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August 20, 2007
Via Facsimile and United States Mail

The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Subject: USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Dear Secretary Johanns:

On behalf of the USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, I am pleased to submit the following recommendations discussed at our recent meeting on July 9-10, 2007 in Des Moines, Iowa. Ranchers, farmers, bankers, educators, state and federal agency staff, and representatives from various agricultural non-profits serve on the twenty-member committee. Each lends a wealth of knowledge and ability to advise you on areas of concern for the next generation of farmers and ranchers. It has been a pleasure for the committee to serve in this advisory capacity on a very important issue facing the future of sustainable agriculture for our nation.

Your championing efforts on beginning farmer and rancher issues is a major step towards encouraging continuity in our food, fiber and natural resource system within an industry whose population is aging quickly. The committee supports many of your initiatives including a twenty percent increase in direct payments to beginning farmers and ranchers. We appreciate all you do to support current and future generations of agriculturalists and hope our remarks are helpful and pertinent.

Per our federal charge as defined in the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992, the committee recommends the Secretary:

1. Conduct Farm Succession Planning Outreach Sessions and encourage existing farm succession organizations to participate. Support increased training and outreach to the farming and ranching community on estate and succession planning through USDA (NRCS, CSREES, RMA and FSA) programs. Publicize the importance of succession planning by issuing publications.
2. Open dialogue with state commissioners of agriculture and regional groups on beginning farmer and rancher and transition/succession issues.
3. Implement outreach efforts to beginning farmers and ranchers such as:

- a. Federal replication of successful state and non-governmental organization (NGO) programs for beginning farmers and ranchers,
 - b. Promotion of beginning farmer and rancher local food systems,
 - c. Ensure conservation planning is integrated with the producer's business plan.
4. We recommend the Secretary support the following:
 - a. Reauthorization of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program—a competitive grant program authorized by the Research and Related Matters title of the 2002 Farm Bill. This program authorizes the Secretary to make competitive grants available to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers. Some of the programs and services would include mentoring and apprenticeships, conservation assistance, risk management education, marketing strategies, and business, financial, and whole-farm planning.
 - b. An amendment to specifically include new refugee/immigrant farming concerns.
 - c. \$25 million per year in Farm Bill funding for this program.
5. Ensure coordination of various USDA Outreach Programs (FSA, NRCS, RMA, CSREES & others) with sub grantees who deliver outreach/training to beginning farmers and ranchers to guarantee effective and efficient program delivery.
6. Eliminate term limits on both of FSA's direct and guaranteed loan programs.
7. Support rural health care initiatives that will increase and improve access to health care and health insurance. This will improve the quality of life for beginning farmers and ranchers and encourage new farm entry.
8. Encourage FSA county executive directors to provide beginning farmers and ranchers an opportunity to serve as county committee members. Encourage the state committee to include at least one member who meets the definition of a beginning farmer and rancher.
9. Revise the USDA definition of beginning farmer and rancher to include other applicable components of the statutory definition used by FSA and other USDA programs. A "needs" element should be included in the definition, so those who have adequate off-farm or ranch financial resources are not receiving subsidized assistance.
10. Support full funding for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) with a nationwide sign-up in the Farm Bill. USDA should abide by the 90 percent cost-share/15 percent cost-share differential provision for beginning farmers and ranchers in all states. Encourage states to provide special enhanced payments for beginning farmers and ranchers.

11. Support initiatives to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an exemption from capital gains for the sale of farmland to a first-time farmer as proposed in H.R. 2034, “The Beginning Farmers & Ranchers Act of 2005”. Any change in law should not conflict with existing tax-exempt programs created to assist beginning farmers and ranchers.
12. Allow FSA loan programs to have more flexibility to allow beginning farmer and rancher participants to buy into established operations, including purchasing a percentage of an operating entity such as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), etc.

Example: As a dairy livestock dependent state, there are large capital requirements for beginning farmers in Wisconsin. Some operators overcome this barrier by sharing capital investment with other operators. Increasingly, FSA is seeing loan demand from beginning farmers wishing to share livestock facilities. This is driven by the diminishing availability of efficient facilities in operable condition. The Wisconsin Shared Facility Policy allows a beginning farmer to build equity over the short term, specifically in livestock, enabling him/her to eventually bring that equity into an entity, such as an LLC, or relocate on his/her own.

13. Support a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Account (IDA) Pilot Program to promote a pattern of savings and encourage a new generation of farmers and ranchers.
14. Ensure that the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) collects Ag Census data on beginning farmers and ranchers for “the year farming began” and “number of years on the present farm” before 2012, so that it is available for the 2012 Ag Census.
15. Support reauthorization and full funding for the Outreach and Technical Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers (Section 2501) Program. The 2002 Farm Bill authorized funding of \$25 million each fiscal year. We request that the appropriate agency conduct research on the impact of the 2501 program on beginning farmers and ranchers.
16. Implement special incentives for beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers to encourage participation in conservation, to help get new farmers started, and to achieve long lasting conservation improvements. The committee encourages the Secretary to implement, under existing or new authorities that might become available, the following types of provisions:
 - a. Upfront or Accelerated Payments – Provide option for immediate upfront/advanced payments to beginning farmers and ranchers through multi-year contracts entered into for federal conservation programs. (e.g.: In a multi-year contract for a certain amount of money in annual payments, an incentive provision could provide that all payments are paid upfront—either in

a lump sum or on an accelerated basis—with all other provisions of the contract remaining. This would provide capital to establish the farming operation with a larger stream of income during the crucial formative years of the beginning farmer or rancher operation and make enrollment in conservations programs more attractive.)

- b. Whole Farm Planning Incentive – Offer financial incentive or bonus through conservation programs for beginning farmers and ranchers to develop integrated farm/ranch conservation plans.
- c. Graduated Cost Share – Graduate the cost share portion attributable to the beginning farmer or rancher over a period of years. (e.g.: Provide priority to beginning farmers and ranchers for cost-share and technical assistance. Such an initiative would allow for installation or replacement of necessary conservation projects while recognizing the economic situation of many beginning farmers and ranchers.)
- d. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Land Returning to Production – Encourage retirees or non-farming heirs holding expiring CRP contracts to make arrangements to transfer the land to beginning farmers and ranchers by offering a rental rate bonus in the transition period.
- e. Grazing Land Improvement Incentives – Provide financial incentives, payment bonuses and technical assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers to develop/improve grazing land.
- f. Farmland Preservation – Encourage farmland preservation initiatives that preserve a viable land base for beginning farmers and ranchers with strong conservation practices.
- g. The committee applauds efforts within the department to coordinate NRCS and FSA programs in ways that assist beginning farmers and ranchers in meeting their business needs while encouraging participation in conservation programs and encourages the Secretary to continue those efforts.

Again, thank you for your support of beginning farmer and rancher initiatives. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Trent McKnight
Vice Chair
USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Cc: Under Secretary Mark Keenum, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

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Mr. Trent McKnight
Vice Chair
USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning
Farmers and Ranchers
McKnight Ranches
Throckmorton, Texas 76483

Dear Mr. McKnight:

Thank you for your August 20, 2007, letter to former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and for sharing the recommendations developed by the USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers as discussed at its July 9-10, 2007, meeting in Des Moines, Iowa.

It was a pleasure to address and talk with the Committee in Des Moines. As you know, one of our priorities has been providing additional assistance to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, and we much appreciate the Committee's dedication and hard work in developing the many thoughtful recommendations that it has provided during our tenure. I am also pleased that we have been able to implement some of the recommendations set forth by the Committee.

Although I was disappointed that the House of Representatives did not include the Department of Agriculture's proposal for a 20 percent increase in direct payments to beginning farmers and ranchers when it established its farm bill proposals in July, the House did include numerous provisions that would benefit them. We expect that the Senate will also include a number of such provisions in its final proposals.

I am pleased to enclose our response to the Committee's recommendations and hope that the Committee will find it helpful. Thank you again.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. F. Conner".

Charles F. Conner
Acting Secretary

Enclosure

**USDA Response
to the
Recommendations of the
USDA Advisory Committee on
Beginning Farmers and Ranchers**

U.S. Department of Agriculture
November 2007

**USDA Response
to the
Recommendations
of the USDA Advisory Committee on
Beginning Farmers and Ranchers**

Each Committee recommendation, followed by USDA's response, appears below.

- 1. Conduct Farm Succession Planning Outreach Sessions and encourage existing farm succession organizations to participate. Support increased training and outreach to the farming and ranching community on estate and succession planning through USDA (NRCS, CSREES, RMA and FSA) programs. Publicize the importance of succession planning by issuing publications.**

This is an excellent recommendation. We are pleased to note that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Outreach and Risk Management Agency cohosted the Risk Management Strategies for Beginning and Small Farmers and Ranchers Conference held September 12–15, 2007, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. USDA partnered with Growing Power, Inc. (Milwaukee), on this exciting conference, which was attended by approximately 600 participants. The meeting focused on a broad spectrum of critical issues—including estate and succession planning—impacting the ability of beginning and small farmers and ranchers to engage in viable agricultural enterprises. Office of Outreach staff, along with officials from many USDA agencies, served as members of the Executive and Planning Committees, participated in the conference, and solicited speakers to make presentations. A number of speakers represented existing farm succession organizations.

Since 2004, the Office of Outreach has hosted an Annual Partners Meeting that is the centerpiece of a series of “conversations” featuring candid dialogue with representatives of community-based organizations and USDA staff on issues such as estate planning and access to land as well as other beginning farmer and rancher issues. A conversation on beginning and small farmer and rancher issues was held at the 2006 and 2007 Annual Partners Meetings.

The Office of Outreach has participated in the activities of such organizations as the Ethiopian Community Development Corporation and National Hmong American Farmers to ensure that the resources of the Department are available to and brought to bear on refugee farmers and ranchers.

As previously recommended by the Advisory Committee, USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) included a specific request for beginning farmer and rancher projects in its fiscal year (FY) 2007 requests for applications under the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program. This has resulted in USDA support for a national project focused on farmland access, tenure, and succession involving colleagues from across the country.

The Office of Outreach has coordinated, supported, and participated in a variety of outreach events and workshops around the country that addressed subjects such as estate planning, heir property, and succession planning. All USDA agencies are being encouraged to continue providing outreach conferences, publicity, and support training on a wide variety of beginning farmer and rancher issues.

2. Open dialogue with state commissioners of agriculture and regional groups on beginning farmer and rancher and transition/succession issues.

USDA is engaging in ongoing dialogue with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture about issues involving beginning farmers and ranchers. USDA has also reached out to several regional and national organizations to promote the Administration's proposals to better assist those who wish to pursue agriculture as a living.

3. Implement outreach efforts to beginning farmers and ranchers such as:

- a. Federal replication of successful state and non-governmental organization (NGO) programs for beginning farmers and ranchers.**
- b. Promotion of beginning farmer and rancher local food systems.**
- c. Ensure conservation planning is integrated with the producer's business plan.**

Among the Nation's beginning farmers and ranchers are refugees and farm workers. The Office of Outreach has worked with other Federal departments and community-based organizations to provide meaningful outreach to this audience. For example, the Office of Outreach has implemented a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, to provide access to USDA programs and services for local food systems. The Office of Outreach staff and agency program and outreach staff have also participated in conferences hosted by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, serving as panelists and discussants on issues including conservation, local food systems, farmers markets, land access, and marketing.

