



NIFTI Advocacy Guide

Tips for Advocating for Beginning Farmers in Local Food Policy



This fact sheet is based off a webinar that New Entry Sustainable Farming Project and the Johns Hopkins Food Policy Network hosted in July 2017. The webinar explored how local food policy efforts can raise awareness of the needs of beginning farmers and create conditions favorable to help new farm businesses succeed. Advocates from three organizations described their recent initiatives and successes to support beginning farmers and provided tips on how to make the next generation of farmers and ranchers a policy priority. This fact sheet summarizes the shared tips.

1. Focus on relationship building and network expansion

Building relationships takes time, so it is important for this to be a strong focus from the beginning. Cultivating strategic internal and external champions, especially in decision making positions, can help with policy making and advocacy.

2. Work closely with farmers, especially beginning farmers

While this tip seems obvious, it is important to engage beginning farmers in advocacy work. This brings an authentic note and creates a more powerful message for the work. Additionally, policy makers and organizations see developing programs in collaboration with farms and farmers as more legitimate.

3. Identify mutually beneficial goals

Identifying mutually beneficial goals can develop buy-in and strong partnerships. When people are working together towards these goals, they are more likely to stay actively engaged.

4. Build credibility early and maintain it through “easy wins”

It is important to identify “low hanging fruit” and accomplish “easy wins” early on. This accomplishes something tangible, which helps keep people engaged. Look at the list of potential topics for advocacy and identify one that already has widespread support in your community, or won’t take much to achieve. Start there.

5. Capitalize on existing networks and communication channels

In many cases, there are strong networks that do not have to be built from the ground up. These existing networks and communication channels can be used to effectively and efficiently spread your message. Additionally, they can help with answering questions and specific requests for assistance.

6. Provide a forum for new and beginning farmers to educate decision makers and stakeholders

Forums can be used to highlight innovations, successes and challenges, as well as local farmers and programs. This exposure can help with it comes to policy advocacy and advancement.

7. Explore how to provide financial assistance and advice, technical assistance and trainings to new farmers

Providing in-person and one-on-one technical assistance and consultation, creating online resource hubs, offering step-by-step guidance, and assisting with financial aspects of farming such as loans and grants is very important. This assistance is crucial in helping beginning farmers get started. Identify community partners who provide these services and invite them to the table.

Potential Topics for Action and Advocacy

Land and capital access and farmland preservation

Access to resources such as funding, trainings and technical assistance for beginning farmers

Marketing farm products: support for product market channels

Land use and long term planning (i.e. zoning and conservation plans)

Urban agriculture expansion

Lowering costs to participate in farmers' market

Access to land: beginning farmer tax credit

Farm and farmland investments

Webinar Presenters included:

Eric Sannerud, Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition

Annie Heuscher, Program Director, Food and Agriculture Coalition of Missoula County

Sydney Daigle & Kim Rush Lynch, Prince George's County Food Equity Council



View the full webinar [here](#).