



## RESILIENCE IN NEW MEXICO AGRICULTURE PROJECT:

# The Ag Plan and Implementation

### **What is the Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture project?**

Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture is a project that began in 2014 to address unprecedented challenges to the health of the agriculture industry – issues no one farmer, rancher or businessman could tackle alone. The project has been supported by several funders, and its backbone organizations are New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU) and New Mexico First.

Foundationally, this project advances three activities: reforms to strengthen agricultural resilience in New Mexico; support for the industry from policymakers and stakeholders; and improved understanding by the public about the value of agriculture to the state's future. To achieve these goals, the project centers on the development and implementation of a statewide policy plan for New Mexico agriculture – the Ag Plan.

### **What is the Ag Plan?**

The Ag Plan is a statewide policy plan for New Mexico agriculture that started from the ground up. At 13 regional meetings across the state, over 600 stakeholders identified major issues in the areas of land and water; the agricultural supply chain; agricultural economic viability; and the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Based off the input from these regional meetings, a 35-member task force of agricultural industry leaders and stakeholders worked over six months to create the Ag Plan (released in August 2017).

The plan contains 17 broad recommendations (see back) with accompanying actionable strategies in the four main subject areas mentioned above. The Ag Plan content focuses on wide-ranging issues such as: increasing educational and financial supports for aspiring farmers and ranchers; ensuring balanced incentives and strategies for water and land conservation; expansion of agricultural supply chain capacity and local procurement; and improved public understanding on the financial hardships of farmers and ranchers.

### **How can you be involved?**

The Ag Plan is only as effective as those who turn its contents into reality. New Mexico First and NMSU are continuing to lead in organizing and supporting implementation efforts of the Ag Plan. If you or your organization wish to contribute to implementing a recommendation or strategy from the plan, please contact [info@nmfirst.org](mailto:info@nmfirst.org), or visit the New Mexico First website at [www.nmfirst.org](http://www.nmfirst.org).



## The Ag Plan Recommendations

Rec #	Topic	Recommendation
1	<b>Education and Training</b>	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.
2	<b>Land Access</b>	Protect agricultural land for future generations, and enable opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to either own or secure long-term leases to productive, affordable land.
3	<b>Capital and Credit Access</b>	Enable and expand opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to build and access credit and capital necessary to grow their businesses.
4	<b>Water Rights</b>	Ensure that the legal and permitting processes for managing water rights are clear, well-administered and support conservation by water rights owners.
5	<b>Wildlife Habitat Conservation</b>	Advance a balanced approach to protection of both habitats and agricultural land-use.
6	<b>Water Supply</b>	Pursue research, incentives and other strategies to advance water conservation and increased water supply.
7	<b>Watershed Restoration</b>	Advance organized and integrated watershed restoration that promotes multiple uses, with the goals of increased water supply, reduced catastrophic fires, improved soil health and overall healthier environments.
8	<b>Resources and Training</b>	Increase access to resources, training and technical assistance for producers to get their products to consumers.
9	<b>Branding and Verification</b>	Achieve a unified brand for New Mexico agriculture products, and develop an equitable, industry-led process for verification of product authenticity.
10	<b>Infrastructure</b>	Identify and increase supply chain infrastructure for small to medium-scale producers of animal products and specialty crops (i.e. cold and dry storage, processing and packaging, transportation and commercial kitchens).
11	<b>Food Retail</b>	Increase local buying and procurement by anchor public and private institutions such as hospitals, school districts, corporations, correctional facilities and senior centers.
12	<b>Consumers</b>	Increase consumer base and market access locally, interstate and internationally for New Mexico agriculture products.
13	<b>Reducing Waste and Compost</b>	Manage food surplus through best practices that promote health in all communities, reduce waste, increase recovery, feed animals, and create a nutrient-rich soil product through composting.
14	<b>Public Relations and Economic Impact</b>	Provide a trusted source of data for accurate financial information on New Mexico's farms and ranches and their contribution to the state. Deploy this information to facilitate informed debate among the public, policymakers, researchers, tribal leaders, and industry representatives regarding the stability of New Mexico farms and ranches and the provision of a safe, affordable and adequate food supply.
15	<b>Worker's Comp</b>	Develop information and projects that help farmers and ranchers cost-effectively meet new requirements to provide their employees with worker's compensation insurance.
16	<b>Leases and Lending</b>	Support cost-effective land leasing and lending by helping farmers and ranchers better understand the legal and regulatory issues surrounding these matters.
17	<b>Tax Reg</b>	Protect existing tax exemptions for agriculture and enact others that fairly keep food costs low while protecting producers' ability to maintain their businesses.