

Resources for New Farmers



A guide for farmers looking to start or diversify a farm in New York State.



**Agriculture
and Markets**

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Resources for New Farmers

In 2014, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo established the Beginning Farmer Workgroup to provide recommendations related to supporting the growth of new farmers and farming in New York. This workgroup was composed of entry level farmers, agricultural service providers, agricultural lenders, representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension, advocacy organizations, higher education representatives, and federal and state agencies.

In response to recommendations by the workgroup, the Department created this webpage to assist new farmers looking to start or diversify their farm. This website provides comprehensive information on state regulations, job training, land ownership, farm financing, marketing, land and soil, and much more! Click on the subpages above to learn more.

Additional resources to get started:

- Guide to Farming in NYS (developed by Cornell University)
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/resources/guides/farming-guide/>
- Northeast Beginning Farmers Project Webpage
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/>
- USDA Start to Farm
<https://newfarmers.usda.gov/>
- National Young Farmers Coalition
<http://www.youngfarmers.org/>

*** Please contact the Department at (718) 722-2891 if there is additional information to disclose or there is information on this webpage that needs to be modified. ***

State Resources

New York is open for business and interested in helping entrepreneurs start a farm enterprise. State agencies can provide you with necessary information to help your farm get off the ground and sustain it once operating.

When ready to start your business legally, you must incorporate within New York State.

To learn about state licenses, please access the state's licensing website.

Agency resources are listed below. To help guide you as to which resources to use, please look at the fact sheets developed by Cornell's Northeast Beginning Farmers Project.

Fact sheets: <http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/resources/guides/farming-guide/>

Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM)

Farms:

Farmland Protection Resources

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/SoilWater/land-and-water.html>

New York Soil and Water Conservation Districts

http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/contacts/county_offices.html

Market Development Resources

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/APHome.html>

Farmers Market Nutrition Programs

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/fmnp-forms-documents.html>

Farm to School

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/index.html>

Food Safety:

Agricultural Enhancement Management

<http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/aem/>

Food Establishment Licenses

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/FS/general/license.html>

Home Processing

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/fs/consumer/processor.html>

Department of Labor (DOL)

Summary of New York State Labor Laws Related to Farm and Food Processing

<https://labor.ny.gov/formsdocs/wp/l118.pdf>

Farm Labor and Minimum Wage

https://www.labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/laborstandards/farm_labor.shtm

Department of State (DOS)

Legal Business Structures

<http://www.dos.ny.gov/corps/pdfs/formingbus.pdf>

State Resources (cont.)

State Laws on Agricultural Buildings

<http://www.ongov.net/planning/documents/D.AgriculturalBuildings-DOS.pdf>

New York State Office of New Americans

<http://www.newamericans.ny.gov/business/agriculture.html>

Empire State Development (ESD)

Minority Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE)

<http://esd.ny.gov/mwbe.html>

Consolidated Funding Application

<https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/>

New York State New Farmers Grant Fund

<http://esd.ny.gov/businessprograms/newfarmersgrantfund.html>

NYS's Business Programs and Incentives

<http://esd.ny.gov/BusinessPrograms.html>

New York State Wine, Beer, Spirit and Cider

<http://esd.ny.gov/nysbeveragebiz.html>

Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)

Free and Low Cost Energy Audits

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Business-and-Industry/Agriculture>

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Agricultural License Plates

<https://dmv.ny.gov/registration/about-agricultural-and-farm-vehicles>

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

Water Quality Regulation

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/290.html#Guidance>

Concentrate Animal Feed Operations Permits

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6285.html>

Pesticide Regulations

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/45618.html>

Chemical and Pollution Control

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/25.html>

Water Management

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/84764.html>

Department of Taxation and Finance (DOTF)

Agricultural Land Assessment Program

https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/valuation/ag_overview.htm

Training, Apprenticeships and Jobs

There are many programs offered across the state that train aspiring farmers and there are several places to look for jobs.

