Menu

Education and Assistance

USDA offers a wealth of information and services for new farmers and ranchers. Such services include providing cutting-edge agricultural research, collecting and sharing information on markets, providing technical assistance for common challenges or issues on the farm, and offering programs to help support new farmers and ranchers in local communities.

As a new farmer or rancher, you can use these resources to plan your business, address risk, assess opportunities for growth and expansion, and connect with your community.

If you are an organization looking to support a new generation of farming and ranching, you can find tools to support your work and opportunities to partner with USDA.

For Farmers and Ranchers

USDA Research, Education, and Economics

USDA is dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable, competitive U.S. food and fiber system and strong, healthy communities, families, and youth. It achieves this through integrated research, analysis and education—offering cutting-edge research, economic insight, as well as timely and accurate statistics to the agricultural and consumer community.

For more information, please visit USDA's Research, Education and Economics (http://www.ree.usda.gov/) (REE) Web site.

Ag Census

Since 1840, the U.S. government has collected important census data (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/index.php) on agriculture. Many growers find this data to be a very helpful resource for understanding what other producers in their state or region are growing, what sorts of conservation practices they are using, and other information about agriculture in their region.

Cooperative Extension

USDA and agricultural colleges around the country work together to support an extensive network of state, regional, and county Cooperative Extension offices (http://nifa.usda.gov/partners-and-extension-map?state=All&type=Extension&order=title&sort=asc),

that can help answer questions about your operation and address common issues faced by agricultural producers. These offices translate the knowledge gained from research into education programs that help provide solutions to challenges people face in agriculture and conduct workshops and educational events for the agricultural community.

You can also crowd-source research-proven and science-based knowledge via eXtension, the Extension system's [national online interactive learning environment (http://www.extension.org)](http://www.extension.org).

Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program

USDA supports [extension agents on American Indian reservations (http://nifa.usda.gov/program/nifa-tribal-programs)](http://nifa.usda.gov/program/nifa-tribal-programs) to assist in developing profitable farming and ranching techniques.

SCORE SCORE

[SCORE (http://www.score.org/usda)](http://www.score.org/usda) provides free business mentoring and coaching to small business owners. You can work one-on-one with a volunteer mentor to explore aspects of running a farm or ranch—including developing your business plan, preparing to navigate legal and financial preparations in getting started, identifying new markets, and developing growth strategies.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

SBA makes available a wealth of information about starting, managing, and transitioning a business. [Explore information and guidance (https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business/managing-business)](https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business/managing-business) that will help you manage and grow your business effectively.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

[SARE's grants and education programs (http://www.sare.org/)](http://www.sare.org/) promote profitability; stewardship of the land, air, and water; and quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and their communities. SARE is one of the only federal research programs that fund on-farm research and that farmers can directly apply for.

FarmAnswers.org

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program has made available a clearinghouse of information for new and beginning farmers, [FarmAnswers.org (http://FarmAnswers.org)](http://FarmAnswers.org).

Training the Next Generation of Farmers and...

Extension Risk Management Education

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture provides funding to four regional centers, known collectively as Extension Risk Management Education (http://extensionrme.org), for the purpose of educating America's farmers and ranchers to manage the unique risks of producing food for the world's table.

Market News

The Agriculture Marketing Service's Market News (http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/marketnews) provides real-time price, volume, supply, and demand information for use in making production and marketing decisions.

The Latest Commodity and Weather Projections

You can find USDA's updated commodity production and price projections for the current marketing year on USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board Web site (http://www.usda.gov/oce/commodity/wasde/index.htm).

In addition, the Office of the Chief Economist publishes weekly updates on U.S. and global crop weather conditions (http://www.usda.gov/oce/weather/index.htm), including the current Drought Monitor.

Learning Guide Series

USDA has created a Learning Guide Series for small and mid-sized producers to help navigate specific sets of USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Tools and Resources (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_RESOURCES).

ATTRA

USDA funds ATTRA (https://attra.ncat.org/marketing.html), the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, which makes information and technical assistance available to farmers, ranchers, Extension agents, educators, and others involved in sustainable agriculture in the United States. ATTRA offers a wide variety of resources for new farmers and ranchers (https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food/startup.html).

Food Safety: Help Getting GAP Certified

USDA offers a user's guide to Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices Audits (http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp)—as well as information about the audit process—provided by the Agricultural Marketing Service.

USDA and other leading food and agriculture organizations support a free online tool, On-Farm Food Safety Project (http://onfarmfoodsafety.org/), to help U.S. producers of all sizes achieve GAP-harmonized standards and certification. By answering just a few questions, farmers who use the site can design a customized manual to meet GAP harmonized standards and certification requirements, including USDA GAP standards, and mitigate business risks.

