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## New and Young Farmers Increasing, According to Agriculture Census



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OCTOBER 2025

## The 2024 Census of Agriculture

([https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_1](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1))

from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reveals a growing number of new and beginning and young producers in the United States. Despite these changes, the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) and USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture say progress is still necessary to support these groups.

In 2022, the number of farms with new and beginning producers in the United States increased by about 5 percent from 2017. The number of producers under the age of 44 also increased by 7 percent from 2017 to 2022.

New farmers and ranchers can help to improve the national food supply and the future of agriculture, according to Denis Ebodaghe, the National Program Leader for the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Supporting new farmers and ranchers will ensure a safe and sustainable food supply," Ebodaghe tells Food Tank.

The Census shows that farmers in the U.S. are, on average, aging. In 2012, USDA data revealed the average age of farmers to be 56.3 years; the latest



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📍 Cambridge, MA

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report shows it is now 58.1. According to Ebodaghe, “there is the urgent need to ensure that strategies are in place to grow the next generation of farmers and ranchers.”

But the number of producers under the age of 44 is on the rise. This may be because of the COVID-19 pandemic, says Michelle Hughes, Co-Executive Director of the NYFC.

“The pandemic revealed cracks in our consolidated food supply chain. The urgency of the climate crisis and the need for racial justice transformation in our society are all motivators and issues we hear about very often from our members,” Hughes tells Food Tank.

Of producers under 44 years old, those under 25 increased by the greatest amount.

However, as the number of new and young farmers increases, the total number of farms in the U.S. decreased by about 7 percent from 2017-2022, the Census shows.

To help new farmers and ranchers establish and sustain their careers, Ebodaghe says they need “education, mentoring and technical assistance...to help minimize farming risks and maximize farm profits.” With these, producers “cannot only survive but thrive to grow food and fiber for generations to come.”

The NYFC also advocates for programs and policies that can reduce barriers of entry to help new farmers. They seek to address access to affordable land, capital, housing, health care and production costs, student loan debt, and the climate crisis.

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📍 Virtual



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“All of these challenges are multi-faceted, and require planning, coordination, policy development, and program evaluation at every level of government,” Hughes tells Food Tank. “The challenges facing the next generation of young farmers are complex, but equitable land access is foundational to all of the solutions proposed in our work.”

Through the One Million Acres for the Future campaign, the Coalition advocates for the next Farm Bill to invest in 1 million acres of land accessible to new farmers.


These interventions are particularly important to support producers who identify as Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian or more than one race, the Census shows. The data reveal that they represent just 7.6 percent of all producers in the United States. A [survey](https://www.youngfarmers.org/22survey/) (https://www.youngfarmers.org/22survey/) of young farmers by NYFC also finds that BIPOC growers experience the most common challenges for young farmers at higher rates.

But these young farmers are also very likely to be motivated by intersectional issues including conservation, anti-racism, and food sovereignty and security, the NYFC shows. Of the Black farmers surveyed, for example, 74 percent say they are primarily motivated by anti-racism work and healing from white supremacy.

“Young Farmers are stewarding and providing the infrastructure for food system transformation that ripples across food access, public health, and environmental and climate outcomes,” Hughes tells Food Tank. “All these values and priorities are

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demanding a shift in U.S. agriculture and we hope policymakers will invest in this more resilient food system that the new generation is leading.”

More new and young farmers may also aid the environment, according to research published in

*Organic Agriculture*

([https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13165-023-00440-7#:~:text=](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13165-023-00440-7#:~:text=(2019)%20found%20that%20younger%20farmers,adaptive%20capacity%20to%20new%20)

(2019)%20found%20that%20younger%20farmers,adaptive%20capacity%20to%20new%20

The study shows that this group is more likely to employ regenerative and organic practices than their established peers. And the NYFC survey reveals that 83 percent of young farmer respondents were primarily motivated by conservation or regeneration.



The number of producers under 44 years old with certified organic status or exempt organic status—meaning the farm meets requirements

(<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2%20Exempt%20Producers%20FIN/>

to represent their products as organic without obtaining certification—also decreased from 2017 to 2022. But the Census does not evaluate regenerative agriculture practices.

According to Hughes, young and BIPOC farmers “are leading the way, modeling solutions at the community level to produce and distribute high quality, fresh, affordable products...As we have clearly seen the connections between small-scale agriculture and the stability of our food systems, as well as our collective well-being, we must do more to invest in and support farmers selling into local and regional markets and directly to consumers.”

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**Clare Shanahan**

(<https://foodtank.com/news/author/clare-shannahan/>)

Clare Shanahan is a Research, Event, Advocacy and Writing intern at Food Tank. She graduated from Ithaca College with a BA in Journalism, a minor in Environmental Studies and a passion for writing about the many facets of the climate crisis. Clare has worked as an editorial intern for Living on Earth --- an environmental news radio show --- as well as a sustainability analyst and she has written extensively about both the climate crisis and food in the past. She has discovered a passion for writing about environmental justice, food waste, new innovations in research and technology, and how the climate crisis is shifting our food systems.



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