

**Governing Iowa's public  
universities and special schools**

University of Iowa  
Iowa State University  
University of Northern Iowa  
Iowa School for the Deaf  
Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School  
Lakeside Laboratory Regents Resource Center  
Western Iowa Regents Resource Center



Michael J. Richards, MD, President, *West Des Moines*  
Patty Cownie, President Pro Tem, *Des Moines*  
Sherry Bates, *Scranton*  
Nancy Boettger, *Harlan*  
Milt Dakovich, *Waterloo*  
Nancy Dunkel, *Dyersville*  
Rachael Johnson, *Sioux City*  
Jim Lindenmeyer, *Ottumwa*  
Larry McKibben, JD, *Marshalltown*

Mark J. Braun, Executive Director

**MEMORANDUM**

January 8, 2019

Mr. Charlie Smithson  
Secretary of the Senate  
State Capitol Building  
Des Moines IA 50319

Ms. Carmine Boal  
Chief Clerk of the House  
State Capitol Building  
Des Moines IA 50319

Re: Beginning Farmer Center Report

Dear Members of the Iowa General Assembly:

Pursuant to Iowa Code 266.39E.3, enclosed is the Beginning Farmer Center report prepared by the Iowa State University.

If you have any questions or need more information, please don't hesitate to contact this office.

Sincerely,  
  
Mark J. Braun

\\Box Sync\Board of Regents Shared\BF\Legislative\2019 session\Reports\

Attachments

cc: Robin Madison  
Legislative Liaisons  
Legislative Log

# Beginning Farmer Center

*Celebrating over 25 years of helping Iowa farm families*

## Resources to help our next generation of farmers

The Beginning Farmer Center was established at Iowa State University by the 1994 Iowa General Assembly. Objectives of the Center include: assess the educational programs and services needed by beginning and retiring farmers; develop and deliver statewide programs to address these needs and be the one-stop-shop for beginning farmers and farm succession planning.

## Organization

---

The Beginning Farmer Center is a joint effort of the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and ISU Extension and Outreach, which delivers the Center's programs and activities. Staff includes David Baker, farm transition specialist who was named the director as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. ISU Agricultural and Natural Resources program specialists assist with programming on farm transition and beginning farmers. Center staff work closely with the ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management team, Value Added Agriculture, Women in Agriculture, the International Farm Transition Network and Human Sciences Extension and Outreach specialists to develop and deliver programming to target audiences.

## Major Activities

---

### Ag Link

The Ag Link program facilitates the introduction of retiring farmers to young people who want to get started in agriculture. The Center transition specialist works to find interested parties and facilitates initial discussions for succession. The Center keeps an electronic database of individuals who register their background and interests. The Center has 687 active beginning farmer files and 43 active retiring farmer files.

During 2018, the Center fielded 1498 calls from beginning farmers and retiring farmers. Electronic correspondence with candidates has increased, allowing for greater speed and flexibility between the two generations. The Center works closely with ISU Extension and Outreach staff and external partners and stakeholders to identify the needs of beginning and retiring farmers and to better coordinate and leverage resources to address these needs. The staff worked closely with USDA and state agencies and commodity groups to develop and analyze new programming that address farmer retirement plans, challenges and educational needs such as Iowa Farm, Bureau Federation Take Root program.

### Returning To The Farm

In 2018, 6 families with 19 individuals attended *Returning to the Farm*, a four-day workshop for families of college juniors and seniors who plan to join their family farm operation after graduation. Topics include communications, retirement, strategic planning, conflict resolution, goal setting, determining values, business analysis, farm planning and management. The seminar is open as well to non-ISU student families.

### Individual Farm Analysis

The Center provides facilitation of farm succession meetings, farm visits and in some cases individual financial analysis of existing farm situations and in partnership with Farm Financial Associates of ISU performing in-depth FinPack analysis. The demand for consultations is growing because of the present economic situation in farming. During 2018, there were 53 farm family consultations. Many consultations involved non-farming and/or non-resident heirs is due to this increasing trend in Iowa farmland ownership.

