

Recommended Reading

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Acquiring Your Farm, Land for Good, 2012

<http://landforgood.org/acquiring-farm-login/>

This online tutorial includes seven modules, including one on farmland tenure, which describes how farmland is acquired and held, U.S. trends, and land tenure principles.

Agricultural Land Tenure: A Curriculum for Beginning Farmers and Farm Seekers, FarmLASTS Project, University of Vermont and Land for Good, 2007

<http://www.uvm.edu/farmlasts/?Page=education.html>

This curriculum includes lessons organized around seven topics designed to provide a thorough introduction to the complex issues of farmland access and tenure, including Farmland Tenure Basics, Financial Assessment, Owning Farmland, Finding Farmland, Leasing Farmland, Communication & Negotiation and Community Partners.

Cultivating the Next Generation: Resources and Policies to Help Beginning Farmers Succeed in Agriculture, Julia Freedgood and Jennifer Dempsey, American Farmland Trust, 2014

<https://www.farmlandinfo.org/cultivating-next-generation-resources-and-policies-help-beginning-farmers-succeed-agriculture>

This report includes an inventory of state and federal policies and programs that support beginning farmers by providing access to capital, land and infrastructure and assistance with agricultural production, business planning and marketing.

Farm Access Methods: A Decision Guide, Land for Good, 2018

<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-Farm-Access-Methods-Guide.pdf>

This guide provides an organized framework of farm access methods to help farmers make informed decisions and organizes farm access and tenure methods through three basic categories: ownership now, ownership in the future or no ownership. This guide also includes the Farm Access Decision Tool:

<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-Farm-Access-Decision-Tool.pdf>

Farmland Access in Urban Settings, Land for Good, 2018

<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-Farmland-Access-in-Urban-Settings-Guide.pdf>

This guidebook addresses the unique aspects of land access in urban settings, such as those associated with location, cost, security, infrastructure, and regulations. Combining practical suggestions, examples and innovative models, this guide can help an increasingly diverse cohort of new farmers launch and sustain viable urban farms.

Finding, Assessing, and Securing Farmland: A Plain Language Guide, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, 2012

<https://nesfp.org/resources/plain-language-guide-finding-assessing-and-securing-farmland-ma>

This guide is written for beginning farmers who are looking for land to start a farm business and helps them understand the process of locating and securing farmland.

Finding Land to Farm: 6 Ways to Secure Farmland, ATTRA—National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, 2009

<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/finding-land-farm-six-ways-secure-farmland>

Written in a cartoon style, this publication highlights common ways to lease or own land and outlines important considerations about each of the leasing options and paths to ownership.

Growing Local: A Community Guide to Planning for Agriculture and Food Systems, American Farmland Trust, 2017

<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/growing-local-community-guide-planning-agriculture-and-food-systems>

This guide provides a history of food system planning, principles and practices, and a comprehensive toolbox of programs and policies. It can help individuals recognize community support for agriculture.

Growing on Solid Ground: A Farmers Guide to Land Tenure, California FarmLink, 2017

<https://www.californiafarmlink.org/resources/growing-on-solid-ground-a-farmers-guide-to-land-tenure/>

This guide covers basic land tenure options. It includes chapters on agricultural leases and crop-share agreements and owning land.

Land Matters Module: Legal Curricula for Beginning Sustainable Farmer Education, Farm Commons, 2014

<http://thelandconnection.org/sites/default/files/Land%20Matters%20Module%20FINAL.pdf>

This module includes a list of considerations for farmers when purchasing or leasing land, slide templates for a presentation on legal land matters for beginning farmers, text for videos discussing farm financing opportunities through the Farm Services Agency and considerations for a successful farmland lease.

DATA SOURCES

An Overview of Beginning Farms and Farmers, USDA Economic Research Service, September 2019

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=95009>

This ERS report provides a summary of economic and demographic trends for new and beginning farmers nationwide between 2013-2019. Contents summarize things like average on-farm vs. off-farm income for new and beginning farmers, average asset to debt ratio, type of farm operation and expected revenue, etc.

Cash Rent Survey Web Page, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Cash_Rents_by_County/

This site provides data about cash rents by county. The Cash Rents Survey provides the basis for county estimates of the cash rent paid for irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, and pasture. NASS conducts the county-level Cash Rents survey every other year in all states except Alaska. U.S. and state estimates are released in August every year using the June Area Survey.

