

Vermont's congressional delegation - Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch - today announced a \$659,784 grant to the Vermont New Farmer Network (VNFN). The grant will allow VNFN to provide training and assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers to help them run successful and sustainable farms.

The Vermont New Farmers Network is a working group of agricultural organizations committed to serving the needs of new and aspiring farmers in Vermont. The grant is made possible through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). Under BFRDP, USDA makes grants to organizations that implement education, training, technical assistance and outreach programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers, specifically those who have been farming or ranching for ten years or fewer.

"Farming is an integral part of Vermont's identity and economy," Vermont's congressional delegation said in a statement. "In recent years we have seen a growth of farmers' markets and community supported agriculture programs, which has inspired a new generation of Vermont farmers. This grant will assist these new farmers as they develop their agricultural enterprises so they can continue the farming tradition so important to our state."

Additional grants will be available through the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Applications will be accepted through November 22, 2011. Interested parties should visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/beginningfarmerandrancher.cfm>.