

*Sponsored by Senator Heidi Heitkamp and Senator Susan Collins*

### **The Next Generation in Agriculture Act**

*Bill would provide funding resources to help beginning farmers and ranchers enter into the industry and help coordinate beginning farmer and rancher programs at the USDA.*

#### **Farmers face an aging population; coordination and resources are needed**

The share of farmers age 65 and older has increased from 14 percent in 1945, to more than 31 percent in 2012. While the labor force in the United States has continued to get older and older, it is important that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to have the tools necessary to help new and beginning farmers become established in the production of agriculture.

Resources and coordination are needed so the USDA can continue to help support the next generation of beginning farmers and ranchers. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development (BFRD) program plays a key role in helping the next generation become established in agriculture. Continuing and increasing this support will play a vital role in helping younger and new producers enter the industry as aging farmers seek retirement. Additionally, it is essential the USDA coordinate with youth farming organizations at the state and national level so they can help energize, support, and educate the next generation of producers. The Youth Outreach and Beginning Farmer Coordination positions will be a conduit through which USDA technical and programmatic assistance can be put in the hands of potential future farmers and ranchers.

#### **Provides resources to help beginning farmers and ranchers transition into agriculture, and coordinates youth organizations with USDA beginning farmer and rancher programs**

It would:

- Would extend the BFRD program beyond 2018, and would increase the USDA's support for the program to \$30 million in fiscal years 2019-2020, \$40 million for fiscal years 2021-2022, and \$50 million for fiscal year 2023 and each fiscal year thereafter. The 2014 Farm Bill provided \$20 million in funding for the beginning farmer and rancher development (BFRD) program through 2018
- Emphasizes areas of the BFRD program that would include farmers and ranchers who are looking to transition their farming operation to a new or beginning farmer.
- Codifies a National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator and Agricultural Youth Coordinator at the USDA. Also this bill would direct state USDA offices to designate an employee as the state beginning farmer and rancher coordinator.
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a next generation agriculture technology challenge competition to provide an incentive for the development of innovative technology that removes barriers to entry in the marketplace for beginning farmers and ranchers.
- Changes the definition in the crop insurance title to define a beginning farmer and rancher as having farmed less than 10 years opposed to 5.