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# Funding Impact Brief #7: Sustainable Agricultural Land Tenure (SALT)

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## Funding Impact Brief #7: Sustainable Agricultural Land Tenure (SALT)

### **Abstract**

This publication looks at what's been learned from research on sustainable land tenure arrangements through a special initiative with the Drake Agricultural Law Center, and other opportunities created by the Leopold Center's major investment in this work.

### **Disciplines**

Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Sustainability

# Funding Impact Brief #7: Sustainable Agricultural Land Tenure (SALT)



## About the SALT Project

Principal investigators: Neil Hamilton and Ed Cox,  
Drake Agricultural Law Center

This project provides resources for sustainable land tenure arrangements, with a focus on farm leasing. Sustainable farm leasing involves an agreement between a landowner and tenant that promotes farming systems that benefit landowners, tenants, the land and the community. The agreement may include conservation provisions, long-term lease arrangements, or risk-sharing between landlord and tenant. The SALT project informs farmers, landowners and service providers about farm tenancy laws, landowner obligations to conserve soil, and landowner rights to have a say in how their land is farmed. It also shows how these topics can converge in a farm lease. This ongoing program is administered by the Drake Agricultural Law Center, funded by the Leopold Center since 2009. This evaluation shares the impacts of the SALT project from 2009 through 2013.

### By the Numbers

- **\$225,273** invested by the Leopold Center since 2009
- **\$138,652** externally leveraged funds
- **20 landlords or tenants** reported entering a conservation lease for **2,290 acres of farmland**
- **2,147 people** received SALT resources

## How has this project helped landowners and farmers?

Women own nearly half (47 percent) of Iowa farmland and 52 percent of rented farmland. SALT materials have been used for several women landowner learning circles that were part of the Women, Food and Agriculture Network's "Women Caring for the Land™" program. This program, which reached more than 1,200 female landowners, is designed to help non-operator female landowners improve conservation on their land.

Leigh Adcock, WFAN executive director, says, "The most important element is empowerment. Women may not have been decision makers [on the farm] in the past, so they need to hear other women landowners are doing conservation with their tenant, making choices, and maybe finding new tenants."

Other SALT materials have aided in outreach to military veterans who are interested in agriculture. The materials have helped them get access to land as sustainable, conservation-oriented farmers. To promote sustainable land access and farm business development among farming veterans, Drake University hosted more than 80 farmer veterans and service providers for Iowa's first Farmer Veteran Coalition of Iowa Conference in December 2013. Four regional workshops for veterans were held across Iowa reaching an additional 45 farmer veterans.

*Leigh Adcock (left) talks with a female landowner for a SALT video*

*Also featured in a video were sisters and landowners Martha Shivers Skillman and Charlotte Shivers*

Photo on back:  
Photos by Ed Cox





## About this series

Purpose: To communicate the impacts of long-term Leopold Center investments made in sustainable agriculture research, education and outreach on Iowa's communities, economies and landscapes. This brief is the seventh in a series featuring:

1. Low-Input High-Diversity Systems (\$357,479; 2004-2012)
2. Long-Term Agroecological Research (\$900,000; 1998-2012)
3. Hoop Houses for Alternative Hog Production (\$526,451; 1997-2012)
4. Regional Food Systems Working Group (\$922,837; 2003-2012)
5. Bear Creek Riparian Buffer Project (\$900,000; 1990-2012)
6. Practical Farmers of Iowa (\$100,000; 2011-2012)
7. Sustainable Agricultural Land Tenure (\$225,273; 2009-2013)

Each brief was prepared based on data gathered from project publications, and interviews with principal investigators and/or key partners. The analysis showed that for every dollar invested in these seven projects, an additional \$4.40 was leveraged to complement or expand the work.

Get all briefs: [www.leopold.iastate.edu/change](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/change)

## Land Conservation Practices Change

- 20 landlords/tenants entered a conservation lease
- 7 landowners/farmers improved conservation practices
- 4 landowners or farmers implemented new conservation practices
- 3 landowners talked to tenants about conservation practices
- 23 total different landlords and tenants made changes

## Products

- SALT website launched March 2011, <http://sustainablefarmlease.org>
- *The Landowners Guide to Sustainable Farm Leasing* (on the website)
- 5 brochures explaining Iowa law and related issues (on the website)
  - *Landowners Helping New Farmers*
  - *Rotational Grazing on Leased Land*
  - *Iowa's Duty of Land Stewardship*
  - *Land Contracts for Beginning Farmers*
  - *NRCS EQUIP High Tunnels*
- 14 online videos about Iowa laws that pertain to land tenure, land management, helping farmers through a lease, and issues affecting women landowners, including (all are on the website)
  - *Introduction to SustainableFarmLease.org*
  - *Helping Farmers Fulfill the Land Ethic*
  - *Conservation Easements*
  - *The Importance of Timber Management*
  - *New Farmers and Women Landowners*
- 3 articles in professional or academic journals

## Research partners

- **5 public sector partners:** Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District; Natural Resources Conservation Service; ISU Extension and Outreach, Iowa Learning Farms; ISU Beginning Farmer Center; ISU Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture
- **7 private and civic sector partners:** American Agricultural Law Association; Farmer Veteran Coalition of Iowa; National Center for Appropriate Technology; Practical Farmers of Iowa; Trees Forever; US Farm Lease; Women, Food and Agriculture Network; Women, Land and Legacy

## Leverage

SALT was created as a Leopold Center strategic initiative partnership with Drake Agricultural Law Center in 2009. SALT also received 2 competitive grants from the Leopold Center Policy Initiative [P2012-04, P2013-05] and a special project grant. The project leveraged an additional \$138,652 from Drake University, the McKnight Foundation and Natural Resources Conservation Service in Iowa.

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