

# New England Small Farm Institute & New England Farm Link

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New England Small Farm Institute

New England Land Link

# Growing New Farmers Program

- Who they are
- US programs
- US policy

# Who Will Farm?

- In the US, twice as many farmers over 65 as under 35 years old
- 8% are under 35; a drop of 46% between '87 and '97
- Up to 400 million acres of US Farmland will change hands in the next 20 years
- Barriers to entry
  - Access to land
  - Access to capital and credit
  - Access to knowledge and technical assistance
  - Access to markets

# Investigations from the Northeast US:

- New Farmers constitute a rich diversity
  - Farm and non-farm backgrounds
  - Young and mid-life career changers
  - Increasingly ethnical and culturally diverse
  - Variety of goals, styles and enterprises

# A Typology of New Farmers

- Prospective
  - Recruits
  - Explorers
  - Planners

# New Farmer Typology

- Beginning
  - Start-ups (0-3 years)
  - Restrategizing (4-7 years)
  - Establishing (up to 10 years)

# Characterizing New Farmers

- New farmer's current situation:
  - Background and expertise
    - Farming skills and background
    - Farm management expertise
    - Farming background
  - Assets and resources
    - Commitment to farming
    - Family and community networks
    - Resources (land, capital, infrastructure, markets)

# Characterizing New Farmers

- New farmer's long term vision
  - Livelihood goals
    - Percentage time farming
    - Desired household income level
    - Decision-making and risk role
  - Farm operation and enterprise goals
    - Type of production system
    - Percent household income from farming
    - Marketing strategy

# Programming for New Farmers

- Wide range of programming needs
- Wide range of learning preferences
- Targeted versus relevant
- Service provider barrier
  - Awareness
  - Attitudes
  - Resources
  - Expertise

# National Farm Transition Network

- 22 states represented by 16 +/- programs
- Founded early 1990's; incorporated 2001
- Mission: to support programs that foster the next generation of farmers and ranchers
- Focus on land linking but include range of related services
- NFTN website, list serve, annual meeting
- Challenge: land linking versus farm succession versus farm entry

# Farm Transition Programs

- Housed in various types of entities
- Common challenges: sustainability
- Common denominator: land linking
- Customers:
  - Entering farmers
  - Exiting farmers
  - Others: non-farming landowners, trusts, gov't.etc.
- Other programmatic features:
  - Workshops
  - Publications
  - 1:1 consultation
  - Professional development
  - Resource and referral

# Growing New Farmers

- Northeast US (12 states) project funded by USDA
- Previous project (NENFN) laid groundwork
- Four years, \$1.7 m
- Only region-wide effort to address new farmers

# GNF Components

- Service provider Consortium
  - 7 principles
  - 150 members
  - Professional development
- Research
  - Decision-making
  - Farm succession
  - Learning models
- Website
- Distance learning

# GNF Components

- Policy
  - Recommendations
  - Education
  - State
  - Federal
- Issue-focused projects
  - Access to knowledge
  - Access to financial resources
  - Access to markets
  - Access to environmental resources

# GNF Components

- Competitive Initiatives
  - Four areas
  - Stimulate innovation and participation
  - Peer reviewed
- Evaluation
- Outreach

# Public Policy

- Federal
- USDA FSA beginning farmer loan programs
- New provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill
  - Beginning Farmer and Rancher Act
  - Credit Reforms
    - Pilot loan guarantee for contract land sales to new farmers
  - Conservation programs incentives
  - Targeted risk management education

# Public Policy

- State Level
  - State-federal partnerships for beginning
    - Farmer loan programs (Aggie bonds)
  - Income tax credit for leasing to beginning farmers (several states)
  - MA targeted loan program in pending bill
  - States can and should do more