



# Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture - 2019 Convening Report

Sponsor: Thornburg Foundation

From November 2019

Moderator, Host, Report Author: New Mexico First

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New Mexico First builds consensus on critical issues facing our state and communities and leads positive policy change through deliberative town halls, forums, and nonpartisan work on education, the economy, healthcare, natural resources and, good governance.

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## Executive Summary

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The Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture project began in 2014 to address evolving challenges and trends in New Mexico's agriculture industry. The project has had support from many stakeholders throughout the process, but its foundational supporters have been New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU), New Mexico First, and the Thornburg Foundation.

The core goals of this project are to accomplish three tasks:

1. Develop consensus-based plans to guide shared efforts to strengthen agricultural resilience in New Mexico.
2. Align ideas and bolster support for the industry from policymakers and stakeholders.
3. Improve understanding by the public about the value of agriculture to the state's culture, economy, and future.

These tasks provide the content and direction for the implementation of a statewide policy plan for New Mexico agriculture – the Ag Plan. The Ag Plan focuses on five main policy areas: land and water; K-12 agriculture education; workforce development; economic viability of agriculture, and the agriculture value (supply) chain.

Through the life of the project, stakeholders have held over 13 regional meetings across the state, with by over 600 stakeholders attending regularly scheduled and ad hoc meetings, as well as statewide convenings. Major issues have been identified as challenges to the agricultural industry:

- An aging population of farmers and ranchers;
- Increasing pressure on water and other natural resources;
- Rising costs for land, energy, equipment and other production needs;
- Challenges accessing or understanding farm loans, grants and repayment programs;
- Unsustainable farmer and rancher incomes;
- Insufficient processing, storage and market access;
- Complex regulations;
- Public health needs regarding nutrition and food access;
- Food waste;
- Workforce issues unique to agriculture.

Following the completion of the first round of regional meetings, a compilation of findings was published in a background report. A 35-member team of industry leaders and experts was assembled to develop this report along with tangible solutions. The team worked in committees to develop recommendations and strategies in each of the policy areas: land and water, K-12 agriculture education, workforce, economic viability of agriculture, and the agriculture value (supply) chain. The result of this work is documented in The Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture Strategic Plan. Simply referred to as "the Ag Plan," its broad recommendations are coupled with specific, actionable strategies. The November 12th, 2019 agriculture convening is the next step in the implementation process of the Ag

Plan, part of the ongoing commitment to move forward existing recommendations to achieve a shared goal of agricultural resiliency.

## The Present

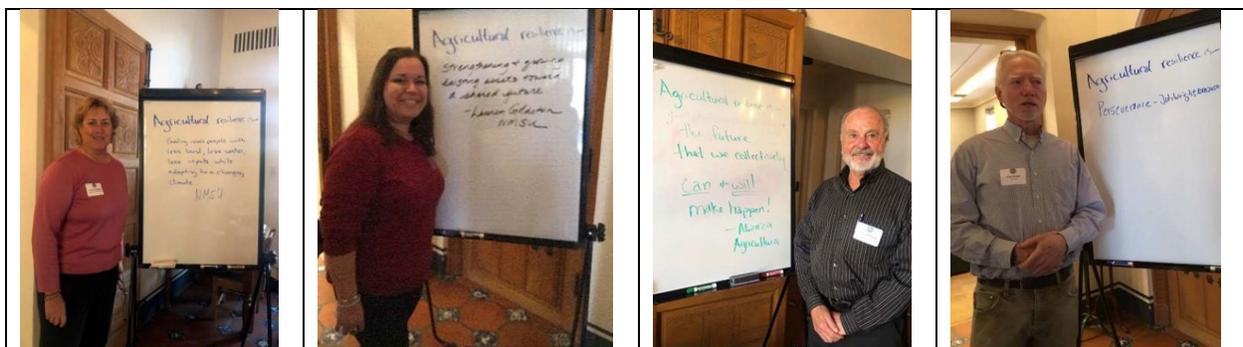
Teams of stakeholders, called “Action Teams,” are still meeting on a regular basis to advance the 17 recommendations and 69 strategies that are identified in the Ag Plan (see Attachment 1). In the summer of 2019, 523 people were invited to attend a convening on November 12, 2019, sponsored by the Thornburg Foundation, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, and the McCune Charitable Foundation. The event drew 78 people representing multiple sectors and organizations within the agricultural industry and multiple communities from across New Mexico to Los Poblanos Historic Inn and Organic Farm in the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque. The event was moderated by Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First President and Executive Director and small group discussions were facilitated by a talented and diverse team that included New Mexico First staff and community partners. Participants reviewed progress recommendations and strategies proposed in the Ag Plan and set action priorities for 2020 and 2021. This report documents the highlights from the day’s discussions around progress, challenges, actionable priorities, and resources.

## The Future

In 2020 and 2021, New Mexico First will continue to support action teams to work collaboratively and meet the priorities identified in our ongoing shared work of promoting agricultural resilience. Agricultural resilience aligns with all of New Mexico First’s policy priorities: natural resources, economic development, health, education, coordination, data sharing and disseminating best practices, and good governance. Through relationship building, civic engagement, advocacy, and public policy change, action team members will continue to advance strategies identified in the Ag Plan.

In general, the following priorities will guide next steps:

- Systematically build passion and commitment to agriculture in the next generation through K-12 education.
- Advance business practices that grow the viability of this industry.
- Consider the land and water issues that New Mexicans encounter while engaging in agriculture in a unique ecosystem.
- Develop and advocate for the needs of the agricultural workforce.
- Promote local food systems by continuing to strengthen the value (supply) chain.



## Introduction

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Agriculture is a pillar of New Mexico’s cultural and economic foundation. Generations of New Mexicans have grown up in or around agriculture; it is a deep part of who we are and how we interact with the outside world. In this ever-changing world, New Mexico’s farmers and ranchers are vulnerable to many challenges to economic well-being and ways of life. The men and women who grow our food, maintain our lands, and preserve our heritage, the farmers, the ranchers, the back-yard gardener, and the hobbyist are vital to our food systems, economic situation, and general well-being. The challenges come in many different forms, such as increasing operating costs, entry barriers, changing technology, growing urban populations, issues in soil and water quality, and a widespread disconnect in understanding how food is grown and makes its way to our tables.



The changes in agriculture have a ripple-like effect that flows outside of agriculture and into communities and other industries. The issues not only affect the economy of urban and rural communities but directly impact the people within those communities by stripping away the basic right to access healthy locally grown food. In a state that has the highest rates of hunger in the nation with 1 in 4 of our children suffering from food insecurity and hunger,<sup>1</sup> the importance of local food systems is clear.

