

# Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors Program

2021 North Central Partnership Grant



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**60% of Michigan's Farmers are 55+ years old.  
New Farmers need mentors in order to be successful.**

**PROGRAM GOALS** are to show  
**INCREASE** in new Farmer's:

- KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, SKILLS, OR AWARENESS (KASA)
- FARM FINANCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILTY (FES)





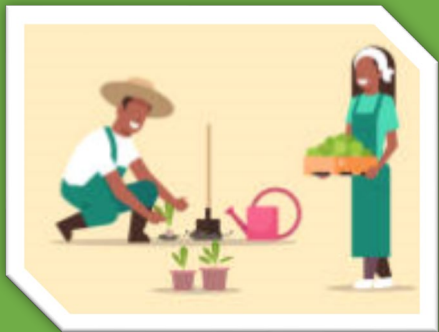
Throughout 2021:

**6 Farmer Mentors**

met with

**13 Mentees**

who self-selected  
into 2 categories



**7 Beginning Farmers**



"Anyone in their first 10 years of actively farming"

**6 Aspiring Farmers**



"Anyone who may have hands-on farming experience but doesn't yet have land or sell farm products"

In 2021,  
Mentees included:



7 Beginning Farmers



6 Aspiring Farmers



3 BIPOC



1 Veteran



3 Limited resource producers\*



1 BIPOC



\* "Limited resource producers" is the USDA's term for low-income farmers.

# MENTORSHIP NEEDS VARY FOR NEW FARMERS.

Farmer Mentors focused on different topics for their Mentees.



Beginning  
Farmers

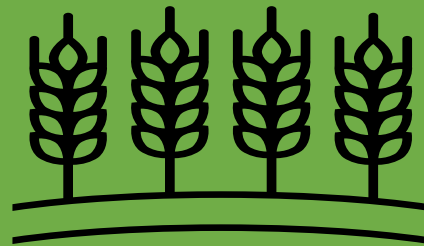


Help Increase  
Financial,  
Environmental &  
Social Sustainability

Aspiring  
Farmers



Help Gain Access to  
Land + Credit  
& Build Skills in  
Business + Farming



# GRANT OBJECTIVES FOR YEAR 1 WERE MET.

Through mentorship, Beginning Farmers reported improvements to their KASA (*knowledge, attitudes, skills, or awareness*) in all categories.

7 Beginning Farmers



7 out of 7  
INCREASED understanding of their Farm Financials



6 out of 7  
INCREASED understanding of their Soil Health + Soil Knowledge



3 out of 5  
INCREASED their WORK-LIFE BALANCE from "Below Average"



Beginning Farmers reported IMPROVEMENTS to their Triple Bottom Line (Profitability, Stewardship & Quality of Life)



# BEGINNING FARMER MENTEE & MENTOR TESTIMONIALS:

“It was great to have access to someone with so much experience and expertise in the same farming enterprise as I am in.”

- Todd H., **Beginning Farmer Mentee**



“I had some really helpful conversations with my mentor Rachel about getting into the wholesale game.”

- Dani F., **Beginning Farmer Mentee**



“Cool to meet other fellow beginning farmers across the state and my mentor who was so helpful and encouraging!”

- Jane L., **Beginning Farmer Mentee**



“The last 5 or 10 years I have been a little discouraged with how much farm information sharing is becoming consulting that you pay for.

When I was first getting into farming, there was so much peer-to-peer sharing for free at conferences, workshops, and just meeting up. New farmers don't really have the resources to pay for consulting or workshops.

It is really encouraging that this program is happening, this sharing - helping new farmers where no one is making a ton of money. They're doing it because they want to further sustainable farming.”