Agency outreach staff, along with the Department's Small Farms and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Coordinators, will be instructed to continue to conduct outreach so that USDA officials across the country are discussing conservation planning with farmers and ranchers, including any proposed expenses in the producer's business plan.

4. We recommend the Secretary support the following:

- a. Reauthorization of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program—a competitive grant program authorized by the Research and Related Matters title of the 2002 Farm Bill. This program authorizes the**

Secretary to make competitive grants available to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers. Some of the programs and services would include mentoring and apprenticeships, conservation assistance, risk management education, marketing strategies, and business, financial, and whole-farm planning.

- b. An amendment to specifically include new refugee/immigrant farming concerns.**
- c. \$25 million per year in Farm Bill funding for this program.**

Although the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program was authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, no funds were appropriated for the program. Reauthorization of the program is presently being considered by Congress. If the program is included in the 2007 Farm Bill and funds are appropriated, USDA will implement the program and provide competitive grants to experienced groups that provide assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers.

- 5. Ensure coordination of various USDA Outreach Programs (FSA, NRCS, RMA, CSREES & others) with sub grantees who deliver outreach/training to beginning farmers and ranchers to guarantee effective and efficient program delivery.**

The Office of Outreach works with USDA agencies to provide technical assistance and coordination of USDA programs and services, and in collaboration with Agency Outreach Coordinators has developed a comprehensive *USDA-wide Outreach Strategic Plan*. The *Strategic Plan* creates a vehicle to ensure better coordination of the outreach activities of all agencies and to leverage the Department's resources so that a more diverse group of constituents is served and served more effectively. Increasing and coordinating the participation of grantees (e.g., minority-serving institutions and community-based organizations) in the outreach activities of the Department helps guarantee effective and efficient program delivery. The *Strategic Plan* is tied to a Departmental Regulation on Outreach.

- 6. Eliminate term limits on both of FSA's direct and guaranteed loan programs.**

The Administration supports continued suspension of guaranteed term limits and believes that the current term limit in direct loans, including the 2-year waiver provision on operating loans, is satisfactory.

- 7. Support rural health care initiatives that will increase and improve access to health care and health insurance. This will improve the quality of life for beginning farmers and ranchers and encourage new farm entry.**

We agree that health care issues are a major concern in rural America. Our proposals would require \$85 million in mandatory spending to supplement funding for Rural Development's Community Facilities programs. With a mix of direct and guaranteed community facilities loans, \$80 million in budget authority would be used to support \$1.6 billion in loans needed to meet the identified capital need to complete the reconstruction and rehabilitation of all 1,283 certified Rural Critical Access Hospitals within the 5 years covered by the Farm Bill.

Affordable health insurance for farmers, including beginning farmers, has been an issue for many years. There are many proposals circulating on how to address health care issues, including the lack of insurance and rising costs to those not participating in employer-sponsored health plans.

The health insurance industry is heavily regulated, and it is often difficult for insurance providers to make available a streamlined, inexpensive policy due to State insurance requirements. However, a change in Wisconsin State law provides the opportunity for the Farmers' Health Cooperative of Wisconsin to allow farmers and agribusinesses to purchase alternative health insurance as a group, increasing their buying power by giving them access to group health care purchasing through the cooperative. USDA Rural Development provided funding to help establish this program through a Rural Community Grant Program. A grant of \$2.2 million funded a pilot project for a Wisconsin-Minnesota health care cooperative insurance-purchasing alliance. The pilot project provides health care coverage for farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations in both States. USDA is monitoring the performance of this new program and hopes to have the opportunity to fund future programs to address rural health needs through loans and grants.

8. Encourage FSA county executive directors to provide beginning farmers and ranchers an opportunity to serve as county committee members. Encourage the state committee to include at least one member who meets the definition of a beginning farmer and rancher.