Multiple groups and organizations have been working tirelessly on advancing sound agricultural practices for many years. The Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture project is intended amplify and focus the work that has been done and empower industry stakeholders to take on new challenges and grow stronger despite those difficulties. This is achieved through active planning and action. Guiding this project is the key word of “resilience” – the ability to recover from and adapt to setbacks – as well as the collective impact model of advocating wholesale change through broad stakeholder representation and cooperation.

Distinct action teams, comprised of experts and industry leaders as well as curious and passionate community members, work on each topic. The recommendations and strategies are designed to be actionable. They also reflect the consensus of stakeholders. No part of the plan can be enacted at the expense of another. The organizers hope this effort contributes to a bridge of understanding between those who work in agriculture every day and the rest of New Mexico that benefits from those efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> (Nathanson, R. (2019). New Mexico Again Leads the Nation in Child Hunger. The Albuquerque Journal.)

# Chapter 1

## K-12 Agriculture Education Action Team



If you drive across any part of New Mexico, you will see the importance of agriculture. New Mexicans are land-based people. New Mexico could be more intentional about how we educate future generations to maintain the viability of agriculture as an industry and a cultural practice. Basic education about food, the environment, and the agricultural industry is often overlooked in teaching curriculum. This creates barriers to knowledge and healthy practices about nutrition, food systems, health, STEM related experiential learning, culture, and future career opportunities that maybe waiting for them.

The K-12 Agriculture Education Action Team was tasked with reviewing the one recommendation and five strategies put forward by the 2017 Agriculture Resilience Plan. During the convening on November 12, 2019, stakeholders reviewed progress on the strategies and identified trends and opportunities that are present in the current K-12 environment. Resources, priorities, and action steps were identified. Sharon Berman, from New Mexico First, facilitated the K-12 Action team discussions and Dr. Cynthia Nava, New Mexico First board member and executive director of Teach for America, was a recorder for the action team discussions.

### Participants:

- Mateo Carrasco, AmeriCorp Food Corp member, Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP)
- April Cox, Mandy's Farm
- Traci Curry, NM Agriculture in the Classroom
- Rosenda Gonzales Wimmer, retired registered nurse and active volunteer in Taos.
- Bruce Hinrichs, NMSU Extension
- Cynthia Nava, former school superintendent and state legislator from Doña Ana County and the executive director of Teach for America in NM.
- Raphael Nevins, Healthy Futures
- Kateri Sava, Garden Specialist, Albuquerque Public Schools
- John Wright, Agriculture Instructor, Rio Grande High School, Albuquerque Public Schools
- Eve Wakeland is currently in advertising.

## Recommendation 1: Education and Training.

Promote and expand agricultural education and training opportunities as pathways to successful careers in the industry, recognizing that new technologies should be deployed to reach young audiences.

- Increase financial and institutional support for agriculture education in K-12 public schools, including charter schools and programs such as FFA and 4-H, with some supporting grants for charter schools
- Create outreach campaign targeting students, parents, teachers and the general public to promote agriculture and food-related jobs in NM.
  - There needs to be more connection among all stakeholders and greater understanding of what each other does. This needs to start in elementary school.
  - It was noted that while there were efforts in this area, they were not coordinated.
  - More connections are needed between K-12, higher education, and the Department of Workforce Solutions to grow our agriculture workforce.
  - Currently, Career/Tech Education (CTE) funding coordinates with workforce programs, but there is room for growth.
  - Tribal entities need to be included.
  - There is no specific funding for school gardens. Hopefully there will be room in the state budget for coordinating school garden.
  - Increase school access to locally grown food.
  - Help urban school districts envision and support urban agriculture.
  - Provide more accessible curriculum and support curriculum development.
- Create dual-credit initiatives
  - NMSU is developing a dual-credit initiative which could become a viable statewide option for community colleges and four-year institutions.
- Create industry-led apprenticeship and mentorship programs.
  - There are currently 30 internships hosted by NMSU Cooperative Extension.
  - A helpful step of the action team could be to gather lists of apprenticeship and mentoring programs and resources.
  - Support certification training in welding, pesticides, and other agriculture-related skills.
  - Support job fairs, bringing together farmers, ranchers, students, teachers, and other ag industry representatives.
- Create agricultural incubator programs throughout New Mexico
  - The Navajo Nation's Navajo Agriculture Products Industry (NAPI) is largest grower in NM and had the most acreage and water rights in the state.
  - Las Vegas just launched an incubator program for all ages, children through adults, offering workshops in entrepreneurial projects, financing, soil health, planning and seed selection, as well as hands-on practice on existing land with water rights.
  - Other communities have emerging projects that may be ripe for incubator programs.
  - Make garden funding more available. Albuquerque's South Valley schools have gardens. There is progress, but these programs need to be expanded and institutionalized
  - The Master Gardener Program offers a curriculum and opportunities for greater coordination among teachers

## Priorities 2020

1. Increase financial and institutional support for agriculture education in K-12 public schools, including existing programs such as 4-H and FFA.
2. Work collaboratively to create an outreach campaign targeting students, parents, teachers and the general public to promote agriculture and food-related jobs in NM.
3. Create dual-credit programs at NMSU and other institutions of higher learning.
4. Create industry-led apprenticeship and mentorship programs.
5. Create agricultural incubator programs throughout New Mexico.
6. Create a memorial for the 2021 session to declare an Agricultural Education Day, one day per year when schools are required to include agriculture education in their curriculum.

## Next Steps

- Compile information regarding agriculture education programs in New Mexico and disseminate information and best practices.
- Assess other states' agricultural classroom models.
- Increase student involvement as both leaders and participants in agricultural education.
- Develop a plan for a statewide agriculture education day.

## Highlighted Resources

- New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom is a non-profit agricultural education outreach program funded largely by the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau. <https://newmexico.agclassroom.org/>
- 4-H is a development program built around providing youth with opportunities to learn skills, gain knowledge, have fun, and make contributions in such areas as agriculture, environmental education, and community service. <https://aces.nmsu.edu/4h/>
- New Mexico FFA is a branch of the national FFA organization which is built around encouraging youth to be involve in agriculture through career development events, and community actives. <http://www.nmffa.org/>
- Farm to School grants developed by the United States Department of Agriculture for training, supporting operations, planning, purchasing equipment, developing school gardens, developing partnerships, and implementing farm to school programs. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-school-grant-program>
- Albuquerque Public Schools Garden Program employs a full-time Garden Specialist position, funded by Title IV federal funding. The vision for this position in the future is to create even more institutional support for school gardens by increasing the level of the position to coordinator, providing a coordinator for each APS zone (4 zones) and increasing the pathways for schools to outdoor and agricultural learning through curriculum integration, increased number of garden elective classes and teachers, coordination of departments such as Capital Outlay, Facilities and Design, and Maintenance and Operations, and coordination with APS Food and Nutrition services to provide more direct pathways to local food systems. <https://www.aps.edu/coordinated-school-health/school-gardens>

## Chapter 2

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### Economic Viability Action Team

Agriculture is a capital-intensive industry. Equipment, land, and labor are all inputs that are needed to run a successful agriculture operation. The amount of overhead for the average agricultural business is astonishing compared to many other businesses with similar returns. The agriculturalist is expected to provide safe products year-round with a low impact on the environment.



