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Farm mentors key to supporting the success of new farmers

by admin | Published October 10, 2023



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BUSINESS MENTORSHIP NETWORK
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New farmers are often motivated by two main missions: to do good for the planet and to feed their community. To accomplish both of these missions, farmers need to build robust and resilient farm businesses.

Starting and building an ecologically and financially sustainable farm business involves facing many challenges, especially in the context of the current climate and economic realities. Whether it's taking over the family business or starting a brand new farm, there is much to learn and peer-to-peer business networks in agriculture are as important as ever. New and young farmers are seeking guidance for the future amidst changes in markets,

the climate crisis, farm business transitions and rural demographic shifts. There is an ongoing need for mentorship programs to provide spaces where farmers can talk openly about business challenges and wins, build business skills and figure out (together!) how to make their farms work.

Since 2015, the Young Agrarians Business Mentorship Network program has been supporting new and young farmers to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to weather the challenges ahead in the sector. The program began in British Columbia and in 2023 expanded to offer mentorships in all three prairie provinces (AB, SK and MB). To date, the program has worked with 171 farmers on 118 farms and the combined outcomes include an increase of 147% in revenues, a 98% increase in the volume of food produced and a 12 % increase in land under production.

The Young Agrarians BMN program fosters strong rural communities by building out a peer mentorship network to support both mentors and mentees to success. Farmers eligible to apply are in their first 1-5 years in business from across BC, AB, SK and MB. This includes brand new farm operations as well as those taking over the family farm business.

Over the span of a year, the program involves 30 hours of direct farmer-to-farmer mentorship, regular peer meetups, a farm business webinar series and access to resources and referrals. It covers the nitty gritty of business startup basics, record keeping, cash flow, marketing and more.

Building a strong business foundation on top of the challenges of farming can feel overwhelming but with the support of the program and the mentors the new farmer's confidence and clarity grows. The program is inclusive of a wide range of production types and priority is given to new farmers between the ages of 18 and 35. Applications for new mentee participants are open for the month of October so check out the website for more information and to access the application.

Interested in being a paid mentor in the BMN program? Find the mentor application form also on the website linked below. This program is made possible with the support of Vancity, Endswell and Columbia Basin Trust.

For more information and to apply, visit: <https://youngagrarians.org/business-mentorship-network/>

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