County Executive Directors and County Committee Members are directed to carry out ongoing efforts to inform underserved producers of the role of County Committees and the County Committee election process. The Agency will emphasize underserved producer participation and beginning farmer participation in the County Committee election process. Farm Service Agency (FSA) directives will be reviewed to ensure that emphasis is placed on the participation of beginning farmers and ranchers as well as of underserved producers.

As future State Committees are appointed, the importance of beginning farmers and ranchers will be emphasized in efforts to include beginning farmers in the appointment process.

9. Revise the USDA definition of beginning farmer and rancher to include other applicable components of the statutory definition used by FSA and other USDA

programs. A “needs” element should be included in the definition, so those who have adequate off-farm or ranch financial resources are not receiving subsidized assistance.

USDA officials have held discussions on this issue. There are numerous proposed House and Senate beginning farmer provisions, and the issue will be addressed when the applicable agencies’ regulations are revised to implement the 2007 Farm Bill.

- 10. Support full funding for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) with a nationwide sign-up in the Farm Bill. USDA should abide by the 90 percent cost-share/15 percent cost-share differential provision for beginning farmers and ranchers in all states. Encourage states to provide special enhanced payments for beginning farmers and ranchers.**

USDA supports a nationwide CSP sign-up, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will strive to meet the needs of socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers through the 10 percent set aside and the 90 percent cost share rate, another integral component of the Administration’s Conservation Access Initiative.

NRCS will continue to encourage State conservationists to provide special enhanced payments for beginning farmers and ranchers as evident by the 80 percent average cost-share rate garnered in 2006 compared to the 59 percent average cost-share rate attributed to regular participants through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

- 11. Support initiatives to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an exemption from capital gains for the sale of farmland to a first-time farmer as proposed in H.R. 2034, “The Beginning Farmers & Ranchers Act of 2005.” Any change in law should not conflict with existing tax-exempt programs created to assist beginning farmers and ranchers.**

Capital gains tax policy is under the purview of the Department of Treasury. However, we expect that there will be a number of tax provisions in the 2007 Farm Bill.

- 12. Allow FSA loan programs to have more flexibility to allow beginning farmer and rancher participants to buy into established operations, including purchasing a percentage of an operating entity such as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), etc.**

FSA supports innovative approaches to assist beginning farmers and ranchers. A change in legislation would be needed to allow an applicant to use loan funds to buy into an established operation.

13. Support a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Account (IDA) Pilot Program to promote a pattern of savings and encourage a new generation of farmers and ranchers.

USDA has historically supported concepts like IDAs, such as farm and risk management accounts. However, such concepts need to be integrated into the existing price and income support program structure. In June 2006, USDA published a study entitled "Whole-Farm Approaches to a Safety Net." The section on income-stabilization (savings) accounts included some examples, one of which was individual risk management management accounts. This study is accessible on USDA's Economic Research Service website (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/EIB15/>).

14. Ensure that the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) collects Ag Census data on beginning farmers and ranchers for "the year farming began" and "number of years on the present farm" before 2012, so that it is available for the 2012 Ag Census.

NASS is committed to examining this question for the 2012 Census of Agriculture. The Census Bureau had responsibility for the Census of Agriculture until 1997 and has previously tested this question on self-administered surveys, with mixed results. Many respondents reported when they first began helping out on the family farm (e.g., began to collect eggs at age 5). NASS has successfully collected these data in the Agricultural Resources Management Survey. However, this survey is administered through the use of a trained survey interviewer. We will use these experiences to revisit and test potential wording to achieve the desired results on the self-administered 2012 Census of Agriculture.

15. Support reauthorization and full funding for the Outreach and Technical Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers (Section 2501) Program. The 2002 Farm Bill authorized funding of \$25 million each fiscal year. We request that the appropriate agency conduct research on the impact of the 2501 program on beginning farmers and ranchers.