Farm Education Programs across the State

Across the State:

Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farm Training (C.R.A.F.T)
<http://www.craftfarmapprentice.com/>

Cornell Cooperative Extension (link includes local offices)
<http://cce.cornell.edu/localoffices>

Cornell Small Farms Program
<http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/>

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
<https://www.nofany.org/>

Virtual Grange
<http://www.virtualgrange.org/>

The Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship
<http://www.cadefarms.org/>

North Country (Adirondacks)

Essex Farm Institute
<http://www.essexfarminstitute.org/>

New York City

Farm School NYC
<http://www.farmschoolnyc.org/>

FARMroots
<http://www.grownyc.org/farmroots>

Mid-Hudson

Glynwood
<https://www.glynwood.org/training-farmers/>

Hawthorne Valley Farm
<http://hawthornevalleyfarm.org/place-based-learning-center/vocational-programs/apprenticeships/>

Heroic Food
<http://heroicfood.org/>

Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation
<http://www.hvadc.org/>

Training, Apprenticeships and Jobs (cont.)

Hudson Valley Farm Hub

<http://hvfarmhub.org/>

McEnroe Organic Farm

<http://www.mcenroeorganicfarm.com/programs/apprenticeships>

Poughkeepsie Farm Project

<http://www.farmproject.org/farm-apprenticeships>

Western New York

Green Shoots for New Americans Refugee Agricultural Program

[http://www.jersbuffalo.org/index.php/programs/category/Green Shoots for New Americans](http://www.jersbuffalo.org/index.php/programs/category/Green_Shoots_for_New_Americans)

Finger Lakes

Groundswell

<http://groundswellcenter.org/>

Long Island

Quail Hill Farm Apprenticeship Program

<https://www.peconiclandtrust.org/apprenticeship.html>

On-Farm Employment

Here are a listing of websites that provide ads for on-farm employment.

Beginning Farmers

<http://www.beginningfarmers.org/internship-and-employment-opportunities/>

GrowNYC

<https://www.grownyc.org/farm-and-farm-stand-job-opportunities>

Cornell Cooperative Extension

<http://cce.cornell.edu/>

Farm Job Search

<http://farmjobsearch.com/>

Hudson Valley Farmland Finder

<http://hudsonvalleyfarmlandfinder.org/>

Farm and Ranch Jobs

<http://www.farmandranchjobs.com/>

National Young Farmers Coalition

<http://www.youngfarmers.org/land-and-jobs/>

Planning Your Farm

Financing Your Farm

There are a number of funding sources that help cover costs associated with business operations, infrastructure, and land transfer.

Sources of Capital

Federal

Farm Service Agency Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program

Loan details here: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/loanprograms2012.pdf

Direct Farm Operating Loan

Direct Farm Ownership Loan

Guaranteed Operating Loan

Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loan

Down Payment Loan Program

Land Contract Guarantee Program

Rural Youth Loan

Emergency Loans

Microloan Programs

State

New York State Empire State Development

New Farmer Grant Fund

Consolidated Funding Application

Regional and Municipal

Public Authorities, including Local Development Corporations (LDCs, i.e. Binghamton Local Development Corporation) and Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs, i.e. Grow Schoharie County), provide funding to many beginning farmers. Speak with someone at your local soil and water conservation district or your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office to learn where the closest LDC or IDA is located.

Private

There are traditional and alternative sources of capital that you can access. Traditional sources include banks or credit unions that tailor their loan products and resources to farmers. Some offer specific resources for beginning farmers. One excellent resource for beginning farmers is on Farm Credit East's website (<https://www.farmcrediteast.com/products-and-services/new-farmer-programs>). Talk to your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office to learn about nearby banks or credit unions that offer capital for farms. Alternative sources of capital can be secured in a variety of ways. Social media and crowd funding platforms, micro-lending organizations, and foundations and venture capital firms positioned to support small farms are potential sources of funding.

Farm Risk Management

First and foremost, farmers need general liability insurance to operate a farm. Then, one must consider the following types of additional insurance:

Supplemental Insurance

Workers Compensation

Crop Insurance

Health Insurance

Here are some additional resources to reduce your risk on the farm.

