

As noted earlier, Mansfield has a relatively low unemployment rate. However, unemployment rates vary significantly depending on educational levels. While the town residents without a high school diploma make up a relatively small proportion of the working age population (ages 25-64), they suffer disproportionately from high unemployment. Those with only a high school diploma are also somewhat more likely than average to be unemployed. This suggests the need for additional low- to middle-skill jobs and training opportunities to meet the employment needs of these residents (see Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5: Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, Mansfield Residents Age 25-64: 2007-2011 Average**

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	% OF POPULATION 25-64
Less than high school graduate	43.2%	7.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	8.2%	39.7%
Some college or associate's degree	3.0%	
Bachelor's degree or higher	1.2%	53.0%

Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

## 2. Key Existing Economic Sectors

Mansfield has a number of established economic sectors that should be sustained and potentially expanded. These include higher education, food and beverage services, health care, and agriculture.

### A) HIGHER EDUCATION/UCONN

Higher education is Mansfield’s leading “traded sector” by a wide margin, and is less a sector than a single dominant institution, the University of Connecticut. With over 22,000 students and over 5,000 faculty and staff, UConn draws income into the community and creates jobs. Direct employment at UConn has increased over the past decade. State government employment in Mansfield, primarily accounted for by UConn, increased by about 500 jobs between 2001 and 2011. The average state government wage in 2011 was almost \$60,000, significantly more than for most other economic sectors within the town. Additional direct spending by students and visitors on off-campus housing, retail, food services, entertainment and recreation, and other local goods and services brings significant additional income to the town economy.

Direct income to the university is further circulated within the community through spending by the university, administration, faculty and staff on local goods and services. Other indirect sources of income and jobs are businesses that are operated by university faculty, including a considerable number of small consulting businesses, and businesses that have been established locally to commercialize university research.



*Accommodation and food services businesses in Mansfield employ over 1,000 people (Storrs Center shown at left).*

## **B) FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES**

The accommodation and food services sector employed 1,139 wage and salary workers in 2011. Most of the employment is in food and drinking places—Mansfield has only a small number of lodging establishments, including two hotels and one bed and breakfast. The relatively high proportion of jobs to local population in this sector likely reflects strong demand for food and beverage services among the large student population.

Employment in this sector increased by about 250 between 2001 and 2011, or over 25 percent. The quality of jobs, however, is very low with average wages of under \$20,000 in 2011, lower than in any other economic sector for which data is available. Many of these jobs are part-time, which accounts in part for the low wage levels.

## **C) HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

This sector employed 1,134 wage and salary workers in 2011. It can also be considered partly traded and partly sheltered since some of the larger health care organizations such as Natchaug Hospital, VNA East and large specialty practices serve a regional population while some smaller practices primarily serve a local population. The relatively high proportion of jobs to local population in this sector indicates that a significant portion of clients are from outside the community.

Employment in this sector increased by about 250 between 2001 and 2011, or almost 30 percent. The average wage in 2011 was about \$42,000, somewhat below the overall average wage for jobs in Mansfield.

**D) AGRICULTURE**

While not a major economic driver in terms of income or jobs, agriculture remains important to Mansfield. 22,175 acres of farm and forest (75% of Mansfield) contribute to the Town’s economy by providing “ecosystem services,” such as clean water, and by requiring lower levels of Town services than residences. Preserving these benefits is critical to Mansfield’s business and fiscal success. Agricultural enterprises use the most business-related acreage in town (16%). Agriculture (farm and forest) provides residents with locally-grown food products, creates opportunities for value-added food processing businesses, and supports farm and forest-based tourism. Preserving and expanding the agricultural economy can help to maintain a diversified local economy, contribute to lower property taxes, and preserve the town’s rural character—which also has potential as a major attraction for prospective businesses and employees.

There are many elements to maintaining and strengthening the town’s agricultural identity, but one critical component is maintaining agricultural activity. Farmland that is conserved and farmed is the ultimate goal. In this regard, agriculture in Mansfield faces many of the same challenges being faced throughout the state, the region and even the country.

