

Final Report

Title:	Growing Beginning Farmers in the Northeast through Regional Programming, Tools, and Community		
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Program Code: BFRDP**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher**Project Director**

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Recipient Organization

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{NO DATA ENTERED}

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{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

The "Growing Beginning Farmers in the Northeast" BFRDP Development Project will serve as a pilot project to support the next cadre of beginning farmers in New York by strengthening the support new farmers receive from NOFA-NY, an organic and sustainable farming organization. The project will also support the pilot regional network of beginning farmer education sharing and data collection among the six organic and sustainable farming organizations across the region. The client pool for this project is beginning farmers in New York state who have been farming for less than ten years, including people who are entering the field of farming by testing the waters as apprentices on organic farms. Based on a survey of beginning farmers who attended the NOFA-NY 2010 winter conference, these beginning farmers are typically between the ages of 18 and 29, although there are also many new farmers starting second careers between 40 and 60. They are equally male and female. The majority of these farmers want to farm fulltime; however, most beginning farmers start farming with off-farm incomes of less than \$20,000 and finance their farm-growth with personal savings (Frenay). Of the surveyed beginning farmers, 77% currently have access to land, and 72% are currently farming, either on their own or working for someone else. These farmers prepared for their farming ventures by working for another farmer in a production capacity (harvesting, weeding, etc.), apprenticing or interning full-time with a farmer-mentor, and by attending farm workshops or trainings. The data shows that the number one way they prefer to receive information is from on-farm hands-on workshops; they also learn well from on-farm field days and annual farming conferences. Our long-term goal is to increase the mentoring, apprenticeship, and technical assistance opportunities to organic and sustainable beginning farmers in every state in the Northeast. This pilot project will set the framework for achieving this goal by testing our methods in New York state. Specific project objectives and methods in support of this goal include: (1) Providing a diverse, supportive, and cohesive formal apprenticeship program and resources to beginning farmers in New York state; (2) Supporting beginning farmers who have begun farming independently through a formal mentoring program; and (3) Delivering comprehensive technical assistance to beginning farmers through on-farm field days, annual conferences, and

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workshops. Additional methods will include web-based resource development including an online apprenticeship matchmaking tool, webinars, regional meetings, capacity-building, and resource sharing. In doing so, NOFA-NY with its project partners will lay the foundation to collaboratively build a successful new generation of Northeast farmers.

Accomplishments**Major goals of the project**

Goals, Objectives and Expected Outputs For this one-year development grant, New York will serve as a pilot project with the goal of increasing the mentoring, apprenticeship, and technical assistance opportunities to organic and sustainable beginning farmers in New York state, while working with the other Northeast NOFAs and MOFGA to gather data on the needs of beginning farmers in the Northeast region. Objective 1: Provide a diverse, supportive, and cohesive formal apprenticeship program and resources to beginning farmers in New York. Activity 1.1. Sharing best practices and building the capacity of NOFA-New York to better meet the needs of beginning farmers. Expected Outputs: Each partner organic farming organization learns about effective and tested tools and resources for apprentices and their on-farm mentors. NOFA-NY receives concentrated support to pilot these programs with apprentices and farmer-mentors in New York state. Apprentices receive improved services. Activity 1.2. NOFA-NY develops an online apprentice & on-farm mentor matching service. Expected Outputs: NOFA-NY hosts and manages an online apprentice & on-farm mentor matching service. More beginning farmers apprentice in New York, and have more fulfilling apprenticeship educational experiences. More data is gathered on apprentices and on-farm mentors in the Northeast. Activity 1.3. NOFA-NY pilots a series of technical farm-based workshops for apprenticeships with a social gathering afterwards. Expected Outputs: At least 10 technical training workshops are hosted throughout New York for new beginning farmers apprenticing on organic and sustainable farms. Apprentices learn a variety of new production, marketing, and business management skills and meet other beginning farmers. Objective 2: Support beginning farmers who have begun farming independently during their first few years of farming through a formal mentoring program. NOFA-NY will pilot a program to connect beginning farmers with successful experienced organic farmers eager to share their knowledge with the next generation of New York farmers. Activity 2.1. Sharing best practices and building the capacity of NOFA-NY to better serve beginning farmers interested in learning from a mentor. Expected Outputs: Each state organization uses effective and tested tools and resources for mentees and their mentors. Objective 3: Deliver comprehensive technical assistance to beginning farmers through on-farm field days, annual winter conferences, and workshops. Activity 3.1. Seven Northeast state partner organizations host a series of beginning farmer workshops at their winter conferences. Expected Outputs: 350 beginning farmers gain technical farming knowledge by attending a NOFA or MOFGA winter conference. Activity 3.2. NOFA-NY hosts a series of beginning farmer on-farm field days. Expected Outputs: Over the pilot project, at least 80 beginning farmers gain technical farming knowledge by attending a NOFA-NY field day.

