



NEWS

New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee

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New Jersey's "Next Gen" Farmer Program Seeks Input from the Agricultural Community

The New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program, administered by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), is developing its new "Next Generation Farmer Program," intended to support new and beginning farmers in addressing the barriers they face starting and establishing new, viable farming enterprises in New Jersey.

"Developing next-generation farmers is critical to the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in New Jersey," said Ed Wengryn, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture. "We want input from the agricultural community to guide our focus as we identify how the SADC can help new farmers overcome obstacles, including access to land, equipment, gaining hands-on experience, and learning how to run a successful farm business."

The SADC's Next Generation Farmer Program is not intended to duplicate existing programs but to coordinate, leverage partnerships, and fill in the gaps to create a more robust and supportive system for new and beginning farmers. The SADC is seeking input from anyone who thinks they have great ideas for how the SADC can support existing efforts and implement a collaborative, comprehensive system to identify, train, equip, and support the next generation of farmers in New Jersey. Your input is crucial in this collective effort.

"The traditional pathways of entering farming and accessing family-held land are no longer as common or viable in many cases," said Charles Roohr, SADC Deputy Executive Director. "Investing in new ways to develop the next generation of farmers and farm viability will immensely benefit New Jersey's agricultural industry for generations to come."

The program's "Next Gen" Senior Coordinator, Brendon Pearsall, and Assistant Coordinator, Jessica Brandeisky, are currently conducting outreach through surveys, one-on-one meetings, and focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders, including next-generation farmers, established farmers, agricultural service providers, and other interested parties to help guide the direction of the program. Interested individuals and organizations are encouraged to provide input and share their experiences with the Next Gen staff through online surveys at www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/nextgen/surveys/. Brendon and Jessica can speak with you or your group directly and collect your ideas as an alternative to the online surveys.

Future efforts regarding land access, mentorship, training, resources, collaborations, or other topics will stem from the program's research and outreach findings. The program goal is to reach a diverse range of potential participants, including those from farm families, newcomers from non-farming backgrounds, veterans, women, urban growers, and others in historically underserved communities.

"All members of the agricultural community are invited to provide their input and ideas, to help us create a strong foundation for the program," said Roohr.

By Spring 2025, the SADC will develop a detailed report utilizing information gathered from outreach and research with recommendations for addressing the challenges and enhancing support.

For more information on the Next Generation Farmer Program, to share comments, or to learn about outreach events, visit www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/nextgen/ or contact Brendon.pearsall@ag.nj.gov or Jessica.brandeisky@ag.nj.gov.

For more information about the Farmland Preservation Program and the SADC, please visit <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/>.