The Economic Viability Action Team was tasked with reviewing four recommendations and 16 strategies from the 2017 Agriculture Resilience Plan. This group explored the current challenges and opportunities in New Mexico. By identifying shared solutions, the goal is to keep farmers, ranchers, and all forms of agriculturalists operating in all regions of the state at sustainable and profitable levels. The challenges that a single agriculture operation will face in any given year range from controllable issues to uncontrollable issues that the agriculturalist must manage in order to stay operational. Wendy Wintermute and Gabrielle Ontiveros, New Mexico First staff, facilitated and recorded this action team.

#### Participants:

- Tom Brewer, NM Hemp Growers Association
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation Agriculture Policy Officer
- Zoey Fink, National Young Farmers Coalition New Mexico Campaign Organizer
- Bill Humphries, Rancher, Eastern New Mexico
- Gillian Joyce, Program Coordinator, Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos
- Don Lopez, Mayor, Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque
- Tobias Martinez, Board Member, Alianza Agri-Cultura de Taos
- Beverlee McClure, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center VP of Cultural & Community Engagement
- Carlos McCord, Cecilia's Organics, Lemitar, NM
- Roy Montibon, the Montibon Company President
- Harry Montoya, Farmer, Santa Fe, NM
- Dr. Michael Patrick, Economic Development Specialist, NMSU
- Eugene Pickett, Black Farmers and Ranchers of New Mexico, Farmer, Jarales, NM
- Eric Renz-Whitmore, Forward Cities Director of ESHIP Communities
- James Skeet, Covenant Pathways, Farmer, Vanderwagen, NM
- Shacey Sullivan, VP Marketing and Public Relations, Farm Credit New Mexico

## Recommendation: Capital & Credit Access

Enable and expand opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to build and access credit and capital necessary to grow their businesses.

- New Mexico needs more outreach regarding capital and loan programs for agriculture. New Mexico State University is launching an online resource center soon that will help identify available programs and resources.
- Loan programs are complex and hard to understand. Many people do not know how to navigate through the process.
- Most agricultural food producers would not break even if growers accounted for all their time.
- We need to provide more hands-on training for business planning and financial training and need remote learning resources for people who are geographically isolated.
- Use resources such as those that are available through our United State Senatorial offices to help us write federal grants. Arrowhead Program through New Mexico State University is a tool that can be used to get grant writing help.
- Loans, including student loans, can be a burden. Explore state or federal loan forgiveness programs for agriculturalists.
- Identify agriculture programs for veterans, including Homegrown by Heroes, a farmer veteran program that gives away a tractor every quarter.
- Introduce a legislative memorial to explore challenges, opportunities and strategies for addressing credit and capital needs of young and beginning agriculturalists in New Mexico.

## Recommendation 2: Consumers

Increase the consumer base and market access locally, interstate, and internationally for New Mexico agricultural products.

- Expand New Mexico's agriculture product marketing to ads in radio and newspapers.
- NMSU Extension Service does a great job of educating consumers but needs more funding support.
- Support programs that help seniors access land to plant or garden.
- Explore viability of state inspected meat processing facilities so producers can produce small scale meat products.
- Get locally grown food into more restaurants and other food purchasers. There is a core group of restaurants buying local food products, but the market is not growing fast enough.
- Identify more local large-value food purchasers such as Sandia Labs.

## Recommendation 3: Agricultural Leases & Lending

Support cost-effective land leasing and lending by helping farmers and ranchers better understand the legal and regulatory issues surrounding these matters through resources and technical assistance.

- Leasing and lending are at the heart of economic vitality.
- Water issues are directly tied to the economic viability of agriculture.

- Getting information out to rural agricultural communities can be a challenge. More internet access is needed for easier access to information and people are needed to maintain and grown on-line resources.
- Legal issues around land leasing can be complicated, and information on land leasing is not readily available.
- Middle Region Council of Government provides templates for leasing and has a number of lawyers that can provide pro bono help.
- Oftentimes what is needed is in-person, one-on-one assistance when it comes to land leasing and land access questions.
- Long-term land leases would provide more security for agriculturalists.

### Recommendation 4: Tax Regulations Impacting Agriculture

Protect existing tax exemptions for agriculture and enact others that fairly keep food costs low while protecting producers' ability to maintain their business.

- Aggie Bonds are established through a federal-state partnership that allows private lenders to receive federal and/or state tax-exempt interest on loans made to beginning farmers. Are they the best way to assist beginning farmers and ranchers? How would taxpayers react to a proposal for New Mexico to offer Aggie Bonds?
- Determine whether and how many people are having trouble paying land taxes on agricultural land.
- Ask for a memorial to collect data on the impact of tax exemptions and work on protecting existing tax exemptions.

### Priorities 2020

1. Promote Aggie Bond program for New Mexico.
2. Research consumer purchasing power and demand; coordinate with the Value Chain Action Team.
3. Identify and develop strategies to compete with agriculture-related producers and industries located outside of New Mexico
4. Work with New Mexico State University to create an infrastructure and system to get information out around the state.
5. Ask for additional funding for New Mexico State University Extension Service.

### Priorities 2021

1. Ask the Departments of Economic Development, Tourism, and Cultural Affairs to create more agriculture and ecosystem trails.
2. Submit a memorial to study tax exemptions impacts.
3. Work collaboratively on tax credits for young farmers.

### Next Steps

- Identify and invite missing stakeholders to the Action Team.
- Identify lending and financial education gaps.

- Explore the pros and cons of Aggie Bonds.
- Explore New Mexico's Tax and Revenue system and its impact on agriculture.
- Promote more in-person education training and workshops around leading, land access, and good business practices.
- Fund NMSU Agricultural Extension Service to provide in-person ag education programs.
- Identify work and resources around agricultural tax exemptions; determine the need for a memorial to study the current tax environment for agriculture.

### Highlighted Resources

- The United States Department of Agriculture's New Farmer website is an online resource center built to provide new and beginning farmers, ranchers and other interested groups with information on available tools and resources. <https://newfarmers.usda.gov>
- Farmer Veteran Coalition connects veterans with opportunities in agriculture. <https://farmvetco.org/hbh/>
- Arrowhead center helps innovators, entrepreneurs, and small businesses at any stage start and grow through our services, resources, expertise, and connections. <https://arrowheadcenter.nmsu.edu>

## Chapter 3

### Land & Water Action Team



Agriculturalists have long been stewards of natural resources because without healthy land and adequate water agriculture cannot be resilient. Farmers and ranchers simply cannot grow crops or raise livestock without these resources. New Mexico has many competitors for natural resources. It is important that we continue to consider and advance strategies that aid farmers and ranchers in using their resources most effectively. There are also industry level innovations such as promoting education and encouraging good industry practices that will assist in making New Mexico's agricultural sector successful today and for years to come.