What was accomplished under these goals?

The in-person project team meeting in November 2011 trained 12 people from 8 states (including Rhode Island, not a partner in the grant) on the history of on-farm training programs and on the administration of apprenticeship and journeyman programs run by NOFA-VT and MOFGA. Evaluations showed that the training increased knowledge in all specified topic areas, and increased the participants' perception of the relevance of web-based tools to support beginning farmers and experienced farmer-educators. By the end of 2011, the NOFA-NY apprenticeship matching database listed 120 aspiring farmers seeking on-farm education and 19 farms seeking apprentices to train. Attendance at the 10 beginning farmer and apprentice field days totaled 233 participants. Of these participants responding to evaluation questions, 92% indicated they had been farming ten or fewer years; 66% indicated not yet having started farming or having farmed from 0 to 3 years; 20% indicated having farmed 4 to 7 years; 6% indicated having farmed from 8 to 10 years. Feedback showed that the information presented to these new farmers was relevant and timely for their farming plans. Farmers rated gaining "a great amount" or "a medium amount" of new knowledge on learning objectives (four objectives were identified for each workshop's overall topic area for 9 out of the 10 workshops) in a combined 523 instances, versus 92 instances of "little new knowledge" and 4 instances of "nothing new." Seventy-eight percent of responses indicated the farmer intended to use their new knowledge from the workshop they attended within the coming year, 20% of respondents were undecided and 2% did not intend to use new knowledge from that workshop in the next year. Attitude outcomes were measured by asking the impact of certain activities on the farmers' future plans. Interactions with farmers outside the beginning farmers' peer group had moderate to considerable impact for 82% of respondents; interactions with farmers in their peer group had a moderate or considerable impact on future farming plans for 74% of respondents; mealtime social interactions had a moderate to considerable impact for 58% of respondents. Therefore, social interactions with farmers of all experience levels, provided in group-based learning events such as conferences, are highly valued by beginning farmers. Surveying these farmers also provided insight into the audience being reached by scholarships to the winter conferences. Twelve percent had not yet started farming, 59% had been farming 0 to 3 years, 25% had been farming 4 to 7 years, and 4% had been farming 8 to 10 years. Three respondents had participated in middle school or high school agriculture programs, 9 grew up on a farm, 92 had gone through farm apprenticeships or internships, 102 had taken agricultural classes, 143 had participated in farm work and 49 had received

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education and counsel from a mentor.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

