



# Minnesota Beginning Farmer Resource Guide






## Brainstorm

As you begin your farming journey you will start by identifying an idea and vision for your farm business. You should also develop a framework for a value proposition you'll offer customers.

- **University of Minnesota Extension - Managing a Farm**  
A collection of resources that provide guidance on building profitability on the farm, while helping farm owners succeed as stewards of the land.
- **University of Minnesota Extension - Local Offices**  
Fast access to your county extension office to connect with a local agriculture and/or community development educator to share ideas with.
- **US Department of Agriculture (USDA) – How to Start a Farm**  
Webpage dedicated to helping beginning farmers and ranchers learn the support that's available to them from USDA.



## Learn

It is critical to educate yourself on your farming enterprise of choice. It is important to research all aspects of producing and marketing the food and fiber products that interest you. Understanding how USDA can assist you in achieving your agricultural goals is also key to navigating the many programs and resources available.

- **Grassroots Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs by National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition**  
This guide provides an in-depth look at dozens of federal programs and policies most important to sustainable agriculture, and details how they can be accessed by farmers, ranchers, and grassroots organizations nationwide.
- **Farm Service Agency (FSA) Fact Sheets**  
This page contains direct links to FSA Fact Sheets, divided into categories based on programs such as commodities, conservation, disaster protection, livestock, loans, and more.
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Publications**  
NRCS provides a variety of agency forms and free publications about conserving our natural resources. You can browse the list of available items, enter a specific title, or search a keyword such as "water" or "soil".
- **Find a Local Crop Insurance Agent**  
The Risk Management Agency (RMA) provides insurance agent and provider information as a service to producers in all 50 states. Find an agent close to you!
- **USDA Service Center Locator**  
USDA Service Centers are offices where you can typically meet face-to-face with USDA, FSA, and NRCS staff to discuss your vision, goals, and ways USDA can help. For your convenience, both agencies are usually located in the same Service Center. USDA employs FSA and NRCS staff members in 2,300 offices nationwide to provide dedicated support to producers.
- **Stay Connected**  
Subscribe to receive email newsletters from your local and state FSA office to stay up to date on program announcements and deadlines, and local events.



### Plan

A solid business plan is a necessary next step. You will need to develop strategy, create a budget, analyze costs of production, and evaluate feasibility under different economic environments.

- Farmers.gov Business Plan Resources**

Think about your operation from the ground up and start planning for your business. A good farm business plan is your road map to start-up, profitability, and growth, and provides the foundation for your conversation with USDA about how our programs can complement your operation.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Business Planning Parking Lot**

Includes useful planning tools, information on how to write a business plan, market research, business and tax registration, in addition to much more.
- National Farmers Union Farm Business Toolbox**

Growing conditions and production practices present demanding challenges, but those are not the only skills today's farmer must maintain. To thrive in changing markets, farmers must also operate with a high degree of business savvy.
- Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses**

This guide brings the business planning process alive to help today's alternative and sustainable agriculture entrepreneurs transform farm-grown inspiration into profitable enterprises.
- Young Farmers Finding Farmland Calculator**

Use this calculator to build scenarios for purchasing farmland. You can compare detailed estimates of total costs, monthly payments and affordability metrics, then download the results to have on hand when meeting with a loan officer.
- Resources for Farm and Ranch Business Training**

This Farm and Ranch Business Health Assessment is for people to assess how ready they are to start a farm or ranch business and to develop a personal learning plan as part of the self-assessment.





## Land

No matter the size and scope of your operation, land is a critical component to any farm. Finding farmland can be challenging, but there are many resources to make the process easier.

- MDA Farmlink**  
 FarmLink is a free, online program that helps connect retiring farmers and new farmers, buyers and sellers, renters and landlords, and employers and employees. Users can list and research farms and farmland for rent or sale, and much more.
- Farmland Clearinghouse**  
 This Land Stewardship Project resource connects beginning farmers looking to rent or purchase farmland with established farmers/landowners who are seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent their land in the Midwest.
- Farm Land Access Hub**  
 The Farmland Access Hub is a consortium of partners including non-profits, government agencies, local companies, and private citizens dedicated to assisting beginning farmers with their quest for land tenure. By bringing together this large group we can make a greater impact on land tenure in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin by: pooling resources and knowledge, identify beginning farmers in need of assistance, providing financial and technical resources, to aid in a search for land tenure, and search and discovery of suitable farmland.
- Cropland Grazing Exchange**  
 The Cropland Grazing Exchange (CGE) matches livestock farmers with crop farmers who have forage (crop residues, cover crops, etc.) to harvest. The CGE is an interactive map that shows the locations of farmers who have livestock to graze and farmers who have cropland they want grazed.
- USDA Inventoried Properties**  
 This website lists available FSA inventory of farmland property for purchase. Beginning farmers and ranchers have first priority to purchase these properties at the appraised value.



## Fund

With your business plan in hand you will begin to identify and seek out sources of capital to purchase business assets to put to work on your new farming venture.

