

# REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA)

## ***Family Investors seek Soil-Regenerating Farmer in Northeast Illinois to be Partner in Their Search to Purchase Farmland for a Long-Term Lease Agreement***

### **Summary**

A family in Oak Park, Illinois, seeks a farmer(s) to work with in finding farmland in northeastern Illinois that the family would purchase and then lease to the farmer on a long-term basis.

The family has secured the sale of a farmland property in Minnesota and wishes to roll over the proceeds into another property through a 1031 Exchange process. They estimate the amount they will have available to purchase a farm as part of this project to be ~\$650-\$900k.

The family intends to use their farmland purchase to create a new long-term farmland access opportunity for an organic and/or regenerative farmer. The farmland will subsequently be leased to a farmer who would have the option to purchase some or all of the property in the future. The exact details of the opportunity and what kind of farmer (s) the family is looking to collaborate with are described in the rest of this RFA. The deadline for applying to collaborate with the family on this project is **Monday, December 1 (Monday) by 11:59 p.m.**

The Land Connection's Illinois FarmLink program is assisting the family with this project but does not represent them.

### **Family Background**

"I grew up on a diverse 385-acre farm in West Central Minnesota in the 50's and 60's. The farm was typical for the times and included dairy, hogs, and chickens. Our family grew corn, beans, alfalfa, oats, and wheat. I did all the jobs of a farm kid – milked cows and drove tractor for plowing, cultivation, discing, and raking hay. I left the farm after college to pursue different careers in Chicago and Washington DC. My wife was born 139 miles away

in northern Iowa, and we met 27 years later while working in Chicago and discovered our mutual interest in farming and gardening.

Farming remained in my blood, even though I moved to the city. I continued to develop my interest in different methods of farming in non-conventional ways – not the typical row crops of corn and beans using chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.

We have come to realize that our contribution to the regenerative/organic movement could be using the proceeds of our share of conventionally farmed land to buy land in Illinois that will help a regenerative farmer gain secure long-term access to land and financially expand their operation. Our goal is to help regenerate land in Illinois with the help of the farmer and be able to watch it all happen!”

## **Family Goals**

The family’s goals for this arrangement are:

- A. Successful execution of 1031 exchange after sale of land in Minnesota
- B. Stable and secure long-term lease arrangement with a farm family using organic/regenerative farming methods
- C. Strengthening of an organic/regenerative farm family’s business
- D. Restoration and ecological stewardship of a property, both its tillable acres and natural areas
- E. Enjoyable ongoing engagement with the farmer(s) and the farmland over time, including visiting the farm and learning from the farmer(s) about their practices

## **Process Steps and Timeline**

October 2025 – The Land Connection’s Illinois FarmLink program, on behalf of the family, distributes this RFA through a variety of channels.

### **December 1, 2025 – Deadline for submission of farmer applications**

January 7, 2026 – Farmer(s) chosen after review of applications as well as some interviews and farm visits.

**Key Note:** If the family chooses a farmer who already has an appropriate property lined up for purchase, the family will choose to work with only that farmer. If, however, there is no farmer with a property already lined up that meets the criteria of the investor family, the family will likely choose more than one farmer to work with so that the odds are as high as

possible that an appropriate property for sale will be found within a reasonable amount of time. The actual lease arrangement would then be completed with the farmer who is located near to the land that the farmer brings to the table and that the investing family finally chooses to purchase.

**January 21, 2026:** Development of agreement (e.g., MOU) completed. Family investors and farmer(s) begin search for land that fits criteria of family investors and farmer.

**Late Winter/Early Spring 2026:** Promising farmland purchase opportunity identified.

**Early spring/Late spring 2026:** Purchase completed and 1031 Exchange conditions met

**Summer 2026:** Family investors and farmer develop and sign lease agreement (likely for 2027 growing season). Plan is to include terms for potential sale in the future of some or all of the land to the farmer-tenant.