The Land & Water Action Team was tasked with assessing progress on five recommendations and 24 strategies from the 2017 Agriculture Resilience Plan.

Clint Harden, New Mexico First board member, and Jonas Moya, New Mexico First staff, facilitated this group.

#### Participants:

- Nick Ashcroft Linebery, Policy Center New Mexico State University
- Christina Allday-Bondy, New Mexico Healthy Soil, Working Group
- Dean Bruce, New Mexico Department of Agriculture Soil and Water Specialist
- Caron Cowan, New Mexico Cattle Grower Executive Director
- Matt Denetclaw, Intertribal Agriculture Counsel TA Specialist
- Chyna Dixon, Taos Land Trust
- Lawrence Gallegos, Western Landowners Alliance New Mexico Field Organizer
- John Gonzales, retired Acequia Association member, Taos, NM
- Kris Graham Chavez, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA-NRCS
- Clint Harden, NMF Board Member, Clint D. Harden and Associates
- Isabelle Jenniches, New Mexico Healthy Soils Working Group, Community Organizer
- Toner Mitchell, Trout Unlimited New Mexico Water & Habitat, Program Director
- Xavier Montoya, USDA/NRCS, State Conservationist
- Jonas Moya, New Mexico First, Strategic Civic Engagement and Policy Manager
- Raphael Nevins, Healthy Futures
- Tiffany Rivera, New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, Director of Government Affairs

- Tom Sidwell, Rancher, JX Cattle Company, Owner Operator,
- Shacey Sullivan, Farm Credit of New Mexico, VP of Marketing and Public Relations
- Dierdre Tarr Claunch-Pinto, Soil & Water Conservation District, District Manager
- Brent Van Dyke, New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts
- Marshall Wilson, NMDA Policy Analyst

### Recommendation 1: Land Access

Protect agricultural land for future generations and enable opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to either own or secure long-term leases to productive, affordable land.

- The assessment of progress for most of the related strategies indicated that efforts are underway and that more is needed.
- The community agriculture toolbox and training program, LandLink, and USDA resources are largely tech based. Building capacity to navigate these resources needs to go hand in hand with developing these resources.
- Assess the 6-week training course and make sure there are workshops to help implement the toolbox.
- Taos has been working with the LandLink website; others are using it and recognizing its value. Expanding and promoting LandLink is still a viable strategy.
- The New Mexico Acequia Association has a training program that makes three people available to support young and beginning farmers; more resources are needed to meet the demand for support.
- Cattle Growers in Catron County have a Raising Ranchers program that supports the next generation of ranchers.
- Minimizing the loss of land for agricultural production is important but challenging.
  - According to the Agricultural Census, how much agriculture land is lost each year in New Mexico?
  - Large land leases in some rural areas are leased quickly once on the market. Most of this land is acquired by established operations, which restricts opportunities for beginning producers.
  - Some land has been lost to urban development; we need more strategies to allow irrigable land to stay in use.
- Economic, tax, and other incentives for qualified beginning farmers and ranchers help reduce the financial challenges to maintaining agricultural land. Programs through the Farm Bureau which create access to financial advisors are important
- Additional technical assistance resources for transition and succession planning are also important to protect agricultural lands in future generation.

### Recommendation 2: Water Rights

Ensure that the legal and permitting processes for managing water rights are clear, well administered, and support conservation of water rights.

- The action team saw this broad recommendation as important and far from accomplished.
- There are still disincentives which limit innovation and water conservation by water right owners.
- The administrative processes associated with existing laws are challenging to navigate.
- Adjudication of active water rights cases is lengthy and contentious.
- Public notice about transfer of agricultural water rights to other uses needs adequate public notice.

### Recommendation 3: Wildlife Habitat Conservation

Advance a balanced approach to protect both habitats and agricultural land use.

- This is underway, but successful examples need to be held up, shared, and adopted by others as best practices.
- Species conservation recovery is also happening; again, there is a need to educate about efforts to help others adopt successful practices.
- Over the last decade there have been gains in local and state stakeholder involvement in land and ecosystem management.
- Good range management practices can promote wildlife conservation efforts. Expanding and promoting voluntary incentives for endangered species protection will require fair financial compensation for landowners.
  - Financial incentives to farmers and ranchers can expand participation.
  - Federal legislation and appropriations would help.
  - Accessing these resources needs to be more user-friendly.

### Recommendation 4: Water Conservation and Supply

Pursue research, incentives, and other strategies to advance water conservation and increased supply.

- In general, water studies are underfunded.
- The discussion of water-efficient crops was robust. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has been moving this forward.
- Research about legal barriers to water storage has not kept pace with interest in these practices.
- Continue work in developing a community agriculture toolbox and training programs.
- Increase support for training programs for farmers and ranchers.
- Agriculturalists have long been protectors of wildlife. Is the timing right to start paying farmers and ranchers to protect wildlife species?

### Recommendation 5: Watershed Restoration

Advance organized and integrated watershed restoration that promotes multiple uses, with the goals of increased water supply, reduced catastrophic fires, improved soil health and overall healthier environments.

- Build relationships with the State Land Office.
- Torrance County has been exploring innovative funding (e.g., Homeland Security) for watershed restoration project. In this instance, blended funding is used to invest in watershed management as disaster prevention is seen as a security issue.
- Expand efforts, technical assistance and funding that allow landowners to implement conservation management and protect water rights for future use.
- Forestry management, perennial cover crops, promoting watershed management best practices, erosion control, streambed management and flood control, and removal of invasive species are underway. These efforts are labor intensive and costly.
- The Healthy Soil Act was signed into law in April 2019. The purpose of the program is “to promote and support farming and ranching systems and other forms of land management that increase soil organic matter, aggregate stability, microbiology and water retention to improve the health, yield and profitability of the soils of the state.” This is achieved by funding pilot projects aimed at improving soil health, as well as related education and outreach efforts.
- Continue the discussions on:
  - Research on water supply and depletion;
  - Research on voluntary incentives for large non-agricultural water users to use more brackish and reclaimed water.
  - Promoting the use of water efficient crops that advance water conservation,
  - Research on opportunities and legal barriers associated with increased water storage statewide.

### Priorities 2020-2021

1. Support agricultural education.
2. Support the Landlink’s section on land leasing. In addition, promote rural landowners to advertise open land on these sites.
3. Develop and promote NMSU’s Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Resource Center.
4. Identify and access the wildlife habitat efforts that are underway or have been accomplished.
5. Identify existing programs and support additional funding for programs that pay farmers and ranchers for conservation and wildlife conservation efforts.
6. Increase funding for water monitoring and water inventory studies.

