
19. Encourage St. Croix County to study a voluntary purchase of development rights program.
20. If authority is developed, establish a voluntary, market driven transfer of development rights program to discourage scattered development, promote rural residential development on the most suitable lands for development and encourage protection of prime agricultural lands. Generally sending areas would be those areas identified as remaining Agricultural/Forest/Grasslands or Open Space and the receiving areas would be the water service and Boundary Agreement areas.
21. Delineate, refine and protect "environmental corridors" as a composite of the Town's most sensitive natural areas.
22. Identify environmentally sensitive areas most likely to be subject to rapid degradation and work to protect these areas first.
23. Prioritize the use of incentives and acquisition (land or easements) to protect environmentally sensitive areas, relying on regulations where necessary.
24. Before approving any changes in land use, consider the impact on wildlife habitat, rare plant and animal species, and archeological sites.

Town of Star Prairie uplands are important wildlife habitat and are very compatible with agriculture. Photo by Mike Burke.

25. Undertake concerted efforts to improve water quality in the most impacted watersheds.
26. Protect and restore natural shoreline areas in the town.