This report, in the Center’s California Farmland and Open Space Policy series, examines the views and experiences of 37 landowners who had sold permanent conservation easements on their land in recent years, and nine others who had recently purchased parcels with easements already in place. Significantly, all three county programs involved the acquiring of easements primarily to preserve commercial farmland in the path of urbanization, as compared to the more traditional use of such easements for environmental purposes.

The authors find that farmland owners who sell easements are motivated by a combination of short and long term factors— including cash, family concerns, and personal beliefs about land preservation.