

Appendix Topic 4: Access to land for new farmers

This section begins on the next page with some pages from the Growing New Farmers website, <http://www.growingnewfarmers.com/>.



GROWING NEW FARMERS

A Community of Northeast New Farmers and Service Providers

[Home](#) | [About GNF](#) | [Who Are Northeast New Farmers](#) | [Directory](#) | [Farming Q&A](#) | [Tools & Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#)

About Northeast New Farmers

This section addressed the following topics:

- [Who will farm?](#)
- [What is a new farmer?](#)
- [Who are Northeast new farmers?](#)
- [How do we characterize new farmers?](#)
- [What is a farming career lattice?](#)
- [What do Northeast new farmers need?](#)
- [How well are new farmers' needs being addressed?](#)



Who will farm?

What is a new farmer?

Who are Northeast new farmers?

How do we characterize new farmers?

What is a farming career lattice?

What do Northeast new farmers need?

How well are new farmers' needs being addressed?

Growing New Farmers • P.O. Box 11 • Belchertown, MA 01007 • 413-323-9878 (tel/fax) • info@growingnewfarmers.org

The Growing New Farmers website is owned by the [New England Small Farm Institute](#), based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 00-52101-9706.

“What do Northeast new farmers need?”

(http://growingnewfarmers.com/about_nenf/what_do_farmers_need.htm)

“Northeast new farmers face barriers in four major areas:

- Access to training, education, and technical assistance
- Access to land
- Access to capital and credit
- Access to markets

In addition, they often experience inadequate support from family, community, farmer and service networks, which impacts the other four areas.

Northeast new farmers need programs and services that enable them to acquire the information and resources they need to succeed. They need a responsive "service infrastructure" -- from production and legal consultants, equipment, feed and seed dealers, and lenders, to trade organizations and publications. They prefer to receive services in a wide variety of formats and venues. They need policies that provide opportunities and remove barriers. They need support, advice and encouragement.

From an investigation of programs and services for new farmers in the Northeast, collaborating organizations* learned that there are a variety of programs that are relevant to new farmers, but few that are targeted to the needs of new farmers. They concluded that not nearly enough attention and resources are directed to this diverse population.”

“Who are Northeast new farmers?”

(http://growingnewfarmers.com/about_nenf/northeast_new_farmers.htm)

“They come from all backgrounds, are in all stages of development, and bring a wide range of resources and talents. From data gathered from new farmer focus groups held in the region and other sources, we know that:

- Most Northeast new farmers are young, although some are older, "mid-life career changers"
- More and more new farmers are coming from non-farm backgrounds — they did not grow up on farms. Some are from farming families; they may be the next generation on an established family farm, or may move onto a different farm
- In our region, new farmers are ethnically and culturally diverse; there are new farmers of Asian and Hispanic origin, but few African-American new farmers
- Northeast new farmers are interested in a very wide range of farming enterprise types, crops, production and marketing strategies
- Many new farmers will start out farming part-time, and some will continue part-time for a variety of reasons

- New farmers who want to farm or have started to farm in the Northeast come from urban, suburban or rural backgrounds. They come from every Northeast state, and some come from outside our region, drawn to the Northeast for its markets, support for alternative agriculture and diversity of farming opportunities”

“What is a new farmer?”

(http://growingnewfarmers.com/about_nenf/what_is_new_farmer.htm)

“There are a number of terms and definitions that apply to this sector:

- According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), a beginning farmer is one who has operated a farm for ten years or less. This definition is used for USDA beginning farmer loan programs. Several loan programs further require that a beginning farmer must have at least three years' experience.
- A young farmer is a farmer under the age of 35. The Farm Bureau and Farm Credit have young farmer programs. A young farmer may be working with the older generation on the family farm.
- The term next-generation farmer is used to describe young people who will be the next generation of farmers. Sometimes the term specifically suggests the next generation of the family to take over an existing farm.

Several Northeast organizations* working with new farmers propose a broad definition of a new farmer. This definition includes people who have started farming (described above) and those who have not yet begun to farm. We developed a typology that further describes different categories of new farmers.

- **Prospective farmers** have not begun to farm.
 - "Recruits" might consider a career in production agriculture, for example students in vo-ag high schools.
 - "Explorers" are investigating a farming future, and may be gathering information.
 - "Planners" have made a choice to pursue some sort of commercial production agriculture, but are not actually farming yet.
- **Beginning farmers** also fall into several categories.
 - "Start-ups" have been farming for three years or less.
 - "Restrategizing" farmers are making adjustments in their fourth to seventh years.
 - "Establishing" farmers are stabilizing in years eight to ten of the beginning farmer phase.”

- **“Case Study: Intervale Foundation,” Holding Ground: A Guide to Northeast Farmland Tenure and Stewardship, 2004**

This article from Holding Ground: A Guide to Northeast Farmland Tenure and Stewardship is reprinted on the next page with permission from the New England Small Farm Institute. For more information on Holding Ground, visit <http://www.smallfarm.org/>.

