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## USDA announces funding for beginning farmer programs

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Officials at USDA announced this week the distribution of \$17 million in funding through the 2009 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, according to a USDA release.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is a competitive grants program administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (formerly known as the Cooperative State Education and Extension Service CSREES) at the USDA. BFRDP grants are awarded to local, state, and regionally based networks and partnerships to support financial and entrepreneurial training, mentoring and apprenticeships for beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as land link programs that connect retiring with new farmers and innovative farm transfer and transition practices. BFRDP grants have a term of 3 years and cannot exceed \$250,000 a year.

The BFRDP was first authorized in the 2002 farm bill, but it never received funding during the annual appropriations process. In the 2008 Farm Bill, BFRDP was reauthorized and now has \$75 million in mandatory funding over the next five years. Twenty-five percent of the yearly BFRDP funds are set aside for projects serving limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, including minority, immigrant, and women farmers and ranchers, and farmworkers.

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"We have been waiting for this moment for some time and are very excited that the USDA is finally able to award grants to programs aimed at helping the next generation of producers get a start on the land," said Aimee Witterman, Executive Director of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. "By providing tools and assistance such as training in business planning and linking new farmers with land, programs funded by the BFRDP promise to help new farmers and ranchers become economically viable land stewards."

Among the 29 2009 BFRDP grant recipients, according to USDA, are:

- **Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA), Salinas, California:** awarded \$515,862 over three years to build upon their outreach programs that provide educational training on organic farm production, marketing, recordkeeping, pest management and whole farm planning for farm workers and aspiring farmers who want to operate their own small farm business.
- **California FarmLink, Sebastopol, California:** awarded \$525,000 over three years to build on California FarmLinks ten years of experience facilitating farm transitions, providing technical assistance, hosting workshops, financing farm operations, and empowering farmers to build assets through California Farmlinks Individual Development Account program.
- **Land Stewardship Project, Minneapolis, Minnesota:** awarded \$413,820 over three years for Collaborative Alliance of Farm Beginnings Programs -- Planning and Supporting Farmer to Farmer Education in Sustainable Agriculture to work with partner organizations that are offering Land Stewardship Project trademarked Farm Beginnings program around the country.
- **Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), Spring Valley, Wisconsin:** awarded \$151,515 over three years for Developing Farm Financial Knowledge of Beginning Organic and Sustainable Farmers to produce a book, workshops, and a two-day mini conference for beginning farmers on farm financial management so they can utilize simple tools and resources to assess their financial situation.

[Click here](#) to see a complete list of grant recipients.

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