



Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach

in FY 2020 Appropriations

Training and supporting beginning and underserved farmers

Over the past 15 years, farmland inflation rates have increased by nearly 150 percent, while the number of people entering agriculture has steadily declined. With the average age of an American farmer approaching 60 years and 100 million acres of farmland set to change hands over the next five years, a potential nationwide shortage of farmers must be a key funding priority in FY 2020.

Additionally, for many farmers of color and military veterans, those barriers can be even more pronounced and difficult to overcome. Although federal resources are an important part of the farm safety net, these communities have not historically benefitted from USDA programs to the same extent as other farmers. This disparity disadvantages these farmers in both the national and global economy, and stifles the growth and prosperity of rural communities.

Fortunately, the new farm bill establishes the **Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO)** program in order to strengthen USDA's efforts to train and assist beginning, veteran, tribal and other underserved communities. FOTO combines two of USDA's flagship training and technical assistance programs – the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)** and the **Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers Program** (aka "Section 2501").

For FY 2020, we urge Congress to provide FOTO with \$10 million in discretionary funding, split equally between BFRDP and 2501

Why BFRDP Matters

- For over a decade, BFRDP has served as the only USDA program explicitly dedicated to training the next generation of farmers.
- A recent evaluation found that BFRDP is not only making a real difference in growing the next generation, but is also building a national infrastructure and new models to train and support new farmers.
- While the 2018 Farm Bill permanently protects BFRDP, the bill also cuts annual funding while broadening the program's scope to address the pressing issue of generational transfer of farmland – creating a dire need for additional appropriated dollars.
- Since 2014, BFRDP has only been able to fund 22 percent of all proposals, turning down two out of every three proposals recommended for funding.

Why 2501 Matters

- For nearly three decades, the Section 2501 Program has worked to level the playing field and arm our nation's most chronically underserved farmers with the tools they need to thrive and compete in the agricultural economy.
- The 2501 program has addressed historic inequities in farmers' access to federal programs – reaching farmers in 400 counties in more than 35 states, including the most persistently poor parts of our country.
- With several wars being waged over the past decade, an influx of returning military personnel are looking for ways to continue serving their country by transitioning into a rewarding career in farming.
- With this additional demand, it is essential that Congress scale up, not cut back, support for our nation's most underserved communities.



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