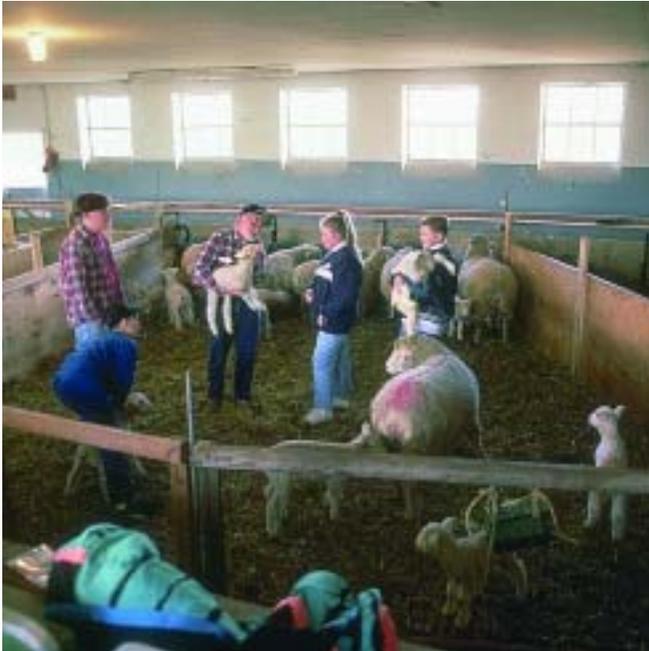




VIII. Beginning Farmers



USDA continues its efforts to encourage and provide support to the next generation of farmers in America.

Commission Recommendations: The Commission’s recommendations highlighted the critical need for public investment to support and facilitate the entry of the next generation into farming. This includes maximizing existing targets of credit assistance for beginning farmers, investigating strategies to facilitate intergenerational farmland transfers, and launching a department-wide initiative to focus research, extension, marketing, and credit assistance appropriate to the needs of new farmers and ranchers.

The Commission also recommended that USDA offer grants to beginning farmers as an alternative to operating loans, which are given at a subsidized interest rate.

AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES)

- **Grant Helps Beginning Farmers in the Northeast:** CSREES awarded The New England Small Farm Institute \$1.7 million in 2000 for the “Growing New Farmers: A Northeast Service Providers Consortium” project under the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food System competitive grant program. The project will address critical barriers facing new farmers.
- **CSREES Grant Helps Fund Research About Retirement and Succession Planning for Farm Families:** In 2000, USDA-CSREES and the National Endowment for Financial Education funded research by Dr. Sharon DeVaney, Purdue University, on “Retirement and Succession Planning for Farm Families.” Additional USDA-CSREES funding in 2001 supports the development of a related educational tool for farm families, which became available in early 2002. CSREES has also contributed funding and provided leadership for a “Financial Security in Later Life Conference” to be held March 20-22, 2002 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The conference, targeted to State teams of Extension educators and small farm experts, focused on helping American families, including farm families, prepare for retirement.



Farm Service Agency (FSA)

- **Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers.** The Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers was formally established by USDA regulation on November 25, 1998. The Committee is comprised of 19 members representing the following groups: (1) Farm Service Agency (FSA); (2) State beginning farmer programs; (3) commercial lenders; (4) private nonprofit organizations with active beginning farmer programs; (5) the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; (6) educational institutions with demonstrated experience in training beginning farmers or ranchers; (7) other entities providing lending or technical assistance for qualified beginning farmers or ranchers; and (8) farmers and ranchers.

The statute requires representatives from the first seven groups to be included on the Committee. The Committee has met twice and issued numerous recommendations to the Secretary. FSA is the Agency designated to provide support to the Committee.

- **Loans to Beginning Farmers and Ranchers.** In FY 2000, FSA provided 8,109 beginning farmers and ranchers direct and guaranteed loan assistance totaling \$716 million. In FY 2001, FSA provided 8,003 beginning farmers and ranchers direct and guaranteed loan assistance totaling \$707 million.



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- New Hampshire NRCS and partners have been assisting small farms around the State. NRCS provided ongoing services that promoted new small farms and helped historically underserved farmers. The following is an example of projects that demonstrate New Hampshire's commitment to beginning farmers.
- *Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire* is an effort supported by the New Hampshire Resource Conservation and Development Councils to address the specific needs of individuals wishing to get into farming. In central New Hampshire a handful of inexperienced, but very determined, new farmers began meeting together 3 years ago. There are now four county chapters around the State that provide the following benefits: 1) organize networks for small and beginning farmers; 2) buy grain and supplies as a group to achieve bulk buying discounts; 3) organize speakers, training workshops, and farm tours; 4) help develop local markets for their farm products; 5) develop relationships with local, county, and State



agricultural agencies to meet the unique needs of beginner farmers; and 6) realize potential funding and assistance sources available for farmers, such as SARE farmer grants.

- The *Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire* project has developed a web site and presented displays at various conferences in its continued effort to reach and educate beginner and underserved farmers. *Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire* was selected as one of the top three success stories of all RC&D success stories submitted nationwide. The project has been involved in the New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture, established a Beginner Farmer Advisory Committee, and has been active in the local Conservation Districts.

Another recent accomplishment for the *Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire* is a community garden and composting project in cooperation with the Belknap County Conservation District, located in south-central New Hampshire. This community garden has helped provide food to low income residents and food pantries, and has been a valuable outreach tool for the District-RC&D-NRCS partnership.

UTAH

- In the Heber Valley in Utah, there are several ranches that have been purchased by persons who have not farmed before. NRCS-Utah has an information conservation campaign for those landowners to raise their awareness of conservation practices leading to improved water quality and reduced soil erosion.



Beginning ranchers with llama.