

Resources for New Farmers



A guide for farmers looking to start or diversify a farm in New York State.



**Agriculture
and Markets**

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Resources for New Farmers

General resources to get started:

- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Beginning Farmer Page
<https://agriculture.ny.gov/farming/beginning-farmers>
- Guide to Farming in NYS (developed by Cornell University)
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/resources/guides/farming-guide/>
- Northeast Beginning Farmers Project
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/>
- USDA Start to Farm
<https://newfarmers.usda.gov/>
- National Young Farmers Coalition
<http://www.youngfarmers.org/>
- NY Farmland Finder Resource Page
<https://nyfarmlandfinder.org/resources>

Links and resources in this resource guide are current as of March 2022.

State Resources

New York is open for business and interested in helping entrepreneurs start a farm enterprise. State agencies can provide you with necessary information to help your farm get off the ground and sustain it once operating. When ready to start your business legally, you must incorporate within New York State. To learn about state licenses, please access the state's licensing website.

Farmland Protection Resources

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/agricultural-districts>

New York Soil and Water Conservation Districts

http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/contacts/county_offices.html

Market Development Resources

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/APHome.html>

Farmers Markets

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/farmersmarkets>

Farm to School

<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/index.html>

Agricultural Environmental Management

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/agricultural-environmental-management>

Food Establishment Licenses

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-safety/home-processing>

Home Processing

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/food-safety/home-processing>

Office of Cannabis Management

<https://cannabis.ny.gov/>

Summary of New York State Labor Laws Related to Farm and Food Processing

<https://dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/03/summary-of-new-york-state-labor-laws-relating-to-farm-and-food-processing-employment-ls118.pdf>

New York State Liquor License

<https://sla.ny.gov/get-license>

Farm Labor and Minimum Wage

<https://dol.ny.gov/workforce-protections>

Business Services

<https://www.ny.gov/services/business>

New York State Office of New Americans

<http://www.newamericans.ny.gov/business/agriculture.html>

Minority Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE)

<http://esd.ny.gov/mwbe.html>

Consolidated Funding Application

<https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/>

New York State New Farmers Grant Fund

<http://esd.ny.gov/businessprograms/newfarmersgrantfund.html>

NYS's Business Programs and Incentives

<http://esd.ny.gov/BusinessPrograms.html>

New York State Wine, Beer, Spirit and Cider

<http://esd.ny.gov/nysbeveragebiz.html>

Free and Low-Cost Energy Audits

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Business-and-Industry/Agriculture>

Agricultural License Plates

<https://dmv.ny.gov/registration/about-agricultural-and-farm-vehicles>

Water Quality Regulation

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/290.html#Guidance>

Concentrate Animal Feed Operations Permits

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6285.html>

Pesticide Regulations

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/45618.html>

Chemical and Pollution Control

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/25.html>

Water Management

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/84764.html>

Agricultural Land Assessment Program

https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/valuation/ag_overview.htm

Planning Your Farm

Land

National Young Farmers Coalition

<http://www.youngfarmers.org/land-and-jobs/>

New York Farmland Finder

<https://nyfarmlandfinder.org/>

Financing Your Farm

There are a number of funding sources that help cover costs associated with business operations, infrastructure, and land transfer.

Federal (not an exhaustive list)

Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Loans

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/beginning-farmers-and-ranchers-loans/index>

Farm Service Agency Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program

Loan details here: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/loanprograms2012.pdf

USDA Loan Factsheets

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/fact-sheets/index#loans>

USDA Underserved Farmer Fact Sheets

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/fact-sheets/index#underserved>

USDA New Farmer Fact Sheets

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/fact-sheets/index#new-farmers>

USDA Farm Service Agency Microloans

https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2019/microloans-fact_sheet-aug_2019.pdf

State

Soil and Water Conservation Committee (Grants available with bonus points awarded to first time applicants)

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/soil-water-conservation-committee>

Loans and Grant Programs

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/farming/expand-your-farm>

Public Authorities, including Local Development Corporations (LDCs, i.e. Binghamton Local Development Corporation) and Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs, i.e. Grow Schoharie County), provide funding to many beginning farmers. Speak with someone at your local soil and water conservation district or your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office to learn where the closest LDC or IDA is located.

Private

There are traditional and alternative sources of capital that you can access. Traditional sources include banks or credit unions that tailor their loan products and resources to farmers. Some offer specific resources for beginning farmers. One excellent resource for beginning farmers is on Farm Credit East's website (<https://www.farmcrediteast.com/products-and-services/new-farmer-programs>). Talk to your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office to learn about nearby banks or credit unions that offer capital for farms. Alternative sources of capital can be secured in a variety of ways. Social media and crowd funding

platforms, micro-lending organizations, and foundations and venture capital firms positioned to support small farms are potential sources of funding.

Farm Risk Management

First and foremost, farmers need general liability insurance to operate a farm. Then, one must consider the following types of additional insurance:

Supplemental Insurance
Workers Compensation
Crop Insurance
Health Insurance

Here are some additional resources to reduce your risk on the farm.

Cornell Small Farms Program resource sheets on risk management and farm insurance

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/05/5-farm-risk-management/>

<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/06/6-farm-insurance/>

GrowNYC's FARMroots guide on farm insurance

<https://www.grownyc.org/insurance-planning>

Technical Assistance and Education Opportunities

There are several technical assistance programs located across the state that can provide information on anything from construction to water management to funding opportunities for beginning farmers.

