

**Farm Bill Listening Session  
It Takes A Region: NESAWG Conference, 2021**

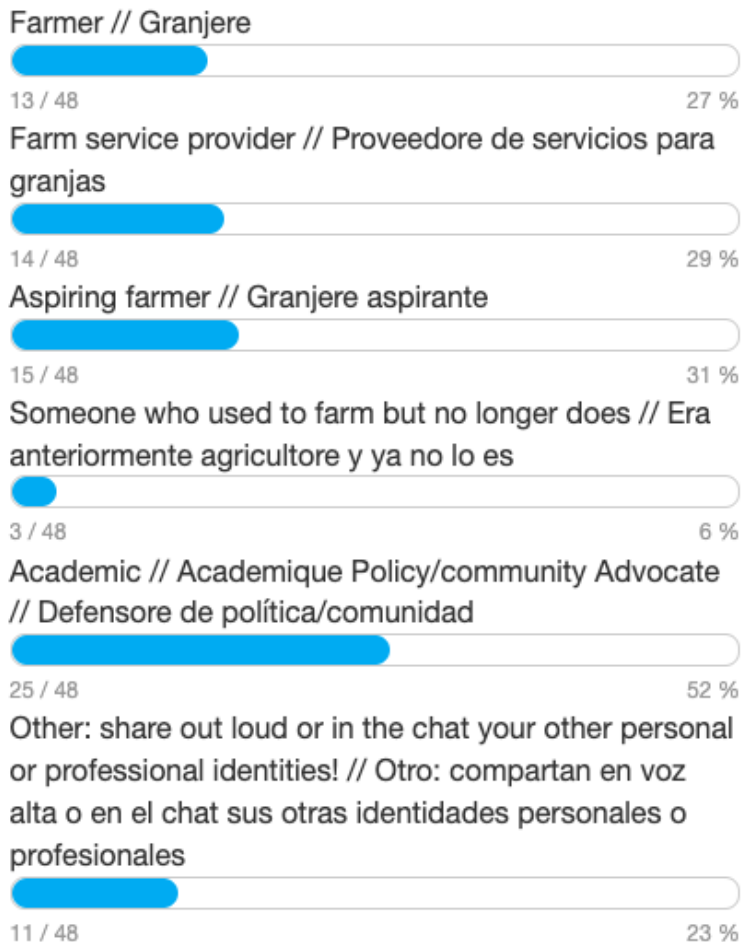
**Co-hosted by:**

AFT  
Groundswell Center  
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## Responses to full-group polls:

Check all that apply. I am a: // Marque todas las que le correspondan. Soy una:

**Poll Results** **48 Answers**



What federal programs do you have experience with? // ¿Con cuáles programas federales tienes experiencia?

**Poll Results**

**53 Answers**

Conservation Programs: CSP, EQIP, CRP, RCPP, etc // Programas de conservación: CSP, EQIP, CRP, RCPP, etc



23 / 53

43 %

Research Programs: SARE, OREI, etc // Programas de investigación: SARE, OREI, etc



25 / 53

47 %

Crop Insurance Programs: Whole Farm Revenue, etc // Programas aseguradores de siembra: Whole Farm Revenue (Ingresos de toda la granja), etc



6 / 53

11 %

Regional Food Systems Programs: VAPG, FMPP, LFPP, etc // Programas Regionales de Sistemas Alimenticios: VAPG, FMPP, LFPP, etc



31 / 53

58 %

Farmer Training and Assistance Programs: 2501, BFRDP, etc // Programas de entrenamiento y asistencia para granjeros: 2501, BFRDP, etc



26 / 53

49 %

If you are a farmer, what do you produce? | Si eres granjere, ¿qué produces?

### Poll Results

22 Answers

#### Vegetables | Vegetales



#### Fruit / nuts | Fruta / Nueces



#### Livestock | Ganado



#### Poultry | Aves



#### Grains/legumes | Granos/Legunbres



#### Dairy | Lacteos



#### Other | Otro



## Notes from issue breakouts

### Climate Change

Put a plus sign next to any of these programs you've used to help you deal with the effects of climate change on your farm:

- EQIP ++
- CSP +

- Crop Insurance Program
- A state-run soil health program +++
- Other (please write in)

Of the above programs: Are you able to access these programs? How can they be improved to help you address or mitigate climate change on your farm-- think in terms of priorities, eligibility, funding amounts/timing, cost-share percentages, TA etc?

