

# Hope Grows\*

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**National Young Farmers Coalition  
2017 Annual Report**

# \*63%

**OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT  
THEY ARE MAKING OR WILL  
EVENTUALLY MAKE SUFFICIENT  
INCOME IN FARMING TO MEET  
THEIR LIFE GOALS.**

Ackoff et al., *Building a Future with Farmers II*, 2017.

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## *RIGHT NOW,*

*Congress is negotiating the next Farm Bill.*

It's difficult to overstate the extent to which this powerful bill influences food and agriculture. It determines whether low-income families can afford groceries, whether a farmer can get a loan to buy a tractor, and how much farmland we will save for future generations.

In 2017, we laid the groundwork for this critical moment. In preparation, we surveyed more than 3,500 young farmers all across the nation and released a platform for policy action. We brought out young farmers to meet their members of Congress in D.C. and at home, we expanded our chapter network and leadership trainings, and we activated hundreds of consumers and farmers to take action.

Then I was asked to testify before the Senate Agriculture Committee on behalf of the coalition. Our message: we need to make affordable farmland a national priority; we need to address the massive student loan debt standing in the way of new farmers; we need to expand farmer training opportunities; and we need to tackle the most urgent issues affecting young farmers today including climate resilience, access to health care, and immigration reform.

Although the challenges facing young farmers are immense, they are not impossible. Together, as a community of farmers and supporters, we will win a bright and just future for food and agriculture in the United States. Thank you for your support in 2017. It was a year of great progress, none of which would have been possible without your action, encouragement and financial support.

With great gratitude,



Lindsey Lusher Shute  
Co-founder and Executive Director

# Young Farmers, *UNITED* 140,000+

## Young Farmers and Supporters Uniting for Change

**NYFC Chapters** offer a platform for young farmers to connect with each other, create change in their communities and advocate for themselves in the political process. In 2017, **NYFC** launched new chapters in Kansas City, Arkansas, Central Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, Southern Maine, and the Mile High and Flatiron regions of Colorado.

## Forty-one Chapters\* In Twenty-nine States

### **ARIZONA:**

Southern Arizona Young Farmers & Ranchers Coalition

### **ARKANSAS:**

Arkansas Young Farmers Coalition

### **COLORADO:**

Flatirons Young Farmers Coalition

Four Corners Farmers & Ranchers Coalition

Mile High Farmers

Roaring Fork Farmers & Ranchers

### **CONNECTICUT:**

New Connecticut Farmer Alliance

### **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:**

D.C. Young Farmers Coalition

### **GEORGIA:**

Atlanta Farmers Coalition

Middle Georgia Young Farmers Coalition

### **ILLINOIS:**

CHI+ILLINOIS Young Farmers Coalition

### **INDIANA:**

Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition

### **IOWA:**

Eastern Iowa Young Farmers Coalition

### **KANSAS:**

Kansas City Young Farmers Coalition

### **LOUISIANA:**

Louisiana Young Farmers Coalition

New Orleans Young Farmers Coalition

### **MAINE:**

Southern Maine Young Farmers Coalition

### **MARYLAND:**

Maryland Young Farmers Coalition

### **MINNESOTA:**

Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition

Duluth Young Farmers Coalition

### **MISSOURI:**

Kansas City Young Farmers Coalition

### **NEW MEXICO:**

Rio Grande Farmers Coalition

Northern New Mexico Young Farmers Alliance

### **NEW YORK:**

ADK Farmers Coalition

Central NY Young Farmers Coalition

Hudson Valley Young Farmers Coalition

Greater Catskills Young Farmers Coalition

Leatherstocking Young Farmers Coalition

### **NORTH CAROLINA:**

Western North Carolina Young Farmers Coalition

### **OHIO:**

Central Ohio Young Farmers Coalition

### **OKLAHOMA:**

Central Oklahoma Young Farmers Coalition

### **OREGON:**

Southern Willamette Beginning Farmers Alliance

### **PENNSYLVANIA:**

Young Farmers Coalition of Southeastern PA

### **RHODE ISLAND/MASSACHUSETTS:**

Young Farmer Network of Southeastern New England

### **TENNESSEE:**

East Tennessee Young Farmers Coalition

### **TEXAS:**

Central Texas Young Farmer Coalition

Texas Panhandle Young Farmers Coalition

South Texas Alliance of Young Farmers (STAY Farmers)