Cornell Small Farms Program

<http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/>

NY FarmNet

<http://www.nyfarmnet.org/>

NOFA NY - New York Organic Farmers' Association

<https://www.nofany.org/>

Heroic Food (Resource for Veterans)

<http://heroicfood.org/>

Small Business Administration

<https://www.sba.gov/>

Farmer Veteran Coalition

<http://www.farmvetco.org/>

New York Farm Bureau

<http://www.nyfb.org/>

American Farmland Trust

<https://www.farmland.org/>

CADE (Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship)

<http://www.cadefarms.org/>

Farmland Information Center

<https://farmlandinfo.org/>

Cornell Cooperative Extension
<http://cce.cornell.edu/>

Watershed Agricultural Council (Catskills)
<http://www.nycwatershed.org/>

Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation
<http://www.hvadc.org/>

Long Island Farm Bureau
<http://www.lifb.com/>

Farm Credit East: Farm Start
<https://www.farmcrediteast.com/products-and-services/new-farmer-programs/FarmStart>

Glynwood (Hudson Valley)
<https://glynwood.org/>

Hawthorne Valley Farm Learning Center
<https://farm.hawthornevalley.org/>

Stone Barns Center for Agriculture (Hudson Valley)
<https://www.stonebarnscenter.org/>

GrowNYC - FARMroots (Hudson Valley, Long Island, Catskills)
<https://www.grownyc.org/farmroots>

Scenic Hudson (Hudson Valley)
<https://www.scenichudson.org/>

Hudson Valley Farmlink Network
<http://hudsonvalleyfarmlandfinder.org/about>

Selling Your Product

Successful farms require sustainable sales. Two major market channels are direct and wholesale. Selling direct means directly to the customer, such as at a farmers' market or through community-supported agriculture (CSA). Selling wholesale means selling to a third party that will then sell your food. Wholesale market channels utilize distributors to sell products to restaurants and retailers.

Technical Assistance Providers

New York State **Department of Agriculture and Markets, Division of Agricultural Development** can provide marketing and branding assistance, information on available funding, specifics on licensing programs and organic certification, and opportunities for business to participate in tradeshow and other industry events.

Nearly every county in the state has a **Cornell Cooperative Extension** office. These offices are staffed by experts on nutrition, land management, and sales and marketing.

Buy-local campaigns in each region

A 'buy-local' campaign can be used to educate and encourage consumers to invest in businesses in their communities. There are several 'buy-local' campaigns across New York State including restaurant weeks and on-product labeling. This is a great way to promote your business to local customers.

Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty (Finger Lakes)
<http://www.flcb.org/>

Hudson Valley Bounty (Hudson Valley)
<http://hudsonvalleybounty.com/>

Pure Catskills (Catskills)
<http://www.purecatskills.com/>

Adirondack Harvest (North Country/Adirondacks)
<http://www.adirondackharvest.com/>

Field & Fork Network (Western NY)
<http://fieldandforknetwork.com/>

GardenShare (St. Lawrence County in North Country region)
<http://www.gardenshare.org/>

Chatauqua Grown (Chatauqua County)
<http://chatauqua.cce.cornell.edu/chatauqua-grown>

Legal Resources for Farmers

Farmers have many legal considerations ranging from labor laws to taxes to succession and land transfer planning. Here are some guides to navigate legal questions when starting a farm.

Understanding Taxes and Regulations
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/farmers/taxes-regulations/>

Environmental Regulations
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/10/10-environmental-regulations/>

Zoning Regulations & Farming
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/08/8-zoning-regulations-and-farming/>

Farm Vehicle Regulations
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/07/7-farm-vehicle-regulations/>

Legal Aspects of Rural Living
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/09/9-legal-aspects-of-rural-living/>

Labor Laws
<http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/18/18-labor-laws/>

Succession Planning and Retirement

Farm Journal Legacy Project
<http://www.farmjournallegacyproject.com/>

Land for Good's Farm Transfer Planning
<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-Transferring-The-Farm-Guide.pdf>

General Legal Resources

Farm Commons
<https://farmcommons.org/>

Land and Soil

Soil and its components, air, water, and nutrients, are the foundation for growing crops. Before starting your farm, contact your nearby Soil and Water Conservation District office. Districts work with farmers to assess, plan, and implement solutions to environmental issues on their farms, and then re-assess the outcomes of the implemented solutions.

Farming Practices

New York Agricultural Landowner Guide (American Farmland Trust)

<http://www.ongov.net/planning/documents/NYAgLandownerGuide.pdf>

Agricultural Environmental Management Program (New York State)

<http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/aem/index.html>

NRCS Programs (National Resources Conservation Service)

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/>

Soil Chart, Texture and Maps

Soil Texture Calculator (USDA)

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/survey/?cid=nrcs142p2_054167

Climate and Soil Considerations (Northeast Beginning Farmers Project)

<https://nebeginningfarmers.org/2012/04/02/2-climate-and-soil-considerations/>

Web Soil Survey (National Resources Conservation Service)

<http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm>

Soil Testing Resources

Cornell University

Cornell Nutrient Analysis Laboratory (CNAL)

cnal.cals.cornell.edu

(607) 255-4540

soiltest@cornell.edu

See laboratories that are certified under NYS's Environmental Laboratory Approval Program

ELAP@health.state.ny.us

(Select a laboratory certified for "solid and hazardous waste".)

<http://www.wadsworth.org/regulatory/elap>

New York City Soil and Water Conservation District

<http://www.soilandwater.nyc/>

Access to Water

DEC's Water Withdrawal Permits and Reporting

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/55509.html>