



Petition Period Opens for 2013 Ag Enterprise Areas

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MADISON – Farmers and local officials can now apply for 2013 Agricultural Enterprise Area designation, a process that can yield tax credits for farmers, keep land in agriculture, and stimulate the local farm economy.

"We strongly encourage our producers and their towns to consider petitioning for designation as ag enterprise areas, says Ben Brancel, Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. "This process supports agricultural production along with farm service and processing businesses. Communities should consider the whole range of things they can do locally to make a realistic plan to maintain their agricultural bases."

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are blocks of land that are primarily in agricultural use, either for farming or for businesses that serve the farming sector. They are created when local governments together with at least five local landowners petition the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the department approves the designation.

Application materials, including detailed instructions and petition forms, are available online at <http://workinglands.wi.gov>. Completed petitions are due March 29, 2013. Petitions must be completed jointly by local landowners and local government officials.

AEA designation by itself does not limit land use within the area, or protect from encroaching development.. It does allow farmers within the AEA to receive tax credits of \$5-\$10 per acre if they enter farmland preservation agreements with the department. The designation can also be used with local planning and zoning for farm use, conservation easements, ag economic development incentives and other tools to support farming and the local farm economy.

Agriculture supports 1 in 10 jobs in Wisconsin, and is a \$59.6 billion industry. The goal is to designate 300,000 acres around the state in 2013. The first three rounds of petitions have led to designating 22 AEAs totaling about 510,000 acres. This includes 750 petitioners and 55 towns in 17 counties.

For more information, farmers and local government officials should call Lisa Schultz at 608-224-4604 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

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