



## 2021 Young Farmer New Mexico Policy Priorities

The National Young Farmers Coalition is a network of more than 200,000 farmers, ranchers, and supporters building a brighter and more equitable future for U.S. agriculture. Since 2010, the Coalition has launched 46 farmer-led chapters across the United States. We help young farmers become leaders in their communities through local chapter organizing, and ensuring they have a seat at the table in local, state and national policy decisions.

In short, we are young farmers fighting for the future of U.S. agriculture.

We represent, mobilize, and engage young farmers and ranchers to ensure their success, tackling the most critical structural and economic issues that prevent motivated young people from starting and growing farm businesses. We recognize that farmers of color face added structural and economic challenges as a result of systemic racism that must be addressed with specificity to ensure that all future farmers have a fair shot at continuing their agricultural careers.

New Mexico's agricultural workforce is older on average than at any other time in the state's history. **The average age of a farmer in New Mexico is 60, and less than seven percent of producers are under the age of 35.** While the current generation of farmers and ranchers are retiring, young and beginning producers face multiple barriers to entry, creating a gap threatening the resiliency of New Mexico's agriculture industry, rural communities, and local food supply. The barriers to entry into the agricultural sector are many: systemic racism, a lack of access to capital and credit, access to land and water, training opportunities, access to viable markets, crippling student loan debt, climate change, and water availability all pose significant obstacles to beginning producers and farmers and ranchers of color.

**The National Young Farmers Coalition unites young farmers and ranchers to ensure a viable future for New Mexico agriculture.** We work with partners and policymakers to address these critical structural and economic barriers preventing motivated young people from building successful farming careers. Special thanks to the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, Farm to Table, NM Healthy Soils Working Group, New Mexico Acequia Association, La Semilla Food Center, National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos, and the NM Black Farmers and Ranchers, and the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association.



### **A. Support programs that incentivize the purchase of New Mexico Grown produce and meats:**

1. Maintain \$400k investment in NM Grown Fruits and Vegetables for School Meals Program.
2. Expand investment to \$500k for the NM Grown Fruits and Vegetables for Senior Meals Program.
3. Invest \$100k in the Department of Health Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

### **B. Support efforts in the agricultural industries to improve soil health and increase carbon sequestration, forage production and water infiltration.**

1. Maintain \$227k investment in the NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Healthy Soils Program.
2. Maintain \$200k investment in Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), who play a key role in administering the Healthy Soils Program.
3. Oppose the transfer of groundwater out of the state of NM and support policy efforts to conserve water in the state.
4. Support efforts to grow and distribute regional seed, particularly seeds that are native to New Mexico and grown by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers.
5. Support all produced water from oil and gas development to be reused by oil and gas before any other water.

### **C. Support the next generation of farmers and ranchers through training opportunities and access to both land and water.**

1. Support \$100k investment in the NM Agriculture Workforce Development Program; prioritize access for producers who identify as BIPOC.
2. Support \$150k investment in the NM Food and Agriculture Experiential Learning Grant Program.
3. Support research to explore a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Tax Credit program, with increased incentives for BIPOC farmers and ranchers leasing or purchasing land, and incentives to help farmers with legal and other costs associated with land access and transition.

4. Urge the State to support agricultural land transition planning to ensure that land and water are affordable for the next generation of land stewards.
5. Support NMDA and other state agencies to require anti-oppression and anti-racism training for program staff.

### **D. Support efforts to expand intrastate meat processing, providing more economic opportunity for both producers and processors.**

1. Encourage NMDA to strengthen state capacity to process livestock on a variety of scales (from large cattle operations to small hog farms) to get more New Mexico meat into the local food supply.

### **E. Support the legislative priorities of our partner organizations.**

1. Support and fund the Healthy Food Financing Act at \$200k to establish a statewide financing program by, and for, underserved and under-resourced communities to increase the availability of fresh, affordable food.
2. Maintain Capital Outlay requests made by Acequia Associations.
3. Maintain \$150k investment in Local Food Systems Development to support value chain coordination and use of SNAP/EBT and the Double Up Food Bucks Program to purchase locally grown produce.
4. Support reimagining municipal, county, and state budgets to allocate more funding toward community led, farmer informed investments in public health and wellness, food access, and agricultural projects and programs.