### **VERMONT:**

Vermont Young Farmers Coalition

### **WASHINGTON:**

Washington Young Farmers Coalition

### **WYOMING/IOWA/MINNESOTA:**

Driftless Young Farmers Coalition

### **WEST VIRGINIA:**

Tri-State Young Farmers Coalition

*\*Chapters as of June 2018*

# Leadership

## Farmers From 16 States and D.C. Met With Their Representatives

In 2017, **NYFC** held 20 in-district meetings, 2 state drive-ins, and one D.C. fly-in, bringing 145 young farmers face-to-face with their elected officials to share their stories in their own words. These events are a proven strategy for recruiting Congressional allies for young farmer issues, and provide opportunities for farmer organizers to practice advocacy skills and become leaders in the movement.

The June D.C. fly-in brought 12 young farmers from across the country to the Capitol to tell House and Senate agriculture committee members that we need a farm bill that invests in their future. We held 44 meetings in one day, discussing needs and challenges related to land access, student loans, health care, and other critical issues.

*“I’m here today to tell my Congressmen and women about my ranching experience and how the Affordable Care Act was very instrumental in me being able to take the opportunity to work on a grass-fed beef ranch. Having access to affordable healthcare allowed me to continue ranching even after an accident and to take care of my pre-existing conditions. I’m also here to talk about how the ACA and other federal programs benefited the ranchers I worked with...”*

–Vanessa

*“That’s something I want our senators and representatives to know—that young people want to do this and there’s a lot of obstacles and barriers to do so and we need their help.”*

–Jocelyn

## 3<sup>rd</sup> National Leadership Convergence Trains 75 New Farmer Leaders

In November, our 3<sup>rd</sup> National Leadership Convergence brought together a diverse group of 75 experienced and emerging farmer organizers and chapter leaders for three days of advocacy training and movement building in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At the Convergence, young farmers sharpen advocacy skills, strengthen local and national networks, and build confidence in leadership. In 2017, we geared up for the farm bill, strategizing on how to win legislation that supports all young farmers.

This past year, we also held our first-ever pre-Convergence tour. The tour helped us to get grounded in New Mexico, and connect our national network to the local farm community and Congressional offices in their home districts.

*“It’s a good place to come and learn. It’s a good place to be a part of something bigger than just the local movement.”*

–Chris Bueno, South Texas Young Farmers Coalition

*“The National Young Farmers Coalition is really important to me because it gives me the tools that I need to advocate for myself and my farm.”*

–Emily Mickley-Doyle

# National Survey II

## 2<sup>nd</sup> National Survey of 3,500 Farmers Makes Headlines and Sets the Stage for the 2018 Farm Bill Fight

In 2017, **NYFC** conducted our second National Young Farmer Survey to understand the most pressing challenges and brightest opportunities for young farmers. A diverse group of 3,500 farmers and ranchers **under the age of 40** from all 50 states responded, and we uncovered that this generation of food producers is struggling to afford farmland; student debt is compromising their ability to capitalize their businesses; labor and support staff are difficult to recruit; and health insurance is increasingly unaffordable.

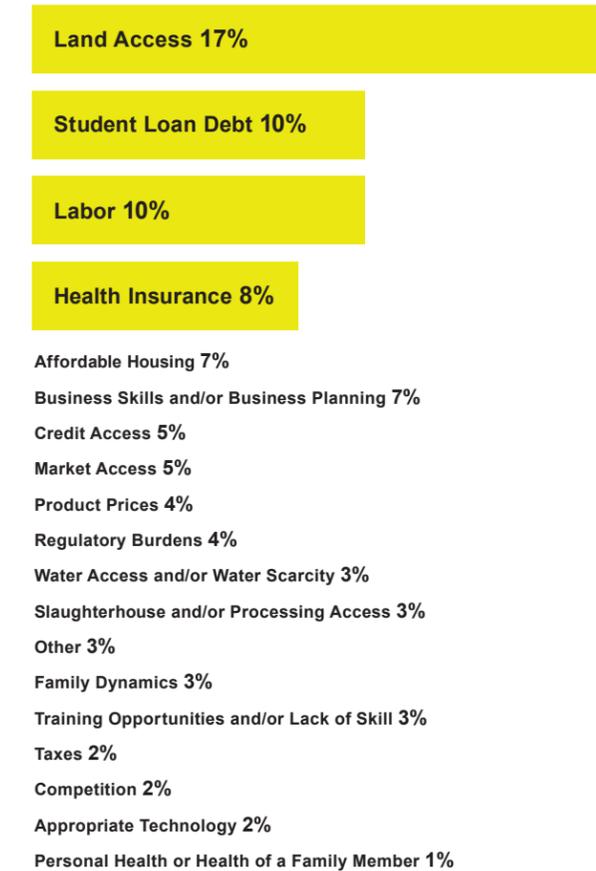
Findings from *Building a Future With Farmers II: results and recommendations from the National Young Farmers Survey*. Read the full report at [youngfarmers.org/survey2017/](http://youngfarmers.org/survey2017/)

