



2021 YOUNG FARMER COLORADO POLICY PRIORITIES

The **National Young Farmers Coalition** unites young farmers and ranchers to ensure a just and viable future for Colorado agriculture.

We work with partners and policymakers to address these critical structural and economic barriers preventing motivated young people from building successful farming careers.

Young farmers across the state are taking on the risks inherent in farming, getting trained, and working hard to build successful farm businesses. They are also facing significant challenges that require creative policy solutions. To support the next generation of Colorado's farmers and ranchers,

Young Farmers recommends policymakers consider the following recommendations:

Protect Colorado's Water and Soil Resources

The National Young Farmers Coalition supports the conservation of soil and water resources as well as increasing the climate resilience of Colorado's farms and ranches. This includes:

- Establishing a **soil health program** at the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) to provide financial and technical assistance to producers to implement soil health practices, while ensuring funds are distributed equitably to Black, Indigenous, and farmers of color (BIPOC), and that cultural practices that impact soil health are recognized and supported by the program.
- Implementing **climate resilience solutions** through CDA that **support soil health, working land protection, racial equity, and farm viability**. If established, the activities of the proposed Agricultural Climate Resilience Office at CDA should complement the above soil health program recommendations and support voluntary, producer-led stewardship, while addressing the agricultural greenhouse gas reduction targets in the GHG Pollution Reduction State of Colorado Roadmap.
- Amending the **Colorado Water Plan to meaningfully integrate equity and agricultural viability** into the plan, and to recognize and support the needs of acequias and urban agricultural water users.



Expand Farmworker Protections

The Coalition supports immigrant rights and improved **working conditions for farm and food system workers**. Policy solutions to support farmworker protections should include fair wages, protection from overwork and the associated health consequences, and the right to meet with advocates and service providers.

Invest in Secure Land Tenure

The Colorado Department of Agriculture should explore ways to expand secure land tenure for young farmers and farmers of color.

Land access is one of the biggest challenges young and beginning farmers face when it comes to starting a career in agriculture.

In addition to unaffordable land prices and competition from non-agricultural buyers, BIPOC farmers and ranchers face racial and cultural discrimination making barriers to land tenure even higher.

Provide Additional COVID Relief

The Coalition supports COVID relief for farmers, ranchers, and food system workers, especially producers that have limited access to federal relief programs, such as beginning producers and producers of color. COVID relief should include:

- State funding for the **Promotora Network**, a community health worker model to provide COVID information and resources to farmworker communities. expansion of WIC and SNAP, and prioritizing hunger relief solutions that partner with Colorado farmers and ranchers.
- **Funding for the Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program** to connect Colorado producers with food pantries.

