Preparing a New Generation of Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Farmers

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http://www.newillinoisfarmers.org

GROWING A NEW GENERATION OF ILLINOIS FRUIT AND VEGETABLE FARMERS

THINKING BEYOND THE FIRST YEAR

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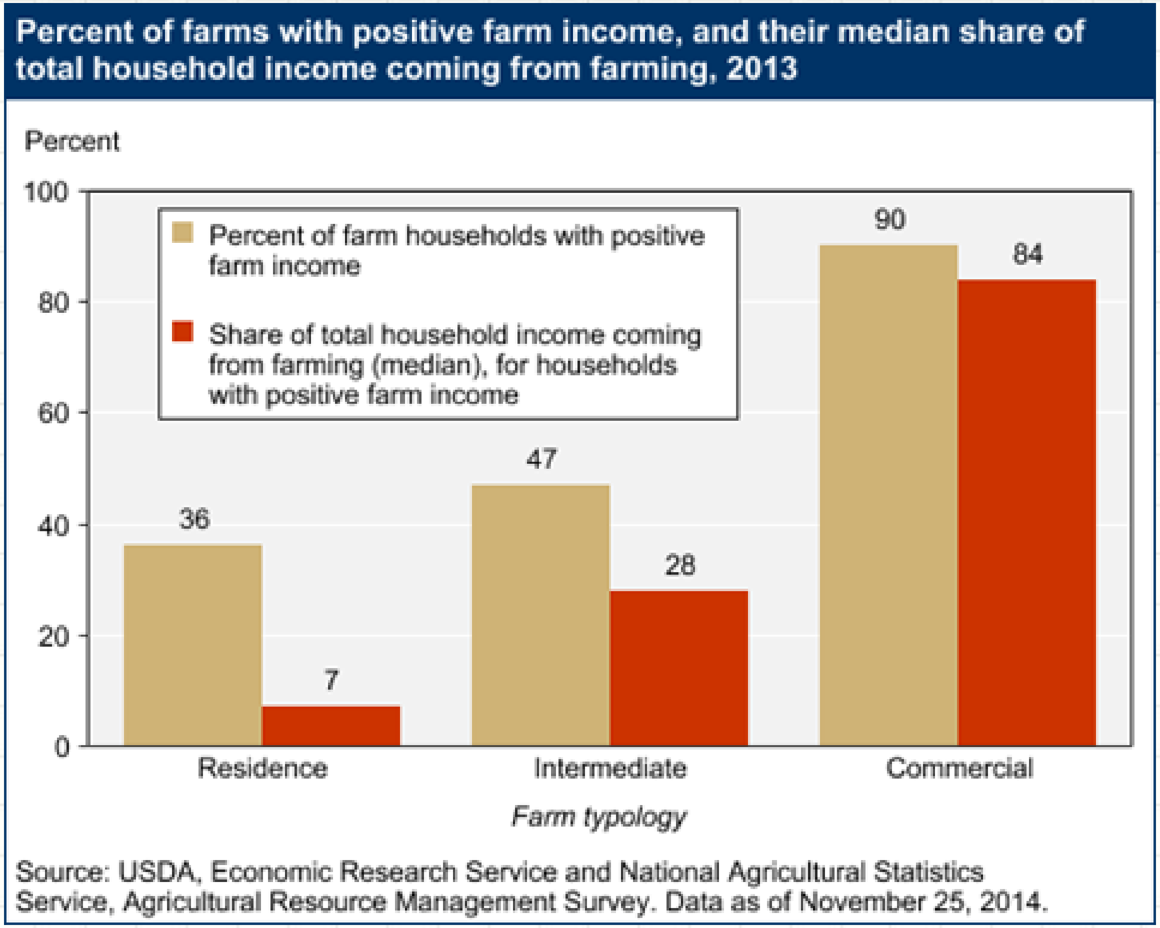
Objective

- Emphasize things you have already heard
  - Income goal
  - Labor and retention
  - Grow with your experience
  - Reinvestment
  - Marketing and market development
  - What to do in the face of adversity

Income Goal

- A realistic number, and a plan to reach it



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new ILLINOIS fruit & vegetable FARMERS

Labor and Retention

- Your will probably need hired help sooner than you think…
  - $ gained or saved necessary to justify hiring
  - Hourly help vs. contractor vs. employee
  - Learn to use industry standard hiring practices

Credit: USDA

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Labor and Retention

- Decent wage
  - Depends on responsibility and geography
  - Pay that incentivizes performance

Credit: Jeremy Keith

Credit: USDA

Labor and Retention

- Decent working conditions
  - Safe equipment and proper ergonomics
  - Positive work environment

Credit: Rick Gordon

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Labor and Retention

- Professional development
  - Take the time to teach and give feedback
  - Increase responsibility or ownership

Credit: Suzie's Farm

Grow With Your Experience

- Work on someone else's farm

Credit: Suzie's Farm

Grow With Your Experience

- Start small, consider renting
- Put in the time, sweat equity
- Build your skills, brand, and market

Credit: Jeremy Keith

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Reinvestment

- Capitalize to increase efficiency and productive capacity, reduce labor
- Buy bigger than you currently need

Credit: Jared and Corin

Marketing and Market Development

- Constantly evaluate your marketplace
  - What is missing?
  - What is new and trendy?
  - What can I produce efficiently?

Credit: Marcy Leigh

Credit: SatrinaO

Credit: Plant Chicago

Marketing and Market Development

- Don't underestimate the potential of wholesale markets

Credit: USDA

In the face of adversity…

- Learn from each year's challenges
  - Gather advice from peers and advisors
  - Go to Plan B, or Plan C
  - Accept help
  - Know when to fold 'em…

Credit: [Michael Quick]

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Summary

- Set an income goal and plan for profitability
- Find good help, and keep them
- Grow your business with your skills/demand
- Prioritize your capital investments
- Constantly evaluate your marketplace
- Learn from mistakes, and accept help

To reach us

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If you have questions …

- University of Illinois Extension Local Food Systems and Small Farms team
  - http://web.extension.illinois.edu/smallfarm/
- USDA's Start2Farm site
  - http://www.start2farm.gov/