### Top 2 Land Access Challenges:

**61%**  
I cannot find affordable farmland for sale.

**54%**  
Land costs more to purchase than the value of what I can produce.

### WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO FARMING OR RANCHING?



### Women were the majority of surveyed farmers under 40:



1% TRANSGENDER, 1% OTHER, 1% PREFER NOT TO ANSWER

# National Survey II, Continued

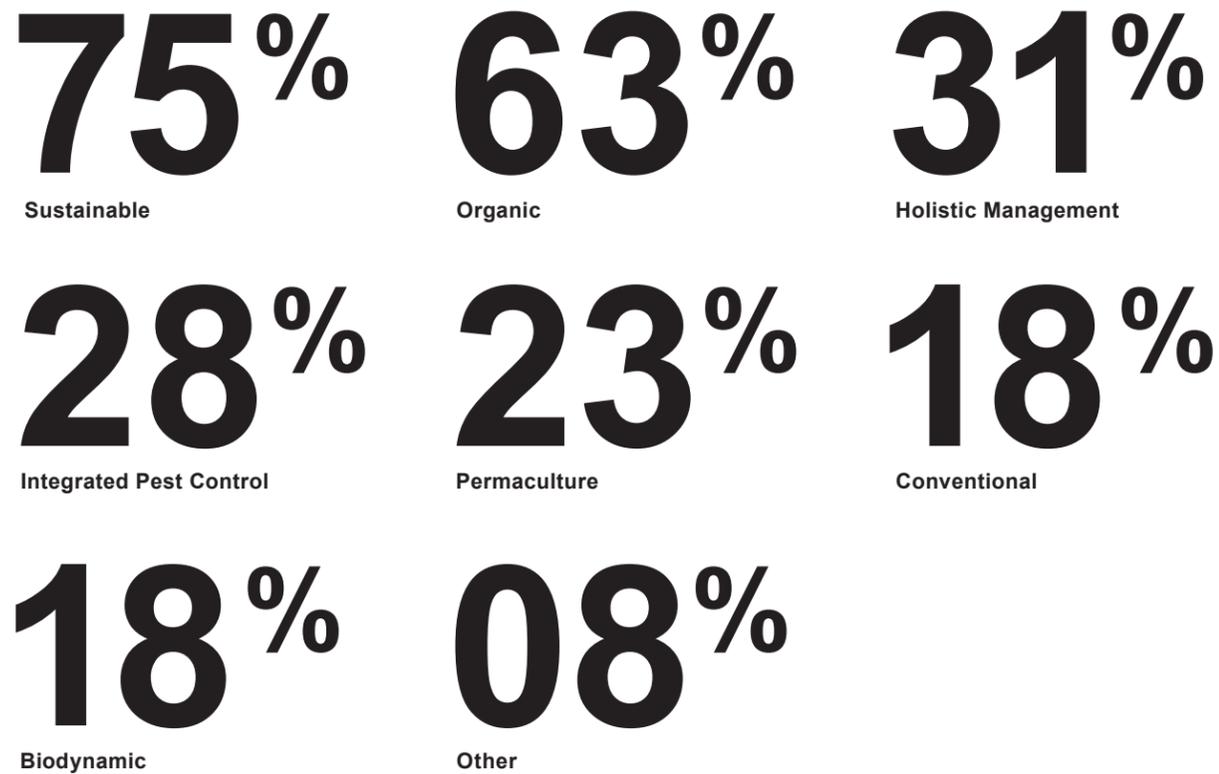
Findings from *Building a Future With Farmers II*: results and recommendations from the National Young Farmers Survey. Read the full report at [youngfarmers.org/survey2017/](http://youngfarmers.org/survey2017/)

Young farmers are focused on organic and sustainable practices.

## CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARMS:



## HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FARMING PRACTICE?\*



\*Multi-answer multiple choice, answers not mutually exclusive.



Promoting innovative conservation easements remains our core strategy for keeping land in food production and owned by farmers.

Read more in our upcoming *Farmland for Farmers* report at [youngfarmers.org](http://youngfarmers.org).



### The Takeaway

**DESPITE CHALLENGES, YOUNG FARMERS REMAIN OPTIMISTIC** and are capitalizing on their opportunities—63% of respondents said they are making, or felt they would eventually make, sufficient income to meet their life goals. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, and other direct marketing channels are helping them meet the demand for local food, while managing risk, and capturing more of the consumer food dollar. Our survey also indicated that young farmers are strongly committed to environmental stewardship, with 75% describing their production practices as sustainable, and 63% as organic. And like their millennial counterparts, the young farmers surveyed were highly educated and more racially diverse for a survey of this type, with more than 10% identifying as people of color, mixed race, or indigenous.

# Farm Bill Agenda

## The Young Farmer Agenda

In late November, we also released a policy platform—The Young Farmer Agenda—in our report, *Building a Future with Farmers II*, which was covered in a front-page exclusive in the Washington Post, and subsequently in hundreds of media outlets around the country.

With the farm bill now up for reauthorization, **NYFC** is using The Young Farmer Agenda to create a roadmap for federal policy change, as well as to guide our advocacy at the state and local levels.

This effort follows the successes of our 2011 survey and report, which laid the groundwork for significant wins in the 2014 farm bill, including expanded access to credit, a new microloan program, and millions of dollars saved for beginning farmer education and farmland conservation.

## NYFC Testifies at Senate Agricultural Committee Hearing

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, Executive Director Lindsey Lusher Shute delivered **NYFC's** first-ever testimony to the full U.S. Senate Committee of Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, contributing a next-generation perspective to the panel. The testimony was an invaluable opportunity to bring the voices of our national young farmer network directly to the senators in D.C. who are writing the next farm bill. Lindsey highlighted young farmer needs and specific policy measures to address access to land and credit, as well as create a farm safety net for the future through the next farm bill.

### Dear Congress, we need a farm bill that helps us...

- Find farmland that's accessible and affordable.
- Pay student debt as we seek loans to build our farms.
- Access business training and create successful farm enterprises.
- Build soil and protect natural resources.
- Get affordable credit through the USDA and reduce our risks.

**And we need federal policy** that helps immigrants and farmers of color—by creating a pathway to citizenship for farmworkers and addressing persistent racial inequities in farming.

# Fixing Farmland

## NYFC Chapter Wins Land Bill in Minnesota, More State Bills to Come

Today, states are becoming more powerful and are willing to lead on legislation in support of young farmers. In 2017, **NYFC** and our chapters identified opportunities to move forward young farmer priorities at the state level, including a historic tax credit bill in Minnesota. Our federal team supported the Central Minnesota chapter in drafting and advocating for legislation that is now setting the precedent for states to improve access to affordable farmland.

In 2017, **NYFC** also completed two state-specific white papers for Colorado and New Mexico that outline how elected officials can support young farmers in those states. **NYFC** helped to create Colorado's Young Farmer Interim Committee, and in October after young farmers' testimony and advocacy, the committee voted unanimously to introduce a new Workforce Development bill that would provide funding for farmers to offer paid training opportunities. The bill was introduced and passed in the Colorado legislature in 2018.

*"We formed the Central Minnesota chapter to work on practical policy, to represent ourselves, and to build political power. Showing up at the state capitol and meeting with our legislators has given us a taste of what it means to change real things that directly help our farms. This is a historic bill, and it is proof of the power we can have on a local level."*

*—Matthew Fitzgerald, Glencoe, Minnesota*

## Land Conservation Remains Our Core Strategy for Protecting Farmland for Food Production

Our 2017 survey showed that land access is the number one challenge for young farmers whether they come from a farm family or are first-generation producers. And it is particularly difficult to find and afford land on a farm income alone.

Over the past three years, **NYFC** has been working directly with land trusts to spread awareness and scale up the use of innovative tools and strategies that make farmland more affordable. Land trusts are in a unique position to use conservation easements that require land be sold to a working farmer, or ground leases that keep farmland in the hands of working farmers.