Has racial or other discrimination affected your ability to access these programs? (open-ended)

- Awareness of programs, deadlines-hard to navigate, need assistance for farmers!
- NRCS don't always understand organic/diversified farms. Women and BIPOC have had bad experiences
- Increase funding for programs that provide experiential education and getting people involved in food systems
- consumer education/awareness
- There are more these programs can do with food accessibility/markets in mind (especially when New England has a short growing season)
- Experience with a CD really helped farmer know what grants were available when and provide TA
- Farmers are busy

How has climate change affected your farm? Think in terms of production, markets, pests and disease, planning, etc. (open-ended)

- Challenges with flooding and water with garden plots
- Flooding, soil erosion, more severe droughts
- In Rochester area, less predictable weather/seasons - Those engaged in soil health practices, less impacted
- Echo issues around water, flooding, unpredictable, weather, drought (Finger Lakes)
- Emeran, communications, thinking about how to communicate about it
- Not a farmer but my husband is, here in the Hudson Valley. I've witnessed the highly unpredictable weather and how that's made for really tough seasons. Hail that destroyed crops, early blooms from out of season warm days followed by freezes that kills fruit tree harvests.pests - spotted wing drosophila, fungal issues, etc
- Delayed frost allowed more mold/impacted yield
- Unpredictable late frost after planting in the spring, lost crops (strawberry)
- This year and last, noticed that wetness was an issue, field was too wet every time, needed three days to dry out, every three days it seemed to rain again
- Attracted to farming/regen farming back in 2005 to work the soil to put carbon back in

What ideas or experiences do you have for interventions that could help you lessen the effects or adapt to climatic changes? (open-ended)

- soil health, carbon sequestration
- Having a strong local food system to create a better awareness of seasonality
- Crop and animal diversity
- Localization: where we get our food supply from-gleaning can help to relocalize the supply chain, reduce long distance dependency
- Gleaning needs responsible resource management, fossil fuel consumption and transportation of goods
- Begin to mitigate early so farms aren't contributing/dependent on emission producing technology
- Perennial Crops

## Urban Agriculture

Put a plus sign next to any of these programs you've accessed or used before to help you grow, access, or maintain an urban farm, reach customers, or learn urban farming skills:

- USDA Office of Urban Agriculture -
- EQIP -
- Community Food Projects - +++
- Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (WIC, Seniors) - ++++++
- Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program - ++++++
- Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program - +++++
- Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501) -
- Food Safety Outreach Program -
- Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program -
- Value Added Producer Grant - +

Of the above programs: Are you able to access these programs? How can they be improved -- think in terms of priorities, eligibility, funding amounts/timing, cost-share percentages, TA etc? (open-ended)

- A lot of the grants we've applied for do not cover salaries which is very challenging for us
- the applications are difficult, all submissions are online, it's a stressful process
- We held a farmers market this past year. We had trouble communicating with folks who received WIC, SFNMP, and SNAP and letting them know we accepted it at our market.
- Some grants are cost reimbursable which means we need to have the cash to spend, and then wait several months to be reimbursed. This is very difficult for small nonprofits
- Wic/Senior Checks-- Limited (or they don't how to get them) or Late Access for recipients to receive checks.
  - I believe that a lot of recipients to have limited access to travel to use their checks.
  - The checks aren't all used.

- Limited access, didn't know of them
- Oops, do know about the USDA Office of Urban Ag, Innovation grant but unsuccessful in getting funded
- usda limits applications to only one per EIN. We had a fiscal sponsor who had our program and several other ag programs from different parts of new england under their umbrella. This severely limited our ability to apply.
- At Gardening the Community we had a fiscal sponsor who also sponsored other farming programs from all parts of new england. We all shared their EIN. USDA limits only one application/EIN so only one of us could apply at time
- New farmer development will help FMNP.
- not as accessible as they could be for small organizations, seems that USDA has a pipeline of orgs they tend to fund. Barriers to collab with orgs that have been funded by USDA.
- infrastructure needed to access these funds. support offered isn't as far reaching as it should be. priority should be given to BIPOC orgs. Language barrier access
- experience with BIPOC farmer training programs
- Difficulty in accessing these programs. Are there ways to access other BIPOC groups to act as mentors? I have felt very on my own and getting doors shut in my face.
- Farm to school turnkey program model - that seems to be working
- Hearing that applications are too much of a beast and they don't know how to do cost sharing or matching - anything that can be done to streamline applications.
- use CNR Farm to School new "turnkey" grant projects as a model for these grants
- Community food projects - requires 1:1 match, and targeted towards limited resource communities - those are in direct conflict. These projects have the most need and also most financial burden
- there are so many ways for marginalized peoples to have their needs/desires blocked, silenced, canceled, demonized. We also need policy and legal activists and advocates who know ways to block a few white farmers from blocking the USDA from distributing monies owed to Black farmers.
- The federal government shouldn't be administrating grants- they should be distributing funds to states to then distribute to communities or admin to regional projects
- 2501 program - disprportionately small amount of funding. BFR programs can request substantially more money

How has racial discrimination impacted your ability to access urban farmland, technical assistance, or federal urban ag programs? (open-ended)

- I've been outright ignored by people in spaces where they're supposed to help you.
- Super loaded question. It affects every aspect of my work from the conditions in which I grow to the people I serve, the help I receive to the markets I have access to.

