

# The Next Generation in Agriculture Act

Sponsored by Senators Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)  
and Susan Collins (R-ME)

## Bill Summary

The **Next Generation in Agriculture Act** lays out a national beginning farmer strategy that breaks down barriers to entry and gives real support to the next generation. This legislation addresses the critical issues new, young, aspiring, and veteran farmers face in accessing land, building skills, managing risk, and accessing federal resources to ensure that the 2018 Farm Bill is truly a farm bill for the future.

## The Need for a New Generation

Our nation's farmers and ranchers are aging, and many of them will reach retirement without a succession plan in place that ensures the ongoing viability and vitality of their operation. At the same time, aspiring farmers nationwide are facing significant barriers to success in agriculture, including: the limited availability of affordable and desirable farmland, challenges in acquiring start-up capital and financing, and inadequate access to hands-on training and risk management tools.

Nearly 100 million acres of farmland (enough to support nearly 250,000 family farms) is set to change hands over the next five years – *during* the course of our next farm bill. **To keep our agricultural economy strong, the next farm bill needs to facilitate the transfer of skills, knowledge, and land between current and future generations of family farmers.** The tools provided in previous farm bills have made a dent in slowing the aging of American agriculture, but it is very clear that a greater investment and a more coordinated national strategy is needed to truly buck this trend.

***The Next Generation in Agriculture Act will ensure that the 2018 Farm Bill gives real support to both aspiring and retiring farmers by:***

- Empowering new, aspiring, and veteran farmers with the skills to succeed in today's agricultural economy by permanently reauthorizing the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP).
- Expanding beginning farmers' access to land by scaling up resources for farm transition and succession planning within BFRDP.
- Ensuring equitable access to federal crop insurance by expanding crop insurance incentives to ensure all beginning farmers are able to effectively manage risk on their farms.
- Increasing coordination, outreach and technical assistance within USDA for resources and programs that support young, beginning, and retiring farmers.

## Section-by-Section Outline

### **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (Sec. 2)**

- Permanently reauthorizes USDA's only new farmer training program. Increases annual mandatory funding to \$50 million in order to ensure the continued investments and long-term support for new farmer training program in every state across the country.
- Expands grant priorities to reflect current high priority topics on food safety training, land access, farm transition and succession planning to better connect new and retiring farmers.
- Ensures farmers are consulted in project design, implementation and decision-making to ensure funded programs are as effective and responsive to farmers' needs as possible.
- Increases the indirect cost rate to 15 percent to better reflect actual administrative costs of project partners.
- Eliminates matching funds requirement to remove barriers and address regional inequities in grant funding.

### **Youth Outreach and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator (Sec. 3)**

- Adds new authority for a National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator that is charged with coordinating beginning farmer programs at USDA; developing strategies to provide assistance to retiring farmers; and working with partners to conduct mentoring, research and outreach on the profitability of new farms.
- Adds new authority for State Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinators within the state offices of FSA, NRCS, RD, RUS, RMA charged with coordinating outreach and technical assistance to help beginning farmers gain access to USDA programs.
- Adds new authority for an Agricultural Youth Coordinator to coordinate programs and outreach for youth organizations (i.e. 4-H, FFA) within USDA.

### **Next Generation Agriculture Tech Challenge (Sec. 4)**

Directs the Secretary to establish a next generation agriculture technology challenge competition to provide an incentive for the development of innovative mobile technology that removes barriers to entry in the marketplace for beginning farmers and ranchers.

### **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Definition (Sec. 5)**

Brings RMA's definition of a beginning farmer into conformity with the definition used by all other USDA agencies, so that the 2014 Farm Bill provisions apply for a producer's first 10 years in operation.