

# USDA To Invest \$4M For Honey Bee Food Sources

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the availability of \$4 million in assistance for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners working to improve food sources for honey bees on private lands in Midwestern and northern plains states.

The targeted conservation effort by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) aims to improve the health of this critical pollinator in a region where more than two-thirds of the nation's honey bee population spends the summer months, pollinating crops and building strength to survive winter.

"The future of our food supply depends on honey bees," NRCS Chief Jason Weller said. "This effort partners with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to ensure honey bees have safe and diverse food sources during a time when they need it most."

Honey bees pollinate an estimated \$15 billion worth of crops annually, including more than 130 fruits and vegetables. One out of every three bites of food in the United States depends on honey bees and other

pollinators. But honey bee populations have suffered significant declines in recent years.

NRCS is working with landowners in Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin to make bee-friendly conservation improvements to their land, such as planting cover crops, wildflowers or native grasses and improving management of grazing lands. From June to September this six-state region is home to more than 70 percent of the commercially managed honey bees in the country. These are critical months when bee colonies need abundant and diverse forage to store enough food for winter.

During the first two years of this targeted campaign, NRCS and landowners have boosted available food for honey bees on around 35,000 acres in Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

NRCS expanded the effort into Montana this year because of the state's prominent role in honey production.

Planting wildflowers, native grasses and cover crops like buckwheat, mustard, clover and sunflowers provides high value food for honey bees. Cover crops also increase soil



PHOTO: PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

nutrients, break pest cycles and increase organic matter in the soil. NRCS also works with landowners to ensure pasturelands and rangelands include a good variety of legumes, forbs and shrubs that also provide pollen and nectar.

These conservation improvements not only benefit the bees, they also strengthen agricultural operations, support other beneficial insects and wildlife, and improve other natural resources. Appropriate cover crops

and better rangeland and pasture management reduce erosion, increase soil health, inhibit the expansion of invasive species and provide food and habitat for insects and wildlife.

The 2014 Farm Bill's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program provides funding for this work. NRCS accepts EQIP applications on a continuous basis. Landowners interested in participating should contact their local USDA service center to learn more.

Landowners not in this region are also eligible for assistance to make conservation improvements to their land that benefit honey bees and many other pollinators, such as monarch butterflies and native bees. More than three dozen conservation practices offered by NRCS can provide benefits to pollinators.

Learn more about the work to help honey bees and other pollinators and NRCS's key role in the National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators. For more on technical assistance and financial resources available through NRCS conservation programs, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/Get-Started](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Get-Started) or a local USDA service center.

## USDA Announces \$17 Million To Support America's Beginning Farmers And Ranchers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced more than \$17 million in grants for organizations that will develop training and provide other resources for beginning farmers and ranchers across the nation. The awards are made through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which is administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

"When new farmers and ranchers start their operations, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program can help them implement tested strategies and new ideas that in turn benefit all of us by reducing food insecurity, growing economic opportunities and building communities," said Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden. "We are partnering with organizations who recognize that an investment in our beginning farmers and ranchers is also an investment in our future."

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program was first established by the 2008 Farm Bill and was continued in the 2014 Farm Bill. The program provides support to those who have farmed or ranched for less than 10 years. NIFA awards grants to organizations throughout the United States that implement programs to train beginning farmers and ranchers, which may take place through workshops, educational teams, training or technical assistance.

The 2014 Farm Bill mandated that at least 5 percent of BFRDP funding must support veterans and socially disadvantaged farmers. This year, 10 percent of the funding supports veterans and farming, while about 50 percent of the funding will serve socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Since 2009, 184 awards have been made for more than \$90 million through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. These awards are part of USDA's deep commitment to empowering beginning farmers and ranchers across America.

Information on past awards can be found on the NIFA website.

Funding for the BFRDP program is authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America.

For more information, visit the Farm Bill page on the USDA website.

More information about USDA support for new farmers and ranchers is available on the New Farmers page on the USDA website.

NIFA invests in and advances agricultural research, education, and extension and seeks to make transformative discoveries that solve societal challenges.

To learn more about NIFA's impact on agricultural science, visit [nifa.usda.gov/impacts](http://nifa.usda.gov/impacts) or follow us on Twitter @usda\_nifa using hashtag #NIFAImpacts.

## SDSU Extension

# New iBook Looks At Management Practices For Cow-Calf Production

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension recently released Best Management Practices for Cow-Calf Production which was developed as a go-to resource for cattle producers in the Upper Midwest.

"This iBook is really unique. Fresh and up-to-date, there isn't anything like it available for cattle producers in this region of the country," said Barry Dunn, South Dakota Corn Utilization Council Endowed Dean of the SDSU College of Agriculture & Biological Sciences, SDSU Extension Director.

More than 20 South Dakota State University faculty and SDSU Extension staff contributed to the peer-reviewed iBook which serves as a comprehensive resource containing the latest in research-based information on all aspects of the cow-calf industry - including developing heifers, integrating backgrounding, systems management, nutrition, reproductive technologies and management, health programs, genetic testing, marketing strategies and range and pasture management innovations.

"Whether you're a seasoned cattle producer or just starting out, this iBook is a valuable resource providing applicable information on best management practices critical to a cow-calf operation," said Rosie Nold, co-editor of the book and SDSU Associate Professor.

As an iBook, the resource is interactive, and when new information is released, the book can be updated more quickly than traditional hard-cover books.

"Even a seasoned producer needs an up-to-date guide because the beef industry is continually changing. Today, there are fewer producers, larger herds and the genetic potential of animals has improved dramatically," said

Joe Cassidy, SDSU Animal Science Department Head and Professor.

As changes to the herd, feed supplies or farm and ranch goals occur, cow-calf producers respond by adapting and improving their management practices. "This book is designed as a go-to tool to help them make decisions based on the latest research," Cassidy said.

Although all the information is scientific and research-based, this iBook is written for the layperson, explained Cassidy. "Cattle producers don't go to aca-

ademic journals for information. We developed this book so they would have the information they need in an easy to understand and navigate format."

For example, the section on reproductive management pulls heavily from recent research conducted at SDSU by Dr. George Perry, Animal Science Professor and co-editor of the book.

The iBook will also be used as a text book.

"Truly a living book, this is one textbook our students can take with them to utilize it as a reference

guide whether they return to their family's cow-calf or feedlot operation or work in the industry as a feed or pharmacy rep," said Dunn, who spent the first 20 years of his career ranching and the next 10.5 years teaching Beef Production at SDSU and Texas A&M University, Kingsville.

Before its release, this iBook underwent a third-party, peer-review conducted by experts in each specialty area. To purchase this iBook, visit [iGrow.org/store](http://iGrow.org/store).



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