



## TO OUR FRIENDS, MEMBERS, AND SUPPORTERS,

We ended last year 26 chapters strong, with key victories for young farmers in the Farm Bill; a productive partnership with the USDA; and threats to land conservation funding and overzealous food safety regulation successfully averted. Our work has many facets—building community, safeguarding essential resources like land and water, and serving as a voice for some of our nation’s most essential young entrepreneurs. As more and more young people seek out farming as a career, it is our role to make sure that they have supportive policies and communities to sustain them.

To that end, last year we took on one of the biggest challenges facing the next generation of young farmers: student loan debt. Our campaign, #FarmingIsPublicService, seeks to add farming to the list of professions included in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. Like teachers and doctors, farmers provide a service that is essential to our society. Not only is student loan debt a barrier to farmers who want to invest in and expand their businesses, it also prevents many graduates from considering farming careers at all. And we desperately need more farmers. The average age of farmers in the U.S. is 58, and farmers over 65 outnumber farmers under 35 by 6-to-1.

Over the next year, we’ll be rallying farmers and farm advocates across the country, asking Congress to make official what we already know: farming is public service. We hope you’ll join us.

**Lindsey Lusher Shute, Executive Director  
and everyone at the National Young Farmers Coalition**

## NYFC BY THE NUMBERS

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- \$60M** IN AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION DOLLARS PROTECTED FROM PROPOSED CUTS
- 100+** MIXERS IN **29 STATES**
- 55** FARMERS FROM FOUR WESTERN STATES PARTICIPATED IN A WATER POLICY FARM TOUR
- 707** FARMERS AND RANCHERS TOOK OUR SURVEY ABOUT HOW STUDENT LOANS IMPACT THEIR ABILITY TO FARM
- 26** LOCAL CHAPTERS OF NYFC IN **25 STATES**
- 7** FILMS PRODUCED BY NYFC SHOWCASING YOUNG FARMER INGENUITY VIEWED **1,700+ TIMES**
- 30** LAND TRUST PROFESSIONALS FROM **14 STATES** LEARNED HOW TO KEEP CONSERVED FARMLAND IN THE HANDS OF FARMERS AT OUR LAND ACCESS INNOVATIONS TRAINING
- 1** INVITATION TO THE WHITE HOUSE FOR NYFC’S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LINDSEY LUSHER SHUTE, WHO WAS SELECTED AS A WHITE HOUSE CHAMPION OF CHANGE



Cait Caughey must work full-time off farm to cover her monthly student loan payments.

## ADVOCATING FOR THE NEEDS OF YOUNG FARMERS

### CAIT CAUGHEY: STUDENT LOAN BARRIER

Cait Caughey and her partner, Tyler, run Botna Burrow, a family farm on rented land in southwest Iowa. They are prevented from scaling up their operation because Cait has almost \$25,000 of student loan debt. Cait and Tyler have two small children (6 months and 3 years old), and they know they need more land to increase their income and support themselves through farming. Tyler works full-time on the farm and has two other side jobs; Cait works full-time off farm. Cait says, “We will continue farming because it is what we love, what we are skilled at, and what we want to do with our lives. I am in good standing on my student loans, however, we want to purchase our own farmland someday, and I am so nervous how we will do it.”

### FARMING IS PUBLIC SERVICE

Young people shouldn't have to choose between a career in farming and earning a college degree. But we've heard it again and again—student loan debt is keeping young people from succeeding in agriculture. In December, NYFC launched the #FarmingIsPublicService campaign asking Congress to add farmers to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. By sharing farmer stories and winning champions in the House, we worked with our Congressional allies to introduce the Young Farmer Success Act in June 2015.





Dairy farmer Siena Meeks meets with Congressman Chris Gibson (NY-19) to share her student loan story.

## **FARM BILL SUCCESS**

NYFC mobilized young farmers across the country to meet with their members of Congress, and Congress listened. In the 2014 Farm Bill we won full funding for beginning farmer training programs, a permanent micro-loan program, and measures to make it easier to buy a farm with help from the Farm Service Agency.

## **PROTECTING FARMLAND WITH FEDERAL DOLLARS**

NYFC brought together a new coalition of 65 land trusts and advocacy groups to oppose funding cuts to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). This program is vital to the future of agriculture—it protects land from development and provides a mechanism to keep land affordable for future generations of working farmers. Together with our coalition, we successfully protected \$60 million dollars of proposed cuts to ACEP and saved the program.

