

Legislation Aims to Draw New Generation of Farmers

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (NE-01) and Congressman Tim Walz (MN-01) are leading a bipartisan initiative to revitalize rural America by encouraging young people to engage in farming operations and agricultural entrepreneurship. They have introduced H.R. 3236, the *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2011*, in the U.S. House of Representatives. Walz and Fortenberry are both members of the House Agriculture Committee. Companion legislation will be introduced in the U.S. Senate in coming weeks.

“As the average age of the American farmer continues to increase, it is critical for the well-being of rural America that young people engage in farming and agricultural entrepreneurship,” Fortenberry said. “Exciting new opportunities are emerging in production agriculture export markets, value-added goods and local foods systems, conservation, and energy generation. This legislation provides practical incentives to young farmers and ranchers, helping overcome the initial challenges facing those who wish to establish their careers in agriculture and raise families on the farm.”

“We have to make sure America’s next generation of family farmers have the support they need to continue providing a safe, abundant food supply,” said Rep. Walz. “This legislation is a smart, effective way to support our local economies and create local jobs.”

The average age of the U.S. farmer is 57. The average age in Nebraska is 56, and in Minnesota it is 55. *The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act* seeks to ready a new generation of American ag producers by modifying and improving upon existing farm programs to help reduce the steep financial burdens of setting up an agricultural business.

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