

United States Senate Committee on
**AGRICULTURE
NUTRITION
& FORESTRY**

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman

Opportunities for Beginning Farmers

Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012

The future of American agriculture depends on the next generation of farmers and ranchers. According to the Department of Agriculture's most recent census, the average age of the American farmer is 57 years old and one-quarter of American farmers are age 65 or older. The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act, also known as the Farm Bill, includes significant measures to address this demographic crisis.

Continued Support for Beginning Farmers

The bill continues the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which develops and offers education, training, outreach and mentoring programs to ensure the success of the next generation of farmers. The bill expands eligibility to include military veterans who wish to begin a career in agriculture.

Prioritizes Beginning Farmers across USDA Programs

The Department of Agriculture is required to prioritize beginning farmers to ensure that they have access to USDA programs, including the Biomass Crop Assistance Program, Rural Cooperation Development Grants. Five percent set-asides in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) make sure that beginning farmers and ranchers have fair and equitable access to conservation programs.

Increases Access to Capital

The bill makes significant strides in increasing lending to beginning farmers by expanding eligibility, removing term limits on guaranteed lending, and providing opportunities for beginning farmers to earn direct loan access. For the first time, the USDA will have the ability to create pilot programs in the Farm Loan Programs exclusively targeted to beginning farmers.

Provides Better Access to Crop Insurance

This bill provides nearly \$200 million in new funding for expanded access for crop insurance for beginning farmers. These improvements will lower the cost of crop insurance for beginning farmers, allow the Risk Management Agency to consider a beginning farmer's previous experience in calculating their production history, and it will provide additional assistance when beginning farmers face natural disasters.

Encourages Older Farmers to Help Beginning Farmers Through Conservation

The bill reauthorizes the Conservation Reserve Program Transition Incentive Program, which gives two extra years of CRP payments to retiring farmers who transition their expiring CRP land to beginning farmers. This program has seen great success with retiring farmers who want to help the next generation get started in agriculture.

Helps Beginning Farmers Buy Land

The bill reauthorizes the Contract Land Sales Program, which guarantees loans to retiring farmers who sell their land to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers. The bill also sets aside a significant percentage of loans for beginning farmers, including additional benefits in the down payment loan program, conservation loans, and direct lending programs for farm ownership and operations.

Continues Program that Adds Value to Farm Products and Boosts Income for Farmers

Value Added Producer Grants encourage independent producers to process raw products into marketable goods, adding value and increasing farm income. Beginning farmers will continue to be given a priority in this program.

Helps Beginning Farmers Get Started

The bill continues the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Accounts, which are designed to help new farmers finance their agricultural pursuits. This program funds financial and business education, as well as matched saving accounts, and encourages healthy business practices and savings.