### Beginning Farmer Network

The transition specialist also serves as a faculty adviser for the Beginning Farmer Network, an ISU student club organization. 65 student members are interested in new, diverse forms of farming and management. More than 100 people attended the Beginning Farmer Network annual conference in 2018. A spring and fall tour of Iowa agricultural businesses was made possible by several scholarships and grants that were awarded to the group.

### Grant received

The BFC partnering with ISU Extension and Outreach is in the third year of a USDA- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program three-year grant for \$698,000. Partners include the Veterans in Agriculture and the International Farm Transition Network. The grant has established 20 beginning farmer peer groups across the state, and has worked with 90

Veterans interested in or engaged in farming. The BFC began a quarterly newsletter for existing farmers and landowners regarding farm succession planning with a list serve of 552 farmers. The International Farm Transition Network in cooperation with the BFC has certified 90 Iowa farm succession coordinators in the public and private sector to assist farm families and unrelated parties along the intergenerational farm transition journey. This grant funding ended Aug.30, 2018. Reports on this grant are available for reviewing the achievements.

### **Outreach Activities**

Outreach and education make up a significant portion of Center responsibilities. In 2018, these activities included:

- 30 presentations to commodity groups, attorneys, farmers, government officials and others
- 15 media interviews including NPR and the BBC.
- The Center continues to upgrade its website. Please visit the site at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>
- Center staff serve on the Board of Directors of the Veterans in Agriculture and participated in 18 meetings and events.
- Partnered with USDA Farm Service Agency on the new SCORE initiative, Iowa Finance Authority with beginning farmer loans and tax credit programs, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and community colleges to provide farm business succession seminars for their students
- Participated in the Iowa Organic Conference, Practical Farmers of Iowa Conference, Iowa Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher annual meeting, Iowa Pork Producers annual conference, Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation, Iowa Grape and Wine Growers, and the Women's Food and Agricultural Network.

The staff member is a board member of the International Farm Transition Network, a network of state, university and private organizations that helps beginning farmers and retiring farmers. It shares information and has established standards and provides certification for professionals working in farm transitions having certified 90 persons as Farm Succession Coordinators.

### **Leveraging the Advantages**

---

The Beginning Farmer Center partners and coordinates with agencies and organizations that are serving farmers. While the attention and resources to farm transitions and new farmers has cycled over time, the Center continues to provide research, education and services to retiring and beginning farmers and the policy-makers who address these critical needs.

The Center works with ISU Extension and Outreach staff to offer materials, speakers and financial support for programs to help beginning and exiting farmers. The Center provides speakers and materials to the Iowa Bar Association and works closely on program efforts with several ISU academic departments and centers, including the Extension and Outreach Farm Management team and the Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation.

### **Future Activities**

---

The Beginning Farmer Center will pursue opportunities to partner with others to address the needs of beginning farmers, but will continue support for its core programs: *Ag Link*, individual farm consultations, *Returning to the Farm* workshops and work to motivate farmers to pass on an operation as a unit rather than in pieces. Research also is needed to develop and analyze alternative business strategies for both beginning and retiring farmers.

### **Recommendations**

The Center recommends that state and federal legislators consider the impact of the lack of updating legislation on beginning farmer's tax credit programs and reduction of the bonding program and its effect on Iowa farm transitioning. The Center will continue to recommend a tax credit similar to that available to exiting farmers who lease farm business assets to a beginning farmer be extended to beginning farmers.

For more information, contact David Baker, BFC director, ISU ANR Extension and Outreach, at (515) 294-7801; or (toll-free) (877) BFC-1999. The Beginning Farmer Center website can be found at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>.

#### **... and justice for all**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and July 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dr. John Lawrence, interim director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.  
Revised January 2017