## NYFC Partners with Ben Fry and Fathom to Build *Finding Farmland*, an Online Financial Education Tool to Help Farmers Buy Land

In October, **NYFC** launched the beta version of *Finding Farmland*: [findingfarmland.org](http://findingfarmland.org), an online financial education tool to help farmers make informed decisions around purchasing land. The tool features a Land Affordability Calculator, as well as an interactive case study, and additional land access resources. More than 1,000 users tested the beta version, which helped shaped the final version released in 2018. In 2017, we trained 114 farmers and farm service providers to use the tool and on farm financing strategies.

# Fixing Farmland, *Continued*



## TRAINING FARMERS

**100+ Farmers**  
trained on how to afford farmland.  
**1,000+ Farmers**  
used [findingfarmland.org](http://findingfarmland.org) to get  
prepared to buy land.

## TRAINING LAND TRUSTS

**167** Land trust professionals  
from **16** states trained at  
**4** Land Access Innovations  
Trainings.

# Growing Businesses

## NYFC Trains Nearly 300 Farmers On Federal Credit Opportunities

Five years ago, **NYFC** worked with the USDA Farm Service Agency to launch a new microloan program, which has served more than 30,000 farmers to date. **NYFC** has also been working with USDA to improve loan options for young farmers who struggle to access credit, and yet 30% of young farmers who took our 2017 National Young Farmer Survey reported that they were unfamiliar with federal loan programs. To address this gap, **NYFC** trained 294 farmers on low-interest federal loan programs and the opportunities they provide. Eleven trainings were held in 8 states.

## NYFC Trains 479 Farmers On How To Keep Food Safe

In 2017, **NYFC** worked with the National Farmers Union and more than a dozen partners to offer a series of workshops to prepare farmers for the upcoming Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which goes into effect in 2018. FSMA is the first mandatory federal regulation covering produce safety on vegetable farms—and it is critical for all produce growers to understand how and when they will need to be in compliance. **NYFC** hosted 10 food safety trainings for 479 farmers in 9 states.

# Farmers of Color

## Speaking Out Against Racism in the Food System

Last year, **NYFC** made a commitment to work against racism in the food system. In this work, we strongly believe in following the lead of the organizations led by people of color and indigenous people who have been engaged in the work of dismantling racism long before us. **NYFC** is actively seeking ways to support these partners and to work in coalition. We are

also using our national platform to speak out against injustices as they arise. In 2017, **NYFC** released a statement on immigration enforcement in response to our current federal administration's policies and executive orders that prioritize enforcement, deportation and intimidation of undocumented families and communities of color.

# Resilient West

In 2017, **NYFC's** Western team completed six new case studies on farmer-led conservation in the Colorado River Basin. These case studies highlight how young farmers and ranchers on the front-lines of climate change are increasing resilience by investing in soil health, creating wildlife habitat, and conserving water. They also show that lack of access to federal financial and technical assistance programs is often a barrier for young farmers to scale up these practices.

In Colorado, our team helped create the first-ever Young and Beginning Farmers Interim Study Committee, a bipartisan committee tasked with identifying the top challenges young Colorado farmers face. **NYFC** testified before the committee, which voted unanimously in support of beginning farmer training in Colorado—an effort that would become law in 2018.

The Western team hosted five water workshops in the West, training 190 farmers, ranchers and community members on the foundations of state water law and policy. We joined partners in completing the Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture Strategic Plan, a road map for protecting the future of agriculture in the state. And Conservation Generation, **NYFC's** short film on farmer-led conservation, screened at four film festivals and is on tour nationwide.



**John and Halee Wepking**  
RIDGEWAY, WISCONSIN

*“Farming is certainly not for everyone, but I know that there are incredible numbers of young people in this country...in all income groups and from all backgrounds who would rather be living a more self-reliant and satisfying life. The trick is finding them, helping them realize their passions, and finding them an experienced farmer and a community with the openness, patience, and dedication to help mold them into the farmers the land so desperately needs.”*

—John Wepking



**Andrew Barsness**  
HOFFMAN, MINNESOTA

*“When I started farming in 2011, grain prices were much better. These last few years have been difficult for most grain farmers, and some have gone out of business entirely. As profit margins shrink, farmers need to farm more acres in order to remain profitable. This fact, combined with our nation’s aging population of farmers and substantial barriers preventing young people from entering the industry, leads me to expect farmland consolidation to continue for quite some time.*