### Next Steps

- Identify key stakeholder that are not at the table.
- Invite additional NM state agencies to the table.
- Support agriculture education in the classroom.
- Maintain focus on the recommendation of the Ag Plan and move forward supporting items that are currently being worked on to manage land and water resources in a way that will continue to agriculture viable.

## Highlighted Resources

- New Mexico LandLink identifies and connects agricultural and local food resources. Connections such as available land for agricultural use, agricultural work, agricultural learning opportunities, or agricultural apprentices, internships, or employment opportunities can be found on the website. <https://www.landlinknm.org/>
- The Healthy Soils Program helps fund pilot projects aimed at improving soil health, as well as education and outreach programs built around soil health. <http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/home/divisions/apr/healthy-soil-program/>

## Chapter 4

### Workforce Action Team



Agriculture is a very labor-intensive industry. The complexity of the industry, high risks involved in work being done, and typically lower wages compared to other industries often leave agribusiness struggling to fill vacancies. These challenges coupled with larger issues such as immigration laws, worker compensation requirements, cheaper technology, and weather present unique challenges to the industry. While many find the work rewarding, attending to workforce issues will strengthen the industry.

The workforce break-out group was tasked with reviewing progress on two recommendations and five strategies from the Ag Plan to continue to explore how workforce impacts agricultural resilience. The discussion group was comprised of agencies, ranchers, farmers, master gardeners, and other

important stakeholders. Omar Torres, from Together for Brothers, facilitated this breakout session. Katie Goetz, Natural Resources Policy/Planning Analyst with New Mexico Department of Agriculture, was the recorder.

#### Participants:

- Sarah Cobb, Retired, Office of Senator Tom Udall
- Joanna Colangelo, Albuquerque Community Foundation
- Crystal Diamond New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, Outreach Director
- John Garlish, NMSU Extension, Bernalillo County Agriculture Agent
- Lauren Goldstein NMSU, Aligning Our AgriFuture
- Valerie Herrera, NM Farm & Livestock Bureau
- Heidi Humphries, Rancher, Eastern New Mexico
- Bill Shen, Master Gardener, Albuquerque Area Extension
- Joyce Skeet, Farmer, Covenant Pathways, Vanderwagen, NM
- Fergus Whitney, Agriculture Program Manager, Village of Los Ranchos Community Farm

### Recommendation 1: Professional Development

Promote pathways to successful careers in the industry.

- Create and support youth pathways to careers to welcome young people into the industry.
- Study shortages of agriculture teachers and identify strategies to train and place agriculture educators.

- Request more money to send students on agricultural field trips and to support experiential learning in the classroom and out on farms and ranches.
- Agriculture in the Classroom provides free training to teachers that is aligned with common core curriculum. Agriculture in the Classroom also provides free common core curriculum to teachers
- Providing space within urban limits to house animals – a community barn to house animals owned by kids who live in town.
- Strengthen connections between youth programs and agricultural producers.
- Some young people are going to out- of-state agricultural schools. How can we help them see opportunities for success here in NM?
- Our community colleges need to offer more agriculture related certificates that students can take to potential employers.
- Provide agriculture education and training for all ages, not just the youth. Older people also crave training and education around agriculture.

### Recommendation 2: Worker’s Compensation

Increase access to resources, training and technical assistance for producers to get their products to consumers.

- Do a better job of sharing information between legislators and agricultural producers.
- Support the development of and/or contribute to a self- insurance pool for the agricultural industry. Farmers have expressed interest in this.
- Provide more information regarding New Mexico’s workers compensation regulations.
- Develop workshops to help farmers and ranchers meet regulations and provide their employees with workers compensation.

### Priorities 2020

1. Education and workshops to help producers understand the worker’s compensation regulations and process.
2. Create a fund to offset the cost of buying workers compensation insurance among farmers and ranchers who might not be able to afford it (at least during the first year of their participation).
3. Fund NMSU Extension for additional agriculture education programs.
4. Support Agriculture in the Classroom’s efforts to create agricultural education materials for teachers.
5. Fund the NM Department of Agriculture Workforce Development pilot program a second year (and beyond) to bring in more new blood into agriculture production and processing businesses.
6. Find funding for more agricultural fieldtrip for students.
7. Fund upgrades to AgriNature Center (in Village de Los Ranchos), based on results of the current “strategic doing process,” to build out a sustainable urban agriculture center.
8. Support “strategic doing” as a participatory community building and economic development process.

## Next Steps

- Ask NMDA about an appropriate agency or organization to host a clearinghouse of resources to inform the next generation of farmers and ranchers.
- Share information across organizations; don't get siloed.
- Keep lines of communication open between NMSU's Aligning our AgriFuture, the Village of Los Ranchos, and NM to grow sustainable urban agriculture at the AgriNature Center.
- Create a fund to offset the cost of buying workers compensation insurance among farmers/ranchers who might not be able to afford it (at least during the first year of their participation)
- Explore ways to support agricultural fieldtrips for students.
- Connect with Councils of Government (COGs) to discuss existing resources (e.g., LandLink), how to make them more visible, and/or how to revive them

## Highlighted Resources

- The New Mexico Department of Agriculture's (NMDA) Agricultural Workforce Development Pilot Program (AWD) encourages New Mexico agricultural businesses to hire interns. The AWD Pilot Program is designed to provide hands-on educational opportunities for students aspiring to pursue careers in agriculture, as well as learning opportunities for young or beginning farmers and ranchers. <http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/awd-applications>
- New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom is a non-profit agricultural education outreach program funded largely by the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau. <https://newmexico.agclassroom.org>
- The New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration's (WCA) mission is to ensure swift and effective delivery of benefits to injured workers at an economical cost to employers. <https://workerscomp.nm.gov>

## Chapter 5

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### Value Chain Action Team

Getting food from the farm to your table is a challenge about which consumers are largely unaware and uninformed. This complex system is replete with logistical challenges, and multiple players. While often referred to as the agricultural *supply chain*, the Ag Plan refers to this system as the *value chain*. As products move off the farm or ranch and through the production and distribution system, each player along the way adds value to the product and deserves to be valued.

The Value Chain Action Team is comprised of skilled professionals involved in the New Mexico food system. This team was tasked with reviewing the six recommendations and 19 strategies from the Ag Plan in light of current conditions.

Maria Perez, from Democracy in Action, facilitated the group. Pam Roy, with Farm to Table, the New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council, and Santa Fe Food Policy Council, was the recorder for this session.

