USDA United States Department of Agriculture

FY 2026 State Beginning Farmer/Rancher Plan

STATE: KENTUCKY



MISSION STATEMENT

To provide access and opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers through USDA programs, services, and partnerships so they may thrive in Kentucky's agricultural economy and the Nation's at large.

VISION STATEMENT

To serve as the standard of excellence in comprehensive and coordinated outreach, education, customer service, program delivery, and engagement that effectively supports our next generation of Kentucky's farmers, ranchers, and foresters.

KY Coordinator & Champions

Angella Watson, FSA

Christine Johnson, RMA

Rebecca Pfeilmeier, RD

Steve Beam, NRCS

BACKGROUND & DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the *2022 USDA Census of Agriculture*[i], Kentucky had **36,659** producers who identified as "new and beginning producers"—producers who have operated on a farm for 10 years or less—an increase of 1,226 producer from the 2017 census data. New and beginning producers made up more than **30%** of the total producers in Kentucky. Additionally:

- 84% of new and beginning producers are the principal producer on the farm.
- The median age of these producers in Kentucky is 45; but 26% of all those identified as new and beginning producers meet the qualification of a "young producer", meaning he/she is under the age of 35.
- New and beginning producers farmed 23,298 farms and 23% of the total acreage farmed in Kentucky in 2022 – a 3% increase from 2017. The majority of that land was owned (69%).

Farmers in Kentucky engage in a wide variety of industries. While only 24% of new and beginning producers stated that farming was their primary occupation, these producers also participated in farming a myriad of commodities:

- The majority of the producers in Kentucky farm cattle or other livestock, including beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, goats, and more. 12,102 new and beginning producer-farms raised livestock of some kind. Though this is an overall decrease from the 2017 data, BFRs showed significant increases in poultry farming.
- BFRs growing oilseed and grain crops increased from 1,242 in 2017 to 2,002 in 2022 census data.
- Tobacco was grown by fewer BFR farms (108 in 2022/278 in 2017); but the number of BFR

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

producers growing greenhouse/nursery/floriculture crops almost doubled to 485 farms.

- The number of farms reporting fruits and vegetables also increased slightly to 1,245 farms.

The Kentucky Beginning Farmer team is proud to be a part of the national initiative to ensure the success of beginning farmers and ranchers. We recognize this sector is vital to the future of agriculture in our state and across the nation and we are excited to continue the important work of recruiting and supporting these farmers, ranchers, and foresters.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Increase the Number of BFRs Nationwide and Their Participation in Key USDA Programs

The Kentucky Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator and Champions, as part of the National BFR team, is tasked with implementing the objectives in Strategic Goal 1 of the National BFR Strategic Plan. Those objectives are:

- **Objective 1.1**: Increase BFR participation in NRCS by 5% (e.g. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)).
- **Objective 1.2**: Increase BFR participation in FSA Farm Loan Program (Direct and Guarantee) by 3%.
- **Objective 1.3**: Increase BFR participation in RMA BFR benefits for Federal crop insurance policies by 3%.
- **Objective 1.4**: Increase BFR participation in RD Value- Added Producer Grant Program by 2%.
- **Objective 1.5**: Analyze barriers that BFRs face in accessing USDA programs—including application processes and program scale. Make recommendations to reduce barriers.
- **Objective 1.6**: Utilize data driven research and statistics to evaluate the effectiveness of USDA programs, identify gaps, and build capacity for BFRs.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

For FY 2026, the Kentucky agencies have identified the following strategies/programs to meet the agency-specific objectives indicated.

Objective	Agency	Measurable Indicators	Prior Year Baseline Metrics
1:1	NRCS	Number of BFRs with EQIP contracts Number of BFRs participating in CSP	2025 EQIP contracts = 1425 2025 CSP contracts = 423
1:2	FSA - FLP	Percentage of both direct and guaranteed loans approved to qualifying BFRs	Direct FO Loans to BFRs = 113 Direct OL Loans to BFRs = 269 Direct ML Loans to BFRs = 165 Total Direct Loans = 1088 Guaranteed FO Loans to BFRs = 153 Guaranteed OL Loans to BFRs = 80 Total Guaranteed Loans = 140
1:3	RMA	Increase BFR participation in RMA BFR benefits for Federal Crop Insurance policies by at least 2%	Number of BFR Federal Crop Insurance Policies in 2025 = 312
1:4	RD	Number of BFRs participating in VAPG	2 BFR applications received in 2025

All agencies will work together to achieve **Objective 1.5** above. The Kentucky team meets quarterly to discuss programs updates, collaborate on events, and team build. For FY2026, we will also discuss any barriers to access we observe that BFRs may be facing in Kentucky and ways in which we can help alleviate those barriers.

Objective 1.6 is achieved, in part, with the measurable indicators and developed baselines indicated in the chart above. Additionally, the Kentucky BFR team has been tracking metrics for the total number of FSA participants that certify as BFRs on a CCC-860. This metric serves as another datapoint for evaluating the effectiveness of USDA programs and will continue to be tracked.

OTHER OBJECTIVES THAT SUPPORT THE NATIONAL BFR STRATEGIC PLAN

In addition to the program-specific goals and metrics above, the Kentucky BFR team will continue to provide targeted outreach to BFRs about the USDA programs that can assist them with starting their operation and addressing any concerns they have. The team routinely receives email, phone, and in-person inquiries and provides targeted, personalized assistance to each. Each agency will also, individually and collaboratively, host workshops, make presentations, and develop outreach materials to meet the specific needs of BFRs in sectors across the state.

We will continue to work with our existing partners and stakeholders to promote applicable USDA programs and services to beginning farmers as well as our other underserved producer groups. We hope to develop new stakeholders and generate new engagement opportunities across the State – especially in our growing organic, specialty, and urban agriculture sectors incorporating all available resources and striving to creatively address any concerns and barriers we encounter.

[i] https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Kentucky/index.php with relevant pages attached as KY Exhibit 1

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

USDA

FY26 KY STATE BFR STRATEGIC PLAN

We hereby certify that the FY 2026 KY State Beginning Farmer/Rancher Strategic Plan was reviewed and approved by the State FAC.

David Wayne, FSA State Executive Director — 1/6/2026

Eric Allness, NRCS State Conservationist — 1/6/2026

Travis Burton, Rural Development State Director — 1/6/26

RODDRIC BELL Digitally signed by RODDRIC BELL Date: 2026.01.14 08:29:08 -06'00'

Roddric Bell, Director, RMA

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.