Cornell Small Farms Program resource sheets on risk management and farm insurance

Planning Your Farm (cont.)

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/05/5-farm-risk-management/>

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/06/6-farm-insurance/>

GrowNYC's FARMroots guide on farm insurance

<https://www.grownyc.org/insurance-planning>

New York Farm Bureau's information for members on insurance

http://www.nyfb.org/membership/benefits_detail.cfm?ID=2

Technical Assistance

There are several technical assistance programs located across the state that can provide information on anything from construction to water management to funding opportunities for beginning farmers.

Major resources include:

Statewide:

Cornell Small Farms Program

<http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/>

NY FarmNet

<http://www.nyfarmnet.org/>

NY FarmLink

<http://www.nyfarmnet.org/farmlink/new-york-farmlink>

NOFA NY - New York Organic Farmers' Association

<https://www.nofany.org/>

Heroic Food (Resource for Veterans)

<http://heroicfood.org/>

Farmer Veteran Coalition

<http://www.farmvetco.org/>

New York Farm Bureau

<http://www.nyfb.org/>

American Farmland Trust

<https://www.farmland.org/>

CADE (Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship)

<http://www.cadefarms.org/>

Regional:

Cornell Cooperative Extension

<http://cce.cornell.edu/>

Watershed Agricultural Council (Catskills)

<http://www.nycwatershed.org/>

Planning Your Farm (cont.)

Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (Hudson Valley)

<http://www.hvadc.org/>

Long Island Farm Bureau

<http://www.lifb.com/>

Farm Credit East: Farm Start

<https://www.farmcrediteast.com/products-and-services/new-farmer-programs/FarmStart>

Glynwood (Hudson Valley)

<https://glynwood.org/>

Hawthorne Valley Farm Learning Center

<http://hawthornevalleyfarm.org/place-based-learning-center/>

Stone Barns Center for Agriculture (Hudson Valley)

<https://www.stonebarnscenter.org/>

GrowNYC - FARMroots (Hudson Valley, Long Island, Catskills)

<https://www.grownyc.org/farmroots>

Scenic Hudson (Hudson Valley)

<http://www.scenichudson.org/farmland>

Hudson Valley Farmlink Network

<http://hudsonvalleyfarmlandfinder.org/about>

Selling Your Product

Successful farms require sustainable sales. Two major market channels are direct and wholesale. Selling direct means directly to the customer, such as at a farmers' market or through community-supported agriculture (CSA). Selling wholesale means selling to a third party that will then sell your food. Wholesale market channels utilize distributors to sell products to restaurants and retailers.

Resources to help you choose which marketplace suits your business needs and how to ready your product for market:

Publications:

Guide to Marketing Channel Selection: How to Sell Through Wholesale & Direct Marketing Channels

<http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/files/2014/07/Guide-to-Marketing-Channel-1ib5phn.pdf>

The Organic Farmer's Business Handbook

<http://richardwiswall.com/the-organic-farmer-s-business-handbook/>

Technical Assistance Providers:

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Division of Agricultural Development
The Division can provide marketing and branding assistance, information on available funding, specifics on licensing programs and organic certification, and opportunities for business to participate in tradeshow and other industry events.

Planning Your Farm (cont.)

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Nearly every county in the state has an extension office. These offices are staffed by experts on nutrition, land management, and sales and marketing.

Buy-local campaigns in each region

A 'buy-local' campaign can be used to educate and encourage consumers to invest in businesses in their communities. There are several 'buy-local' campaigns across New York State including restaurant weeks and on-product labeling. This is a great way to promote your business to local customers.