## **PARTNERING TO PROMOTE A YOUNG-FARMER-FRIENDLY USDA**

Through interviews with our members on their experiences working with USDA, we identified several key barriers that make it difficult for young farmers to access important USDA programs. Our recommendations were enthusiastically received by USDA and, as a result, the agency made key changes to the Farm Storage Facilities Loan Program, enabling diversified fruit and vegetable growers to access inexpensive capital for wash and pack stations. Thanks to our advice, USDA is also now in the process of modernizing and streamlining its programs. Young farmers will soon have an easier time registering their farms with USDA, applying for loans online, and connecting with local USDA offices on a range of specialties, including organic and diversified farming.

## **NEEDS OF SMALL FARMERS REPRESENTED IN FOOD SAFETY RULES**

NYFC generated over 1,000 letters to FDA in response to the draft food safety rules released in 2013, which were unnecessarily harmful to organic and sustainable farm operations. Our voices were heard. The revised rules make allowances for practices that are common on sustainable farms, like pastured animal rotations and wildlife habitat conservation. The revised rules also have water testing and co-packing requirements that are better tailored to meet farmers' needs.



Dustin Stein of Stubburn Farm sees water conservation as a responsibility that also supports his bottom line.

## LEADING A PARADIGM SHIFT AROUND LAND AND WATER

### DUSTIN STEIN: FARMING IN THE ARID WEST

A semi-pro-cyclist-turned-farmer, Dustin Stein never envisioned his true calling would be on tractor wheels instead of bike wheels. But after moving to southwest Colorado for school, Stein uncovered a love for farming.

Stein searched for farmland with good water rights, but couldn't find any affordable acreage. Then he met Jack and Patricia Burk, who were looking for a young farmer to care for their land. It was a perfect match. The Burks provided Dustin with land to start his own vegetable operation, Stubburn Farm, while also training him as manager of their grass-fed beef operation, Burk Beef.

With access to land, Stein is now able to experiment with growing a business. He is also experimenting with water and soil conservation, which he considers a responsibility that also supports his bottom line.

Seeing the need to advocate for young farmers in the region, Stein helped launch one of the newest NYFC affiliate chapters, the Southwest Colorado Farmers and Ranchers Coalition. In Stein's words, starting a chapter is a way to "help us all step it up—in terms of advocacy, production, and conservation."

### YOUNG FARMERS AS WATER CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

In August, NYFC published its first Western report, "Sustaining Farming in the Arid West: Stories of young farmers, water, and resilience." The report is a collection of case studies highlighting six Western producers of different scales, regions, and crop types who are managing profitable and resilient farms and ranches with less water. The report was distributed to dozens of agricultural and water partners, agencies, and policy makers across the West and was covered in National Geographic online.



Land trust staff and conservation professionals from around the country gathered to share knowledge and best practices at Equity Trust and NYFC's first Land Access Innovations Training in September 2014.

### EDUCATING OUR ALLIES: LAND TRUST TRAINING

Land trusts protect hundreds of thousands of acres from development in the United States, but many of these groups are seeing these protected lands taken out of agricultural production when they are purchased by non-farm owners for second homes and rural estates. To solve this challenge and help a new generation of farmers access farmland, NYFC partnered with Equity Trust to offer the inaugural Land Access Innovations Training. Thirty land trusts from 14 states learned how to strengthen their conservation easements to keep farmland affordable and accessible to working farmers. Following the training, NYFC created a working group and listserv to facilitate information and resource sharing among the land trust community. A second-annual convening is planned for October 2015.

### RESILIENCE: A SHORT FILM AND A THREE-DAY TOUR

Our short film, "Resilient: Soil, Water, and the New Stewards of the American West" premiered in Durango, Colorado with an accompanying three-day farm tour across the Southwest to showcase on-the-ground practices farmers and ranchers are implementing to build water resilience. The tour included break-out groups and workshops on soil conservation and irrigation efficiency.





Liberty Hunter and Leslie Touzeau started the Missouri Young Farmers Coalition to foster collaboration among diversified farmers in a state dominated by Big Ag.

### LIBERTY & LESLIE: ORGANIZING YOUNG FARMERS IN MISSOURI

Liberty Hunter and Leslie Touzeau describe their home state of Missouri as “fly-over country, the land of corn and beans.” Back in 2011, they worried that diversified farming operations, like the farms they worked on, were few and far between. Inspired by NYFC’s work, they started organizing their neighbors, and in 2014 they formed an official NYFC chapter, the Missouri Young Farmers Coalition (MOYFC).

“Since the beginning, our goal was to create a network of support for a type of agriculture that is fading from our landscape and a place of partnership, friendship, and collaboration between young and beginning farmers looking to eschew the stereotypes of what a Midwestern farmer must be,” Liberty says.