## **Farmland Purchase Opportunity Criteria**

The characteristics of the land the family intends to buy are:

1. Location – a farmland property in northeastern Illinois in the following counties: McHenry, Boone, Will, Kane, Kendall, LaSalle, DeKalb, Grundy, Kankakee, Ogle, Lee, Iroquois, Livingston, Ford.
2. Price - \$650K - \$900K (conditional upon exact amount of sales price of share of Minnesota land) Note: Family is open to buying more than one property to get to desired total farmland investment amount.
3. Property and infrastructure fits farming needs of farmer-collaborator(s)
4. At least 80 percent of property is tillable land
5. Property has some local ecological/conservation value

## **Lease Terms**

1. Long-term lease: 3-10 years (to be negotiated)
2. Mutually fair terms appropriate for type of farming operation (with lower rent possible during organic transition period if that is carried out)
3. Open to lease-to-own type of arrangement for some or all of the property

## **Farmer-Collaborator(s)**

The family seeks a farmer/farm family who:

- Uses certified organic, regenerative, and/or conservation-oriented farming practices (in that order of priority).
- Grows, in order of preference, (1) grains/row crops (with cover crops and small grains as part of rotation), (2) grazing, (3) orchards/agroforestry, (4) non-vegetable specialty crops (hemp, hops, etc.), and (5) diversified crops and livestock.
- Is financially sound with solid business plan, good financial management system, and long-term commitment to farming in the area.
- Has a minimum of 3 years of experience of farming independently.
- Has, ideally, a farmland purchase opportunity lined up that fits the farmer's criteria and criteria of the family. But the family is also interested in talking with farmers who are likely to have ability to find farmland purchase opportunities (that fit the farmer's own criteria for farming as well as criteria of family already described) in less than a year after beginning to work together with the family.
- Would significantly benefit from access to farmland in terms of the farm family's future in farming.
- Enjoys communicating and educating about farming and land stewardship.
- Would be happy to help think through and assist with management of any natural areas of the farm.

The family welcomes applicants of all backgrounds and from all communities who meet the criteria described in this RFA.

## **Application Process**

By **Monday, December 1st**, interested farmers should provide the following information to the family at [farmquest126@gmail.com](mailto:farmquest126@gmail.com). A Word version of the following questions can be provided to make the application process easier. Please send email to same email address to request the Word document.

### **Resume of farming and non-farming experience (if available)**

#### **Document with following information**

##### **Farming Business/History**

- A. What is your history of farming? How many years have you farmed independently?*
- B. What do you grow?*
- C. How would you describe your farming approach? Certified organic? Regenerative? Conservation-oriented? What practices do you follow?*
- D. What is your vision and your goals for your farm business in the coming 5-10 years?*

*E. How do you market what you grow?*

### **Farmland Leasing and Ownership**

*A. How many acres are you currently farming? How many do you own and how many do you rent?*

*B. Where is the land you own and lease?*

*C. If you do have a lease or leases, what kind of leases are they and what kind of leases would be ideal for you in general (crop share, cash rental, written vs oral, etc.)?*

*D. How well do you know the farmland real estate market in your area?*

*E. Ideally, how many total acres would you be farming?*

### **Finances**

*A. How would you describe the financial health of your farm business?*

*B. Please provide whatever information you feel comfortable sharing that would show that you are very likely to be in business for the next decade or more (balance sheet, business plan, assessment from financial advisor, etc.)*

### **Skills/Experience**

*A. Do you have any other skills or experience that are applicable to the situation described in this RFA?*

*B. Do you have any experience, knowledge, and interest in helping steward edge of field practices and/or more natural areas of a property (brush control, prescribed burns, etc.)?*

*C. Do you have any experience with applying and implementing government programs, like CRP and EQIP?*

### **Farmland Opportunities**

*A. Do you already know of farmland purchase opportunities you would have that fit your criteria for production and the criteria of the family? If so, please briefly describe.*

*B. In what area would you want to find a farmland property to lease from the family described in this RFA? In what county or counties is that area? Do properties come up for sale regularly that would fit your criteria and criteria of the family?*

*C. Any other comments/ideas on how you would be able to locate property for purchase quickly and efficiently if the family decided to collaborate with you?*

*E. What are the characteristics of the ideal farmland property you would like to lease for your farming operation? Soils? Topography? Infrastructure?*

*F. What difference would additional acres mean to you and your business in the short-term and the long-term?*

## **Review Process**

The family and Illinois FarmLink staff will review the applications together. The family will then make the final decisions about which farmer or farmers they would like to talk further with. The family may have advisors in relevant fields (like farm finance) help with the review as well.

Interviews and potentially even farm visits with the candidates who best meet criteria will follow the written application process.

## **Questions?**

If you have any questions beyond what this RFA has explained, you can contact the family directly at [farmquest126@gmail.com](mailto:farmquest126@gmail.com).

To learn more about the 1031 Exchange process, please visit this website.

<https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0110/10-things-to-know-about-1031-exchanges.aspx>