



Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Stands Up New Team to Better Serve Beginning Farmers and Ranchers in New Jersey

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WASHINGTON, Jul. 31, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is standing up a new team that will lead a department-wide effort focused on serving beginning farmers and ranchers.

To institutionalize support for beginning farmers and ranchers and to build upon prior agency work, the 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to create a national coordinator position in the agency and state-level coordinators for four of its agencies – Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and Rural Development (RD).

Austin Baird was selected as the USDA Beginning Farmer Rancher state coordinator in New Jersey. Austin is a Farm Loan Officer with FSA based out of the Hackettstown Service Center since 2016. Austin has worked with many beginning farmers providing loan assistance and guidance. In addition, Austin is a graduate from West Virginia University with a M.S. in Agricultural and Resource Economics and a B.S. in Agribusiness and Rural Development.

Others on the team coordinating New Jersey's beginning farmers and rancher efforts include, William Ferris, Risk Management Specialist, with RMA; Kenneth Drewes, Community Programs Director, with RD; and Freddie Patino-Rodriguez, Soil Conservationist, with NRCS. This is a collateral duty for all team members.

Each state coordinator will receive training and develop tailored beginning farmer outreach plans for their state. Coordinators will help field employees better reach and serve beginning farmers and ranchers and will also be available to assist beginning farmers who need help navigating the variety of resources USDA has to offer.

More on Beginning Farmers

Twenty-seven percent of farmers were categorized as new and beginning producers, with 10 years or less of experience in agriculture, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

USDA offers a variety of farm loan, risk management, disaster assistance, and conservation programs to support farmers, including beginning farmers and ranchers. Additionally, a number of these programs have provisions specifically for beginning farmers, including targeted funding for loans and conservation programs as well as waivers and exemptions.

More Information

Learn more about USDA's resources for beginning farmers as well as more information on the national and state-level coordinators at farmers.gov/newfarmers. For more information on available programs in your area, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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