2017 Census of Agriculture, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2019

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/>

The Census of Agriculture provides a comprehensive summary of agricultural activity nationwide. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive data about U.S. farms and ranches at the state and county level, including information about land tenure and farmland ownership. The census is conducted every five years by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Climate Data Web Page, USDA National Resources Conservation Service

<https://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/climate/>

This Web page provides information about climate patterns, water and soil moisture conditions.

Land Values 2019 Summary, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2019

<https://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1446>

This report summarizes information from the annual June Area Survey, which collects data on crop acreage, land use, grain stocks, farms, rents and the value of land and sales. NASS estimates national and state agricultural land values and rental rates paid by producers (cash rents) from that survey.

Information about land values in chart and map format is posted at:

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Charts_and_Maps/Land_Values/

Plant Hardiness Zone Map, USDA Agricultural Research Service

<http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/>

This site provides information about plant hardiness zones nationwide. The interactive maps enable users to find their own plant hardiness zone.

Population Web Page, United States Census Bureau

<https://www.census.gov/topics/population.html>

The U.S. Census Bureau is the leading source of statistical information about the nation's population. Statistics come from the decennial censuses, which count the entire U.S. population every 10 years, along with several other surveys. This page includes links to population estimates and projections for different geographies.

Web Soil Survey, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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

The Web Soil Survey (WSS) provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. NRCS provides soil maps and data online for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties. Soil surveys can be used for general farm, local, and wider area planning. Onsite investigation is needed in some cases, such as soil quality assessments and certain conservation and engineering applications.

ONLINE TOOLS - LEASES, CALCULATORS, TRANSITION PLANS

AgTransitions, University of Minnesota, Center for Farm Financial Management

<https://agtransitions.umn.edu/>

This tool helps farmers & ranchers develop a plan to transition their business through a step-by-step guide. The site also provides tips, resources and online assistance.

Build a Lease Tool, Land for Good, 2018

<http://www.landforgood.org/lease-tool-login/>

This tool was designed with New England farmers and landowners in mind but can still be useful in other parts of the country, although some language and clauses might be different. The Build a Lease Tool provides information about farm leases and can create a working version of a lease that fits your situation or intent. This is an educational tool and not intended to produce a legal document or replace the legal advice of an attorney.

Farm Credit Calculators

The Farm Credit System is a nationwide network of borrower-owned lending institutions and specialized service organizations. Branch office websites typically offer loan payment calculators. To locate a branch office website visit: <https://farmcredit.com/locations>

Farm Leasing Tutorial, Land for Good

<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-New-England-Farm-Leasing-Tutorial.pdf>

Farm Legacy Letter Template, Practical Farmers of Iowa

<https://www.practicalfarmers.org/member-priorities/farm-transfer/>

The Farm Legacy Letter provides a series of prompts to help exiting farmers write down the history of their farm and goals for its future. The finished document can serve as a point of departure for a conversation with heirs or successors about the landowner's farmland values and goals.

Finding Farmland Course and Finding Farmland Calculator, National Young Farmers Coalition

This series of lessons will prepare you to confidently approach the financial decisions related to acquiring your first farm. The calculator enables farmers to create different scenarios to help inform land purchases. The site also provides case studies that describe how farmers made land purchases.

<https://www.youngfarmers.org/finding-farmland-course>

<https://findingfarmland.youngfarmers.org/calculator>

PRINT MATERIALS – CHECKLISTS, ASSESSMENT GUIDES AND LEASE TEMPLATES

Ag Lease 101, North Central Farm Management Extension Committee

<https://aglease101.org/default.aspx>

This website has a Document Library with alternative lease arrangements and sample lease agreements.

Agricultural Leases: An Overview, The National Agricultural Law Center

<http://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/agleases/>

This webpage provides basic information about different types of leases.

Elements of a Good Farm Lease, Land for Good, 2015

http://www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/FarmlandAdvisors_Elements-of-a-Good-Farm-Lease_10-2015.pdf

This fact sheet provides guidance on many of the important elements of a good farm lease.

Farmland Assessment Checklist, Penn State Extension

<https://extension.psu.edu/farmland-assessment-checklist>

This checklist includes a list of considerations for farmers to think about when evaluating properties to lease, a comprehensive description of each item and why it is important and list of additional resources. Many of the items also would apply to site assessment for a land purchase.