- US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) – Farm Loan Programs**  
 FSA offers loans to help farmers and ranchers get the financing they need to start, expand or maintain a family farm. Visit [this page](#) for more farm loan information, options, and tools.
- Farm Credit – Minnesota**  
 Provides loans to farmers and ranchers and supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services, today and tomorrow.
- MDA Grants and Loans**  
 Resources for beginning and emerging farmers including loans, grants, scholarships, tax credits, etc. You're one stop shop for all state department of agriculture financial resources.



## Operate

With your business plan officially in motion you can focus energy on optimization. You will need to be monitoring your balance sheet, evaluating earnings, and utilizing risk management strategy.

- **US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) – Price Support Programs**

Webpage including information on a variety of price support initiatives, loan, and market loss assistance programs available from FSA.

- **US Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency (RMA)**

Website including information about crop insurance for American farmers and ranchers. Visit [here](#) for regional office information, or [here](#) for an agent locator tool to find a provider near you.

- **US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – State Programs and Initiatives**

NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources sustainably.

- **Taxes and USDA Programs – Farmers.gov**

Information and resources related to USDA program payments, asset protection, and the important relationships between federal income taxes and USDA farm programs.

- **USDA Rural Development (RD)**

RD offers over fifty financial assistance programs for a variety of rural applications including, but not limited to, value-added producer grants and loans and grants for rural renewable energy systems to increase efficiency.

- **Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) Calculator**

Livestock producers can use this calculator to gauge what it would look like if they purchased different combinations of LRP at different times of the year, over the past few years and can compare it to their own operation from that year to determine if LRP would be beneficial. The calculator also helps make decisions about LRP in the future.





## Network

The value of peer support and industry professionals cannot be overstated. Many of the most successful farm businesses prioritize producer groups and membership in industry organizations.

Below are some general examples with active memberships. However, there are many others tailored to specific farming enterprises and agriculture products. It is key to seek groups you share interests with.

- **National Young Farmers Coalition**

An intersectional coalition working for justice and collective liberation of our food and farm systems. Work for a future in which people, land, and relationships are respected.

- **Marbleseed - Farmer-Led and Rooted in Organic**

Have worked in community with the Midwest's regenerative and organic farmers for over 30 years by focusing on continuing to grow the region's organic farming movement.

- **Farmer Veteran Coalition**

Cultivates a new generation of farmers. Develops viable employment and careers through the collaboration of the farming and military communities. Visit [here](#) for the Minnesota chapter.

- **University of Minnesota Extension**

University of Minnesota Extension discovers science-based solutions, delivers practical education, and engages Minnesotans to build a better future.

- **Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU)**

Farmers Union is a grassroots, member-driven organization working for family farmers and rural communities. We believe in fair farm and rural policy that guarantees a safe and abundant food supply, provides family farmers with fair prices for their labor, and revitalizes rural Minnesota.

- **Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)**

As part of an integrated approach to community wealth building, HAFA owns and manages a 155-acre farm in Dakota County, where member families can lease land, hone their business and agricultural practices, and sell produce to the HAFA Food Hub which aggregates and sells members' produce through community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares, schools, retailers and institutions.

- **Big River Farms - The Food Group**

Provides land and resources for farmers to learn sustainable practices, grow organic foods, and build strong businesses.

- **Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF)**

The mission of Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation is to ensure Minnesota's agricultural vitality. By engaging members, advocating at the grassroots level and spreading awareness about agriculture, we support farmers and ranchers.





## Other Resources

- Minnesota FSA State Website**  
 FSA implements agriculture policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster and farm marketing programs. Through our network of county FSA offices and dedicated personnel, we are proud to offer a variety of programs to assist you.
- Farmers.gov**  
 Your one-stop-shop for all things USDA. Read important program news, review upcoming program dates, and explore tools fit to assist your farming operation.
- SCORE Mentoring**  
 Get the guidance and support you need to start or grow your farm, ranch or other form of agribusiness. Enter your zip code, and complete the request form. Your local SCORE chapter will pair you with the right mentor to answer your questions and help your farm or ranch thrive.
- Partner Organization Resources**  
 Through competitive cooperative agreements with organizations to assist with outreach, technical and financial assistance activities to farmers and ranchers, partners have developed program resources to assist with outreach efforts. The website includes resources prepared to provide guidance and information to aid farmers and ranchers in creating sustainable operations.
- Farm Answers**  
 Farm Answers is the USDA-NIFA beginning farmer and rancher clearinghouse, providing resources to help you get started farming, as well as tools to help more seasoned producers succeed.
- Beginning Farmer Tax Credit**  
 The Minnesota Beginning Farmer Tax Credit provides state tax credits to landlords and sellers (asset owners) who rent or sell farmland, equipment, livestock, and other agricultural assets to beginning farmers in the current tax year. Funding is limited. Tax credits are funded in a first-come, first-served manner regardless of the deadlines. Applicants are highly encouraged to apply early in the year and may apply before sales close, if needed.





Farm Service Agency  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[fsa.usda.gov/MN](https://fsa.usda.gov/MN)



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April 2024