# Your Sustainable Practices: Conservation, Soil Health and More

What conservation practices do you use on your farm? (open ended question)

- Cover crops++
- Reducing tillage+
- "Lasagna" layering (mulch/compost layering) to build soil health
- Organic feed
- Rotational grazing
- Raised beds use of compost soil, compost program, but also purchase as out program increases
- Compost
- Native planting areas
- Companion planting/intercropping
- Living mulch

What resources were most important when implementing those practices? Put a plus sign next to any of these resource that helped you:

- Technical assistance
- Funding +
- Mentorship +
- Information ++
- Helpful assistance from NRCS/other USDA officials
- Access to equipment / Technology
- Good lease agreement / Supportive landlord
- Established market for secondary/cover crop
- Other (write in) - peer to peer learning ++

What resources do you wish you had had when implementing conservation practices? Put a plus sign next to all that apply:

- Technical assistance +
- Funding
- Mentorship
- Information
- Helpful assistance from NRCS/other USDA officials +
- Access to equipment or technology
- Good lease agreement/Supportive landlord
- Established market for secondary/cover crop
- Other (write in)

Put an X next to any of the programs you've used to help you use conservation practices on your farm:

- EQIP x
- CSP x
- CRP x
- ACEP
- RCPP
- A state-run program (describe)
- Other (please describe)

What conservation practices would you like to implement in the future? (open ended)

- Building and maintaining soil health
- integrating perennial crops/agroforestry
- using renewable energy sources
- Cover Crops
- No tillage
- Working w/ Perennials
- intercropping

What barriers have kept you from implementing additional conservation practices?

- Technical Assistance
- Funding +
- Mentorship
- Information
- Access to equipment / technology +
- Existing contracts / lease agreements / landlord unsupportive
- Organic standards
- Racial discrimination
- Lack of translation / language access
- Loan or risk management program requirements +
- Other- not in a management role +

What would help to strengthen conservation and soil health programs? (For example more funding, technical assistance, greater program accessibility?)

- Maybe funding or access, I honestly have not heard about these types of programs in my area

How common are practices like cover crops, no-till, diverse rotations, on-farm use of compost, and livestock integration in your region? How can adoption be improved?



- My understanding (which is limited by my experience and the range of farmers I know) is that some of the barriers relate to incentives. Implementing new practices, especially ones that require time/money/new equipment/new training, isn't something most farmers have the time/capacity to do. Being a small to mid-scale farm, from the farmers I've spoken to, is really hard, and sometimes there's a lack of awareness, even among state extensions for how to support small to midscale operations. One other thing I'll add is that while I do know farmers who use these practices, they are doing it out of pure dedication and are not very profitable and don't receive any outside recognition for that work except through their own self-promotion of the practices they're using. But yes, I am aware of farms using cover crops, no-till, diverse rotations, and on-farm use of compost.
- Fairly common, but can still be improved through education. Some farmers may not know about these practices
- cover crops are used by almost all of the urban farmers in my area.

## Your Markets: Local and Regional Food Supply Chains

Put a plus sign next to any of these programs you've accessed before:

1. Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program ++++++
2. Value Added Producer Grant Program++
3. Regional Food Systems Partnership Program++++
4. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program ++++
5. Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (WIC, Seniors) ++++++
6. Office of Urban Agriculture

Are you able to access these programs? How can they be improved- think in terms of priorities, eligibility, funding, cost-share, etc?

- I am, because I have the time, knowledge, and support of my org to apply. But the applications can be daunting and require a large time investment from small producers and other small organizations.
- Cost-share requirements can be prohibitive
- tried to access this program as a grant writing helper for All Together Now but ended up not submitting due to the complexity of the application and newness of the program although originally encouraged to apply
- technical assistance is needed to understand the complex language and requirements
- Yes, can access. I think a lot of organizations need technical assistance to access these however. The applications are long and cumbersome. Matching funds are a challenge for some as well.
- A lot of these have overlapping outcomes in the local food system; it can be hard to utilize them to integrate into your local food development strategy.
- tried to access RFSP program as a grant writing assistant but ended up not submitting due to complexity of application and newness of program

