

# Animal Feed

## 2025 NEW HAMPSHIRE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN

**Purpose:** To describe the unique opportunities and challenges that impact economically viable animal feed production in New Hampshire, including grains, forage, and pasture.

### What’s at Stake?

According to the USDA’s 2022 Census of Agriculture, New Hampshire’s dairy and livestock industry is a \$90.7 million industry providing Granite Staters with a wide variety of meat and dairy products. The ability of this industry to thrive depends on dairy and livestock producers being able to harvest or purchase high-quality feeds that can meet the nutritional needs of beef and dairy cattle, sheep, goats and horses. Feed production depends on the availability of land, access to healthy soils including soil health amendments and services, and the successful matching of crops to soil conditions.

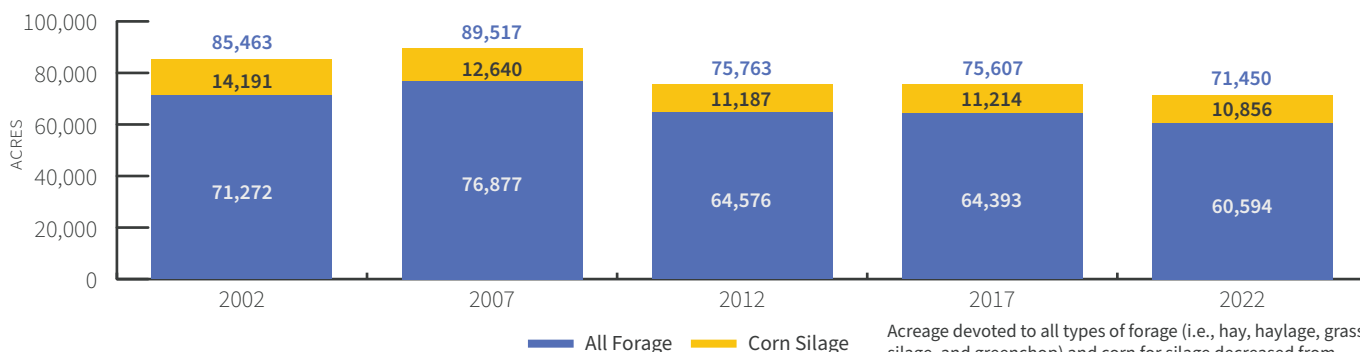
### Current Conditions

The majority of livestock species are herbivores that can make use of forages. New Hampshire’s farms are capable of producing highly nutritious feed for livestock; the state’s shorter growing season and soils are well suited to grow perennial, cool-season grasses and legumes. Some areas, predominantly in the Connecticut and Merrimack River Valleys, feature extensive tracts of prime farmland suitable for annual crops. The cropping systems there include more acreage of corn harvested as silage. Recently, farms have begun to produce grain corn, soybeans, or cereal grains to reduce the need for importing these types of feed from the Midwest. All together, annual and perennial forages, silage corn,

and grains comprise more than 75,000 acres of New Hampshire’s cropland. The majority of this feed is used on the farm where it is produced, though some sell to smaller homesteads and backyard producers who lack the land or equipment to produce feed themselves.

Recognizing the challenges posed by climate change, producers are adopting practices that improve soil health and provide greater flexibility; the use of cover crops, reducing tillage, and improving grazing management are making New Hampshire’s farms more productive and more resilient.

**TRACKING ACRES OF CORN SILAGE AND ALL FORAGES IN NH, 2002-2022**



Acreage devoted to all types of forage (i.e., hay, haylage, grass silage, and greenchop) and corn for silage decreased from 2002 to 2022. In 2002, forage and corn silage accounted for 19.2% of all land in agriculture in New Hampshire. In 2022, that acreage decreased to 17.1%.

**SOURCE:** USDA Census of Agriculture, multiple years, *Table 34: Specified Crops Harvested*.

# Challenges and Opportunities

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## CHALLENGES

- There is limited acreage for feed production in New Hampshire and development pressure threatens to reduce it further, resulting in barriers to land access for new farms and a more fragmented landscape, hindering efficient crop production.
- Climate change is increasing the frequency of erratic weather patterns that result in poor growing conditions. Farms may have difficulty maintaining the feed inventory and nutritional quality they need for their animals to support the production of milk and meat.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- There is substantial acreage of unused or under-utilized land that, with improvements, could significantly increase capacity for producing feed. With protections offered by conservation easements and long-term leases, farms are more likely to invest in making land more productive.
- There are already multiple organizations— USDA agencies, the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food (NHDAMF), UNH Extension, NOFA-NH, county conservation districts, land trusts, and more— that are well suited to support dairy and livestock producers in meeting their feed needs and have a history of collaborating with each other. Maintaining staff and support for these organizations will help to ensure that these valuable partnerships continue.



# Recommendations

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- > **Develop New Hampshire-specific resources to facilitate cropland conservation.** Resources should prioritize sites designated as prime farmland and could be split into materials for land trusts and landowners and should include guidance for planning and drafting easements, balancing crop production with wildlife conservation, the consideration of long-term leases, and the benefits of maintaining unfragmented land parcels.
- > **Provide opportunities for education and peer learning on resilient cropping practices.** Organize educational events (i.e., pasture walks, cover crop tours) to highlight practices that improve the resilience of cropping systems and encourage peer-to-peer learning between producers.
- > **Provide grant assistance to producers improving production capacity.** Provide grant assistance to support producers in their efforts to improve production capacity through new equipment and technologies, facilities and infrastructure upgrades, or adopting new practices, including:
  - Offering matching funds that enable New Hampshire farms to better compete for grants with matching requirements.
  - Expand existing programs (e.g., NHDAMF's Nutrient Management grants) to include proposals that address resilience in cropping systems.
- > **Perform research to increase farmer capacity for feed production.** Engage in research that enables New Hampshire farms to increase their capacity to produce feed. This could include evaluating the performance of forage cultivars grown under local conditions, improving intensive grazing practices, establishing appropriate management practices for grain production, and helping to establish realistic yield goals and quality benchmarks.

# Authors

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**New Hampshire**  
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For more information, including references and opportunities to get involved, visit the 2025 NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan web page on [nhfoodalliance.org](https://nhfoodalliance.org) or scan the QR code on the inside front cover of the print version.