



**Responses to Questions Posed on the Gaining Insights, Gaining Access Webinars**  
Held November 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Gaining Insights, Gaining Access Webinar 11/23/15 Questions**

*Q: Can some of this data be broken out at the county level?*

A: From the special tabulation, we would be able to break out county-level data about senior farmers who are farming without a secondary or tertiary operator under age 45. In some counties, that data may not be available because of disclosure issues. We have not done that analysis for all seven states yet. Please be in touch if you are interested in pursuing that.

*Q: Perhaps I missed it, but can we tell how many of the larger more profitable farmers have a succession plan vs. the smaller less profitable farm?*

A: Neither the Census of Agriculture nor the Tenure, Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Land (TOTAL) survey ask specifically about succession plans, so we do not know how many farms of any kind have succession plans. There are several research studies that confirm the hypothesis that too few farmers have adequate succession plans. A 2006 study showed only 36 percent of farmers and farmland owners had an estate plan. 82 percent did not have an exit strategy and did not know how to develop one. Only 12 percent had a retirement plan. An Iowa study showed 2/3 of retiring farmers did not have an identified successor. See <http://www.uvm.edu/farmlasts> for citations and a comprehensive research report on land tenure and transfer.

*Q: Has any data been collected regarding farmers who have sold the development rights to their farmland?*

A: American Farmland Trust compiles an annual survey of the number of farms and acres of farmland protected through state and local Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) programs. That survey can be found on AFT's Farmland Information Center website, [here](#).

*Q: Are there any interesting patterns in the Census data on value of livestock & equipment? This # might get at beginning farmer/age issues.*

A: The Census of Agriculture includes average value of machinery in Table 69, Summary by Age and Primary Occupation. It does not have value of livestock, just inventory numbers.

*Q: Are your proposed policies and programs going to be excluding those 45-65 years old?*

A: This project was focused on gaining insights into certain farmer demographics, specifically senior farmers and beginning farmers. Farmers age 45-65 are an important and growing demographic, and our findings point to the need to engage farmers in this age bracket in discussions around transition and succession.

*Q: Thank you so much for all this information. In your research, have you been able to discover what is the greatest barrier to senior farmers having a farm succession plan? Is it the lack of new farmers? Not being able to find new farmers? Or some other issue(s)?*

A: We encourage you to listen to our webinar from November 24<sup>th</sup>. In it, we walk through the findings from our focus groups of farmers without identified successors, including the barriers these farmers see to succession, and in planning for it.

*Q: What is the definition of a hobby farm? I am referring to the net income of 1734?*

A: The Census of Agriculture does not define a “hobby” farm.

*Q: Was there any differences in off farm income among the different age groups or other farmer group characteristics analyzed in the special tabulation?*

A: We were not able to analyze difference in off-farm income among the different age groups through our special tabulation request. However, please see the attached spreadsheet, generously provided to us by Gary Keough with the National Agricultural Statistical Service, which has information about off-farm income of principal farm operators, by age.

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*Q: Were wineries included as "farms" in these studies?*

A: In general terms wineries are not counted as farms. Wine production is classified a food manufacturing process. The Census of Agriculture has historically measured agricultural production and not included value added sales like wine, jams, jellies, cider, etc. However, that will change with the 2017 Census of Agriculture. For vineyards that also have wineries, the wine production is considered a value added process and sales are not included as Gross Cash Farm Income. The value of the fruit grown on the farm and use on the farm is included. Vineyards are included as fruit farms.

*Q: Of the farmers who indicated that they would like a screening service to help identify buyer or lessee, did they identify any specific aspect of the "screening" that would be helpful?*

A: No, the discussion was more general around getting assistance to find and select a potential transferee.

*Q: Food security being a critical issue for any country, what is the government (any level) doing to assist seniors without successors to ensure future food security. Any policy in place?*

A: American Farmland Trust, Land For Good and Conservation Law Foundation have been working on a complementary project focused largely on state policy needs and innovations around land access and farm transfer and succession. How to encourage and support farmers in planning around succession was identified as a policy need, with a number of policy solutions identified. AFT, LFG and CLF will be working with stakeholders around New England this coming year on advancing these policy ideas. If you would like more information about this Land Access Policy Project, please be in touch with Cris Coffin or Kathy Ruhf at Land For Good.

*Q: For those of us that have tools and programs that can help with succession, and also the proactive motivation to put these tools and programs in service, what are some strategies for helping to identify and reach out to the farmers that need them?*

A: This is a good and commonly asked question (and frustration!). There is no silver bullet. Working with partner organizations such as Farm Bureaus and trade groups, incentivizing participation, and effective messaging are a few strategies. Land For Good did some research on the messaging end.