

# PURCHASE OF AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM



## What Is a PACE program?

A Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program is a state-led initiative to partner with farmers who wish to protect the state's best farmland for future generations. By working with farmers seeking to voluntarily restrict their right to develop their farmland, a PACE program ensures that the best farmland for food production will stay farmable for Georgia's next generation of farmers.

### What is an agricultural conservation easement?

*An agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary permanent restriction of development rights on private property to ensure that farmland will continue to be used as a farm and not be fragmented, while contributing food and soil, air, water, and wildlife habitat for the community.*

## Why should Georgia have a PACE program?

Georgia's agriculture industry is the biggest economic driver in the state. A PACE program will ensure the industry's long-term viability while providing rural economic benefits and extend land protection to voluntary private landowners.

PACE programs coordinate with federal dollars and local matching funds to extend conservation objectives. The USDA allocates \$450 million per year in matching dollars for state farmland protection programs.

*The Conservation Fund in Georgia has secured \$3.8 million of federal funds for farmland conservation over the next 5 years to match 1:1 with state and local programs.*

### National Farmland Protection Statistics:

**29** state PACE programs  
**4.8** billion \$ in farmland value secured  
**3.2** million acres of farmland protected

## How will Georgia farmers benefit?

As Georgia continues to expand its role as a leading agricultural state in the country, we need a robust state program that supports farmland protection. A PACE program would give Georgia's farmers an opportunity to generate on-farm revenue while retaining ownership and control of farming operations. The bottom line: PACE programs provide direct financial support for farmers, while simultaneously strengthening our state's top economic sector.

### Benefits

- Preserves rural heritage
- Protects Georgia's #1 economic sector
- Expands wildlife habitat protection
- Expands water quality protection
- Provides small farmers with options for maintaining property

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## How Can Georgia start a PACE program?

- 1** Work with GA Dept. of Agriculture to identify PACE program examples
- 2** Enact legislation to administer and fund a PACE program
- 3** Fund a pilot PACE program for 5 years, with \$5M/year in funding including program administration costs
- 4** Statewide partners conduct outreach to farmers to increase participation
- 5** Evaluate outcomes of land protection program to assess implementation strategies

## Where have PACE programs been implemented?

PACE programs have been established in 29 states nationwide, several of which can be found in the southeastern U.S. Below are 4 programs in leading agricultural states that have been recognized for their successful implementation.

### North Carolina

#### Impact

- Year enacted: 1999
- Farmland protected: 25,380 acres
- Funds spent: \$27.4 million



### Florida

#### Impact

- Year enacted: 2001
- Farmland protected: 59,263 acres
- Funds spent: \$82.2 million



### Virginia

#### Impact

- Year enacted: 2001
- Farmland protected: 23,074 acres
- Funds spent: \$17.0 million



### Pennsylvania

#### Impact

- Year enacted: 1989
- Farmland protected: 591,819 acres
- Funds spent: \$1.07 billion