OUTPUTS: The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) coordinated an in-person training with 6 NOFA chapters, with presentations by MOFGA and NOFA-VT regarding apprenticeship and Journey person Farmer programs. Following that meeting, NOFA-NY created a web-based apprenticeship directory (<http://www.nofany.org/bfam/apprenticeshipmain>) where farmers and aspiring apprentices could list themselves and search for a match. This tool was publicized through relationships with other farmer-training institutions such as the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, Cornell University's Northeast Beginning Farmer Project, Groundswell, CRAFT networks and through NOFA-NY's presence at its own and partners' events. NOFA-NY created a landing page (<http://www.nofany.org/bfam>) on its organizational website which currently includes links to information on farm labor, land access, farm financing and farm education, as well as 8 informational fact sheets and 1 knowledge/skills/attitude change tracking tool. Representatives from each chapter (NOFA-NJ, -Mass, -VT, -NH, -CT, -NY and MOFGA) participated in monthly hour-long phone calls to discuss beginning farmer activities and to enhance the collaborative capacity of these organizations to better serve new farmers. At each NOFA winter conference (total of 6 regionally), certain workshops were created for or identified as applicable to Beginning Farmers. Additional to its winter conference activities, CT NOFA assisted with the planning of a Getting Started in Organic Farming Conference and a New Farmer Summit prior to the CT NOFA Winter Conference. Scholarships were awarded to Beginning Farmers from each state to attend the 7 regional conferences, including the MOFGA Farmer-to-Farmer Conference in November 2010, totaling 233 beginning farmer awardees. These farmers evaluated their experience and the change in knowledge and attitude that resulted from attending. NOFA-NY, NOFA-VT, NOFA-NJ and NOFA-NH hosted social events for Beginning Farmers at their winter conferences, collaborating with the non-profit organization The Greenhorns. NOFA-NY and NOFA-NH created pin-back buttons to enhance beginning farmer community spirit at their conferences. The NOFA Summer Conference included a beginning farmer track of 13 workshops. Forty-eight beginning farmers from 8 states were awarded scholarships to this conference. NOFA-NY planned and coordinated with New York organic farmers to host ten on-farm technical skills workshops for beginning farmers with time to socialize and network, from May through September. Three new farmers received scholarships to attend these events. Five new farmers were awarded scholarships to attend the NOFA-NY training, "CSA in Western New York: an Introduction to Membership Farming." NOFA-NH planned a Beginner Farmer Workshop and social event and provided 18 scholarships. NOFA/Mass provided beginning farmer scholarships to two fall educational events. All states used e-mail news, printed news and outreach materials, printed postcards, online social media and personal communication to advertise beginning farmer opportunities and events to their audiences.

PARTICIPANTS: Kate Mendenhall (NOFA-NY) supervised collaboration between the other primary and subcontracted organizations: MOFGA, NOFA-VT, NOFA-NJ, NOFA/Mass, CT-NOFA, NOFA-NH. Rachel Schell-Lambert (NOFA-NY) created the NOFA-NY Farm Apprenticeship Program, planned on-farm workshops for beginning farmers, planned beginning farmer educational opportunities at NOFA conferences, led the scholarship and activity evaluation initiatives and carried out all other duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for NOFA-NY. Schell-Lambert organized monthly phone meetings for the interstate collaborative team, tracked activities among all partners and provided some logistical support for the billing process. Andrew Marshall (MOFGA) and Enid Wonnacott (NOFA-VT) the in-person training in November 2010 for the interstate collaborative team. Kate Mendenhall supervised Rachel Schell-Lambert in all activities for NOFA-NY. Bill Duesing and Shannon Raider carried out all duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for CT NOFA. Michal Lumsden, Ben Grosscup and Julie Rawson carried out all duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for NOFA/Mass. Jim Ramanek and Jack Mastrianni carried out all duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for NOFA-NH. Enid Wonnacott and Wendy Sue Harper carried out all duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for NOFA-VT. Joanna Dillon and David Glenn carried out all duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for NOFA-NJ. Andrew Marshall carried out all duties associated with the outputs and outcomes of the grant for MOFGA. Informal collaborations occurred with farmers and service providers. These farmers and service providers gave valuable technical presentations and provided valuable consultation and referrals to the aforementioned collaborators, to the end that on-farm and conference technical workshops were taught by qualified and experienced individuals. Service providers shared information they had learned through their work, and host farm networks expressed their needs to help focus collaborators' work. **TARGET AUDIENCES:** Farmers living in New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine and Connecticut with less than ten years of experience farming, including those still exploring farming as their career, were served by this grant. These farmers attended educational and networking events designed to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence in technical and farm business planning topics. These educational events provided the time and place for informal peer-to-peer mentoring, formation of professional connections and information exchange. Web-based outreach and resources in New York connected these beginning farmers to technical and scientific resources in a range of topics. Staff at collaborating organizations made personal connections to disseminate and determine the best practices to reach the audience of beginning farmers with important efforts. Experienced farmers who want to transfer knowledge, skills and experiences to beginning farmers were also a target audience. These farmers were

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given information on providing quality on-farm technical training for beginning farmers through web-based and personal communication, as well as through workshops at farming education conferences put on by each collaborating organization.
 PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Not relevant to this project.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

{NO DATA ENTERED}

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Participants

Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0	0	0	0	0
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	0	0	0	0	0

Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Target Audience

Products

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
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Citation

No publications reported this period

Other Products

Changes/Problems