*On the other hand...farmers [can] diversify and add value to their operations...which is the route that I’m pursuing. This strategy seems to be more prevalent with younger farmers who are more likely to try new things, and for whom adding value is often a more practical approach than rapid expansion.”*



**Mai Nguyen**  
UPPER LAKE, CALIFORNIA

*“Sustainable farming depends first on our ability to sustain farmers. Our country has never equitably compensated farm labor, and has too often worked actively against it. We haven’t invested in the human and environmental health conditions for safe farming and eating. Is it a wonder, then, why young people don’t remain in or take up farm work?”*

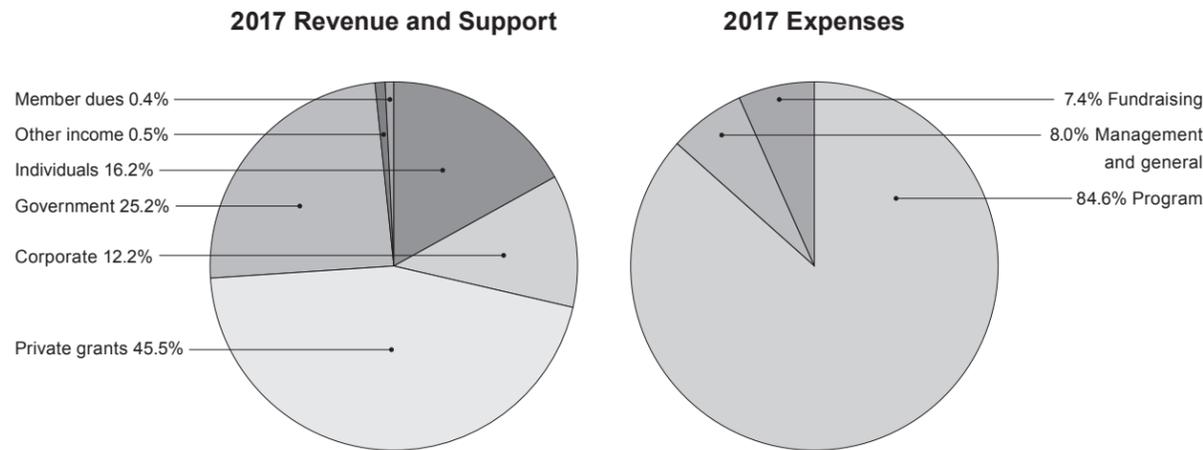
# Heart and Grain

## Young Grain Farmer Film Series

The high start-up costs associated with grain farming can make it an especially difficult field to enter. The future of high quality, sustainably grown grains in the United States depends on the success of young farmers. In 2017, grain farmers John and Halee Wepking, Andrew Barsness, and Mai Nguyen,

wrote a series of blog posts throughout the season to share their stories. These posts, as well as a series of three short films, highlight their innovative work, challenges, and successes in becoming the next generation of our country’s grain growers.

# Financials



## Year ended December 31, 2017

Figures in US\$

	2017			2016
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Total
<b>Revenue and support:</b>				
Individual contributions	\$ 284,471		\$ 284,471	\$ 174,155
Corporate contributions	213,789		213,789	147,953
Private grants	721,759	78,000	799,759	697,332
Government grants	442,952		442,952	102,947
Members dues	7,741		7,741	1,065
Other income	8,530		8,530	6,908
Releases from restrictions	150,000	(150,000)	0	0
<b>Total revenue and support</b>	<b>1,829,242</b>	<b>(72,000)</b>	<b>1,757,242</b>	<b>1,130,360</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>				
Program	1,265,607		1,265,607	852,180
Management and general	119,937		119,937	72,527
Fundraising	111,328		111,328	101,558
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>1,496,872</b>		<b>1,496,872</b>	<b>1,026,265</b>
<b>Change in net assets</b>				
	332,370	(72,000)	260,370	104,095
Net assets, beginning of year	290,592	150,000	440,592	336,497
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$ 622,962</b>	<b>\$ 78,000</b>	<b>\$ 700,962</b>	<b>\$ 440,592</b>