Here are some buy-local campaigns across New York State that promote agricultural products:

Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty (Finger Lakes)

<http://www.flcb.org/>

Hudson Valley Bounty (Hudson Valley)

<http://hudsonvalleybounty.com/>

Grown on Long Island (Long Island)

<http://www.lifb.com/ABOUT/AboutOurLogo/tabid/243/Default.aspx>

Pure Catskills (Catskills)

<http://www.purecatskills.com/>

Adirondack Harvest (North Country/Adirondacks)

<http://www.adirondackharvest.com/>

Field & Fork Network (Western NY)

<http://fieldandforknetwork.com/>

Lake Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council (Below Lake Ontario)

http://www.lakeplainsrcd.org/PM_Buy_Local.htm

GardenShare (St. Lawrence County in North Country region)

<http://www.gardenshare.org/>

Empire 87 (Albany area/Capital Region)

<http://www.empire87.com/members-cmpb>

Onondaga Grown (Onondaga County)

<https://www.facebook.com/onondagagrown/>

Chatauqua Grown (Chatauqua County)

<http://chatauqua.cce.cornell.edu/chatauqua-grown>

Finding Your Farm

There are several ways to access land. Buying or leasing land are the most common.

Please review the guide Finding a Farm to Buy or Lease (Northeast Beginning Farmers Project) for the most accurate information on buying and leasing land.

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/01/1-finding-a-farm-to-buy-or-lease/>

Planning Your Farm (cont.)

For lists of conservancies, land trusts and technical assistance providers located in New York State, please visit American Farmland Trust's resource called the Farmland Protection Directory. This guide also covers technical assistance providers knowledgeable about farm succession planning and land transfer.

http://www.farmlandinfo.org/directory?title=&field_type_of_entity_tid=All&field_states_of_operation_tid=331&&sm_au=iVVW7sZP0WD3R7ps

Legal Resources for Farmers

Farmers have many legal considerations ranging from labor laws to taxes to succession and land transfer planning. Here are some guides to navigate legal questions when starting a farm.

Guide to Farming in NY

Understanding Taxes and Regulations

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/farmers/taxes-regulations/>

Environmental Regulations

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/10/10-environmental-regulations/>

Zoning Regulations & Farming

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/08/8-zoning-regulations-and-farming/>

Farm Vehicle Regulations

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/07/7-farm-vehicle-regulations/>

Legal Aspects of Rural Living

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/09/9-legal-aspects-of-rural-living/>

Labor Laws

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/18/18-labor-laws/>

Succession Planning and Retirement

Farm Journal Legacy Project

<http://www.farmjournallegacyproject.com/>

Land for Good's Farm Transfer Planning

<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-Transferring-The-Farm-Guide.pdf>

General Legal Resources

Farm Commons

<https://farmcommons.org/>

Land and Soil

Soil and its components, air, water and nutrients, are the foundation for growing crops. Before starting your farm, contact your nearby Soil and Water Conservation District office. Districts work with farmers to assess, plan, and implement solutions to environmental issues on their farms, and then re-assess the outcomes of the implemented solutions.

Farming Practices

New York Agricultural Landowner Guide (American Farmland Trust)
<http://www.ongov.net/planning/documents/NYAgLandownerGuide.pdf>

Agricultural Enhancement Management Program (New York State)
<http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/aem/index.html>

NRCS Programs (National Resources Conservation Service)
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/>

Soil Chart, Texture and Maps

Soil Texture Calculator (USDA)
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/survey/?cid=nrcs142p2_054167

Climate and Soil Considerations (Northeast Beginning Farmers Project)
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/02/2-climate-and-soil-considerations/>

Web Soil Survey (National Resources Conservation Service)
<http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm>

Soil Testing Resources

Cornell University
Cornell Nutrient Analysis Laboratory (CNAL)
cnal.cals.cornell.edu
(607) 255-4540
soiltest@cornell.edu

See laboratories that are certified under NYS's Environmental Laboratory Approval Program
ELAP@health.state.ny.us
(Select a laboratory certified for "solid and hazardous waste".)
<http://www.wadsworth.org/regulatory/elap>

New York City Soil and Water Conservation District
<http://www.soilandwater.nyc/>

Access to Water

DEC's Water Withdrawal Permits and Reporting
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/55509.html>