

# Farm Business Technical Assistance

## 2025 NEW HAMPSHIRE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN

**Purpose:** To illustrate the business and financial advising services available to farmers and other assistance that supports the viability of their farm business.

### What's at Stake?

Family farms are a cornerstone of New Hampshire culture; they protect open spaces, contribute to environmental health, serve as a major attraction for tourists, and support numerous business sectors throughout the food chain.

Yet, New Hampshire's farms face many obstacles that threaten their viability. Grocery stores often sell food at prices below the local cost of production. The increased costs of labor, equipment, and other inputs continue to deteriorate farm profitability and expanding regulations further challenge producers. Farm business management requires complex knowledge and skill sets that reach across the legal, tax, finance, and human resource fields. Providing technical assistance in these areas is critical to the success of New Hampshire's farming community.

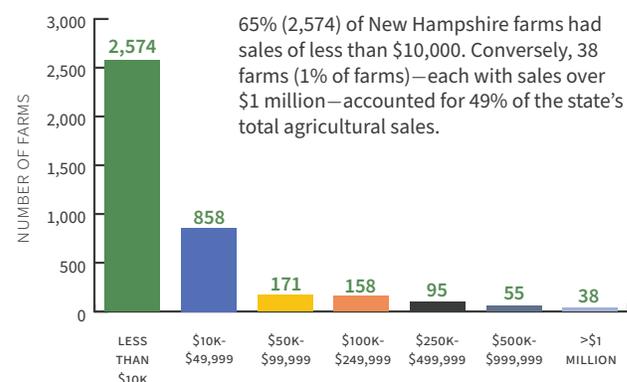
### Current Conditions

There were 3,949 farms in New Hampshire in 2022 and 92% of those farms sold less than \$100,000 in goods and services. Sustaining economically viable farms requires farmers to be supported by skilled business advisors. Farms at varying stages of development, scale, and commodity areas have differing needs; smaller, lower-grossing farms often need assistance in understanding how to develop profitable operations, while more complex, higher-grossing operations often need assistance with management systems that support their complexity.

Due to the confidentiality and risk associated with business management, farmers often seek to work with people with whom they have forged trusting relationships. This exacerbates the current shortage of technical assistance providers, as new professionals often lack those relationships. Additionally, both public and private sector organizations report difficulty hiring skilled farm business professionals due to fewer university programs offering courses in that area, an increase in retirements since 2020, a lack of funding, and non-competitive wages.

Current technical assistance services struggle to reach BIPOC and LGBTQ+ farmer communities. Furthermore, historically underserved farmers have identified the need for technical assistance from service providers who represent their communities and understand their unique practices and challenges. Building capacity to meet these needs has become another part of the equation.

#### NH FARMS BY VALUE OF SALES, 2022



SOURCE: USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture, Table 3: Economic Class.

# Challenges and Opportunities

## CHALLENGES

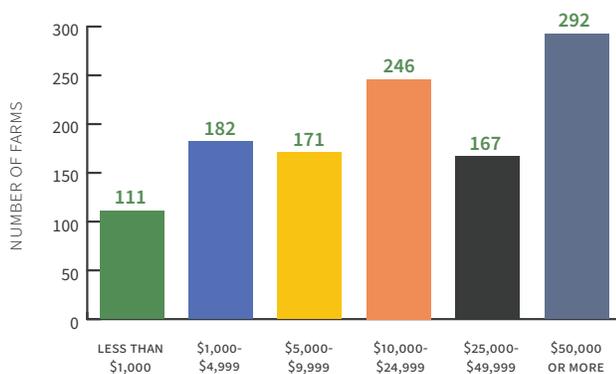
- Farmers often identify a lack of desire to learn and work on record keeping, finances, legal compliance, and tax planning.
- The complexity of these farm business topics make it difficult to strengthen the skills of farmers and technical service providers alike.
- Fees for private sector technical service providers are often financially inaccessible to farmers.
- Low salaries for public sector service providers make it challenging to fill positions, especially with highly experienced individuals.
- Several existing obstacles preclude farm business service providers from collaborating.
- Non-agricultural professionals often lack knowledge of farm-related requirements or applications.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Federal and state decision makers are increasingly aware of the need for more farm business technical assistance.
- Groups, such as the Agricultural Viability Alliance, are working to garner funding and create policy changes to build both the capacity and number of Northeast farm business service providers. They are also working to reduce obstacles to collaborate across the region, including with historically underserved farmers.
- Federal monies allocated to New Hampshire are being used to address some of the farm business technical assistance needs.
- Conversations within organizations and groups around collaborating and/or hiring additional staff are being held.

