

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Preparing beginning farmers and ranchers to secure farmland in Idaho

AT A GLANCE

Land access education increases beginning farmers and ranchers' skills and readiness to secure land to farm or ranch.

The Situation

Success in farming and ranching depends on the ability of producers to secure land with soils, water, infrastructure and other attributes suitable to starting and expanding an agricultural operation. Since Idaho's Cultivating Success™ program was established in 2000, beginning farmers and ranchers have consistently identified access to farmland as one of the top three challenges they face to starting a sustainable small farm. The National Young Farmers Coalition and American Farmland Trust identify land access as the most significant challenge beginning farmers and ranchers face today.

Adding to the challenge of finding land suitable for small acreage farming is the rising cost of land in Idaho. Beginning producers looking to purchase farmland are seeing prices soar as agriculture competes with other land uses like residential development and the purchase of scenic acreages for non-agricultural rural estates. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, the value of agricultural land in Idaho averages \$3,350 per acre, a 7.7% increase from 2020 to 2021. Farmers looking to purchase agricultural land close to direct and intermediated markets often face prices in excess of \$10,000 or even



Land Assessment Workshop at Brush Creek Farms in Deary, July 2017. Photo Credit: Colette DePhelps.

\$100,000 per acre. Lease rates for prime agricultural land are also increasing.

For many beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs), finding and securing land to farm can take three to 10 years. In order to successfully find and secure farmland, BFR's need both tools for finding and assessing parcels of land and the skills required to determine their financial readiness to enter into a land tenure arrangement — whether that be purchasing land or negotiating an equitable and stable lease agreement.

Our Response

In recognizing that secure land tenure is critical to farm and food system success, UI Extension has added land access education as a core component of Idaho's

Cultivating Success™ program. These land access educational offerings focus on BFRs developing the skills needed to evaluate the financial aspects of farmland options available to them. These financial aspects include the carrying costs of the land such as taxes, infrastructure maintenance and improvement.

Beginning farmer and rancher land access educational programs offered between 2017-2021.

Type of Program	Number of Offerings	Participants
In-person workshops	3	46
Live webinars	3	56
Short-courses	2	27
Train-the-trainer workshop	1	24
Online video recordings	12	254 views

The skills-based curriculum utilized in Idaho's Cultivating Success™ program was developed through a national collaboration led by the American Farmland Trust (AFT) and funded by the USDA Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program. Colette DePhelps, a UI Extension area educator in community food systems, is a member of the cohort that developed the land access curriculum and a AFT certified land access trainer. In July 2019, DePhelps offered a train-the-trainer program certifying 24 agricultural educators to utilize the AFT Farmland for the Next Generation curriculum to offer land access programs in Idaho, Washington and Oregon.

When the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated moving from in-person to online educational programming, DePhelps adapted the AFT land access curriculum for virtual delivery and made video recordings and resources available 24/7 through Idaho's Cultivating Success™ [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Program Outcomes

Evaluations completed by participants in Idaho's Cultivating Success™ land access programs show BFRs have increased their ability to develop personal and business goals, inventory their resources and prepare key financial statements required by ag lenders.

"Gathering all [the] documents made it **so easy** when we actually found a place about four months later and only had to update for that time vs creating from scratch and/or discovering these documents for the first time through the land buying process." — short course participant

Participants learned how to utilize financial statements to assess their financial position and evaluate the financial feasibility of various land tenure situations. BFRs also developed the knowledge and skills needed to search for and assess the suitability of specific land parcels for their preferred agricultural enterprises.

"I learned that the opportunities are diverse and when you take the time to research your needs and desires it's worth every moment. Don't give up and don't settle for something that doesn't fit... keep looking. It's out there!" — short-course participant

The Future

UI Extension will continue to offer BFR land access in-person and online education through Idaho's Cultivating Success™ program and will begin utilizing land access recordings and supporting materials as prerequisites for listing on the [Idaho Farm Link](#) platform. In 2022, DePhelps will begin offering trainings for land-owners interested in transferring their land to a new generation of BFRs.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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