Rethinking Farmland Transition for the 21st Century

Agricultural Outlook Forum

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33% of Principal Operators Are Seniors

And the share of the oldest farmers keeps growing
Senior Principal Operators Own 240 M Acres

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture
Compiled by the Farmland Information Center – www.farmlandinfo.org
Half of Ag Landowners are *not* Operators

- 1.9 M non-operator landlords own and rent out 283 M acres
  - 80% of land rented for agriculture
  - 31% of U.S. farmland
- Of 2.1 M principal operators, 2 M *own* ag land
  - They operate 561 million acres
  - They rent out 70 million acres
  - 69% of U.S. farmland
  - 20% of land rented for agriculture
Senior Principal Landlords Own 132 M Acres

Source: 2014 Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land Survey
Compiled by the Farmland Information Center – www.farmlandinfo.org
Together Seniors Own
More than 40% of U.S. Farmland!
What will Happen to this Land?
Decline of Young and Beginning Farmers

Beginning farms represented only 11% of acres operated.
Land Access is a Universal Barrier

- **Land unaffordable due to competition** 97%
  - From nonfarm development pressure 76%
  - From established farmers 62%
  - From estate market or large parcel sizes 10%

- **Land unavailable to buy or to lease** 86%

- Finding suitable land to farm 69%

- Difficulty negotiating leases/sales 41%
  - With non-family members 45%
  - With family members 3%
Senior Farm Operators
More Than 90% Have No Young Farm Operator Farming Alongside

NEW ENGLAND

- Without an Operator Under 45: 92%
- With an Operator Under 45: 8%
  - 794

NEW YORK

- Without an Operator Under 45: 92%
- With an Operator Under 45: 8%
  - 861

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture
There’s a “growing” disconnect between the primary commodities **senior** farmers produce and the primary commodities **younger** farmers produce.
Farmers by Primary Commodity Type

NEW YORK

- Oilseed and Grain
- Vegetable and Melon
- Fruit and Tree Nut
- Greenhouse, Nursery and Floriculture
- Hay, Maple and Other Crops
- Beef Cattle
- Cattle Feedlots
- Dairy Cattle and Milk
- Hog and Pig
- Poultry and Egg
- Sheep and Goat
- Aquaculture, Equine and Other Animals

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

American Farmland Trust
Protecting Farmland Helps Farm Transfer

- 96% of landowners said protected land stayed in active agricultural use
  - 61% had succession plans
    - 69% said the next owner would be a farmer
    - 92% of their identified successors were relatives