**i) Private agriculture in Mansfield**

Agriculture is changing across America. As farms get bigger in the Midwest, farms in New England are getting smaller but more numerous, up an average of 19% in New England between 2002 and 2007 (with a 0.1% increase in Connecticut). Following regional trends, the median farm size in Tolland County decreased from 38 acres in 2002 to 25 acres in 2007, while the number of farms increased from 398 to 484.<sup>6</sup> The 2007 Cen-

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<sup>6</sup> 2007 Census of Agriculture. State and County Data: Connecticut.



Photo credit: James D. Gilligan

*Mansfield’s agricultural enterprises are a valued part of the town’s economy (Mountain Dairy shown above).*

**Table 6.6: Mansfield's Agricultural Enterprises 2014**

Arrowhead Farms	Honey, goat milk, pumpkins, berries, vegetables, angora wool, and non-edibles	Mountain Dairy	Milk and dairy products
Bailey's Maple Syrup and Honey, LLC	Maple syrup and honey	Phenix Farm	Maple syrup, hay/alfalfa
Bird Walk Farm	Eggs, seasonal lamb, pork, chicken	Pleasant Valley Harvest	Organic fruits and vegetables
Cedar Ledge Tree Farm	Christmas trees. Natural stone for walls, walks, patios. Pumpkins. Firewood	Round the Bend Farm	Vegetables
Country Stop & Goods	Produce and country goods	Sawmill Brook Farm	Equine board facility offering beginner through advanced lessons in all disciplines. Miles of trail riding. Facility also houses Magnolia Run horse rescue.
Don's Rhubarb	Rhubarb	Shundahai Farm	Fruits and vegetables. CSA.
Foxfire Farm	Raw milk	Storrs Farmers Market	Year-round farmers market
Fox Fire Stables	Equine boarding facility with indoor and outdoor riding arenas.	Storrs Regional FFA	Christmas trees, plants, eggs
Gardens at Bassetts Bridge Farm	Rhubarb, tomatoes, asparagus, pumpkins, blueberries, hanging baskets, annuals and perennials	Thistle Springs Farm	Hay and beef cattle. Sand and gravel
G.M. Thompson and Sons, Inc.	Agricultural supply	Thompson's Christmas Tree Farm	Christmas trees
Hillside Farm	Milk, mulch bark and feed hay	Three Green Acres/Chelsea's Blue Ribbon Lamb	Sheep-lamb for meat, wool blankets, show animals (Hampshire Sheep and Jersey Cattle)
Ledgecrest Greenhouses	Annuals, perennials, herbs, vegetables plants and spring flowering plants	Tri-County Greenhouse	Annuals, perennials, herbs and vegetables plants, mums
Maple Crest Farm	Rhubarb, blueberries, raspberries are sold wholesale. Tree fruit, jams, honey, yellow wax beans, potted raspberry plants. Aloe, Christmas cactus, hand-painted egg shells. By appointment only.	Twin Ponds Farm	Hay, lumber, firewood, nursery stock, plant stock, seasonal berries
Matthews Farm	Blueberries	University of Connecticut	Ice cream, eggs, plants and flowers. Annual live stock sale.
Mike's Stand	Organic tomatoes, peas, broccoli products from other farms as seasonally available.	Valley Farms	Kobe-style beef, hogs, free-range eggs
		Windover Farm	Heritage swine, cattle and sheep, pork and lamb.

sus of Agriculture identified 19 farms in Mansfield, five of which support farming as a primary occupation.<sup>7</sup> Agriculture in Mansfield is diverse, producing dairy products, livestock and meat products, fruits and vegetables, honey, maple syrup, Christmas trees and nursery stock, as well as agritourism experiences. Every two to three years, the Mansfield Agriculture Committee inventories all agricultural operations in town and develops a “Mansfield Grown” brochure and website link ([www.mansfieldct.org/mansfieldgrown](http://www.mansfieldct.org/mansfieldgrown)). The last inventory in 2012 identified close to 40 agricultural enterprises—19 self-identified as farms, plus other enterprises including one Community Supported



***A 2010 Town survey identified approximately 40 agricultural enterprises in Mansfield, including farms, farm stands, and agritourism destinations (Stearns Farm shown above).***

Agriculture (CSA) operation, farm stands, agritourism destinations, and retail outlets. A 2010 survey by the Town identified close to 40 agricultural enterprises—19 self-identified as farms, plus other enterprises including farm stands, agritourism destinations, retail outlets, and so on. Agriculture in Mansfield is diverse, producing dairy products, livestock and meat products, fruits and vegetables, honey, maple syrup, Christmas trees and nursery stock, as well as agritourism experiences.