- Clarity on what types of projects are likely to be funded, especially for Regional Food system partnerships
- I am a fundraiser. These programs are hard to access because applications are very complex. USDA tends to fund the same partners.
  - Ex: Farm to Food Box Program - incredible failure because people with experience did not get selected. Application complexity is a barrier
- New to policy side, worked on farms for several years. Lack of accessibility to farmers for value added grants, not for infrastructure development
- Previously worked for cons district that helped farmers write grants, weren't able to help farmers because of lack of infrastructure, capacity for match
- Work for a food hub in RI, food access and farmers market programs, EBT match at farm stands, CSAs, coop.
- Limits of application for GusNIP. Have 4 year FINI grant, applied to GusNIP CRR. Filled out app, communicated with state partners, trying to increase incentive
  - Denied b/c app not specific enough to pandemic. Frustrating to prove to USDA that program is relevant. Want to push for state run nutrition incentive programs.
- Food policy council. Experienced same - grant app takes a long time, overall awareness that programs exist can be limited

How has racial discrimination impacted your ability to access local and regional markets or federal local food or health food access programs?

- I have not had direct experience with discrimination
- New farmer development programs will help the FMNP
- I find in our area that most of our people of color are so new to the field and not "plugged in" to the networks that they don't know about these programs or how to leverage them in their work.

As a farmer who sells into local and regional markets, what processing, infrastructure, or market-related barriers do you face? What kinds of changes in policy would help better meet your needs?

- refrigeration is a big challenge in both terms of capacity and expense
- refrigeration and construction (which are typically not allowed expenses)
- Lack of aggregation and local processing infrastructure; our state is working on this, but is disconnected from the producers, especially the smaller ones.
- transportation is also a big challenge in both terms of capacity and expense
- the tech around nutrition incentives and especially WIC going digital remain a challenge. Need additional education & funding support especially around WIC FMNP & WIC CVV at markets
- We need to add new programs that do not exist anymore in the Farm Bill. We need to end the basic cheap food policies that prevent farmers from making a living and push larger farms to grow more and more crops that largely go into animal feed and export. We need to redesign and implement parity with supply management so that buyers have to pay enough to cover farmers' cost of production, including living wages for the farmer and everyone who works on the farm.
- Working with new American farmers - language barrier in local food system can be real for New England states that lack diversity

# Your Skills: Research, Innovation, and Technical Assistance

What programs have you accessed before:

- OASDFR/2501
- BFRDP +
- SARE +++
- ATTRA +
- Other Programs

What topics do you think need more research in the next 10 years? Put a plus sign next to the ones you'd benefit from:

- Seed cultivars +
- Decreasing on-farm greenhouse gas emissions +
- Increasing on-farm soil carbon sequestration +
- On-farm adaptation to climate change impacts +++
- Distribution of local food+
- Quantifying soil health benefits+
- GIS data useful for small farms+

Other:

- Cooperatives
- Food systems and local food educator. Bkgrd in local food distr, building relationships along supply chain, food hub operator support. Food hubs collaborating with each other, making transactions among each other. Listening & learning
- EBT reader technology access

# Your Capital: Access to Credit for Land and Operations

How have you or are you financing your farm's needs/operation - and what is the source and purpose of that financing?

- Minority Cannabis Business Association
- Personal savings
- Private investors
- Out of pockets funds through other work
- Grants for Educational Programming (not production specific)
- Loan from the URA
- has been out of pocket so far

What barriers have you faced accessing credit?

- The level of racism and xenophobia received in USDA-FSA regional offices made my experience of applying to those programs as a farmer a very traumatic one
- Paperwork is fatiguing and overwhelming and takes a lot of time without a guarantee of approval
- Less funding in agriculture (S Corp) vs. the industrial processing side (former LLC)
- Racial slurs, bad experience with Farm Credit East and other lender agents
- poor marketing/outreach. Need a graphic designer on the team to make the resources more accessible
- increasing costs to run the farm
- BIPOC farmer clients don't trust FSA or USDA
- Unsure where to find/access certain loans
- Farmer service provider: I don't fully understand and know the programs even after reading all the FSA and USDA emails. Low literacy.
- need to go through local non-profits since FSA isn't accessible
- Turnarounds and timing (seasonal) for applying too quick to be realistic
- FSA / USDA agents themselves aren't even aware of all of the new incentives for BIPOC/Women/Beginning Farmers
- Even FSA lenders aren't always familiar with different/new types of farm enterprises

What would your top priority for investment in your farm if you had ready access to financing or additional capital?

- Looking to own land rather than lease land
- Trying to branch off with my own beef herd and swine using mainly leased land....
- Building greenhouse
- land access / purchase