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Mark J. Braun, Executive Director

January 8, 2018

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

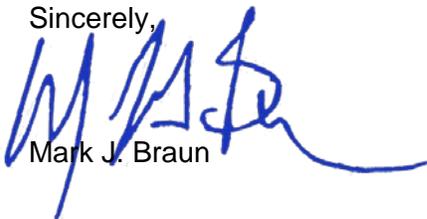
Ms. Carmine Boal
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building
Des Moines IA 50319

Re: Beginning Farmer Center – Annual Report FY 2017

Dear Members of the Iowa General Assembly:

Pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 266.39E, enclosed is the annual report on the Beginning Farmer Center at 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\2018 session\Reports\

Attachments

cc: Robin Madison
Legislative Liaisons
Legislative Log

Beginning Farmer Center

Celebrating 24 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. Dr. William Edwards, professor emeritus has served as interim director for the past year. Staff includes the Center's administrator, John Baker, an attorney for the Iowa Concern Hotline, and David Baker, farm transition specialist who has been named the director as of January 1st, 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 other specialists to develop and deliver programming to target audiences.

Major Activities

AgLink

The AgLink 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 651 active beginning farmer files and 39 active retiring farmer files.

During 2017, the Center fielded 1560 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 state agencies and commodity groups to develop and analyze new programming that address farmer retirement plans, challenges and educational needs such as IFBF Take Root program.

Returning To The Farm

In 2017, 7 families with 22 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 FinPac analysis. The demand for consultations is growing because of the present economic situation in farming. During 2017, there were 48 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 80 people attended the Beginning Farmer Network annual conference in 2017. A spring and fall tour of Iowa agricultural businesses was made possible by several scholarship 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 nearly \$700,000. Partners include the Veterans in Agriculture and the International Farm Transition Network. The grant has established 19 beginning farmer peer groups across the state, and has worked with 80

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 525 farmers. The International Farm Transition Network in cooperation with the BFC has certified 51 Iowa farm succession coordinators in the public and private sector to assist farmer families and unrelated parties along the intergenerational farm transition journey.

Advisory Council

The BFC advisory council met via teleconference with Center staff to perform the annual review and make recommendations on programming and direction. Members include representation from USDA Farm Service Agency, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, agricultural lenders, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, estate planners, agricultural nongovernmental organizations, colleagues from similar programs in other states and active farmers.

Outreach Activities

Outreach and education make up a significant portion of Center responsibilities. In 2017, these activities included:

- 24 presentations to commodity groups, attorneys, farmers, government officials and others
- 10 media interviews
- 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 15 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 annual meeting, Iowa Pork Producers annual conference, Annie's Project, Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation, South Dakota State University, North Dakota State University, Minnesota Grape Growers, and the Women's Food and Agricultural Network. International activities include presenting to affiliated farm groups in Great Britain and Canada of work being done in United States.

The administrator serves as chairman 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 having certified 51 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 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: AgLink, 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, (515) 294-7801; or John Baker, Center administrator and attorney at (toll-free) (877) BFC-1999. The Beginning Farmer Center website can be found at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>.

... and justice for all

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