Priority 11: Develop strategies to expand on **AGRICULTURAL LAND ACCESS** and leasing

**187 out of 584 respondents (32%) ranked this topic as highest priority. Of those, 131 provided justification as follows:**

* 42 respondents (or 23%) commented that land prices are too expensive to purchase so leasing may be the best way to start farms and expand existing operations

“*Many beginning farmers are coming from other careers and do not have access to family land. The cost of land can be prohibitive, especially near cities where markets exist. We need strategies to get people the most basic and important piece of their business, the land which their entire livelihood is based on, in long-term situations that enable a real, sustainable, stewardship of the land, and a feasible life-long career.”*

* 38 respondents (or 20%) commented that increasing land access is a way to protect land from being developed for other uses and to ensure that farmland is available for future production.

*“Unused farmable land too often just gets bought up for housing lots, leading to the loss of local rural land quality as well as reducing our area’s ability to feed people locally. Turning this land back to agricultural use through creative methods, such as leasing or tenant farming, could stem that change, as well as provide opportunities to young farmers and improve health and nutritional access to fresh foods in our communities.”*

* 14 respondents (or 8%) commented that we need to improve education for landowners and farmers on lease arrangements for private and public land.

*“Sometimes the obstacles are more perceived than real, but until the education and confidence are in place, farmers do not, oftentimes, seem to know how to go about obtaining financing, feel they have enough to borrow against, are risk-adverse to borrowing, or enter in precarious land leasing arrangements.”*

* 8 respondents (or 4%) commented that it is difficult to find available land.

*“I have known several farmers, including myself, looking for land to farm who had difficulty securing this information.”*