



— YOUNG AGRARIANS —

How to Support New Farmers in Alberta

There is an urgent need for more new and young farmers in Alberta. However, new entrants are often underserved by the agricultural industry. Young Agrarians, a farmer-to-farmer educational network for new farmers, led a series of stakeholder engagement sessions to better understand the current needs of new entrants and to discuss how farming organizations in Alberta can support them.

Goals of the Engagement

During online workshops and one-on-one conversations we heard from agriculture extension & research groups, educational institutions, producer commodity groups, as well as rural municipalities (200+ organizations invited, 30 attended). The goals of the engagement were to:

- Build a shared understanding in the agriculture sector of the barriers, needs, challenges, and opportunities facing new farmers.
- Better understand how organizations can collaborate to recruit new entrants into the agriculture workforce.
- Promote existing training programs and opportunities to develop skills and knowledge of new entrants in agriculture.



What We Heard

	Barriers	Opportunities
Perception	The traditional image of farming can prevent new entrants from seeing themselves in a farming career, especially if they don't come from a farming background.	New entrants are often drawn to farming as a career choice that offers a desirable lifestyle. Many are driven by environmental and social justice values.
Training	There are few supports that train new entrants on the day-to-day production and business management tasks of farming.	New models for training farming skills need to be explored that fit the needs of those living in rural communities and those coming from non-farming backgrounds.
Cost	The high cost of land and equipment is a barrier to new entrants. Accessing funds may be challenging. There is also the perception that farming is unprofitable and inherently risky.	New farmers are exploring more niche agricultural products. They are interested in mitigating risk by diversifying their farm operations. Many farmers are also interested in working collectively to grow food and access markets. New farmers are using diverse funding streams to access capital.
Access to Land	Most new farmers cannot afford to buy land and leasing land can be precarious. New farmers without a family farming connection have significant struggles to find land.	There is a significant need to put more resources into programs that connect new entrants to land and support for organizations that understand the complexity of land agreements.
Policies	There is a perceived lack of collaboration among municipalities, the province and federal support to support new farmers and farm transition. There is a lack of new farmer representation in agricultural boards and organizations.	Policies at all levels of government should reduce barriers to entry and support new entrants. New farmers of a wide variety of backgrounds should be consulted to bring fresh perspective and ensure that new entrants are considered moving forward.
Mental Health	Isolation deters some people from pursuing a farming career. The risk and stress associated with farming, coupled with the isolation, can be onerous.	Offering programs and hosting events to build community locally and connect new farmers can combat isolation. Professional mental support in rural communities is needed.

What is Young Agrarians working on?

1

Building Community

Connecting new and young farmers through online storytelling and engagement as well as on-farm events

2

Production Skills

Providing mentorship and training for aspiring farmers through on-farm apprenticeships

3

Business Skills

Teaching business planning and management skills to new farmers in startup

4

Land Access

Online resources about land access and a database of land seekers and land opportunities in Alberta



What can you do to support new farmers?

- Uplift the stories of new and young farmers
- Make programming accessible to new farmers and tailor it to fit their needs
- Encourage financial institutions to support farm start up with low-barrier, scale-appropriate loans
- Promote policies at all levels of government that reduce barriers to entry and support new farmers
- Build a strong sense of community within your farmer network and welcome new farmers
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and mentorships to help new farmers
- Be representative of the diverse backgrounds and interests of new farmers
- Share your events and collaborate with Young Agrarians to reach new farmers

Want to continue the conversation?

We're looking for people to advise us on next steps to support new farmers in Alberta.

Reach out to Alex at alex@youngagrarians.org