**Farmland Systems Map**

**Class activity for Chapter 14**

***Food, Farms and Community***

**Material Requirements: None**

**Time Requirement: 20-30 minutes**

Break students into small groups of three to five, and invite them to explore the many factors that affect the persistence of farmland in the modern American landscape. As always, the process of systems mapping will start by identifying one or more key stock-flow systems around which the larger systems map will be constructed. These stock-flow systems often represent key resources in a system, such as the flow of financial resources, labor or capital, but they can also represent other variables that can increase or decrease and key factors that may cause them to increase or decrease. An example of a stock that falls into this latter category is the number of acres of cropland in a region, with inflows that articulate factors that increase those acres while outflows articulate factors that decrease them.

Once students choose their primary stock(s) and flows, they can begin brainstorming the many other factors that exert influence on those stocks and flows, place those factors on their systems map and draw arrows connecting them to one another and to the stocks and flows they influence. Some of these factors may fall in the physical realm, such as topography and climate, while others may be more social, economic or political in their framing. As you walk around the classroom and watch students’ systems maps take shape, invite them to consider factors that are absent from their maps. If a group is looking primarily at political and economic factors, invite them to consider social, physical or biological ones to broaden their perspectives, for instance.

Once students have worked on their systems maps for 20-30 minutes, bring the class back together to discuss the exercise and its impact on their understanding of agricultural landscapes. You can enquire about some of the different stocks and flows students used, and the different factors they chose to include in their systems map. There is no one right way to draw a systems map that relates to agricultural land, so all students’ expressions of this system can be ‘right’.