Farm Rental Assessment Checklist, University of Vermont Extension, 2010

<http://www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/land/checklist.pdf>

This fact sheet includes a checklist with items to consider when evaluating a site to lease, additional information about some of the items on the checklist and a list of related resources. Many of the items also would apply to site assessment for a land purchase.

Finding Good Farmland: How to Evaluate and Acquire Land for Raising Crops and Animals, Ann Larkin Hansen, 2013

<http://www.storey.com/books/finding-good-farmland/>

This practical guide contains information you need to have before purchasing farmland, covering everything from the characteristics of the land (soil type, slope, water sources, drainage) and the surrounding area to permits, codes, taxes, roads, loans, mortgages, government assistance programs and more. Checklists and questionnaires are included.

RESOURCE PROVIDERS

Conservation Districts

Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs. District staff can give land seekers maps, help beginning farmers and ranchers evaluate soils and develop conservation plans. The National Association of Conservation Districts has a directory of the 3,000 districts across the country. To find a conservation district visit:

<http://www.nacdnet.org/general-resources/conservation-district-directory/>

Cooperative Extension System

<https://nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory>

The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide, non-credit educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at its land-grant university and a network of local or regional offices with experts who provide useful, practical and research-based information to agricultural producers and small business owners. In some areas, extension produces regional reports on rental rates.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/contact/local/?cid=nrcsdev11_000242

NRCS is an agency within the United States Department of Agriculture that helps farmers and ranchers manage and conserve natural resources. NRCS conservationists can offer land seekers technical and financial assistance including help developing and implementing conservation plans. They usually can be found in USDA service centers. This link provides a service center locator.

CONSERVATION

Beginning Farmers' Guide to Conservation Easements, American Farmland Trust, 2015

<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/beginning-farmers-guide-conservation-easements>

This fact sheet provides key information about conservation easement for beginning farmers and ranchers.

Finding Farmland: A Farmers Guide to Working with Land Trusts, National Young Farmer Coalition, 2015

<http://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NYFC-Finding-Affordable-Farmland.pdf>

This guide describes how beginning farmers and ranchers can work with a land trust to gain access to land.

Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs, American Farmland Trust, 2016

<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/purchase-agricultural-conservation-easements>

This fact sheet describes what purchase of agricultural conservation easements programs are, how they protect agricultural land and where they are available.

FINANCES, TAXES AND REAL ESTATE (SEE ONLINE TOOLS SECTION FOR MORE RESOURCES)

The Federation of Tax Administrators

Find each state's tax agency's current website: <https://www.taxadmin.org/state-tax-agencies>

Harvesting a Profit, Farm Credit East, 2016

<https://www.farmcrediteast.com/products-and-services/new-farmer-programs/harvesting-a-profit>

This publication is a comprehensive guide to using financial information to help improve farm profitability. The guide includes chapters on how to make a profit, benchmarking your business and financial statements and reports.

Publication 225, Farmer's Tax Guide, Internal Revenue Service

<https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-publication-225> and <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p225.pdf>

This publication explains how the federal tax laws apply to farming.

Society of Rural Appraisers and Farm Managers

<http://www.asfmra.org/directory/find-experts2>

This link provides a directory of members of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers is a professional association for rural property land experts, with more than 2,100 members nationwide. Members can help beginning farmers and ranchers evaluate land, develop a management plan and determine if the price is reasonable.

RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY***African Americans Have Lost Untold Acres of Land Over the Last Century: An obscure legal loophole is often to blame.* Leah Douglas, The Nation, 2017**

<https://www.thenation.com/article/african-americans-have-lost-acres/>

Heirs' property is a type of joint ownership resulting when the original landowner died without a will and multiple heirs inherit and own the land "in common," as determined by the state. This article explains the history of heirs' property and demonstrates its consequences through the personal stories of those who have inherited land that now has no primary owner.

Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund

<http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/>

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund is an organization in the Southeast United States organizing cooperatives, working with Black farmers and providing heirs' property assistance.

Heirs' Property Retention Coalition

<http://www.southerncoalition.org/hprc/>

The mission of the Heirs' Property Retention Coalition (HPRC) is to stem the tide of heirs' property land loss, particularly among families of color in the southeast. To this end, it develops and facilitates the collaborative action of organizations that help low-income families, specifically by: a) connecting such organizations and partners to legal and land planning resources inside and outside the Coalition; b) developing and centralizing practice materials and research libraries; c) providing for intra-Coalition case referrals; d) organizing the gathering of empirical information about the scope of heirs' property and land loss; and e) supporting legal reform efforts at the state level.

