



## USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY CALIFORNIA

These useful links to sources of information should help your quest to start or improve your small farm or ranch. The contacts are divided into three sections: 1) Information/Training, 2) Loans/Grants and 3) Organic Farming/Ranching. Be sure to ask each organization or agency for more contacts in your own local area. We wish you success in your venture. *USDA Farm Service Agency, California Office.*

### INFORMATION / TRAINING FOR NEW FARMERS AND RANCHERS

**County Agricultural Commissioner** (in your county) – check in with your own local county government’s Ag experts whose mission is to advise and assist growers in their counties. They know the local successful crops that suit area climate and soils. Use this locator: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/county/countymap/>

**University of California – Cooperative Extension Service** – working closely with the county ag commissioners, the “Ag Extension Agents” have local offices and staff around the state to advise regional growers, big and small. Frequently courses and cooperative marketing efforts are coordinated with Extensive Service and Ag Commissioners. Use this locator: <http://ucanr.org/ce.cfm>

**California FarmLink** – a respected non-profit organization with a history of success helping new farmers through conferences, networking, financial training, marketing advice and other resources. They also maintain ag property listings, help with succession planning and are a standard eligible lender in the FSA Guaranteed Loan Program. <http://www.californiafarmlink.org/joomla/index.php>

**Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)** - provides education, business opportunities and assistance for farm workers and aspiring farmers to grow and sell crops. Program services include the 195-hour Farmer Education Program (PEPA), monthly farmer workshops and field days, and farmer technical assistance. Apprenticeships and Farm Business Incubator services also available. <http://www.albafarmers.org/>

**California Small Farm Conference** – a major yearly conference supported by most of the agencies, organizations and educational institutions listed above. This annual multi-day conference with tours and commercial exhibits provides a wealth of ideas, information and valuable "network" contacts for smaller operators and start-up agricultural ventures. Scholarships are available yearly for farm workers and small farmers. <http://www.californiafarmconference.com/joomla/>

**California Small Farm Center, UC Davis** – provides educational resources, reporting on field and market research studies to help small and moderate-scale farmers. Sign up to receive the free **Small Farm News** <https://ucce.ucdavis.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=6959> Visit website for description of further references and advice. <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/>

**CA Department of Food & Ag (CDFA)** – the State of California’s agricultural department provides a vast array of services and programs for all California farmers and ranchers. For beginning and small growers, see the **Certified Farmers Markets section** (also shown below) and [www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov) and **Specialty Crop Block Grants Program** [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty\\_Crop\\_Competitiveness\\_Grants/](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) (focused on “*enhancing the competitiveness of California specialty crops by creating and expanding partnerships, promoting and developing new and existing markets, reaching new consumers, and ensuring the long-term viability of California specialty crop agriculture.*”)

**START2FARM - USDA National Agricultural Library and American Farm Bureau Federation** - a useful web portal that provides links to training, financing, technical assistance and other support services specifically for beginning farmers and ranchers as well as successful case studies about new and beginning farmers and ranchers. [www.start2farm.gov](http://www.start2farm.gov)

**Ecological Farming Organization (EcoFarm)** - an environmental farming organization with a vast clearinghouse of helpful information for beginning farmers as shown on the RESOURCES page of their website (linked below). Visit their list of helpful organizations and agencies, listed A to Z for sources of information, networking and funding. <http://www.eco-farm.org/resources/>

**USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)** - formerly Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) – useful information and a listing of government grants for beginning farmers. <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/recentReleasedGrants.cfm>

**USDA – Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)** - in addition to research and promotion of U.S. agricultural commodities, AMS manages and promotes U.S. organic agriculture and assists the development of farmer's markets and improved transportation. Focusing on small to medium sized farms, AMS provides several information and grant programs to assist in selling through farmer's markets and selling to federal procurement programs. [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov) and search for "Farmers Markets and Local Food Marketing."

**Certified Farmers Market Program** CFM's provide a great opportunity for small farmers to market their products without the added expenses of commercial preparation. This Cdfa-coordinated system of scheduled retail markets increases their net income and makes it possible for them to stay in business. In California, there are approximately 700 certified farmers markets and approximately 2,200 certified producers. [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i\\_&\\_c/cfm.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i_&_c/cfm.html)

**Farmer Veteran Coalition** – focusing on returning men and women veterans, this organization holds educational and informational events, provides training and internship experiences and counsels aspiring farmers on how to succeed in the field of agriculture. Focus also includes vocational training on other agricultural occupations in addition to farm ownership. FVC also provides a Fellowship Fund grant program to help new farmers expand. <http://www.farmvetco.org>

## **LOANS / GRANTS FOR NEW FARMERS AND RANCHERS**

**USDA Farm Service Agency - Farm Operating Loans and Farm Ownership Loans** - loan funds are reserved for **Beginning and for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers** in this credit program. Lending by FSA is for those unable to obtain credit elsewhere. FSA also has a new streamlined **MicroLoan Program** for new farmers and ranchers. <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=fmlp&topic=landing> For information specific to your own needs, contact your nearest FSA office: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=ca&agency=fsa>

**California FarmLink** – A well respected non-profit organization with a history of success helping new farmers. Farm Link provides conferences, networking, financial training, marketing advice and other resources. They also maintain ag property listings, help with succession planning and are a standard eligible lender in the FSA Guaranteed Loan Program. <http://www.californiafarmlink.org/joomla/index.php>

**USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture** (formerly Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service) – NIFA collaborates or has formal working [partnerships](#) with many institutions and individuals. Our key partners are the institutions of higher learning making up the Land-Grant University System. However, we also partner with other federal agencies, within and beyond USDA; non-profit associations; professional societies; commodity groups and grower associations; [multistate research committees](#); private industry; citizen groups; foundations; regional centers; the military; task forces; and other groups. For information and grants for beginning farmers, visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/recentReleasedGrants.cfm>

## **ORGANIC FARMING AND RANCHING**

**CA Organic Program - California Department of Food and Ag. (CDFA)**

[www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov)

**California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)**

[ccof@ccof.org](mailto:ccof@ccof.org)

**Ecological Farming Association (EcoFarm)** – see description above

<http://www.eco-farm.org/resources/>