#### Participants:

- Rebeca Archuleta, Farmer, Bernalillo County
- Kendal Chavez, Farm to School Specialist, NM Public Education Department,
- April Cox, Adaptive Farming Specialist, Mandy's Farm
- Lindsey Diaz, Project Manager, East Valencia Urban Gardens Coordinator
- Cezanne Dockstander, Food Corp Team Leader, AmeriCorp
- Natalie Goldberg, Interim Associate Dean and Director, NMSU
- Chuck Lucas, Agriculture Committee Member, Village of Los Ranchos
- Newt McCarty, NMSU Agriculture Extension Agent, Valencia County
- Erin Ortigoza, Forward Cities, ESHIP Rio Grande, Santa Fe
- Valerie Smith, Quality Assurance Specialist, La Montañita Coop
- Melanie Stansbury, NM House of Representatives
- Susan Wilger, Executive Director, National Center for Frontier Communities and New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council

### Recommendation 1: Resources and Training for Farmers and Ranchers

Increase access to resources, training and technical assistance for producers to get their products to consumers.

- New Mexico needs a clearing house of resources.
- Support New Mexico State Cooperative Extension in keeping websites up to date by increasing funding for staff.
- Support New Mexico State University’s online agriculture resource hub website.
- Support LandLink in the efforts of connecting land and job to those in agriculture.
- Promote all current Agricultural Days and events.
- Expand marketing of agriculture, for example at popular sporting events.

## Recommendation 2: New Mexico Branding and Verification

Achieve a unified brand for New Mexico agricultural products and develop an equitable, industry-led process for verification of product authenticity.

- While programs are underway, there is much work to be done to implement this recommendation.
- NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA) has branding components, “Grow the Tradition” and “Taste the Tradition,” and are charged with leading this effort and maintaining the momentum.
- NM Tourism Department’s “NM True” campaign complements the NMDA effort.
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program is especially valuable because recipients are receiving nutrition information along with healthy, locally grown products.
- Double Up Food Bucks (SNAP-Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) allows participants to purchase locally grown food at local farmers’ markets across the state.
- NM is the number one producer in numerous crops, including pecans, chile, dairy. We should shine a light on these.
- Consumers do want to buy and should demand local products. Developing a brand for local products would be helpful, but there is currently no capacity to verify that products are NM grown.
- Is there buy-in for the Chile Certification? Growers may resist certification programs unless it is clear as to how the grower benefits.
- NMDA Strategic Plan did not speak to “locally grown.” Work to include this in the new plan.
- Water priorities need to be considered in the agricultural management planning.
- Under the national “Beef Check Off” program Under the program, producers and beef importers pay a \$1-per-head assessment on animals they market and import. These funds are used for advocacy and marketing. Explore the “Beef Check Off Program” as a model for a more expanded “Product Check Off” program.

## Recommendation 3: Infrastructure and Building Capacity for Aggregators, Processors, and Distributors

Identify and increase value chain infrastructure for small to medium-scale producers of animal products and specialty crops (e.g., cold storage, processing and packaging, transportation and specialty kitchens.)

- Santa Fe County is considering creating a food hub for aggregation & distribution. More specificity around storage and transportation needs is required.
- San Juan County has a food hub, with a mobile market.

- Southwest NM has a food hub pilot using existing facilities with food pantries.
- Where are possible aggregations points?
- There are many investments in communities, such as commercial kitchens. Align additional funding requests for existing or shovel-ready projects. Explore establishing an infrastructure fund to food system initiatives.
- NM Farmers Marketing Association has a Value Chain Coordinator helping to coordinate wholesale and retail markets.
- We have functional models of distribution.
  - The Santa Fe County facility could be part of a hub that coordinates with other hubs.
  - If we align everything, we have momentum to move things forward.
  - Santa Fe County could be a public space for a private entity to lease and manage
- Institutions are actively working to work together.
  - Build power33 through agencies working together.
  - Map the infrastructure, policies; work with school purchasing model as example and build on it.<sup>3</sup>
  - Partner with the Farm Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) to identify components that stand up to scrutiny and create a unified process around implementation.
  - Help build the capacity of smaller producers to access large procurement markets, possibly through cooperatives or collaboratives.
- Processing is one of our weak links.
  - Consider how it fits in to our NM mapping work. Link to NM resources.
  - We may just need simple machinery like an apple slicing machine...
  - We have commercial kitchens in Albuquerque, Socorro, Taos and elsewhere. Assess capacity and certifications needed
  - Map out the “price points” through the value chain
  - Explore use of NM Economic Development funds to help with this.
- This is an area ripe for a state legislative initiative.
  - Initiate a statewide assessment of our food system. Build on the cumulative research that identifies what we have now and what we need.
  - Facilitate data-sharing among data sources, including state agencies and universities, as well as community-based and for-profit data collectors, compilers, and analysts.
  - Map out a plan to catalyze these research efforts and industry conversations into action

#### Recommendation 4: Institutional Purchasing, Restaurants, Food Service, and Retail

Increase local buying and procurement by anchoring public and private institutions such as hospitals, school districts, corporations, correctional facilities, and senior centers.

- Strengthen the connection between education and the meal program.
  - NM Food & Agriculture Experiential Learning Grant Program Appropriation request will align procurement with schools.
  - Raise awareness and buy-in of food service personnel regarding the benefits of locally grown food.

- The NM Grown Procurement for Schools is a model that is in place and has the formal structure to expand institutional purchasing.
- Public Education Department is helping with the baseline of data collection.
- Identify additional markets for locally grown products.
  - Get hospitals, senior centers, schools and correctional facilities on board together to promote local purchasing.
  - Agencies need administrative support to manage these programs. Is there administrative funding that can help?
- We need to build the capacity over time.
- We need to better understand grower capacity to meet demand. We need the data about what products we have, market opportunities/needs, production planning to meet markets, and coordination. This can help to provide opportunities to rural areas that may not have the products in demand.
- There are various entities that are already providing production planning training (NM Public Education Department, NM Farmers Marketing Association).

### Recommendation 5: Food Donation, Reducing Waste and Compost

Manage food surplus through best practices that promote health in all communities, reduce waste, increase recovery, feed animals, and create nutrient-rich soil product through composting.

- The Reunity program in Santa Fe is a model that is successful.
- Expand on Reunity and Soilutions efforts to educate on reducing, reusing, and repurposing food waste, fold efforts to make “ugly” produce available to retail and other markets
- Reducing food waste is related to Governor’s priority to eradicate hunger.
- The Food Depot is advocating for repurposing meals in schools to send home with students. Follow up with the Children’s Cabinet to see where this is.
- NM Environment Department is looking at policies, e.g., Farm to Food Bank, Pam Roy and Valerie Smith can follow up on this.
- NM Department of Agriculture and the Governor are focusing on developing incentives.
- NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council (FAPC) will follow up with Patty Keane, Governor’s Office.
- Public Education Department is researching existing and new laws about when raw and prepared food can be donated.

### Recommendation 6: Public Relations and Economic Impact

Provide a trusted source of data for accurate financial information on New Mexico’s farms and ranches and their contribution to the state. Deploy this information to facilitate informed debate among the public, policy makers, researchers, tribal leaders, and industry representatives regarding the stability of New Mexico farms and ranches and the provision of a safe, affordable, and adequate food supply.

