

Title:	A Comprehensive New Farmer Support and Training Program for Maine		
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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

The State of Maine, like much of the rest of the US, needs well-trained and innovative new farmers to supply a growing demand for sustainably-produced food. The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, in partnership with Maine Farmland Trust and Land for Good, will enhance and expand its Journeyperson Farm Training Program in response to that demand. This program is already well-established and has helped to start over 75 new farming operations in Maine over the past 10 years, but is currently undergoing significant growth and expansion as interest in sustainable and local agriculture increases. MOFGA's Journeyperson program offers a 2-year package of educational and financial support to new Farmers in Maine, including mentorship from an experienced farmer, business and management training, and scholarship support. We will use BFRDP funds to enroll and support 50 participants in the program each year for the next 3 years, creating 75 additional new farmers in Maine by 2014. To confront the major challenges of secure, stable land access and tenure facing these new farmers, MOFGA will form partnerships with Maine Farmland Trust and Land for Good. These partnerships will provide participants in the Journeyperson Program the skills, strategies, and support they need to find land. Together these innovative programs and services will form a comprehensive New Farmer program for the State of Maine.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

MOFGA's objectives for the project are to contribute significantly to the training and support of the new farmers that Maine needs to catalyze and sustain its growing local food system. Following this, we expect that by the end of the grant's term in 2014, MOFGA will have trained 75 new farmers through its Journeyperson Program, will have maintained its current success rate of 90%, and will have helped those participants who entered the program without stable land tenure to achieve that through its partnerships with Maine FarmLink and Land for Good.

What was accomplished under these goals?

Major goals of the project

MOFGA's objectives for the program were to contribute significantly to the training and support of the new farmers that Maine needs to catalyze and sustain its growing local food system.

What was accomplished under these goals?

MOFGA trained 75 new farmers through its Journeyperson Program, of which 90% have established new farms.

It also helped participants secure stable land tenure. 74% of the participants entered the program without stable land tenure. Within their two-year program, nearly half of them secured land through MOFGA's partnership between Land for Good and Maine Farmland Trust.

Thirty participants attended MOFGA's Farm Beginnings whole-farm planning and business course, resulting in comprehensive action plans for their farms and increased financial literacy for the farmers.

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

The Program offered numerous training opportunities for its participants. These included the following:

- *Negotiation for Farmers*, a day-long workshop produced in partnership with Community Mediation Program, Volunteers of America NNE. (Two workshops were offered each year.)
- Beginning Farmer Resource Network, 2 days of programming each year at the Maine Agricultural Trades Show.
- Land for Good offered a dozen training workshops including *Conducting a Land Search* and *Next Steps: from apprentice to farmer*.
- Each summer MOFGA also offered 21 weeks of on-farm programs, *The Farm Training Project*, to augment on-farm learning. These were 4-hour farm tours, discussions and potluck dinners where participants shared ideas and skills.
- Hundreds of hours of one-on-one consultation were also provided at the farms.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

The program has been successful in training 75 new farmers who have established 68 new farms.

The program participants and graduates interact and share ideas through a listserv that includes current and past participants as MOFGA's technical services staff.

Several states have used MOFGA's program as a model to establish similar programs in their states; including a coalition of northeastern organic farming organizations (NOFA) who have joined together with the goal of establishing a regional journeyperson program, modeled after MOFGA's. In addition Land Stewardship Project (LSP) has also developed a journeyperson program.

Young farmers routinely move to Maine to participate in our journeyperson program and set up farms here.

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

Building on the success of the last three years, MOFGA is committed to continuing the program. It presently is requesting additional funding from the USDA. MOFGA is also working on building a secure endowment to support the program over the long term. MOFGA is currently reviewing applications for a new class of Journeypersons beginning in 2015.

Participants

{Nothing to report}

Target Audience

The direct target audience is young farmers who want to learn the trade and establish businesses. MOFGA met its goal to enroll 25 participants each year. The number of applicants far exceeded this goal.

The indirect audience is the thousands of Maine families who benefit from fresh, organic food grown by these farmers. As illustrated by the hundreds of successful farmers markets and farms selling CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares, Maine people are enjoying the bounty.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products

{Nothing to report}

Changes/Problems

This program was successful and has served as a model across the country