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About USDA (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=ABOUT_USDA)

Glossary (<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=glossary>)

Ask the Expert (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=ASK_EXPERT2)

Languages (<https://www.farmers.gov/translations>)

Contact Us (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=CONTACT_US)

Menu

[Home \(/\)](#)

[New Farmers \(/new-farmers\)](#)

[Women in Ag \(/women-in-ag\)](#)

[Young Farmers \(/young-farmers\)](#)

[Veterans \(https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/veterans\)](https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/veterans)

[A New Generation \(/new-generation-land\)](#)

[Discovery Tool \(/discovery\)](#)

Important Considerations



If you are considering a career in farming or just getting started, take a minute to think about your next steps.

Successful farmers will tell you that farming is not just a career. Farmers take great care of the land and water for future generations; they work together to build strong, close-knit communities; they feed families, located both next door and across the globe.

But being a farmer or rancher is not simply a job change. It is a life change.

Watch these videos where new farmers discuss how their lives changed as they started their journey into farming.

Bear Creek Organics



Remember the 4Ps for New Farmers - Purpose, Plan, Product, and People

PURPOSE: Why do you want to become a farmer?

Some people want to start farming based on a strong sense of mission. For example, they want to protect the environment or help feed the world. Some people simply want to enjoy an entrepreneurial lifestyle that allows them to work outdoors.

Whatever your reasons, you should step back and take a practical view of the farming lifestyle.

- Are you prepared for a job that requires long hours, including weekends, early mornings, and late nights?
- Have you considered the economics of seasonal earnings?
- Are you able to take on the physical rigors of the job?
- Can you learn to make do and fix things yourself?
- Can you handle setbacks with determination?
- Do you have the patience to start a career with a steep learning curve and a long road to finally getting established?

PLAN: You may have the drive to start a farm, but do you have the plan?

A business plan details what you hope to do and maps how you expect to succeed. A well-crafted business plan can be the difference between success and failure and includes a thoughtful list of what you need but also details how things will get done.

- What are you going to plant?
- How much will you sell it for and when do you expect to see profit?
- What equipment do you need? Who will fix it?
- How will you cover costs of insurance premiums? Mortgage or rent? Labor?
- How will you finance the business?
- Every business needs a plan in case of emergency. What is your business succession plan? Do you have a will?

A plan also considers the things that might go wrong and how to prepare for the unexpected.

- Do you have a disaster plan?
- Can you weather a bad year?
- Can you make changes to stay in business?

A good business plan is supplemented by a personal plan. Have you considered:

- Non-farm needs?

- Insurance needs?
- Retirement funds?
- College fund?
- Personal savings?
- Succession planning?

PRODUCT: What are you going to commit your time and money to producing?

You may feel very strongly about your farm product but consider the following:

- Who is going to buy it? Be sure you can sell before you plant. Know your cost of production, your market, and your consumers. Compare the price of your product to the price others are selling it for. If you want to sell locally, visit your local markets and find out what is selling and what is not.
- Where else can you sell? Are you able to produce something different than you planned if the market changes?
- How will you get your product to consumers? What are the transportation costs and requirements? To grow for local markets, it may be ideal to find land close to a city, but that could mean leasing rather than owning land.

Do you know the relevant Federal, state, and local food safety regulations and do you have the proper licensing for your state or municipality? You must know local ordinances dealing with land use and agricultural products for farming and marketing your crop.



PEOPLE: Who is your business team and community?

Family

You may want to farm but does your spouse or partner? What about your children? Are they ready to take on this lifestyle change? Will you be moving away from your support network of friends and family? Can you build a new support network for farming?

Neighbors and Community

Not everyone understands how important farming is and why you do it. You should expect to do some outreach, to explain what you plan to do and how it will affect others.

- Who are your neighbors?
- Are they farmers? Non-farmers?
- What impact might your farm have on them and what impact might they have on you?

Be the first to extend the hand of friendship to your neighbors and others in your community. Good relations with your community are vital to a successful farming or ranching enterprise.

There are also people who can examine your farm business plans and help you make the best decisions for your situation. USDA is here to help you find people with answers and resources to help build your farm business. But remember, it's up to you to make good decisions based on sound advice.

To further explore starting a farm, learn about your [First Steps \(first-steps\)](#).

First Steps (/first-steps)

STEP 1: START TO FARM

STEP 2: MAKE A PLAN

STEP 3: RESOURCES FOR NEW FARMERS

STEP 4: GET CONNECTED

Discovery Tool ([/discovery](#))