



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Sue McGovern, [sue@youngfarmers.org](mailto:sue@youngfarmers.org), 781-315-3400

**National Young Farmers Coalition applauds Colorado Senate Agriculture Committee passage of bipartisan legislation to help build agricultural workforce**

*SB18-042, the Agricultural Workforce Development Program, cost-shares the expense of hiring on-farm interns with farm and ranch business owners.*

*Young farmer drive-in at the Capitol set for Tues., Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>*

**DENVER, CO (February 1, 2018)** – Today, the Senate Agriculture Committee of the Colorado General Assembly voted 9-2 in support of a new bill to increase agricultural apprenticeships in Colorado. SB18-042, the *Agricultural Workforce Development Program*, would reimburse qualified agricultural businesses up to 50 percent of the cost of hiring a farm intern. The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) applauded the continued bipartisan efforts in support of the measure.

“In Colorado, young motivated people are struggling to break into the agriculture industry, and with an aging agricultural workforce in the state, the lack of skilled labor is a serious concern,” said Alex Funk, Western policy director for NYFC. “Establishing resources for workforce development will provide an opportunity for attracting new people to Colorado’s agriculture industry while allowing them to acquire important skills and techniques necessary to build long-term, successful careers in agriculture.”

The bill is now headed for the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Senate bill’s prime sponsors are Senator Larry Crowder (R-Alamosa) and Senator Kerry Donovan (D-Vail).

“This bill focuses on the future of agriculture in Colorado by connecting new agriculturalists with seasoned experts,” said State Senator Kerry Donovan. “I’m thrilled to be constructing a pathway for young and beginning ranchers and farmers to develop skills and hopefully start successful careers in agriculture.” In 2017 Senator Donovan initiated the formation of first-ever Young and Beginning Farmer Interim Study Committee, where this bill first passed unanimously with bipartisan support.

“This is a good bill,” said State Senator Larry Crowder. “Colorado’s agricultural industry requires an experienced workforce to remain competitive. This program will help attract new people to the industry and provide farmers and ranchers with a pool of trained employees to help manage their operations.”

SB18-042 comes at a critical time for agriculture in Colorado. The average age of farmers in the state is 59, higher than the national average, and Colorado farmers over 55 outnumber farmers under 35 by 12:1. About two-thirds of working lands will need a new farmer in the next twenty years. How that land and water change hands will impact Colorado agriculture for generations.

***Building a future with farmers***

This bill follows on the heels of the release of the NYFC’s National Young Farmers Survey report [\*Building a Future with Farmers II\*](#). The report calls for expanded training opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers to increase the skilled agricultural workforce.

“SB18-042 addresses many of the top challenges young and beginning farmers face,” said Dustin Stein, a rancher with Burk Beef in Mancos, Colorado and member of the Four Corners Farmers and Ranchers Coalition, an NYFC affiliate chapter. “There is a dwindling agricultural workforce in Colorado and a lack of

**NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION**

PO BOX 1074 HUDSON, NY 12534 | 518-643-3564 | [YOUNGFARMERS.ORG](http://YOUNGFARMERS.ORG)

authentic, hands-on, educational programs that feed into the workforce. This bill will help get more young people into agriculture while helping keep current farmers and ranchers whole.”

NYFC is hosting a farmer drive-in at the Capitol on Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss this and other top issues Colorado’s young farmers and ranchers face. Among the legislators NYFC members will meet with are Senator Stephen Fenberg (D-Boulder), Senator Kerry Donovan (D-Vail), Representative Jim Wilson (R-Salida) and Representative Chris Hansen (D-Denver). For more information please contact Alex Funk, [alex@youngfarmers.org](mailto:alex@youngfarmers.org).

*The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) is a national advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. Visit NYFC on the web at [www.youngfarmers.org](http://www.youngfarmers.org), and on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).*

###

**NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION**

PO BOX 1074 HUDSON, NY 12534 | 518-643-3564 | [YOUNGFARMERS.ORG](http://YOUNGFARMERS.ORG)