



Grant Opportunities for Farmers

An increasing number of grant programs are available to farmers from federal or state sources, each with specific objectives. Grants fall into the three general types: 1) grants for business planning, adding value and increasing farm viability; 2) grants for on-farm research and demonstration projects that are mostly production-oriented though some include marketing demonstration projects; and 3) grants for farm energy conservation, alternative energy, environmental protection/conservation and waste management.

Grants are never (rarely) available to start a farm and are not a reliable strategy for growing your business. Grants may enable you to expand a particular aspect of your business to make your operation more viable or provide funding to try a new practice on your farm.

Grants are highly competitive so apply only if the project you are proposing clearly meets the grantor's objectives. Always find out what kinds of projects were funded in the past to determine if your project is in line with what has been funded.

It takes significant time and effort to write a winning grant proposal. Instructions must be followed precisely. Grants often require a cash or in-kind match that must be documented in the budget you propose. Grants will not be considered if they arrive after the application deadline. Deadlines for application submission and instructions are generally announced once a year. Most grants are not available on an ongoing basis.

Once you submit a grant, it may take 3 to 6 months to find out if your application was selected for funding. If funded, it also takes time to finalize the contract. Generally you will not be reimbursed for money spent prior receiving the signed contract. Grant contracts require that you write a report of the results and provide an accounting of how the money was spent; therefore, you must keep accurate records. Grants are also considered income for tax purposes.

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Grant Opportunities for Farmers Guide to Farming in New York State

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Following is a list of some grant sources currently available for farm projects. The purpose, timing, and availability of grants changes frequently. Therefore it's important to check websites for current information:

NEW YORK STATE SOURCES – www.agmkt.state.ny.us – Click on “Funding Opportunities” or call 518-457-7076

- **NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets - Farmland Viability Program – Form B or C**
Purpose: Funds to help prepare a farm business plan or a comprehensive nutrient management plan (use Form B) or to assist with implementation of a business improvement identified in a business plan (use Form C); you must submit a business plan along with the application.
Funding: matching grant up to \$15,000 (75% state: 25% farm business - 20% is this cash, balance may be in-kind match)
- **NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets – Food and Agriculture Industry Research & Development Grant Program (FAID)**
Purpose: Funds demonstration projects, feasibility analyses, applied research involving new or alternative technologies, practices or organizational arrangements.
Funding: 50% match up to maximum of \$60,000 (match can be cash, in-kind services, other resources)
- **NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets – Agriculture & Farmland Protection Projects**
Purpose: State assistance for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (development rights) to permanently restrict development of valuable agricultural lands
Eligibility: Counties or municipalities with approved Ag & Farmland Protection – Farmers should contact county/town government if interested in the sale of development rights.
Funding: No cap; State provides 75% of the cost to acquire the easement; farmers or local government provides 25%
- **NYS Funding for Organic Certification**
Purpose: Reimburse producers for a portion of their annual organic certification renewal costs
Funding levels: 75% reimbursement up to a maximum of \$500
Information: Ag & Markets - 800-554-4501 or 518-457-2195
website: www.ams.usda.gov/nop - National Organic Program information
Forms can be downloaded from: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/agsservices/OrganicApp.pdf
- **NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets Winery Website Grant**
Purpose: available for farm wineries to develop/upgrade their website
Funding levels: 75% of cost up to \$1,000; 25% match
Information: 518-457-2716; www.agmkt.state.ny.us/RFPS.html
- **NYS DEC Water Quality Improvement Projects**
Purpose: Implement practices to improve water quality
Information: contact your county SWCD for information on local funds; funding is not competitive but funds are limited and must meet criteria for water quality protection.
- **NYSERDA-New York State Energy Research and Development Authority Programs**
Purpose: Several programs offer incentives and loans for farm waste management; improved energy efficiency; solar and wind generation; and innovative business practices for energy use.
Information: 518-862-1090; toll free 800-NYSERDA or check www.nyserda.org - look at current funding opportunities for project descriptions and who to contact for details





FEDERAL SOURCES

- **USDA-SARE/Sustainable Agriculture - Farmer/Grower Grant**
Purpose: Support on-farm research demonstrations, marketing innovations, value adding activities and other projects.
Funding: grants in the range of \$5000-10,000; capital improvements limited to \$500 of total project cost; no match required
Annual deadline in December
Information: 802-656-0471 or email nesare@uvm.edu; website: www.uvm.edu/~nesare/
- **USDA Rural Business Cooperative Service – Value Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant Program**
Purpose: Encourage producers of commodities to refine products to increase their value – for feasibility studies, business and marketing plans, studies to establish a new venture.
Funding levels: up to \$150,000 per proposal
Information: 315-477-6409; website: www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm
- **USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service - Renewable Energy and Efficiency Program**
Purpose: Help farmers and rural businesses make energy improvements and install renewable systems
Eligible projects: systems that generate energy from wind, solar, biomass, or geothermal sources, energy efficiency improvements, upgrading equipment or processes
Funding levels: up to 25% of project costs, maximum grant \$250,000 for energy efficiency; up to \$500,000 for renewable energy
Information: 315-477-6409; website: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html>
- **USDA NRCS – Farm Bill Initiatives for Conservation Practices**
Purpose: The Farm Bill authorizes several new initiatives geared at land conservation and water quality protection.
Information: find out what is available by contacting your county or regional USDA Service Center.
Websites: www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov or call 315-477-6503.

Check websites for deadlines, applications forms and lists of previously funded projects.

