



## Farm Succession Plans; A meeting place for new and experienced farmers

August 2017

The 2016 Census of Agriculture data was released in early May 2017. It paints a picture with a brush of familiarity, showing the declining number of farms and farmers (“farm operators”), the increasing (though only slightly) average age of farmers, and the shrinking livestock numbers. These can be a daunting trends to reverse, and while we don’t propose that the following will solve all the problems, it does propose tangible steps in the right direction.

With only 7% of NB farms having a succession plan in place, this is an area that stands out as something that maturing farmers have the power to change on an individual basis, perhaps with more ease than some other areas of struggle. With a growing number of young (or simply new) farmers, there is a contingent of growers who struggle to access land, capital, and assets. Generally speaking, these new farmers are keen and willing to work hard and make connections with those who are experienced and successful in the farming community. Though finding the right person or people to take over something that you have poured so much time, blood, sweat, and tears into is not an easy task, and can take years of teaching and sharing vision, is it not worth the time and effort to maintain the vitality and production of a farm?

The Chamber of Commerce is in the process of piloting [Succession Connect](#) (no ag stories to report yet), and DAAF is partnering with the Ag Alliance to develop a farm succession stream. [ACORN](#) and the [Ag Alliance](#) collaborate to deliver mentorship programs across all sectors, and [SOIL](#) connects aspiring farm apprentices with farms interested in teaching them, nationwide. [FAWN](#) is an apprentice- and worker-lead network that meets regularly to connect and encourage new farmers in their pursuits, and [Farm Link](#) is a nationwide matching network that helps connect farmers with potential successors. The [Urban Teaching Farm project](#), supported in part by NFU-NB, is working to educate skilled and knowledgeable farmers for success in the small-scale organic industry. Each of these organizations is keen to help forge lasting connections in the agriculture community.

With generation-to-generation succession becoming a thing of the past, and debt-loads making the transfer or sale of large farms increasingly difficult, the need for a new outlook on the approach to farm succession has arrived at our doorstep. Take a listen to [Maritime Noon’s segment on farm succession here](#) from August 2, 2017 (begins at 13:00).

The 2016 Census of Agriculture helps us to assess the direction of New Brunswick’s agriculture industry over the past 5 years. It has shown us downfalls and successes, and though not all the numbers are positive, the information it provides can only help to inform upcoming decisions and improvements so that the industry becomes robust and well-rounded when we see the next census in five years’ time.