- **“The New England Small Farm Institute,” *The Natural Farmer*, Spring 2004**
<http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/digital/tnf/2004.02.pdf> (p. 34)

By Wendy Kaczerski and Kathy Ruhf

Twenty-five years ago a few agrarian advocates, desiring to recreate a vibrant and sustainable regional small farm sector, founded the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI). Since that time, NESFI has provided educational support and advocacy for New England’s small farms in a number of ways. The Institute’s Small Farm Development Center provides direct assistance to aspiring, new and developing farmers. It offers courses, workshops, information services, the Small Farm Library, and publications. Matching programs like New England Land Link (NELL) and Northeast Workers on Organic Farms help farmers and aspiring farmers find land and on-farm learning experiences. NELL also offers consultation, publications and workshops on access to land and farm transfer.

By an Act of the Massachusetts Legislature in 1986 the Institute manages Lampson Brook Agricultural Reserve, a 400-acre publicly owned farmstead in Belchertown, Massachusetts. In October 2003, NESFI signed a long-term lease with the Commonwealth. This agreement enables the Institute to seek partners to invest in substantial rehabilitation of the site, and to offer secure tenure to its “farm partners”. Five farm partners run a variety of farm businesses on 70 acres of the site. The partners have the option to sign leases of 5 to 20 years. They must farm according to organic standards. They commit to sharing responsibility for land management and have the opportunity to participate in delivering educational programs. Because NESFI is both a tenant (with the Commonwealth as landlord) and landlord to several farmer tenants, it is uniquely positioned to consider all the issues associated with “non-ownership” tenure.

On the NESFI site, the farm enterprises range in size from 2 to 50 acres. The size and type of operation is flexible and is negotiated between the farmer and NESFI. NESFI has a contractual obligation to the state to host diverse farming operations on the site, and to ensure that the operations are the appropriate size for their use in order to be economically viable. Some of the leaseholds involve specific demonstrations of sustainable natural resource management, and these must be maintained and accessible for educational purposes.

NESFI provides some office space, a kitchen for farmers and workers, storage space, utilities and water to some fields. Rental values are calculated for all uses and collected annually. Some farmers own their own equipment; others rent it from a farmer-teacher on the site. They also borrow from one another. Two farmers have invested in several hoop greenhouses to extend the growing season. Enterprises include organic vegetables, herbs, annual and perennial plants, grains and hay, eggs, grass-fed sheep for meat and fiber, grass-fed beef, farm equipment repair, cordwood, honey, and fresh and dried flowers. Most of the farmers collectively market their products together as the Lampson Brook Farms Cooperative, Inc. They share a farmstand on the site and

collectively participate in high value farmers markets, including in the Boston area. Future plans include reviving a CSA operation, and operating a dairy farm and seed processing and cleaning enterprise. Current land lease fees run \$30 - \$80 per acre for cropland and \$15 - \$30 per acre for pastureland.

NESFI and its farm partners meet to work out many of the challenges inherent in landlord-tenant agreements. Together, they have established stewardship standards for leasehold management, and continue to work on issues related to shared and abutting uses.

In addition to a small lease fee to the state, NESFI provides services in the way of land management, capital improvements, and a wide and expanding range of public education and farmer training programs available to anyone. NESFI also participates in numerous collaborations that foster a vigorous regional small farm sector. For example, NESFI hosts the Growing New Farmers Project (www.northeastnewfarmer.org) and the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG; visit www.nesawg.org.) It promotes supportive public policies, sponsors farmer-driven research projects and provides professional training to the farming services community. NESFI is supported by foundation grants, government contracts and site use and program fees. For more information, visit the NESFI website, www.smallfarm.org.

- **Intervale Foundation – Incubator and Enterprise Farm Program (Farm Program)**

- **Non-ownership access-to-land model**
- **Providing new farmers access to land and resources**

The Intervale Foundation’s Farm Program helps new farmers get a start by providing affordable access to land, equipment, buildings, and other resources. These items represent “the large capital costs traditionally associated with farm start-ups.” The non-profit Intervale Foundation (IF) owns a large tract of farmland, which it leases to beginning farmers. Simultaneously, it makes “farm equipment, storage, cooler, and greenhouse space” available for these farmers’ affordable lease and use.

During the first three years of the Farm Program, new farmers are called Incubator Farmers. They are given a one-year lease and “pay slightly less in fees, rent for land, and equipment.” Once this initial period ends, these farmers become Enterprise Farmers. This entitles them to a five-year lease; their fees and rent also increase a little. One benefit of retaining Enterprise Farmers in the Farm Program is they are available to offer guidance to the beginning Incubator Farmers. Overall, as the case study of the program in Holding Ground states, “one of the Farm Program’s strongest assets is the opportunity it gives start-up farmers to learn the basics of farm management without having to spend large amounts of capital to get started.” (50)

More information on the Intervale Foundation’s Farms Program is online at <http://www.intervale.org/FarmsProgram.htm>. See also the one-page Case Study on the Intervale Foundation included in this appendix.

