

Title:	Land Here!: Assuring Land Access for New England's Beginning Farmers		
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Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Recipient Organization

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Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

Access to land is the most significant barrier facing most farm entrants. Research and the experiences of service providers who work with beginning farmers across the country confirm that finding land, appropriate acquisition and tenure strategies, assessment and negotiation, legal and business considerations, affordability of land and housing, security of tenure, and stewardship are foremost challenges for people in their start-up years of farming. "Land" includes agriculturally capable acreage, and any farm and housing infrastructure that might accompany it. On the flip side, exiting farm families struggle to achieve a satisfying transfer of the family farm, whether to the next generation or to a non-family operator. And, much privately and publicly held agriculturally capable acreage goes unused because owners and managers do not have the information and support to make their properties available. To successfully launch and support our region's next generations of farmers, we need to address the above gaps by: preparing and supporting beginning farmers for land access ("readiness"); helping farmers and landowners find and engage each other; helping non-farming landowners enter into mutually rewarding tenure agreements; making more agriculturally capable land available; helping exiting farmers successfully transfer their farms and farmland; creating, testing, encouraging and implementing innovative secure and affordable acquisition and tenure arrangements and partnerships; and implementing modern techniques to reach and engage various audience sectors. This project's unique, innovative contribution is that it employs a systems approach to dramatically and comprehensively improve the entire service infrastructure to foster access to land. We will build an enduring, collaborative network of experts from across sectors and disciplines with professionals and farmers with deep experience and expertise in these issues. We will create a learning community of institutions, agencies and at least 16 NGOs in a laboratory where both experimental and well considered ideas strengthen service and expand the boundaries of what's possible. Our five topic-focused task forces will bring groups together, produce educational materials, conduct educational activities and research, and forge new collaborations that will help beginning farmers get onto farms in New England.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

The long-term goal of this project is to assure land access for New England's beginning farmers. We will fill specific program gaps, build professional capacity, inform and assist target audiences, and develop and disseminate land tenure and transfer innovations. Our objectives are to: adequately prepare beginning farmers to make sound land acquisition choices; increase the number of exiting farm families prepared to transfer to the next generation; make land held by non-farmers more available, affordable and accessible for beginners; enable farmers and farm property holders to find each other; and advance innovative land tenure and transfer methods and tools. This project will refine, expand and add innovation to the existing modest body of knowledge on farmland access and tenure. In particular, we will provide missing and new technical and practical information

and models on novel approaches such as: long-term and ground leases; perpetual affordability provisions; active agriculture easements; stewardship clauses; affordable farmer housing; statutory and regulatory reforms to reward secure tenure; working with public, institutional and conservation buyer landlords; and shared equity and other non-traditional acquisition approaches. We will expand theory and praxis, and disseminate our successes throughout the region and nationally (see below). Our tools and materials will have wide applicability for beginning farmers everywhere who cannot or choose not to purchase land early in their farming careers (or ever.) As a multi-state project, we will compare programs, policies and regulations across states. And while one focus is on peri-urban areas, our attention to both urbanizing and rural landscapes offers wide applicability for all other regions. This project will build comprehensive, sustainable regional support for beginning farmers to find, choose, acquire and successfully operate farms in New England and offer innovative, alternative land acquisition, tenure and transfer models to national audiences.

What was accomplished under these goals?

To meet these goals, we brought together sixty project partners from over 30 organizations, plus private firms and consultants who collaborated to strengthen the network of land access services and programs in New England. Through our collaboration, services to help beginning farmers acquire secure and affordable land tenure improved and expanded in all six states.

Referral capacity was increased; more programs were added, staff built their knowledge and skills to better serve beginning farmers. Over 100 service providers acquired information and skills related to farmland access, tenure and transfer. Other specific accomplishments include:

Twelve new print and online educational materials built the knowledge and skills of over 700 beginning farmers, landowners and others who are part of land access solutions. Over 110 non-farming landowners learned about making their land available for farming in eleven workshops across six states. An innovative new online regional farm property clearinghouse helped connect over 4,000 farm seeking and landowning website visitors.

At least 1,300 transitioning farmers found advisors and services on the Farm Transfer Network of New England's updated and expanded website. Innovative land access and transfer solutions were promoted in seven LAP research and policy reports. Over 300 transitioning farm families received guidance from advisors informed by LAP resources and peer training. 630 farm seekers, farm families and farmland owners received information, referral, advice and "coaching" from Land For Good field agents and 244 beginning farmers improved their readiness to access farmland by taking LFG's Acquiring Your Farm online course.

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

We held one region wide project summit for 50 service providers. We conducted one day-long training for professionals involved with farm succession planning. We coordinated five task forces for professionals to develop tools, reports and activities such as workshops, collaborating together within and across states. We held 12 workshops related to farmland access that professionals attended. We produced several guides for professionals (see list of products elsewhere in this REEPORT.)

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

We developed a database of over 200 New England contacts including agriculture agencies and departments, Extension, farm support organizations, academics, private sector advisors, land trusts and other conservation groups, and others. We sent about a dozen separate email blasts totaling about 1980 discrete recipients announcing the release of project deliverables, upcoming project events, and periodic project updates. We also posted to various organizational contacts and list serves in the region and nationally, reaching several thousand more. All project products, along with a final report are posted at www.landforgood.org.

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

{Nothing to report}

Participants

Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students within Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0.7	0	0	0	0.7
Technical	0.7	0	0	0	0.7
Administrative	0.4	0	0	0	0.4

Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students within Stuffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	1.8	0	0	0	1.8

Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Target Audience

The main target audience for this project was beginning farmers, with emphasis on those seeking land to begin or grow their operations. Many beginning farmers do not have family land to farm. Our purpose in reaching this audience was to prepare them to make good land acquisition decisions that would increase likelihood of success.

Other key audiences included: senior farm operators; non-farming landowners; farm service providers; community leaders; and policymakers. We also included established farmers seeking more or other land, or better agreements on land they currently farm.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

A Landowner's Guide to Leasing Land for Farming

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

Leasing Land to Farmers: A Handbook for New England Land Trusts, Municipalities, and Institutions

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

Successful Farm Transfer Planning for Farmers Without an Identified Successor

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

Farm Succession and Transfer: Strategies for the Junior Generation

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

A Team Approach to Farm Transfer Planning Assistance

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

Farmland Leasing for Private Landowners: A Short Guide

Product Type

Data and Research Material

Description

Farmland Tenure: Policy and Program Recommendations

Product Type

Data and Research Material

Description

A Report on the Option to Purchase at Ag Value

Product Type

Data and Research Material

Description

Farmland Investors: Findings and Opportunities for New England

Product Type

Other

Description

New England Farmland Finder www.newenglandfarmlandfinder.org, a new regional farm property clearinghouse

Product Type

Other

Description

Farm Transfer Network of New England www.farmtransfernewengland.net, updated with new providers and new materials

Product Type

Other

Description

Acquiring Your Farm online course www.landforgood.org

Changes/Problems

{Nothing to report}