

Beginning Farmer & Rancher Fly-In

Sound Investments to Ensure the Next Generation of Beginning Farmers

June 14-16, 2011

Agriculture is a growing and vibrant sector of our nation's economy, yet farming and ranching as a career choice may be one of the most difficult occupations to enter. Limited access to land and markets, hyper land price inflation, high input costs, and a lack of sufficient support networks are just a few barriers new agriculture entrepreneurs face.

Despite these hurdles, people want to farm or ranch and see great opportunities in agriculture. Community organizations and institutions are seeing a wave of interest. Relatively good crop prices, the local food movement, alternative livestock production systems and markets, and the growth in organics are just a few trends that have more and more individuals and families interested in farming or ranching.

We need a national strategy and commitment to support beginning farmer and ranchers entering agriculture. With an aging farm population and a large segment of baby boomers in this economic sector considering retirement, the time is now to nurture new agriculture start-ups.

New farmer and rancher policy is a jobs creator, a sound investment that can provide long-term societal benefits. It is the people in agriculture that produce the food and fiber of our nation, protect and enhance our natural resources, and contribute to the revitalization of our rural as well as urban communities.

New farmers and ranchers are much more diverse than previous generations. In addition to young people from farm families who are hoping to follow in their parents' footsteps, there are also new producers from non-farming backgrounds and recent immigrant families that hope to begin farming.

Beginning with the 1990 Farm Bill, Congress created programs for beginning farmers and ranchers, particularly in the area of farm credit. The 2008 Farm Bill went even further by augmenting existing provisions and creating several new initiatives and incentives for beginning farmers and ranchers.

Yet, those starting or hoping to start farming or ranching continue to face distinctive challenges as agriculture changes and evolves. They also continue to face barriers in accessing federal programs designed to assist them with getting started. If we want to encourage a new generation to pursue a career in agriculture, we must design public policy that responds to the unique needs of beginning farmers and ranchers.

With the 2012 Farm Bill, Congress has an opportunity to expand and improve a comprehensive beginning farmer and rancher initiative that breaks down barriers to entry and gives real support to ensure the effective start-up and success of new small and mid-scale producers across the country.

The time to act is now.

Who we are: This packet and fly-in is being led by beginning farmers from across the country with the assistance of staff from sponsor organizations. The policies and priorities outlined reflect the real life experiences of our leaders and organizations.

• **Nolan Lenzen**, beginning farmer, Eagle Bend, Minn. — Silver Shade dairy is a grass-based organic dairy operation in central Minnesota.

- **Annie Metzger**, beginning farmer, Shelbyville, Ill. — Samara Farm grows produce and poultry in central Illinois. It markets agricultural products through local farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).
- **Denae Friedheim**, beginning farmer, Lansing, Mich. — FoodShed Farmer is a farm and business that specializes in transplant production, microgreens and consulting.
- **Ethan Book**, beginning farmer, Knoxville, Iowa — Crooked Gap Farm focuses on raising Heritage breeds of grass-fed beef, outdoor-raised farrow-to-finish hogs and pastured egg layers.
- **Lindsey Shute**, beginning farmer, Red Hook, NY — Hearty Roots Community Farm grows non-certified organic vegetables for a 450-member CSA with members in New York City and the Hudson Valley.
- **Sara Eckert**, beginning farmer, Bellefonte, Penn. — Sara and her husband are establishing a CSA farm with an expected 120 subscribers in the next year.
- **Seth Nitschke**, beginning farmer, Neuman, Cal. — Open Space Meats is a sustainable grass-fed beef operation based out of the San Joaquin Valley.
- **Ben Marcus**, beginning farmer, Whitefield, Me. — Uncas Farms and Sheepscot General Store, a farm and retail farm business located in east central Maine.
- **William Powers**, beginning farmer, Ceresco, Neb. — Darby Springs Farm is a highly integrated crop and livestock operation that utilizes permaculture and holistic management, as well as grass-fed pastured poultry, multi-species pasture stacking, rotational grazing, organic, all-natural, antibiotic free, hormone free, and humanely-raised.
- **Don Lareau**, beginning farmer, Paonia, Col. — Zephyros Farm and Garden is a certified organic vegetable and cut flower farm in western Colorado. Products are marketed off the farm and at farmers' markets and through a CSA.
- **Garret Dwyer**, beginning farmer/rancher, Bartlett, Neb. — Garret operates and owns a beef cow and heifer operation while he continues to partner and work on his parent's family farm.
- **Adam Warthesen**, Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota
- **Traci Bruckner**, Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska
- **Steve Schwartz**, California FarmLink, California

This fly-in is sponsored by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Land Stewardship Project, Center for Rural Affairs, California FarmLink, Practical Farmers of Iowa, The Land Connection, National Young Farmer Coalition, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, and Beginning Farmers.