

# NMSU CES Support Activities for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

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# Background

- Farming and ranching have shaped the identity and way-of life of New Mexico families and the communities that support them.
- Agriculture is an important contributor to local economies, a source of healthy food, and a vital steward of New Mexico's land, water, and environmental ecosystem.

# Background

- The aging of New Mexico's farmers and ranchers, however, is raising concerns about the future of New Mexico agriculture.
- The average age of a New Mexico full-time farmer and rancher is 62 (2017), roughly 6% are under the age of 35 and 40% are 65 or older (2017).

# Background

- New Mexico needs new blood in agriculture.
- These new entrants can be either young and looking to start a life-long career in agriculture, or older people considering a career change or looking for a second job.

# Background

- Some encouraging signs:
  - In 2017, new and beginning producers (those in farming/ranching 10 years or less) accounted for 26% of New Mexico's producers, up from 18% in 2012.
  - Seven in ten youth (237 of 346) attending the 2017 NM FFA Leadership Conference said they would like to pursue a career in agriculture.

# Background

- Regardless of age, barriers to entry to agriculture exist including:
  - significant land, equipment, machinery, facilities, and labor costs
  - limited management experience
  - transferring farm and ranch assets from one generation to another is challenging and requires careful succession planning.

# NMSU CES Support Activities for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

- NMSU CES has offices in all 33 New Mexico counties. The county ag agents routinely receive requests for information and assistance for getting into farming and ranching.
- County ag agents provide information and technical assistance on an individual farmer/rancher basis as well as through workshops, field days, and on-farm/ranch demonstrations.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- NMSU CES annual ***New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp*** provides high school youth with training in all aspects of beef cattle production, marketing, range and wildlife management, and business planning.
- NMSU CES annual ***New Mexico Indian Livestock Days Conference*** provides beginning and established native producers information and training on a board range of topics including animal nutrition and disease, forage, rangeland management, weed management, drought insurance, business planning, record keeping and marketing strategies.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- The Bernalillo county extension office *Grow the Growers Program* provides beginning farmers with access to land and water on county open space properties to initiate their small farm operations.
- Program participants receive classroom instruction, on-farm training and mentoring, business incubation, and entrepreneurial training.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- NMSU CES *Extension & Research Youth Agricultural Science Center*, in partnership with the Las Vegas City Schools, provides K-12 students with the opportunity to learn the science of agriculture and natural resource management through hands-on learning.
- Not only do high school students learn to grow food, they also develop entrepreneurial skills to establish and manage a food-based value-added business.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- The Valencia county extension office *Select Beef Heifer Replacement Project* teaches youth, ranging in age from 11 to 17, the science and business behind raising and selling cattle.
- Students receive college-level instruction from NMSU CES faculty regarding cattle nutrition, genetics and reproduction; developing business and marketing plans; and designing a sales catalog.
- The students also complete Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- The Quay county extension office is working to establish a beginning farmers cooperative. The **Table Top Co-op** will link beginning farmers with land and water and provide education, training, mentorship, and technical assistance with production, management, markets and financing issues.
- NMSU CES **New Mexico AgrAbility Program** assists beginning farmers and ranchers, impacted by a disability or chronic health issue, develop adaptive farm and ranch plans and access appropriate technology- equipment, tools or devices to mitigate their limitations.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- The San Juan county extension office and San Juan community college have partnered to successfully leverage city, county, state and federal resources to establish the ***Harvest Food Hub*** (with refrigerated storage, transportation, distribution capabilities) giving beginning and established farmers greater access local and regional markets.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- At the annual *Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference* and *New Mexico Organic Conference* NMSU CES speakers address the challenges and opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers including the importance of business planning, record keeping, and market strategies.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- NMSU CES' *Rural Agriculture Improvement and Public Affairs (RAIPAP) Project*, funded by a USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program grant, is assisting Northern and Southern Pueblos farmers increase vegetable production for family consumption and sale in local markets.
- NMSU CES has partnered with the Rural Education Office in the NM Public Education Department and Zuni High School officials to *Revitalize Traditional Agriculture* in the pueblo through the establishment of student managed vegetable gardens at the high school and senior centers. Produce from the gardens is also sold to local grocery store and at farmers' markets in the area.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- NMSU CES is partnering with the USDA Risk Management Agency to establish the ***Navajo Ranchers Sustainability Project*** to assist beginning and established Navajo ranchers improve the health of their animals (cattle and sheep) and increase their sales in local and regional markets.
- NMSU CES is partnering with USDA RD Agency to establish the ***Navajo Market Connect Project*** to assist beginning and established Navajo farmers in the Gallup to Farmington (NM Hwy 491) corridor increase vegetable production for family consumption and sale in local markets.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- NMSU's Departments of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Business and Extension Economics is establishing a ***Farm and Ranch Resource Center*** to enhance the profitability of beginning and establish farmers and ranchers by reducing production, marketing, financial, legal and human risks through the delivery of:
  - on-line information, research reports, guides, webinars, you tube presentations, and
  - on-farm/ranch training, demonstrations, and technical assistance.

# NMSU CES Support Activities: Some Examples

- NMSU CES has plans to establish several *Agribusiness Accelerators* in the state to increase local food production and provide greater access to healthy food.
- A key component of the accelerators will be a training and demonstration farm designed to mentor beginning farmers. The accelerators will also promote value-added agribusiness activity and foster entrepreneurship, business development and job creation.

# NMSU CES Support Activities for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Questions

Comments

*Thank You*

