



Overview

According to the [2017 USDA Census of Agriculture](#), the average age of farmers is 59, meaning a majority of farms will need to be passed on to the next generation in the coming years. Bringing young and new farmers into the workforce is vital to ensuring the security of our food supply. Furthermore, engaging young farmers will make for more sustainable farms; a survey led by the National Young Farmers Coalition revealed that 75% of young farmer respondents described their farming practices as sustainable (i.e., cover crops, rotational grazing, no-till).

However, young and beginning farmers face numerous challenges such as access to affordable farmland, which is compounded by other economic barriers including student loan debt, health insurance, and credit access. Listed below are policy options to reduce some of these barriers and encourage young and beginning farmers to enter into farming.

Policy Options



Minnesota Beginning Farmer Tax Credit ([SF 1414](#), 2017)

[Provides a tax credit](#) for rent/sale of farmland or agricultural assets (e.g., livestock and machinery) to a beginning farmer.



California Regional Economies and Equity in Agricultural Lands Act ([AB 986](#), 2019)

Establishes a grant program for groups such as non-profits and tribes to protect agricultural lands from development and to make agricultural lands accessible to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (defined as those coming from a low-income background or farmers and ranchers of color).



New Mexico Soil Health Act ([HB 204](#), 2019)

A comprehensive bill to advance soil health through initiatives like a soil health assessment, educational program, and grants program. The grant program has a specific provision to prioritize funding those entities that work with socially disadvantaged farmers (including young farmers).



Wisconsin Higher Education Debt Reduction ([SB 472](#), 2019)

Requires the Department of Agriculture to establish a program that reimburses beginning farmers for their higher education debt.



New York Beginning Farmer Grant Fund (Amended 2019 [S.5716](#), Originally Passed 2014)

As part of its 2014 appropriations, New York created a Beginning Farmer Fund that allots grants to beginning farmers to support purchasing of new equipment and implementing or improving practices and on-farm structures.