Indian Land Tenure Foundation

<https://iltf.org/>

The Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) is a national, community-based organization focused on American Indian land recovery and management. ILTF works to promote education, increase cultural

awareness, create economic opportunity, and reform the legal and administrative systems that prevent Indian people from owning and controlling reservation lands.

Managing Indian Land in a Highly Fractionated Future, The Message Runner, Indian Land Tenure Foundation, Fall 2018, Volume 9

https://iltf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ILTF_Message-Runner-9.pdf

Refugee Farmer Teaching Handbook, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Dani M. Scherer M. Ed and the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED Solutions), 2017.

https://nesfp.org/sites/default/files/resources/teaching_handbook_refugee_farmer_training_updated_1.20.pdf

This handbook is for staff providing training and technical assistance (T&TA) in immigrant and refugee farmer-training programs. This foundational and practical handbook provides basic explanations of certain teaching theories, as well as tips for applying them in the design and delivery of T&TA.

Ten Ways to Save Your Land, Land Loss Prevention Project, 2018

https://www.landloss.org/docs/t/Ten_Ways_to_Save_Your_Land.pdf

Every year, farmers and homeowners lose thousands of acres of land. Legal problems such as foreclosures, lack of estate planning, contract scams, and adverse possession are often the main causes of land loss. This handbook was written to increase awareness of what can be done now to prevent problems in the future, providing information on the most common ways land is lost and a general overview of key issues associated with trying to protect it.

What is African-American Land Ownership? Federation of Southern Cooperatives

<http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/aalandown04.htm>

This publication introduces heirs' property ownership and the challenges it poses for proper land management.

What You Need to Know About Heir Property, USDA, Farm Service Agency

https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/whatyouneedtoknowheirproperty.pdf

This fact sheet identifies key issues and lists resources for the 10 states most affected by heirs' property loss.

SUCCESSION, TRANSFER AND LANDOWNER PERSPECTIVE (SEE ONLINE TOOLS SECTION FOR MORE RESOURCES)

Farm Legacy Workbook, Kevin Spafford, Farm Journal Media, 2010

<http://www.farmjournallegacyproject.com/legacy-workbook/>

The long-term health of a family farm has always depended on the wise stewardship of its resources, and succession planning is part of that stewardship. This practical workbook is designed to be both a catalyst for landowners to engage in the succession planning process and to help them navigate the process.

Farm Succession and Transfer: Strategies for the Junior Generation, Kathy Ruhf, Land for Good, 2012

<http://landforgood.org/wp-content/uploads/LFG-Farm-Succession-And-Transfer-Strategies-For-Junior-Generation-Handbook.pdf>

This publication is for the next generation. It presents the issues from the perspective of the incoming farmer and offers suggestions and strategies to enhance that generation's chances for a successful transfer of the farm business. Service providers and the senior generation will find this guide useful, too.

***Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In.* Roger Fisher and William L Ury, 2011**

<http://www.williamury.com/books/getting-to-yes/>

Since its original publication nearly 30 years ago, *Getting to Yes* has become one of the primary business texts of the modern era. Based on the work of the Harvard Negotiation Project, a group that deals with all levels of negotiation and conflict resolution, *Getting to Yes* offers a proven, step-by-step strategy for coming to mutually acceptable agreements in every sort of conflict.

***The Landowner's Guide to Sustainable Farm Leasing,* Drake Agricultural Law Center, 2016**

<http://sustainablefarmlease.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/The-Guide2.pdf>

This guide includes chapters on: The Basics; Determining Priorities; Talking to Your Tenant; Farm Leases, Sustainability and the Law; and Key Considerations for a Sustainable Farm Lease.

***Planning the Future of Your Farm: A Workbook Supporting Farm Transfer Decisions, Virginia Edition,* Andrew Branan, Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2017**

https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/446/446-610/446-610v8.pdf

This is a workbook for those who want to keep their farmland in production and/or in the family as it passes to the next generation. This workbook was developed to help families communicate and harness information gathering into an orderly and productive process to maximize the value of professional planning help and produce the legal documents necessary to manage the risks of farm transfer.

***Six Guidelines for "Getting to Yes,"* Katie Shonk, Harvard Law School, 2018**

<https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-skills-daily/six-guidelines-for-getting-to-yes>

These six integrative negotiation skills can help you on your journey of getting to yes and the possibilities of mutual-gains negotiation, or integrative negotiation.