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Jim Lindenmayer, PhD, *Ottumwa*

Mark J. Braun, Executive Director

December 17, 2019

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

Ms. Meghan Nelson
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 Chapter 266.39E, attached is the Beginning Farmer Center Report for FY19. The Beginning Farmer Center is a joint effort of the Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, which delivers the Center's programs and activities.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "MJB", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark J. Braun

\\Box Sync\Board of Regents Shared\BF\Legislative\2020 session\Reports\

Attachments

cc: Robin Madison
Legislative Liaisons
Legislative Log

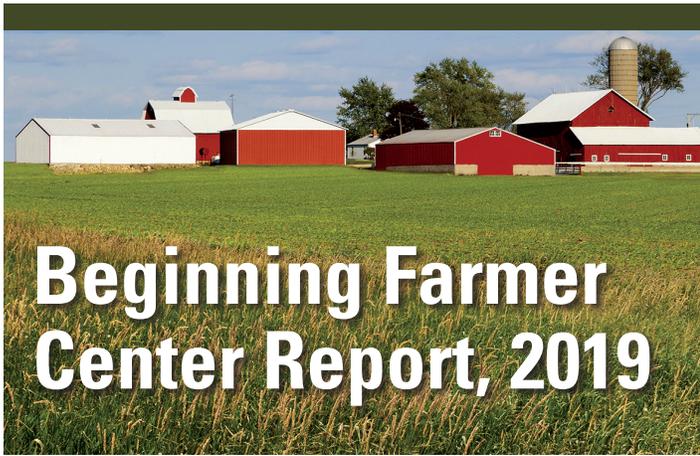


Photo by maksymowicz/AdobeStock.com

A Resource to Help our Next Generation

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 for exiting farmers.

Organization

The Beginning Farmer Center is a joint effort of the Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Iowa State University 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 Jan. 1, 2018. ISU Extension and Outreach program specialists assist with programming on farm transition and beginning farmers. Center staff work closely with the ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management team, Veterans in Agriculture, the International Farm Transition Network and specialists from the Iowa State College of Human Sciences to develop and deliver programming to target audiences, including Iowa State students, military veterans, farm families, retiring farmers, and landowners.

Major Activities

Ag Link

The Ag Link program is a matching program that facilitates the introduction of retiring farmers and landowners to young people who want to get started in agriculture. The Center's 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 and can provide those files to retiring farmers. The Center has 775 active beginning farmer files and 46 active retiring farmer files. During 2019, the

Center fielded 1,430 calls from beginning farmers and retiring farmers. Electronic correspondence with candidates has increased, allowing for greater speed and flexibility between the two generations.

Returning To The Farm

Returning to the Farm is 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, identifying individual values, strategic business analysis, farm planning, and management. The seminar is open as well to non-Iowa State student families. In addition to Returning to the Farm Seminar the staff has held three regional workshops, four hours each, with Iowa State Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation staff, and also the Iowa Agricultural Development Division staff to reach a larger audience of farmland owners. These workshops are meant to better inform our farm communities of resources available for land transfer.

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 from ISU Extension and Outreach performing in-depth Fin Pac analysis. The demand for consultations is growing because of the present economic situation in farming. During 2019, there were 49 farm family consultations. Many of these consultations involved non-farming and or non-resident heirs. This might be due to an increasing age of farmers and management changes of Iowa farmland ownership.

Beginning Farmer Network

The director also serves as a faculty adviser for the Beginning Farmer Network, an Iowa State student club organization. Sixty-five student members are interested in new, diverse forms of farming and management. More than 70 people attended the Beginning Farmer Network annual conference in 2019. A spring and fall industry tour of agricultural businesses was made possible by several scholarships and private industry grants that were awarded to the group.

Partnerships

Partners include the Veterans in Agriculture a non-profit for enhancing opportunities and empowering veterans to thrive in agriculture. This partnership has worked with 122 military veterans interested or engaged in farming.

The International Farm Transition Network is another non-profit organization for sharing succession programs with 22 other states. The International Farm Transition Network,

in cooperation with the BFC, has certified 120 Iowa farm succession coordinators in the public and private sector to assist farm families and unrelated parties along the intergenerational farm transition journey. 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. It shares information and has established standards and provides certification for professionals working in farm transitions.

The BFC continues a quarterly newsletter for existing farmers and landowners regarding farm succession planning with a list serve of 552 farmers. The BFC staff hope to reconfigure this newsletter into a multi-generational, relevant tool. A gift was received late 2018 from Growmark, Inc. of \$10,000 a year for five years and will be used to expand our reach to beginning farmers and perform a Farm Transition survey in 2019. This survey is in partnership with the Department of Economics at Iowa State.

Outreach Activities

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, IADD and other state agencies and commodity groups to develop and analyze new programming that address farmer retirement plans, challenges and educational needs such as IFBF's Take Root program.

Outreach and education make up a significant portion of Center responsibilities. In 2019, these activities included:

- 24 presentations to commodity groups, attorneys, farmers, government officials and others
- 18 media interviews including NPR and the BBC.
- The Center continues to upgrade its [website](#). Please visit the site at: 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.
- Participated in the Iowa Organic Conference, Practical Farmers of Iowa Conference, Iowa Farm Bureau annual

meeting and Take Root program, Iowa Pork Producers annual conference, Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation, Iowa Grape Growers, Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and the Women's Food and Agricultural Network.

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 expertise and works closely on program efforts with several ISU academic departments and centers, including the Extension 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, and will continue support for its core programs: AgLink, individual farm consultations, Returning to the Farm workshops, and efforts to motivate farmers to pass on an operation as a whole 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 ongoing FARMTRANSFERS international research project, the survey being conducted in 2019 by Iowa State, to determine characteristics of farm transfers in Iowa. Results of the survey will help to determine whether there is a career ladder for new farm entrants, identify the educational needs of farm family businesses, and create a reliable database for researchers. Additionally, 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, Beginning Farmer Center director with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, at (877) BFC-1999. The [Beginning Farmer Center website](#) can be found at: www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc.