



*Evaluating Beginning Farmer Programs:
Identifying Outcomes, Impacts and Factors Relating to Success*

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is excited to receive a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) project grant for Fiscal Year 2016 to assist in our efforts to lead the first ever comprehensive evaluation of BFRDP funded projects to date.

This project will help the U.S. Department of Agriculture, advocacy organizations, and rural communities to better understand the short, medium and long-term outcomes of BFRDP. As interest in new farmer training continues to grow and existing funds are stretched to their limits, it is imperative that policymakers and practitioners alike understand the outcomes of these programs and learn how to make them as effective and successful as possible. It is our hope that this analysis will provide some of this clarity and showcase the importance of this unique program to the future of American agriculture.

Project Summary:

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program is the only national program seeking to explicitly train the next generation of farmers. Since BFRDP was first created, over \$100 million has been invested to support over 200 new farmer training projects impacting farmers in every state across the country. And while each project is required to track and report outcomes and impacts, to date, no national-level analysis has ever been completed of BFRDP as a whole. There has been no comprehensive effort to assess the short and long-term outcomes and impacts the program has had since its creation, and to identify the factors that lead to more successful new farmer training projects. Our project seeks to conduct the first ever comprehensive evaluation of BFRDP funded projects to date, by analyzing qualitative and quantitative data from project reports and assessing the mid and long-term outcomes of completed projects for which data has not yet been collected.

To undertake this comprehensive evaluation of BFRDP, we have assembled a Project Team that includes significant program evaluation and data analysis expertise, as well as a demonstrated track record of working with and evaluating beginning farmer programs. The two lead evaluators, who have expertise evaluating beginning farmer training programs, are Jan Perez, from the University of California-Santa Cruz and Ann Williams, consultant. Additionally, an Advisory Team comprised of beginning farmer practitioners and policy experts from non-profit and community-based organizations, as well as Cooperative Extension, will work collaboratively with the Evaluation Team to inform and guide the evaluation to ensure its relevance to beginning farmer stakeholders and policymakers. The advisory team members include the University of California-Berkeley, Center for Rural Affairs, CROPP Cooperatives, Land for Good, Land Stewardship Project, and the National Young Farmers' Coalition.

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