- Resources include:
  - NMSU Farm and Ranch Resource Center Data Base;
  - NMSU Agriculture and Food Atlas;

- Agri-Gate: Regional data base and resource center hosted by Santa Fe County.
- Get out to meet people and learn what they need and want. Follow through is important. Anything is possible through listening. Santa Fe County did a year of outreach meetings in all corners of the county that has a very diverse agriculture.
- The Santa Fe County initiative was a multi-year process committed to by the County Commission.

## Priorities 2020

1. Host a summit and bring stakeholders together to map out the value-chain that includes technology, equipment, food supply, food waste, processing facilities.
2. Identify funding opportunities and look for appropriations requests that would support innovative ideas to meet local needs based on agreed upon set of criteria.
3. Elicit funding and/or an awards program for food waste innovations.
4. Help develop, plan and implement a grants program for business grants.
5. Deploy a fleet of trucks that can complete pre-processing in the field, possibly an NMSU pilot project.
6. NM Department of Agriculture may be working on a feasibility study along with USDA inspectors. Follow up on this study.
7. NM Grown for Senior Centers provides seniors with vouchers to purchase NM-grown fruits and vegetables at farmers markets. The NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council is backing 2020 legislative that would expand the program.
8. Look for opportunities to expand messaging and branding efforts that are underway, linking local production, marketing and nutrition.

## Next Steps

- Support current value chain mapping efforts.
- Identify what is being done in the state regarding branding.
- Research the need for and benefits of an infrastructure fund.
- Support WIC, SNAP and senior food programs that encourage consumption of locally-grown, nutrition food.

## Highlighted Resources

- New Mexico's Department of Agriculture's Marketing and Development Division provides tool and resources for New Mexico farmers, ranchers, and other agribusinesses through a variety of marketing and economic development programs and tools.  
<http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/home/divisions/marketing>
- The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides coupons to Eligible WIC participants to buy eligible foods from farmers, farmers' markets or roadside stands that have been approved by the state agency to accept FMNP coupons.  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/wic-farmers-market-nutrition-program>
- SNAP Double Up Program doubles the value of federal nutrition assistance (SNAP) spent at participating farmers' markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and grocery stores, helping New Mexicans bring home more locally grown fruits and vegetables. The wins are three-

fold: low-income consumers eat more healthy food, New Mexican farmers gain new customers and make more money, and more food dollars stay in the local economy.

<http://www.doubleupnm.org/>

- NM Grown for Seniors Program the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is available for income-eligible seniors age 60 and over and provides participants with up to \$50 worth of checks that can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables as well as honey at participating farmers' markets between July 1st and November 15th of the current market season. Checks come in \$5 or \$10 increments and no change can be given. Participants may send a proxy to shop for them if they are not able to go to the market themselves. <https://farmersmarketsnm.org/resources/food-access/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program/>

## Conclusion

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The original Ag Plan Recommendations and Strategies are the product of community knowledge, cultural practices, research, and a series of ongoing statewide collaborative conversations, deliberation, and decision-making.

A review and reassessment of these recommendations and strategies by the various Action Teams in November 2019 concluded that all the recommendations are still relevant and important in ensuring a vibrant and sustainability agricultural sector in New Mexico. However, progress toward implementing the various strategies designed to accomplish these recommendations in the light of current realities and trends resulted a mixed record. Most of the recommendations are judged to be in the preparation or development stages of implementation. While there is forward momentum, there is still significant work to be done to address these issues in a way that contributes to the resilience of agriculture. The group identified recommendations and next steps aligned with current opportunities and challenges that face New Mexico.

Three major strategic fronts were identified.

- Continuing community conversations and collaboration.
- Research
- Legislation

### K-12

While K-12 agriculture education has been a specific action team, most action teams emphasized the importance of K-12 strategies in their review of other agricultural resilience efforts. In 2020, New Mexico First will convene agriculture stakeholders to:

- Map k-12 education efforts;
- Identify shared and unique resources including models, curriculum, and programming;
- Develop more effective ways to disseminate promising, and best practices; and
- Identify data and information sharing strategies to evaluate outcomes in ways that demonstrate return on investment in agricultural education.

Furthermore, stakeholders can help refine outreach strategies and materials to promote K-12 education and advance priorities. An asset-based approach to researching agriculture education requires holding up and spreading New Mexico based approaches that are working. Working together to identify opportunities for field trips and experiential learning through public and private funding is important. On a legislative front, in 2020 New Mexico First will work with stakeholders to advance experiential agriculture education in the New Mexico Department of Agriculture's "farm bill". Stakeholders were also in support of increased 4-H and FFA appropriations, and New Mexico First will work with advocates and legislators to advance increased appropriations for these key K-12 efforts. Legislative efforts in 2021 will include promotion of a statewide agricultural education day.

## Economic Viability

In terms of collaboration and deliberation, New Mexico First will convene stakeholders in 2020 to identify and develop strategies to compete with agriculture-related producers and industries outside of New Mexico. New Mexico First will continue to explore ways to advance implementation of the Aggie Bond program for New Mexico. On the research front, New Mexico First will support collaboration between action teams to analyze and assess consumer purchasing power and demand. In 2020, New Mexico First will work with stakeholders to support recurring funding for the Beginner Farmer Rancher Resource Center in NMSU's College of ACES. New Mexico First is also advocating for the Center of Excellence in Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems to promote economic viability. In 2020-2021, New Mexico First will help stakeholders develop an ask to the Departments of Economic Development, Tourism, and Cultural Affairs to create more agriculture and ecosystem trails. In the 2021 session, New Mexico First will work with stakeholders and policy makers to submit a memorial to study tax exemptions impacts for farmers and ranchers. Over the next two years, New Mexico First will support collaborative work on tax credits for young farmers.

## Land and Water

This workgroup amplified the importance of ongoing conversation, collaboration and legislative advocacy efforts to support agricultural education. In addition, this group focused on the importance of supporting the Landlink website section on land leasing. A key collaboration and coordination strategy identified is promoting rural landowners to advertise open land on these sites. From the research side, better understanding of wildlife habitat restoration efforts underway across New Mexico was noted as a priority. A priority research question within this topic is about how to incentivize farmer and rancher conservation efforts. This topic would lend itself to a stakeholder convening. Advocacy aimed at increasing funding for water monitoring and water inventory studies was also prioritized. In addition, state legislative efforts to support healthy soils, the acequia and ditch funds are aligned with the Ag Resilience Plan priorities. The group also identified federal policy related to conservation as a 2020-2021 priority.

