



Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture: Ag Plan

New Mexico First



Nonpartisan and nonprofit public policy organization advancing independent research and citizen input in the areas of:

- Education
- Health
- Natural Resources
- Economy
- Good Government

NMSU Cooperative Extension Service



- Provides the people of New Mexico with practical, research-based knowledge and programs to improve their quality of life
- The organization's base programs include:
 - Agriculture and natural resources
 - Consumer and family issues
 - Youth development
 - Community economic development



Funders to date

- Thornburg Foundation
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- McCune Charitable Foundation
- Santa Fe Community Foundation

National Young Farmers Coalition



- The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) represents, mobilizes, and engages young farmers and ranchers to ensure their success.
- Represents a growing network of young farmers and rancher in New Mexico, nationally
- Member of the Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture Task Force, Next Generation of Farmers and Rancher Subcommittee with Future Farmers of American, NMSU and the Agricultura Cooperative Network

The Ag Plan – Why do we need it?

- An aging population of farmers and ranchers
- Challenges accessing or understanding farm loans, grants and repayment programs
- Public health needs regarding nutrition and food access
- Increasing pressure on water and other natural resources
- Rising costs for land, energy, equipment and other production needs
- Unsustainable farmer and rancher incomes
- Insufficient processing, storage and market access
- Complex regulations
- Food waste

Results from Other States

- **VERMONT:** Improved supply chains to get significantly more locally grown produce served in K-12 cafeterias.
- **MICHIGAN:** Set a goal of 20% of food served in state institutions to be raised by Michigan farmers and ranchers.
- **ILLINOIS:** Created a business climate task force that worked with federal and state lawmakers to improve the regulatory climate and reduce the time required by the EPA for permitting processes.
- **IOWA:** Improved partnerships among universities – especially their land-grant institution – to grow the number of students in agriculture and thus advance the next generation of food growers.

About the Resilience in Agriculture Project

- **Collective impact project:**
 - Bringing together many different stakeholders to work towards a common goal
 - Involving several stages of the project (next slide)
 - Utilizing two backbone organization

Stakeholder Input

- Convene regional meetings
- Survey/interview additional stakeholders

Background Report

- Analyze data from meetings, surveys & interviews
- Conduct industry research

Develop Plan

- Convene task force meetings
- Draft resiliency plan

Elicit Feedback

- Send out plan for public comment
- Refine resiliency plan

Publicize Plan

- Advocate for recommendations
- Secure funding

Implement Plan

- Establish working groups
- Measure progress and adapt plan strategies

**Where are
we now?**

...

The Ag Plan!

Developed from:

- **Input from over 600 agricultural stakeholders**
- **7 months of deliberation from a 33 member task force**
- **Extensive research, public comment and review from federal and state officials, industry leaders and experts**

What does the Ag Plan look like?

Addresses the areas of:

- Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers
- Water & Land Use
- Agricultural Supply Chain
- Agricultural Economic Viability

(17 proposed strategies!)

What now? Ag Plan Implementation!

Activities include:

- **Bringing together a working group to oversee implementation**
- **Calling for volunteers to implement in the following ways:**
 - Presenting the ag plan to community organizations
 - Meeting with local, state or federal policymakers about the ag plan
 - Initiating community discussion about the plan
 - Writing a grant or research proposal tied to one or more of the ag plan recommendations
- **Presenting this plan to you – the state legislators!**

A Deeper Dive: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

- **NM's farmers and ranchers are aging:**
 - Average age: 61
 - Fewer than 5% are under 35
 - Nearly a third are 70 or older.
- **People enter the career at different times:**
 - Some are young, starting a life-long career
 - Others older, changing careers
- **Number of N.M. farmers and ranchers growing (between 2007 and 2012):**
 - 18% increase in all farms and ranch operators (from 20,930 to 24,721)
 - 45% increase in the number of Hispanic farm and ranch operators (from 6,475 to 9,377)
 - 16% increase in number of Native American farm and ranch operators (from 4,493 to 5,202)
- **Farming and ranching is changing:**
 - Not everyone "learned it from Dad..."
 - New technology, new funding strategies, it's a new world.
 - Need training to address production, marketing, financials, legal and human risks
 - Environmentally and financially sustainable farms and ranches
 - A university center devoted to this cause can make a huge difference.

Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

Addresses the critical need for more young and beginning farmers and ranchers in New Mexico. Acknowledges the high barriers many young people face when trying to start their own farm or ranch.

Recommendations and strategies center on:

- **Education and Training**
- **Land Access**
- **Capital and Credit Access**

Next Generation: Education and Training

- *Promote and expand agricultural education and training opportunities as pathways to successful careers in the industry, recognizing that new technologies should be deployed to reach young audiences.*
- Increase or hold stable financial support for agricultural education in K-12 public schools
 - Including existing programs such as Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H
- Support the implementation of NMSU agricultural dual-credit initiative to encourage youth to pursue agriculture as a career
- Establish a student loan repayment program with the Higher Education Department for reimbursing individuals who operate farms or ranches in New Mexico

Student Loan Debt

- *NYFC Farming is a Public Service Report*
- NYFC student loan survey respondents, average debt of \$35,000
- Nearly 30% said they delayed or opted out of farming because of student loan debt
- 50% struggle to make student loan payments on a farming salary
- Impacts ability to secure credit to purchase land or farming equipment

STUDENT LOAN DEBT IS AN OBSTACLE FOR MANY AMERICANS, BUT OFTEN AN INSURMOUNTABLE ONE FOR YOUNG FARMERS



Student Loan Debt

- Loan repayment/ loan for service programs widely used by states
- Research indicates programs are effective in to attracting and retaining workforce in under- served fields and geographic areas
- NM Higher Education Department offers a number of loan repayment options
- New York State provides loan assistance for young farmers and ranchers; other states in development (WI and MT)



Student Loan Debt

- Establishing a student loan repayment for farmers and ranchers in New Mexico within Higher Education Department a top priority in strategic plan
- New program should provide up to \$22,000/person over a five year period; awards to 10 applicants with potential to scale
- Five year service requirement (work or operate on a small farm or ranch); earn 2/3 of income from farming or ranching
- Priority for NM college graduates, substantial financial need, intent to pursue farming as a career, underrepresented in agriculture community

Questions?



Kelsey Rader, New Mexico First,
kelsey@nmfirst.org

Kate Greenberg, National Young
Farmers Coalition,
kate@youngfarmers.org



Thank you
Legislative
Education
Study
Committee!

