

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, DC 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION	NUMBER: DR 9700-002
SUBJECT: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program	DATE: August 25, 2020
OPI: Farm Service Agency, Office of Outreach	EXPIRATION DATE: August 25, 2025

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Purpose	1
2. Special Instructions/Cancellations	1
3. Scope	2
4. Background	2
5. Policy	2
6. Roles and Responsibilities	2
7. Inquiries	4
Appendix A – Acronyms and Abbreviations	A-1
Appendix B – Authorities and References	B-1

1. PURPOSE

This Departmental Regulation (DR) establishes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) integrated and coordinated policy for beginning farmer and rancher outreach initiatives. The strategy will be led by the USDA National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator and implemented in each State as required by the *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* (“*Farm Bill*”), [P.L. 115-334](#), and [Secretary's Memorandum \(SM\) 1076-030](#), *Implementation of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018*.

2. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS

- a. This policy is effective immediately and will remain in effect until it is superseded or expiration.
- b. All Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices must align their policies and procedures with this DR within 3 months of the publication date.

3. SCOPE

This DR applies to all USDA Mission Areas, agencies, staff offices, programs, teams, organizations, appointees, and employees. This includes contractors and grantees operating on behalf of USDA with beginning farmer and rancher programs.

4. BACKGROUND

Support for beginning farmers and ranchers has long been a priority of the *USDA*. The *Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008*, [P.L. No. 110-246](#), and the *Agricultural Act of 2014*, [P.L. 113-79](#), included significant new investments for beginning farmers and ranchers. In 2015 the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) published [Audit Report 50601-0003-31](#), *USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Programs*. This report found that past efforts to serve beginning farmers and ranchers had been limited as a result of no Departmentwide directive requiring participation by Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices in USDA's beginning farmer and rancher efforts.

The 2018 *Farm Bill* expanded opportunities and funding for beginning farmers and ranchers throughout the Department's programs. The *Farm Bill*, Section 12304, *Beginning farmer and rancher coordination*, and SM 1076-030, established a National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator position to implement the Beginning Farmer and Rancher program.

5. POLICY

USDA will establish, and continuously implement targeted educational, marketing, outreach, credit, risk management, conservation, technical assistance, and other programs that help ensure that beginning farmers and ranchers can gain access to the resources they need for success.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator ("National Coordinator"), in consultation with State Food and Agriculture Councils, will:
 - (a) Designate in each State a collateral duty State Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator ("State Coordinator") from either the State office of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development (RD) or regional office of the Risk Management Agency (RMA);
 - (b) Determine whether to approve a plan submitted by a State Coordinator;

- (c) Establish a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Working Group to identify, assess and improve Mission Area, agency, and staff office programs that serve beginning farmers and ranchers. Working group members will consist of:
 - (1) The National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator – Chair and Member;
 - (2) FSA Administrator or delegate – Member;
 - (3) NRCS Chief or delegate – Member;
 - (4) RMA Administrator or delegate – Member;
 - (5) RD Administrator or delegate – Member;
 - (6) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Administrator or delegate – Member;
 - (7) Economic Research Service (ERS) Administrator or delegate – Member;
 - (8) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Administrator or delegate – Member;
 - (9) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Administrator or delegate – Member; and
 - (10) Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) Director or delegate – Member;
 - (d) Leverage the Secretary’s Advisory Committee for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers to frame priority issues;
 - (e) Work with NASS to develop and monitor statistics on beginning farmers and ranchers;
 - (f) Establish key program performance indicators and include them in an annual plan; and
 - (g) Assess and report on performance of utilization of USDA programs by beginning farmers and ranchers.
- b. Each collateral duty State Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator will:
- (1) Coordinate technical assistance at the State level to assist beginning farmers and ranchers in accessing USDA programs,

- (2) Develop and submit to the National Coordinator for approval a State plan to improve the coordination, delivery and efficacy of USDA programs to beginning farmers and ranchers at each county and area office in the State;
 - (a) Oversee the implementation of the approved State plan and submit annual plan accomplishments to the National Coordinator;
 - (b) Work with State and county outreach coordinators to ensure appropriate program information and technical assistance is available at outreach events and activities; and
 - (c) Coordinate partnerships and joint outreach efforts with other organizations and government agencies serving beginning farmers and ranchers.
- c. Mission Areas, agencies, and staff offices without a field-based presence will provide measurable program or grant data benefitting beginning farmers and ranchers to the National Coordinator annually.

7. INQUIRIES

Inquiries regarding this directive should be directed to the FSA Office of Outreach at 202-690-1700, or via email to fsaoutreach@usda.gov.

-END-

APPENDIX A

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
DR	Departmental Regulation
ERS	Economic Research Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service
NIFA	National Institute of Food and Agriculture
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OPPE	Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
P.L.	Public Law
RD	Rural Development
RMA	Risk Management Agency
SM	Secretary's Memorandum
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

APPENDIX B

AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

Agricultural Act of 2014, [P.L. 113-79](#), February 7, 2014

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, [P.L. 115-334](#), December 20, 2018

Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, [P.L. No. 110-246](#), June 18, 2008

USDA, OIG, [Audit Report 50601-0003-31](#), *USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Programs*, May 2015

USDA, [SM 1076-030](#), *Implementation of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018*, July 1, 2019