# 2017 Supporters

## FOUNDATIONS

The Arthur & Eileen Newman Family Foundation  
 Bank of America Charitable Foundation  
 Bernstein Bunzl Family Fund  
 The Cedar Tree Foundation  
 The Claneil Foundation  
 The Conservation Fund  
 Dayton Foundation (Martha S. MacDonnell Fund)  
 Dolnick Family Fund  
 Donald C. Brace Foundation  
 The Durst Family Foundation  
 Ettinger Foundation  
 Farm Aid  
 Flood-Gamble Foundation  
 Gaia Fund  
 Gates Family Foundation  
 Gramercy Property Trust  
 The Hope Foundation  
 Jennifer Schwegler Charitable Fund  
 The Jewish Communal Fund  
 Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation  
 Joyce & Irving Goldman Family Foundation  
 Leichtag Foundation  
 Lydia B. Stokes Foundation  
 The Musk Foundation Charitable Fund  
 The Nell Newman Foundation  
 New Visions Foundation  
 New World Foundation  
 NYS Health Foundation  
 Ole Skaarup Foundation  
 Ralph E. Ogden Foundation

Rebecca Sparks Philanthropic Fund  
 The Russell Berrie Foundation  
 The Schachar Foundation Trust  
 The Thompson Family Charitable Fund  
 Thornburg Foundation  
 United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI) Foundation  
 Walking Stick Family Fund  
 The Walton Family Foundation  
 The Whitehead Foundation  
 Woodcock Foundation

## GOVERNMENT

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)  
 USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)  
 Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)  
 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)  
 USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)  
 USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA)  
 U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

## CORPORATE PARTNERS

AgChoice Farm Credit  
 AgGeorgia Farm Credit  
 Annie's  
 Applegate  
 Arnow Family Farm  
 Clif Bar & Company  
 Crofter's Organic  
 The Durst Organization  
 Earth Tools

Enovation Brands  
 Farm Credit  
 Farm Credit East  
 Farm Credit of New Mexico  
 Fitzgerald Canepa  
 Great Performances Artists as Waitresses  
 Harney & Sons  
 Indiana Farmers Union  
 Healing Living Systems  
 High Mowing Organic Seeds  
 J&D Farm  
 King Arthur Flour  
 Lundberg Family Farms  
 Maude Restaurant  
 New Belgium Brewing Company  
 New Day Farm  
 Niman Ranch  
 Once Again Nut Butter  
 Organic Valley  
 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union  
 United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI)  
 Walnut Grove Farm

## BOARD

Tess Brown-Lavoie, *President*  
 Eduardo Rivera (2017), *Vice President*  
 Jacqueline Lewin Munno, *Secretary*  
 Alex Bryan, *Treasurer*  
 Mark Bittman  
 Katharine Butler  
 Tierney Creech  
 Davon Goodwin  
 Jacob Israelow  
 Salima Jones-Daley  
 Benjamin Shute  
 Lindsey Lusher Shute

# NYFC Staff

Lindsey Lusher Shute, *Executive Director and Co-founder*

Sophie Ackoff, *National Field Director*

Caitlin Arnold, *National Chapter Coordinator*

Andrew Bahrenburg, *National Policy Director*

Michael Durante, *Land Access Program Associate*

Cara Fraver, *Business Services Director*

Erin Foster West, *Policy Specialist (2018)*

Alex Funk, *Southwest Policy Analyst and Staff Attorney*

Kate Greenberg, *Western Program Director*

David Howard, *Northeast Campaigns Director*

Michelle Hughes, *Director of Investments and Partnerships*

Theresa Hughes, *Executive Assistant*

Maggie Kaiser, *Food Safety Trainer*

Mai Nguyen, *California Organizer (2018)*

Holly Rippon-Butler, *Land Access Program Director*

Natana Roots, *Operations Manager*

Hannah Sassoon, *Communications Coordinator*

Cassidy Tawse-Garcia, *Southwest Organizer*

Aracely Tellez, *Western Water Projects Specialist (2018)*

Susan Van Tassel, *Bookkeeper*

Will Yandik, *Director of Philanthropy*

Hanna Seltz, *Organizer*

Adrienne Nelson, *Western Pennsylvania Organizer (2018)*

Karen Gardner, *Pennsylvania Policy Associate (2018)*

Martin Lemos, *Deputy Director (2018)*

Fiona Harbert, *Intern*

Faith Schaeffer, *Intern (2018)*

**“I’m part of NYFC  
because it’s about  
community, and  
feeling like I can  
take action and  
do good work in  
the world.”**

**–Tiana Baca, Farmer**

**YoungFarmers.org**



**@YoungFarmers**

*listen to the NYFC Podcast*



**@youngfarmerscoalition**

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