**Scale of operations.** While the Mansfield dairy farms own or lease over 1,800 acres of land, the majority of Mansfield farms are small, under 50 acres (some under 5 acres) and with sales less than \$50,000. Seven (39%) of 19 Mansfield farms identified in the 2007 agricultural census had sales over \$50,000 (2 horticultural operations, 3 dairy operations, 2 animal operations, including products, and 1 cattle and calves operation). While Mansfield farms make up just under 4% of farms in Tolland County, they account for more than 7% of the operations in Tolland County with sales over \$50,000. Mansfield has one of only three dairy processing facilities in the state. This facility has a producer/handler license that enables it to compete with federal milk prices and remain competitive.

The 2007 Census showed that the average net income for farms in Tolland County was \$15,307, up significantly from an average of \$5,833 in 2003 but still significantly below the state average of \$25,087.<sup>8</sup> Assuming the average net income for Mansfield farms is the same as for Tolland County it is not surprising that only 26% of Mansfield farms support farming as the primary occupation, versus 55% of all Connecticut farms and 49% of farms in New England. If we assume the 19 farms in Mansfield make the average Tolland County farm income it would account for 0.1% of all the income earned by residents in Mansfield.<sup>9</sup> In a 2010 survey of Mansfield farmers, some of the major challenges identified by respondents were “financial stability, lack of funding, [and] input costs.”

<sup>7</sup> 2007 Census of Agriculture. Data by Zip Code: 06268 and 06269.

<sup>8</sup> 2007 Census of Agriculture. State and County Data: Connecticut.

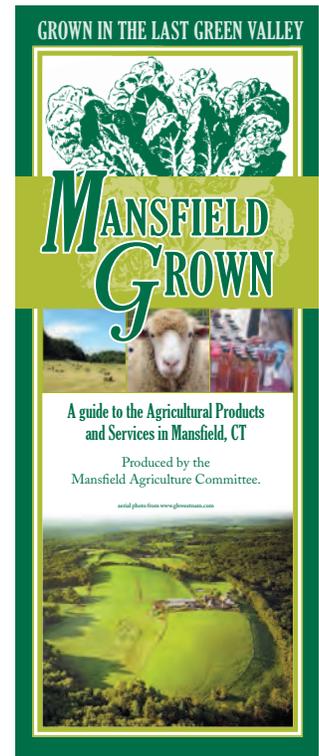
<sup>9</sup> Assumes 11,027 jobs in the community at average salary of \$49,637 per Peter Kwass, Mansfield Economy Fact Sheet.

**Employment.** Data from the 2010 Census showed that less than 2% of the Mansfield population was employed in agriculture compared with Connecticut communities with the highest proportion of residents employed in agriculture, such as Scotland and Preston that have between 4% and 8% of the population.<sup>10</sup> The majority of farms in Tolland County do not hire farm labor and of the farms that do, 90% hire fewer than 10 workers. The Connecticut Department of Labor reports 398 jobs in Tolland County in the agriculture, fishing and hunting sector in 2011, making up just 1% of all Tolland County jobs.<sup>11</sup> Access to farm labor is a challenge for local and regional farms.

**Markets.** According to the 2010 survey of Mansfield farmers, the majority of farmers market their products direct to consumers through roadside stands or farmers markets and/or sell wholesale to restaurants and stores. Of the 19 operations with self-identified farmers, 11 do direct marketing only, one does wholesale only and seven do a combination of direct marketing and wholesale. While this type of marketing and sales usually ensures that farmers get the highest possible price for their products, it also requires that farmers spend a lot of time building and maintaining relationships with many individual buyers. Direct marketing and direct wholesale marketing also puts the burden of transportation and distribution on the farmer.

