

The Farmer's Toolbox: A Guide To Accessing USDA Programs

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Introduction: Is this Toolbox for You?

If you are a socially disadvantaged or other small farmer or rancher in the United States, or if you work to teach small farmers and ranchers about the resources available to them, then Yes!

This toolbox is designed for farmers and ranchers, as well as for trainers who want to educate their farm groups about accessing tools and resources from the federal government. As a small farmer or rancher, you have many options that will allow you to receive assistance from the federal government. This toolbox will guide you through some of the most important federal programs available to you, as well as touch upon other information that will help make your farm and ranch operations practical and profitable.

This toolbox stresses the importance of financial record-keeping; local market assessments and value added products; disaster relief programs; conservation and sustainable agriculture; and participating in the Census of Agriculture and the U.S. Census. You can also plan your training methods and tools for the year by using the seasonal calendar (to help you plan your farm activities) and the farmer tracking tool (to track the trainings your farmers receive).

The most important thing to remember about this toolbox is preparation: you must **PLAN AHEAD**. This includes buying crop insurance, keeping good financial records, and planning your marketing and conservation activities. If you are unprepared, many doors will be closed to you--you will not qualify for most federal programs if you have not thought ahead.

The Farmer's Toolbox can be found on Rural Coalition's website at: www.ruralco.org.

The Rural Coalition and its members developed the Farmer's Toolbox for the exclusive benefit of minority farmers and other small farmers with major federal support from USDA's Risk Management Agency Civil Rights and Community Outreach Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service, and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. Under the partnership agreement between the Rural Coalition and the USDA, this manual is the property of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC). These materials may only be reproduced and utilized with permission from the Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural for the training of farmers and ranchers. Permission must be requested using the Permission to Use Form. If permission is granted, users must agree to provide credit to the producers of the materials, and agree that the materials will not be sold nor farmers charged any fees for training using these materials.

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Training Methods & Tools

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