- **New England Small Farm Institute – Lampson Brook Farm**

- Non-ownership access-to-land model

The non-profit New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) manages a 400-acre farm owned by Massachusetts. NESFI holds a long-term lease with MA on the land, which it in turn sub-leases, with secure tenure-terms, to a number of farmers. These farmers are called Farm Partners and are able to affordably rent equipment from the on-site “farmer-teacher” if they either do not own what they need or are not able to borrow it from another farm partner. NESFI also “provides some office space, a kitchen for farmers and workers, storage space, utilities, and water to some fields.”

NESFI’s mission is to promote small farmers and farming, and it conducts a “range of public education and farmer training programs” to this end. As a non-profit and a landlord, NESFI has tried to find the right balance between which services it should or should not provide to its farm partners and/or the farm. For instance, what happens if a farm partner does not have the time or money to decrease a weed bank or apply compost or fertilizer (so as to maintain a field’s fertility)? NESFI could do these things because it needs to be a good caretaker of the land, but doing so also benefits the

farmer's for-profit farm business (which could be problematic for a non-profit). NESFI and its farm partners try to work out stewardship standards in their leases. They may also work together on NESFI's educational and farmer training programs. Overall, with the farm, NESFI is providing affordable access to land and equipment, along with the opportunity to network with and learn from other small farmers.

More information on NESFI and its farm is available at www.smallfarm.org/index.htm and in the article "The New England Small Farm Institute" in this appendix.

- **New farmer development programs working with immigrants**

A number of programs have been established in the Northeast and elsewhere to help recent immigrants, who have farming backgrounds, get a start as farmers in the US. This includes not only access to land, but assistance in other areas too. The make-up a typical program revolves around the provision of the following: access to business-planning, marketing, and crop production skills training; access to land for the new farm business to get started (typically on the incubator farm owned by the organization); and assistance finding access to other land (not owned by the organization) once a few years have passed and it is time to move on.

The general idea is to help interested immigrants start new farm businesses. Part of this involves education about how the agricultural economy works in the US, including marketing outlets and business management skills. The second component is providing affordable access to land to get started. This is typically 1-3 acres, with most new immigrant farmers looking to grow fruits and vegetables for the retail market. They may be able to or decide to farm more acres after moving on. Some programs may provide additional resources, such as further technical assistance and workshops, mentor farmers such as those in the Intervale Foundation's Farm Program, or assistance with access to specific markets.

A few examples of these programs include the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (Boston), the New Farmer Development Project (New York), the Agricultural Land Based Training Association (Salinas, CA), and the Farm Business Incubator at Urban Edge Farm (Providence, RI). Latinos, West Africans, Southeast Asians and others are served by these programs. More information on these and other programs is available through the National Immigrant Farming Initiative website at www.immigrantfarming.org.

- **Tax credit for landowners who lease land to beginning farmers**

Since 2001, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has offered a Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program. The program is set up to give a tax credit to landowners for renting land or other agricultural assets (machinery, livestock, barns, etc.) to beginning farmers. Landowners can also get tax credits for crop-share or livestock/milk-

share agreements with new farmers. The lease term must be for three years. In exchange for the lease, the landowner gets a annual tax credit equal to '10% of the rental income for cash rent and 15% of the cash equivalent for share-rentals.' To qualify, a beginning farmer must be actively involved in the operation and have some prior farming experience or education.

Iowa started a similar program in 2006. The tax credit for landowners is 5% of the cash rent and 15% of share-rentals. In share-rentals, it is 15% of the value of the crop or product produced. Iowa's lease agreements must be a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 5 years. The program has a maximum so that after a set period of time, the agreement and participants can be reevaluated to make sure everyone is still eligible.

Other states such as Minnesota are trying to start similar programs. There is also movement to include this type of tax credit in federal legislation. More information on the Nebraska and Iowa programs is available at <http://www.agr.state.ne.us/division/med/begfrm.htm> and <http://www.iada.state.ia.us/index.html>.

- **Loan programs for beginning farmers**

The National Council of State Agricultural Finance Programs provides a good summary of how these programs work. (<http://stateagfinance.org/types.html#otherag>)

“Several states operate special loan programs for beginning farmers and ranchers. One of the most common types of beginning farmers programs are called “Aggie Bond” programs. Through these programs states can assist beginning, first-time farmers to purchase land, farm equipment, farm buildings and breeding livestock through reduced interest rate loans. Through an Aggie Bond program, the state coordinates the creation of a bond that allows lenders to earn federally-tax exempt interest income on loans to eligible beginning farmers and ranchers. The tax-savings allows the lenders to provide the loans at a reduced interest rate to the first time farmer, while the credit decisions and financial risk remain with the local lending institutions. Aggie bond programs are federal-state, public-private partnership programs that provide a cost effective way for states to assist beginning farmers.”

The Aggie Bond type of program in Pennsylvania is known as The Next Generation Farm Loan Program. More information on these programs is at the website above.