



FACT SHEET

Beginning Farmers

Issue Summary: *The number of farmers in the United States has drastically decreased over the years. The USDA and NFU have numerous programs to help individuals who are interested in farming begin their operations.*

- In 2012, there were 522,058 beginning farmers in the United States. Beginning farmers represent 25% of the 2.1 million farmers who live and work in the U.S. These farmers control 16% of farmland, which produced 15% of the agricultural products sold, 22% of total products sold directly to consumers, and 25% of all organic sales. (USDA-NASS)
- NFU has several programs to assist beginning and transitioning farmers and ranchers. Specifically, the National Farmers Union Beginning Farmers Institute helps beginning farmers develop and acquire leadership and farm management skills. Participants from all over the country gain these skills through three multi-day sessions where they are educated on various risk management topics and on-farm tours.
- The average age of an American farmer is slowly increasing. The average age of American farmers is 58 years old, however established farmers (those farming for eleven years or more) average 61 years old. Beginning farmers average in age between 47 years old (farming 1 to 5 years) and 51 years old (farming for 6 to 10 years). (USDA-NASS)
- The top ten states where beginning farmers and ranchers start their operations are: Alaska, California, Florida, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. (USDA-NASS)
- The Agriculture Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) authorized several programs to support beginning farmers by increasing funding for beginning farmer development, facilitating farmland transitions to the next generation of farmers, and improving outreach and communication to military veterans about farming and ranching opportunities. (USDA-ERS)
- Through the 2014 Farm Bill, beginning farmers now have improved access to crop insurance, noninsured crop disaster assistance, conservation loans, microloans, and down payment loan assistance. Notably, this farm bill provides \$261 million over 10 years for beginning farmers through the new Federal crop insurance premium assistance program and \$33 million for the USDA's Transition Incentives Program to encourage retiring farmers to transfer their land to beginning farmers. (USDA-ERS)