### NH FARMS WITH NET INCOME GAINS, 2022

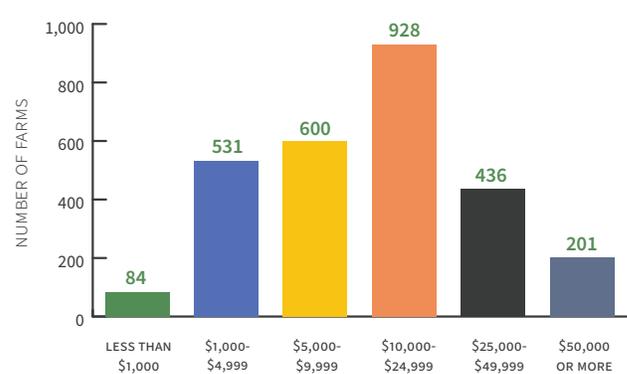
29.6% (1,169) of NH farms had net gains—revenue that exceeded expenses—in 2022. A little more than 7% (292) of farms had net income over \$50,000.



SOURCE: USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture, Table 5: Net Cash Income.

### NH FARMS WITH NET INCOME LOSSES, 2022

70.4% (2,780) of NH farms had net losses—expenses that exceeded revenue—in 2022. A little more than 5% (201) of farms had net losses over \$50,000.



SOURCE: USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture, Table 5: Net Cash Income.

# Recommendations

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- **Create collaborative partnerships between existing farm business technical service providers.** Recommended partnerships and collaborations are between UNH Extension, the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food, NOFA-NH, NH Farm Bureau, and NH Ag Financiers.
- **Secure a funding pool providing farm business technical assistance grants.** Secure and create a funding pool that provides grants to farmers for business technical assistance, allowing farmers to choose who they work with. Funds could be deployed through existing federal agencies that have historically been successful in these funding models, such as programs funded through the USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Rural Development, and the Small Business Development Center.
- **Create a multi-year plan to build capacity for and attract new agricultural professionals.** This plan could include identifying skill gaps in organizations currently offering farm business technical assistance, accounting for the diversity of farm sizes, developmental stages, production methods, commodities, and particular demographic needs of New Hampshire's farming community. The plan could prioritize professional development utilizing effective education techniques to build skills for all levels of service providers.
- **Create a database to connect farm business professionals with farmers.** Create and populate a searchable database to connect available farm business professionals with farmers, including subject matter expertise, cost for services, and availability.
- **Expand farm business technical assistance capacity.** Advocacy for the following improvements can expand farm business technical assistance capacity.

  - Agricultural organizations increasing farm business technical assistance staff
  - Small business development organizations training staff to help meet the needs of farmers
  - Agricultural technical assistance providers that historically focused solely on production are cross-trained in business technical assistance

# Authors

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**New Hampshire**  
*Department of Agriculture,  
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This brief was developed through a participatory process led by the NH Food Alliance, a program of the University of New Hampshire. The brief content is comprised of the opinions, perspectives, and information gathered by the authors and participants, and does not necessarily represent those of the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food or the NH Food Alliance.

For more information, including references and opportunities to get involved, visit the 2025 NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan web page on [nhfoodalliance.org](https://nhfoodalliance.org) or scan the QR code on the inside front cover of the print version.