



The Future of Family Farms: Practical Farmers' Legacy Letters Project

From University Of Iowa Press

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A monumental transfer of farmland is occurring in the United States. The average American farmer is fifty-eight years old, and the 40 percent of farmland owners who lease their land to others are even older: sixty-six on average. Five times as many farmers are over sixty-five as are under thirty-five. What will happen to this land? Who will own it? What if one child wants to farm but can't afford to buy out the nonfarming siblings? What if keeping the farm in the family means foregoing the significant profits that could be earned from selling it? These sometimes painful and divisive questions confront many farmers and farmland owners today. How they answer them will shape their families and the land for generations to come.

The Farm Legacy Letters project, developed by the member-driven nonprofit Practical Farmers of Iowa, is designed to help farmers and farmland owners think about their farm's future and talk about it with their families. An essential complement to handbooks on business succession, this book gathers the letters and stories of midwestern families about the land they cherish—how they acquired it, what they treasure most about it, and their hopes for its future. Some of the writers descend from families who have owned a particular patch of the earth since the 1800s, while others became farmland owners more recently—one as recently as 2015. Some are no longer farmland owners at all, because—after careful thought about what mattered most to them—they sold their land to the next generation of farmers.

All of these writers hope that, by sharing their farmland legacies, they will encourage others to ponder and then write about the histories, accomplishments, challenges, and hopes for their farmland for the generations who come after they are gone.

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Editorial Review

Review

“*The Future of Family Farms* is a timely and important new book about the future of farmland and the hopes and challenges of the families who farm it. More than 40 percent of America’s agricultural landscape is owned by seniors aged sixty-five and older so, as the author notes, we’re in for a lot of drama in the coming years. The book’s framing chapters make a compelling case for action, and the Practical Farmers’ stories are both moving and relevant, reinforcing the need for families not only to have shared commitment but also a vision and plan for the future—whether they’ve been farming for more than a hundred years, or are beginning farmers.”—Julia Freedgood, assistant vice president of programs, American Farmland Trust

“PFI and its members are an inspiration! They remind us all that family, community, and stewardship are at the heart of farming. Their stories are a call to action to everyone who ‘belongs to the land:’ start the conversation about your farm’s legacy today. The future of rural communities and regional food systems may depend on it.”—Jim Habana Hafner, executive director, Land for Good

“As a company geared toward holding farmland indefinitely, we understand deeply the emotional commitment farmers make to building their business from the land. It means everything for young farmers to be able to own their land someday and then hopefully pass it along to the next generation. It is, in fact, what is worth working for. Teresa’s work bridges the entire life and hopes of farm families.”—Dave Miller, CEO & cofounder, Iroquois Valley Farms, LLC

About the Author

Teresa Opheim has worked for the Iowa Environmental Council, the Environmental Law Institute, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. She led the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group before serving as the executive director of Practical Farmers of Iowa from 2006 to 2016. Opheim is coauthor of *Our National Wetland Heritage*. She continues to work on farm transfer issues from her home in the Twin Cities.

Users Review

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Carolyn Bailey:

The Future of Family Farms: Practical Farmers' Legacy Letters Project can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing The Future of Family Farms: Practical Farmers' Legacy Letters Project nevertheless doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into completely new stage of crucial thinking.

Stephen Galvan:

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