MOYFC continues to grow, connecting their members with young farmers across the country.

## REBUILDING FARM COMMUNITIES

### TWENTY-SIX CHAPTERS AND GROWING

This year, NYFC offered one-on-one support to young farmer leaders who successfully launched local chapters of NYFC in North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Louisiana, Minnesota, southwest Colorado and the Catskills of New York. Our national network of young-farmer led chapters are rebuilding the social and business infrastructure of rural communities.

### CAPTURING A MOVEMENT ON FILM

To grow our chapter network and increase its organizing capacity, NYFC produced the *Build the Movement* video series featuring the organizing and advocacy work of our established chapters in Washington state, Missouri, and New York.

### BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AROUND ORGANIC FARMING

In February, we released “The Vegetable Grower’s Guide to Organic Certification.” The guidebook, written by Oklahoma organic farmer Emily Oakley, is an excellent resource for all growers interested in the certification process. It has already been viewed over 6,000 times through youngfarmers.org.



# 2014 HIGHLIGHTS



# 26

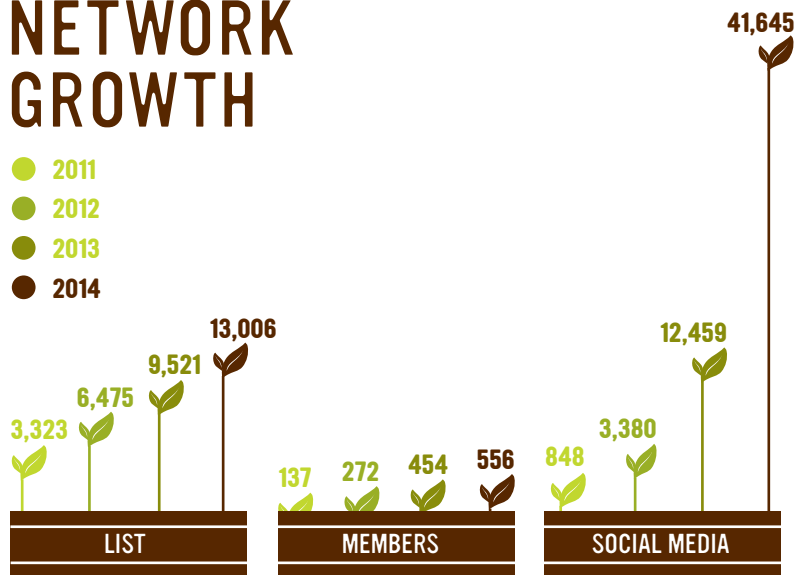
## CHAPTERS IN 25 STATES

## INCOME GROWTH



## NETWORK GROWTH

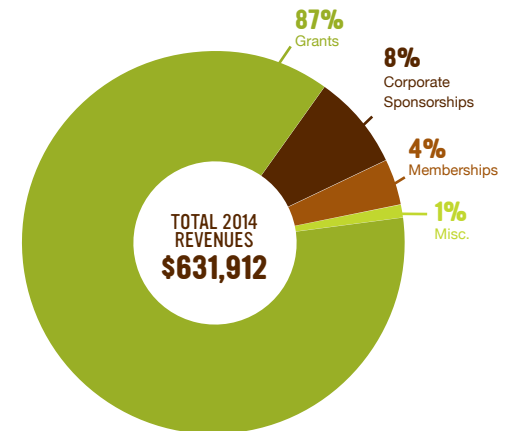
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014



## EXPENSES

STAFF AND CONSULTANTS	\$407,814
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION	\$43,102
TRAVEL	\$41,851
OFFICE & EQUIPMENT	\$38,702
PRINTING	\$9,782
CONFERENCES & MEMBERSHIPS	\$6,658
COMMUNICATIONS	\$2,523
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$550,432</b>

## SOURCES



# SUPPORTERS

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## FOUNDATIONS

Cedar Tree Foundation  
Claneil Foundation  
Clif Bar Family Foundation  
Colegato Foundation  
Farm Aid  
Field Day Foundation  
The Hope Foundation  
Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation  
Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation  
Lillian Goldman Charitable Trust  
Mortenson Family Foundation  
The New World Foundation  
Organic Valley CROPP Cooperative's Farmers Advocating for Organics Fund  
Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
RSF Social Finance  
UNFI Foundation  
The Walton Family Foundation  
The Western Conservation Foundation

\*Joined NYFC staff in 2015

\*\* Term ended in 2014

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New Belgium Brewing Company  
Once Again Nut Butters  
Stonyfield  
Wilder Quarterly  
Woodstock Foods  
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