



Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture Bosque Farms Regional Meeting Summary

Introduction

The Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture regional meeting in Bosque Farms was convened on April 15, 2016. A diverse group of 15 people from eight different counties attended the meeting, including farmers, ranchers, commercial producers and marketers, educators, researchers, soil and water experts and advocates.

The purpose of the meeting was to elicit input from key stakeholders on the trends having the most significant impact on the agriculture industry, as well as challenges and potential solutions. These ideas will contribute to the industry and stakeholder research that will result in a long-term plan for a robust food and agriculture system in New Mexico.

Throughout the meeting, participants worked in table groups to discuss the following trends, challenges and solutions. Once information is gathered from all the regional meetings, it will be synthesized and potentially verified.

Trends

Participants were asked to identify key trends that are having an impact (either positive or negative) on the agriculture industry, in general. The trends represent individual opinions of participants in attendance at this meeting and not necessarily the group as a whole.

Positive

- *Technology & Methods*—New innovations in equipment has increased production efficiencies and water conservation practices. Genetic research has led to higher yields. Internet marketing and social media allows producers to expand their market reach.
- *Conservation*—More producers are adopting water conservation practices.
- *Markets*—There will always be a market for the food and clothing products produced by the industry. There is increased interest in local food production and consumption for food safety reasons, as well as an emerging demand for the foods that are unique to our immigrant populations.
- *Industry Support*—Government agencies are trying to improve methods and avenues for current and future producers to obtain necessary financing.
- *Producers and Succession*—There is increased recognition that agricultural professionals are aging-out of the industry and that the industry needs young people to take their place.
- *Collaboration*—Farmers and ranchers are working together more than ever.
- *Education*—More people recognize the need to educate youth and consumers on where their food comes from and the resources that go into producing food. Most people in agriculture today are college educated.

Negative

- *Water*—There is increasing uncertainty with regard to water due to current and potential drought conditions and declining aquifers. Competition for water between urban and rural use is also increasing. Instead of water being tied to the land, current laws and regulations allow for taking water rights from prime agricultural land which results in land with no agriculture value or use. The lack of water rights adjudications is also a threat to water access.
- *Regulations*—Most producers mentioned regulatory overreach at both the state and local levels. Critical habitat designations and restrictions on grazing permits for livestock limit food production. Various tax laws such as workers' compensation and gross receipts tax on hunting and fishing activities on farm and ranch properties impact producer income. Commercial kitchen regulations prevent initiatives to process food products like roasted chili and bread, especially

by small acreage farmers. Regulations also create financial barriers to beginning farmers and ranchers as well as cause some established producers to leave the industry.

- *Producers and Succession*—Young people are leaving agriculture and moving to urban areas where careers are higher paying.
- *Economics*—There is increasing pricing volatility which makes it difficult for producers to plan ahead. Producers have become price-takers not price-setters. Producers are getting a smaller percentage for their efforts. Competition with imported products has increased. Although consumers want local food, the economic system and the economy of scale issues do not support small producers. Many producers must work off the farm to supplement their income.
- *Public Perception*—There is media bias and public misperception about the industry (e.g., harming the environment through chemicals, manure and soil erosion, as well as producing harmful, genetically modified foods). This has led to an increase in land and water use regulation. Producers are not effectively telling their own story to the public.
- *Technology and Methods*—Some producers are not tapping into new technologies that would be beneficial.

Challenges

These trends lead to a number of challenges which were prioritized by the participants.

1. Continued access to water
2. Regulatory overreach and interference
3. Accurate information and education for the public regarding the agriculture industry
4. Education and information within the industry
5. Profitability in the current industry environment
6. Succession planning for the next generation of agriculture producers

Solutions

Given the challenges, participants were asked to recommend potential solutions that would make the most positive difference in the industry.

Water

1. Address water rights issues including adjudication and alternatives to adjudication.
2. Review, and address where necessary, interstate water compacts.
3. Conduct an economic analysis outlining the impact if all water went to urban areas and all food had to be imported from elsewhere.
4. Address forest health issues, other than allowing burning, in order to improve water supplies.
5. Ensure decisions are science-based when determining tradeoffs between water use and endangered species protection.

Regulations & Business Profitability

6. Establish a unified communications campaign to promote the identification and review of regulatory barriers.
7. Require a cost benefit analysis of regulations.
8. Differentiate regulations for start-up, small and large producers.
9. Streamline regulations for start-up producers.
10. Allow for-profit producers who experience farm/ranch losses to deduct those losses for income tax purposes. Restrict hobby farmers and ranchers from deducting farm/ranch losses from their other, primary income.
11. Promote regulations that incentivize high-quality versus cheap, low-quality food.
12. For meat producers, allow for more versatility in butchering (e.g., mobile butchers, “matanza mobiles”).
13. Require a scientific review of regulations, outside of government, to ensure regulations are based on public health goals versus socially/politically motivated goals.
14. Reduce state regulations.
15. Require the same standards and regulatory compliance for both U.S. and foreign-produced food products.
16. Cut U.S. price supports and prohibit other countries that subsidize agriculture products from importing to the U.S.
17. Require workman’s compensation equity whether producers are U.S. or foreign.

Education and Communication

18. Demonstrate to young people the breadth of jobs available in agriculture.
19. Promote and expand FFA, 4H and Ag in the Classroom programs, as well as leadership programs for all youth.
20. Include courses in financial literacy in high school curriculum.
21. Implement school-based agriculture leadership and enrichment programs.
22. Implement school mentorship programs in which a student is mentored by a retired farmer or rancher and, with their guidance, takes a crop or livestock herd through its production cycle.
23. Use targeted social media to deliver objective, scientific information about New Mexico agriculture.
24. Communicate to the public the economic impact of the industry’s regulatory environment so that consumers understand the costs of producing food and how this effects a producer’s return on investment.
25. Communicate that agriculture is the only renewable industry.
26. Build a unified New Mexico Agriculture Coalition to be our own spokespersons for the industry.
27. Educate policymakers (i.e., local, state and national) on the business of agriculture.

Producers & Succession

28. Provide estate planning education and guidance to agriculture producers.
29. Establish mentoring programs where a beginning farmer can work with a retiring farmer to learn the ropes and share the profits.
30. Provide start-up capital to young farmers and ranchers to acquire land and manage major expenses.
31. Support groups like WESST that invest in young producers and education programs like the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program.
32. Establish business incubators for beginning producers.
33. Establish a foundation to support the next generation of farmers and ranchers in which grantees agree to contribute to the foundation once their business is established.

Meeting Demographics

Stakeholder Groups	# Participants	Counties	# Participants
Advocacy	1	Bernalillo	4
Commercial Production & Marketing	2	Doña Ana	2
Education & Research	4	Lea	1
Farming/Ranching	7	Mora	2
Soil & Water	1	Rio Arriba	1
Staff (NMF)	3	Sandoval	1
		Torrance	1
		Valencia	6