Mansfield is home to a year-round farmers market, Storrs Farmers Market, providing a direct-market outlet to local farmers and value-added producers. (Currently just under 30% of the producers listed on the Storrs Farmers Market website are from Mansfield.) In addition to the Farmers Market, the Town produces a “Mansfield Grown” brochure featuring a guide to locally produced agricultural products and services—the brochure includes 29 farms and stores (in addition to the farmers market) providing locally produced goods. One Mansfield farm offers a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. *Farmfresh.org*, a local food guide for Southern New England, identifies 6 producers in Mansfield with farm stands making direct sales to consumers.

**Ownership and Management.** Mansfield has a mix of entrepreneurial and lifestyle farmers. The vast majority of farm households in the U.S. rely on off farm income to support themselves<sup>12</sup> and there is no evidence this is likely to change. In 2012, off-farm income sources are forecasted to account for about 84% of the national average farm household income, compared with about 16% from farming activities.<sup>13</sup> Farming is often a lifestyle choice as much as an economic endeavor. This means that farmers often lack, or fail to apply, the business skills required to grow their enterprises, establish track records



*The Mansfield Grown brochure provides information on local agricultural products and producers.*

10 Percentage of Population with Farming, Fishing & Forestry Jobs in Connecticut by Zip Code: 06268 and 06269. <http://zipatlas.com/us/ct/storrs-mansfield/zip-code-comparison/percentage-farming-jobs.htm>

11 Tolland County: Covered Employment and Wages by Industry. 2011 QCEW Program Data. [http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/cty\\_tolland.asp](http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/cty_tolland.asp)

12 Schnepf, Randy. “U.S. Farm Income.” Congressional Research Service. December 10, 2012.

13 Schnepf, Randy. “U.S. Farm Income.” Congressional Research Service. December 10, 2012.

**CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture**, a popular way for consumers to buy food directly from farmers through a subscription program. In this model, the consumer pays for a “farm share” (a percentage of the food produced that season) up front and receives a weekly box of produce during the growing season. This provides farmers the opportunity to do marketing and have cash flow during the winter and spring seasons.

of sales, and qualify for investments that would help them further expand. While those who choose to farm as a lifestyle can and do make important contributions to the agricultural landscape, the environment, and other indirect economic and social aspects of quality of life, continuing agriculture into the future will likely require a mix of lifestyle farmers and entrepreneurial farmers. The entrepreneurial farmers will require the same type of business planning, management, and financing assistance that any small business needs. By understanding the potential for farming as a business, the Town can encourage innovative enterprises and help connect agricultural entrepreneurs with appropriate business-related services.

The average age of farmers in Connecticut is 57.6, higher than the New England average of 56.6.<sup>14</sup> While the average age of farmers has been a concern regionally and nationally for a number of years, in recent years more young people have been choosing to farm. With the presence of UConn, Mansfield is in a position to engage young people in its agricultural community in ways that would be harder for a more isolated community. There is evidence that some young people are already interested in farming in Mansfield. More can be done to attract and retain a new generation of farmers. Young farmers often find farmland unaffordable. It will also be important to work with the current generation on transition plans where there is interest in passing the farm to another generation.

#### ii) UConn agriculture in Mansfield

As Connecticut’s land grant university, UConn owns and maintains approximately one quarter of the active farmland in Mansfield, and is home to several agricultural operations including an Equine Center specializing in the breeding of Morgan horses, the Dairy Center and Creamery, Livestock Unit and Poultry Unit. Many of these facilities are open to the public 365 days a year, making UConn a popular agri-tourism destination. UConn’s Dairy Bar, serving award winning ice cream produced in the Creamery from UConn dairy cows, is one of the top 10 tourism destinations in Connecticut, attracting over 200,000 visitors per year.<sup>15</sup> UConn officials are committed to keeping the agricultural land it currently uses in active use.<sup>16</sup>

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14 2007 Census of Agriculture. State and County Data.

15 Schirm, Nicole. “Education and so much more!” Holstein World; New England Holstein Annual. March 2013.

16 Phone Interview. Greg Weidemann, Dean, UConn College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. 4/8/13.