Exploring Land Link Options...and More: A conversation about options in Kansas

Kansas Rural Center Food and Farm Conference
November 16, 2018
Wichita, Ks.
Purpose of session

1) To explore how we may facilitate connections between outgoing or retiring farmers and ranchers and farm/land seekers or entering farmers;

2) Provide YOU an opportunity for input & discussion

3) Provide an informal opportunity for “meet & greet among outgoing farmers/landowners and farm seekers"
Current context for farm exit and entry

• Aging farmers (ave. age is 60; farmers > 65 fastest growing sector of farm demographic;
• Poor farm economy: 2018 farm income projected to drop to 12 yr low
• High land prices & high input and equipment costs
• Agriculture is high risk and lots of uncertainty
• Many farms do not have a family heir or successor
Thankfully, there are still those who see farming/ranching as:
* the good life, and a necessary and noble profession which requires hard work but a good quality of life;

* And who see food production -- and the way we produce it-- as essential to stewardship of our natural resources, to community health and survival, quality of life, and even human survival.

* Passing a legacy on is more important than selling at highest market value
Thinking outside the box... will be necessary to meet the challenges of our farm and food future and to ensure next generation of farmers and ranchers.
Overview of Research Project: TRANSITIONING FARMS TO A NON-KIN SUCCESSOR
Transitioning farms and ranches from one family to the next: Improving farm transitions with better programs and services
Advisors
PURPOSE OF FARM TRANSITIONS STUDY

To assess best practices from the 20+ year experience of 42 land link and linking programs to support farm transfers between non-related parties.

To examine models for fostering collaboration between experienced and beginning farmers through mentoring programs,

To share success stories of non-family transfers
The common thread

How do farm seekers gain a farming opportunity?

• Seekers Also known as:
  • Beginning farmers (but can be experienced)
  • Young farmers (or second career)
  • Aspiring farmers

+ How do farmers with no family successor build a relationship with a non-kin successor

And/or

How do Non-operator landowners find a farmer
Diversity of programs reviewed

- Listing classifieds
- Linking / facilitation / case management
- Mentoring
- Ranching/grazing internships
- Dairy Internships
- Community college programs
- State tax credit
Characteristics of programs reviewed

• Start year: median and range 2006 (1990-2017)
• Program duration: median & range 10 years (0 to 27 yrs)
• 80% of programs are still active
• Half of programs serve one state
• 16% of programs serve a multi-county region within a state
• 9% of programs are national
Characteristics of 29 programs reviewed

• 63% located within NGO or non-profit; 17% within an Extension program, 10% within a state department of ag;

• Programs served both beginners moving into commodity crop ag and non-commodity or specialty crop or smaller ag
Range of Services Provided

• LISTING: a managed list of available land from owners; may also list seekers

• LINKING: provides contact information to seekers and owners, pre-sorted or pre-screened; a step beyond listing;

• MATCHING: facilitates a specific transaction between seeker and owner
MENTORING: a service that facilitates formal connections between learners (who may be farm or ranch seekers) and mentors who are farm or ranch owners. May only be a learning connection and not a transfer situation.
• SUPPORT SERVICES: general services that build seeker or owner competencies to engage in farm or ranch acquisition or transfer; i.e. business, financial planning, legal, estate and succession transfer

• plus other educational or training services addressing production and management, marketing, conservation, labor

• TAX CREDITS; for landowners who lease/sell to beginning farmers (Available in limited number of states)
Here’s what works - 1

Helping people find each other

- Simple classified style listings;
- Participatory forum or event;
- List serve (managed or moderated)
Here’s what works - 2

| High staff involvement | A case management position  
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
|                         | To support non-family transfers  
|                         | Model is Iowa State University  
|                         | Full-time, salaried, perennial  
|                         | OR  
|                         | A position to support any type of farm transfer (kin or non-kin)  
| Low staff involvement | One-off conversation facilitation  
|                         | Focus on goal-setting  
|                         | On-line listing programs  

Direct linking service to facilitate relationships
Here’s what works - 3

Financial incentive

• State tax credit - Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska are models
• Federal or state beginning farmer loan programs
Indirect educational interventions

- Education for farmer advisors
- Networks of CPA's, attorneys, rural loan officers, realtors, insurance
- Cross-train Extension and USDA personnel in non-family farm transfer
Here’s what works - 5

Mentoring

• Serving as a mentor helps a farmer transition to some mode of retirement
• Provides mentee education and skills training
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

* Finding each other is the biggest challenge
  So linking programs (from simple online listings to full scale land link programs) offer opportunities.
  Networking events can bring owners & seekers together;
  Online discussion forms are also helpful

  These do benefit from at least minimal staffing or oversight to manage info and to allow some kind of follow-up or tracking.
* Mentoring Programs are good for both seekers and farmers; programs vary in intention

    Mentor role helps a farmer prepare for transitioning the operation by moving into an advisory role, as well as provides beginning farmer with valuable info and skill training and advice. (even without a formal transfer part of the deal.)
Individual facilitation is helpful, but how much a program offers varies. Consensus was that owners & seekers need a lot of assistance in all phases, but that this is time consuming, expensive, and not necessarily all that successful.
Beginning farmer state tax credits attract a lot of participation and help beginners gain secure tenure (in IA, NE and now MN).

People are experimenting with alternative land ownership or access models.

That all farm transitions are complicated—but we learn from others’ stories.
(1) http://www.harvestpublicmedia.org/post/handing-reality-land-transfer-between-older-younger-farmers

(2) https://indianapublicmedia.org/eartheats/love-farming/  audio here

https://indianapublicmedia.org/eartheats/growing-food-justice-south-bronx-farm/
https://indianapublicmedia.org/eartheats/kira-santiago-talks-dave-bishop-future-farming/
(audio here: https://indianapublicmedia.org/eartheats/flowery-farm-transition-neighborhood-coffee-shop-nightlife/)

https://indianapublicmedia.org/eartheats/matchmakingfarmers-farmland/
Next Steps from the research project:

* Indiana University will publish a report in early 2019 and journal articles;
* Contact Mary Fund for draft version of the findings at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org

*Multiple Story Corps interviews and releases are being made available
NATIONAL LAND LINK PROGRAMS

The Land Connection:  
www.thelandconnection.org

International Farm Transition Network:  
www.farmtransition.org

Rodale Institute Farmer Connection:  
www.rodaleinstitute.org/farm/farmers-connect/
MOSES Land Link
www.mosesorganic.org/farming/land-link-up/

100 Beef Cow Advantage Program
Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis

https://ncta.unl.edu/specialty-programs-ncta-curtis
KRC Next Steps

* Exploring (with partners) holding a one day or more conference focusing on land access, land link etc.
  • Develop simple online listing service
  • Regional meet and greet sessions?
  • Develop a Beginning Farmer/Rancher Program for USDA funding with partners for full service program
Policy:

*Ks. Beginning Farmer Loan Program
Urge more legislative oversight and expansion

• Explore legislative support for Kansas beginning farmer tax credits
Mary Fund
Kansas Rural Center
mfund@kansasruralcenter.org
866-579-5469