## Workforce

The workforce group also emphasized the importance of experiential agricultural education at the K-12 level and ongoing through supports from NMSU Extension. Collaboration and community conversations about workforce development needs, resources, and strategies and the best ways to respond to the various needs across the state speaks to the need for ongoing deliberation. For example, topics ranging from worker's compensation regulations and processes to the needs of new farmers and succession planning arose. Building apprenticeships and internships are vital to a healthy workforce in this sector. In addition, research is needed to develop a model policy to offset the cost of buying workers compensation insurance among farmers and ranchers who might not be able to afford it (at least during the first year of their participation). Funding to support "strategic doing" is a New Mexico First priority so that workforce partners can better plan and coordinate responses to workforce needs. Support of the \$150,000 in the FY 2021 NMDA "farm bill" would help retain a well-trained and highly-skilled agriculture workforce. As agriculture was identified as one of New Mexico's priority economic development sectors, investments in the ag workforce are key to New Mexico's economic resilience as a whole.

## Value Chain

New Mexico First will work with other ag stakeholders to host a summit and bring stakeholders together to map out the value-chain that includes technology, equipment, food supply, food waste, and processing facilities. Together, agriculture partners will identify funding opportunities and look for appropriations requests that would support innovative ideas to meet local needs based on an agreed upon set of criteria. Local food systems development in the farm bill and expansion of the Department of Health's Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the Aging and Long-Term Services Department's Purchasing New Mexico Grown Fruits and Vegetables in Senior Meals Programs are appropriations that strengthen the agriculture value-chain and get nutritious local food to seniors. Similarly, recurring funding in the New Mexico Grown Produce for School Meals and SNAP Double up Food Bucks program support the importance of institutional buying in the value-chain. New Mexico First shares these policy priorities with other members of the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council. Furthermore, the value-chain group places priority on food waste reduction innovations. Similar to the economic viability group, the value-chain group is committed to identifying opportunities to expand messaging and branding efforts that are underway, linking local production, marketing and nutrition.

## Next Steps

The work and the conversations of the Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture project will continue to bridge information and communication gaps and strengthen relationships among the stakeholders. Action steps will continue to be identified and pursued.

Ultimately, New Mexico's agricultural sector is key to the continued health and vitality of New Mexico's communities and the quality of life of New Mexicans. The goal of the Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture project is to ensure that the knowledge and wisdom of the diverse group of farmers, ranchers, and agriculturalists are leveraged to make informed public policy and systems change that promotes agricultural resilience.

# Attachment 1: AG Plan and Recommendations

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## The Ag Plan and Implementation

### What is the Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture project?

Resilience in New Mexico Agriculture is a project that began in 2014 to address unprecedented challenges to the health of the agriculture industry – issues no one farmer, rancher or businessman could tackle alone. The project has been supported by several funders, and its backbone organizations are New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (NMSU) and New Mexico First.

Foundationally, this project advances three activities: reforms to strengthen agricultural resilience in New Mexico; support for the industry from policymakers and stakeholders; and improved understanding by the public about the value of agriculture to the state's future. To achieve these goals, the project centers on the development and implementation of a statewide policy plan for New Mexico agriculture – the Ag Plan.

### What is the Ag Plan?

The Ag Plan is a statewide policy plan for New Mexico agriculture that started from the ground up. At 13 regional meetings across the state, over 600 stakeholders identified major issues in the areas of land and water; the agricultural supply chain; agricultural economic viability; and the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Based off the input from these regional meetings, a 35-member task force of agricultural industry leaders and stakeholders worked over six months to create the Ag Plan (released in August 2017).

The plan contains 17 broad recommendations (see back) with accompanying actionable strategies in the four main subject areas mentioned above. The Ag Plan content focuses on wide-ranging issues such as: increasing educational and financial supports for aspiring farmers and ranchers; ensuring balanced incentives and strategies for water and land conservation; expansion of agricultural supply chain capacity and local procurement; and improved public understanding on the financial hardships of farmers and ranchers.

### How can you be involved?

The Ag Plan is only as effective as those who turn its contents into reality. New Mexico First and NMSU are continuing to lead in organizing and supporting implementation efforts of the Ag Plan. If you or your organization wish to contribute to implementing a recommendation or strategy from the plan, please contact [info@nmfirst.org](mailto:info@nmfirst.org), or visit the New Mexico First website at [www.nmfirst.org](http://www.nmfirst.org).



## The Ag Plan Recommendations

Rec #	Topic	Recommendation
1	<b>Education and Training</b>	Promote and expand agricultural education and training opportunities as pathways to successful careers in the industry, recognizing that new technologies should be deployed to reach young audiences.
2	<b>Land Access</b>	Protect agricultural land for future generations, and enable opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to either own or secure long-term leases to productive, affordable land.
3	<b>Capital and Credit Access</b>	Enable and expand opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers to build and access credit and capital necessary to grow their businesses.
4	<b>Water Rights</b>	Ensure that the legal and permitting processes for managing water rights are clear, well-administered and support conservation by water rights owners.
5	<b>Wildlife Habitat Conservation</b>	Advance a balanced approach to protection of both habitats and agricultural land-use.
6	<b>Water Supply</b>	Pursue research, incentives and other strategies to advance water conservation and increased water supply.
7	<b>Watershed Restoration</b>	Advance organized and integrated watershed restoration that promotes multiple uses, with the goals of increased water supply, reduced catastrophic fires, improved soil health and overall healthier environments.
8	<b>Resources and Training</b>	Increase access to resources, training and technical assistance for producers to get their products to consumers.
9	<b>Branding and Verification</b>	Achieve a unified brand for New Mexico agriculture products, and develop an equitable, industry-led process for verification of product authenticity.
10	<b>Infrastructure</b>	Identify and increase supply chain infrastructure for small to medium-scale producers of animal products and specialty crops (i.e. cold and dry storage, processing and packaging, transportation and commercial kitchens).
11	<b>Food Retail</b>	Increase local buying and procurement by anchor public and private institutions such as hospitals, school districts, corporations, correctional facilities and senior centers.
12	<b>Consumers</b>	Increase consumer base and market access locally, interstate and internationally for New Mexico agriculture products.
13	<b>Reducing Waste and Compost</b>	Manage food surplus through best practices that promote health in all communities, reduce waste, increase recovery, feed animals, and create a nutrient-rich soil product through composting.
14	<b>Public Relations and Economic Impact</b>	Provide a trusted source of data for accurate financial information on New Mexico's farms and ranches and their contribution to the state. Deploy this information to facilitate informed debate among the public, policymakers, researchers, tribal leaders, and industry representatives regarding the stability of New Mexico farms and ranches and the provision of a safe, affordable and adequate food supply.
15	<b>Worker's Comp</b>	Develop information and projects that help farmers and ranchers cost-effectively meet new requirements to provide their employees with worker's compensation insurance.
16	<b>Leases and Lending</b>	Support cost-effective land leasing and lending by helping farmers and ranchers better understand the legal and regulatory issues surrounding these matters.
17	<b>Tax Reg</b>	Protect existing tax exemptions for agriculture and enact others that fairly keep food costs low while protecting producers' ability to maintain their businesses.