Food Safety: Produce Safety Alliance

The Produce Safety Alliance (http://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/) is developing a nationwide curriculum to increase understanding of the principles of Good Agricultural Practices and to facilitate the implementation of food safety regulations that will be part of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Their website provides information related to training opportunities, educational materials, regulatory updates, and national produce safety collaborators. Outreach efforts focus on fresh produce growers, packers, and grower cooperatives, with special emphasis on small and very small farms and packinghouses. Additional materials for specific processed products and sprouts may also be found here:

- **Food Safety: Food Safety Preventive Controls Safety Alliance**
  The Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance (http://www.iit.edu/ifsh/alliance) is a broad-based public-private alliance of key industry, academic, and government stakeholders. The alliance's mission is to support safe food production by developing a broad range of materials, including a nationwide core curriculum as well as training and outreach programs that assist companies producing human and animal food to comply with the preventive controls regulations that will be part of FSMA

- **Food Safety: Sprout Safety Alliance**
  The Sprout Safety Alliance (http://www.iit.edu/ifsh/sprout_safety) is a public-private alliance developing a core curriculum, training and outreach programs for stakeholders in the sprout production community to enhance the industry's understanding and implementation of best practices for improving sprout safety as well as additional requirements for sprout producers in the upcoming rule on standards for produce safety required by FSMA.

USDA Meat, Poultry, and Processed Egg Regulations

New and small meat, poultry, or processed egg product producers with compliance questions about inspection-related policies, programs, systems, and procedures can find resources through the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Small Plant Help Desk (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/haccp/small-and-very-small-plant-outreach).

For Organizations Supporting New Farmers and Ranchers

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/beginning-farmer-and-rancher-development-program-bfrdp), administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, provides grants to organizations that train, educate, and provide outreach and technical assistance to new and beginning farmers on production, marketing, business management, legal strategies, and other topics critical to running a successful operation. It also funds the national clearinghouse/library of information for new farmers and new farmer educators, FarmAnswers.org (http://farmanswers.org/).

Outreach Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Grants
Outreach Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veterans Farmers and Ranchers (http://www.outreach.usda.gov/sdfr) grants (formerly known as Section 2501 grants) provide funds to tribes, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations throughout the country to conduct training, outreach, and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and veteran farmers and ranchers.

AgrAbility
The AgrAbility program (http://nifa.usda.gov/program/agrability) supports projects—led by State Cooperative Extension Services, in coordination with private, nonprofit disability organizations—to enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities.

Intertribal Agriculture Council's Technical Assistance Network

USDA works closely with the [Intertribal Agriculture Council (http://www.iactechhelp.com/)](http://www.iactechhelp.com/) to promote the use of Tribal resources in Indian Country and facilitate the application process for USDA loans and grants. The Intertribal Agriculture Council also facilitates the export of products produced by Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Tribal citizens.

Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant

The [Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant program (http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/socially-disadvantaged-groups-grant)](http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/socially-disadvantaged-groups-grant) provides technical assistance—through eligible cooperatives and cooperative development centers—to small, socially-disadvantaged agricultural producers in rural areas.

Value-Added Producer Grants

The [Value-Added Producer Grant program (http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants)](http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants) helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to processing or marketing of value-added products. Grants are for feasibility studies and working capital.

Risk Management Education for Producers

The Risk Management Agency offers two opportunities each year to partner with organizations working with producers to provide crop insurance education and risk-management training. Special emphasis is given to Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, and Minority Farmers and Ranchers. For more information on how organizations can partner with RMA please visit [Partnership and Cooperative Agreements (http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements)](http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements).

Technical Assistance for Food Hubs

USDA provides resources to help food hubs improve their financial performance. Food hubs, which are a businesses or organizations that manage the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of locally-produced food, play a key role in creating opportunities for small and mid-sized producers while also satisfying growing consumer demand for local products. These resources, [Running a Food Hub: Assessing Financial Viability (http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTYwNDI4LjU4MzczOTIxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE2MDQyOC41ODM](http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTYwNDI4LjU4MzczOTIxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE2MDQyOC41ODM) provides modules and best practices for food hubs to maximize profits and control costs. Part of a [multi-volume series (http://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/publications-cooperatives)](http://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/publications-cooperatives) published by USDA Rural Development, the report provides technical assistance for food hubs at different stages of development.

Cooperative Publications

Rural Business-Cooperative Service has a library of [cooperative publications (http://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/publications-cooperatives)](http://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/publications-cooperatives) that are useful for exploring cooperatives as a potential business model.

For technical assistance for cooperative development, please visit our [Cooperative Development Centers (https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RD-CoopDevelopmentCenters.pdf)](https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RD-CoopDevelopmentCenters.pdf).

STEP 1: START TO FARM

STEP 2: MAKE A PLAN

STEP 3: RESOURCES FOR NEW FARMERS

STEP 4: GET CONNECTED

Discovery Tool (/discovery)