The President's budget proposes \$6.9 million in FY 2008 for the Section 2501 Program. The House has included \$15 million in its Farm Bill Proposals. USDA certainly supports reauthorization of the Section 2501 Program, as for many years these grant funds have helped many groups provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Some of the groups that have received funding have targeted assistance to beginning farmers. As requested, USDA officials will be instructed to conduct research on the impact of the Section 2501 Program on beginning farmers and ranchers.

- 16. Implement special incentives for beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers to encourage participation in conservation, to help get new farmers started, and to achieve long lasting conservation improvements. The committee encourages the Secretary to implement, under existing or new authorities that might become available, the following types of provisions:**
- a. Upfront or Accelerated Payments—Provide option for immediate upfront/advanced payments to beginning farmers and ranchers through multi-year contracts entered into for federal conservation programs (e.g.: in a multi-year contract for a certain amount of money in annual payments, an incentive provision could provide that all payments are paid upfront—either in a lump sum or on an accelerated basis—with all other provisions of the contract remaining. This would provide capital to establish the farming operation with a larger stream of income during the crucial formative years of the beginning farmer or rancher operation and make enrollment in conservations programs more attractive).**
 - b. Whole Farm Planning Incentive—Offer financial incentive or bonus through conservation programs for beginning farmers and ranchers to develop integrated farm/ranch conservation plans.**
 - c. Graduated Cost Share—Graduate the cost share portion attributable to the beginning farmer or rancher over a period of years. (e.g.: Provide priority to beginning farmers and ranchers for cost-share and technical assistance. Such an initiative would allow for installation or replacement of necessary conservation projects while recognizing the economic situation of many beginning farmers and ranchers.)**
 - d. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Land Returning to Production—Encourage retirees or non-farming heirs holding expiring CRP contracts to make arrangements to transfer the land to beginning farmers and ranchers by offering a rental rate bonus in the transition period.**
 - e. Grazing Land Improvement Incentives—Provide financial incentives, payment bonuses and technical assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers to develop/improve grazing land.**
 - f. Farmland Preservation—Encourage farmland preservation initiatives that preserve a viable land base for beginning farmers and ranchers with strong conservation practices.**
 - g. The committee applauds efforts within the department to coordinate NRCS and FSA programs in ways that assist beginning farmers and ranchers in meeting their business needs while encouraging participation in conservation programs and encourages the Secretary to continue those efforts.**

USDA has submitted numerous proposals to Congress that would greatly expand our conservation programs, totaling an additional \$7.8 billion over the next 10 years. The House-passed bill increased conservation programs by \$5.7 billion, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates. The Senate is expected to substantially increase conservation spending. We believe there will be increased assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers as these expanded programs are implemented.

H.R. 2419, the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007 that passed the U.S. House of Representatives on July 27, 2007, would authorize new incentives for beginning, limited-resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers under the Conservation Reserve Program.

Section 2101 of H.R. 2419 would facilitate the transition of land enrolled in CRP from a retired or retiring owner or operator to beginning, limited-resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to return some of the land to production using sustainable grazing or crop production methods.

Up to 1 year before CRP contract expiration, conservation land improvements could be made and certification begun under the Organic Foods Production Act. Other provisions apply, including making payments for not more than 2 years after CRP contract termination in certain cases.

Concerning some of the Committee's specific recommendations, NRCS and FSA have cooperated on a 2007 Grassland Reserve Program rental agreement sign-up targeted to limited-resource and beginning farmers. Also, the NRCS Strategic Plan includes a venture goal designed to sustain a viable agricultural sector and natural resource quality. Currently, the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program encourages consideration of ranking factors for farms and ranches that have succession plans. NRCS provides support to the American Farmland Trust's Farmland Information Center, which is used as a resource for farmers on farm and ranch protection. NRCS also participated in the American Planning Association's Annual Meeting to encourage planners to consider farm and ranch protection in their community planning efforts and to utilize the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment methodology and soils data to assess the impacts of plans on farms and ranches.