

LOCAL AND REGIONAL SYSTEMS FOR NEW FARMERS: USDA'S KYF2 INITIATIVE

In 2009, USDA launched the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative (KYF2) to leverage existing USDA resources around local and regional food value chains. The initiative continues to actively coordinate greater collaboration across the Department's 17 agencies and multiple staff offices, promote increased public access to the relevant programs, and identify ways to improve their implementation. The constituent activities range from Farm to School to food hubs, to high-tunnel production. Through the KYF2 initiative and other efforts, USDA helps expand resources for beginning farmers and ranchers interested in local and regional markets.

Grants and Loans:

From 2009 to 2012, various programs included under KYF2 awarded at least 87¹ grants and loans to projects which had a stated emphasis on both, new/beginning operators and on local and regional food markets. The projects reached thousands of beginning farmers and ranchers by supporting training programs, education, infrastructure improvements, and other needs. In addition to the flagship Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, the programs included Specialty Crop Block Grants (SCBG), the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), Risk Management Education and Outreach Partnerships (RMEO), Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) and Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG). (Many other USDA programs serve BFR's but do not track a local foods aspect.)

Information and Resources for the BFR Advisory Committee:

The KYF2 cross-departmental Task Force and the KYF2 Compass website gather information on USDA (and other federal) activities related to local and regional food systems. KYF's searchable data includes a category for "Careers in Ag" encompassing BFR outcomes.

- The [KYF2 Website](#) brings together information from across the Department on 1) grants and loans available to support local and regional food work, 2) USDA research, guidance documents, and other tools, and 3) program updates, blogs, and media.
- The [KYF2 Compass](#) Map and database provide searchable geospatial display of awards and services from over 30 USDA programs, related to local/regional food systems, from 2009-2012². Each project listed provides further links and other meta-data on for followup and analysis. The Compass organizes available resources by theme: "Careers in Ag" focuses on beginning farmers and ranchers.

Queries

- What types of local and regional food resources and information is most helpful to beginning farmers and ranchers?
- How can KYF2 leverage successful programs to increase impact for beginning farmers and ranchers?
- What are the key barriers or challenges hindering beginning farmers and ranchers from utilizing certain programs?
- Is the information available on the KYF2 website presented in an accessible format?

¹ This total does not include NRCS support for installation of high tunnels by operators who qualify under NRCS regulations as "new farmers." Will update next version with that data. ML 6/16/14.

² 2013 Compass update is in process.