- Rachel C., **Farmer Mentor**



6 Aspiring Farmers



2 Accessed Training on land, credit, business or farm



1 Accessed Land to Farm thanks to a mentor's shared resources!



6 Accessed Mentor/Peer Input



3 out of 3

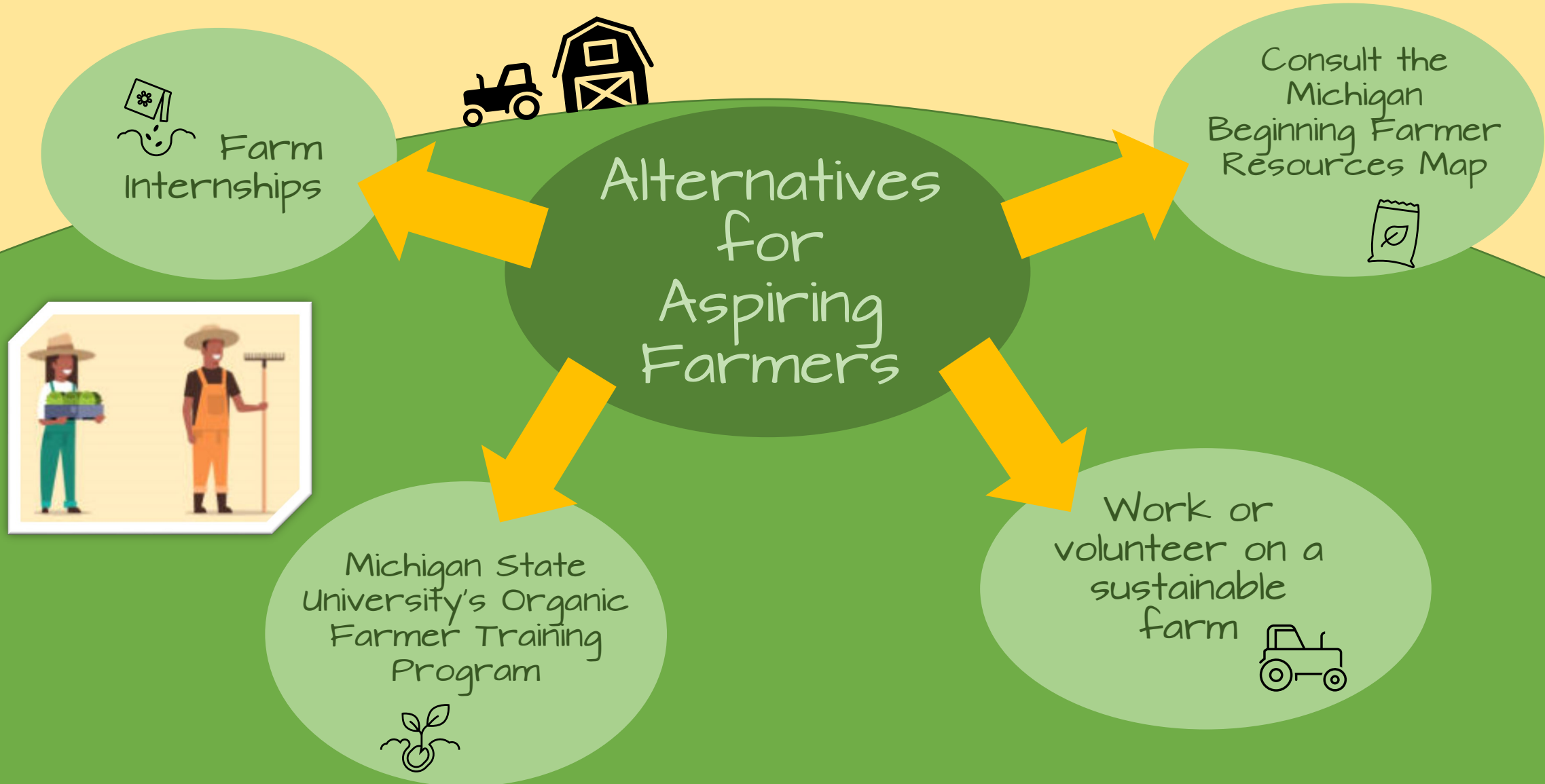
report INCREASED KASA about land, credit, or farm/business training





# FOR ASPIRING FARMERS – MENTORSHIP MAY NOT BE A GOOD FIT FOR ALL.

Mentors stated that communication was difficult to establish, not sure how to help.



# ASPIRING FARMER MENTEE & MENTOR TESTIMONIALS:

“Connecting with established farmers and aspiring farmers has helped a lot. I think networking and having people to bounce ideas off of is extremely helpful because farming can feel overwhelming at times. By networking, you can potentially find someone who has experience with an issue that you are facing on your farm and they can help you find a solution.”

- Andy N., **Aspiring Farmer Mentee**



“Getting matched up with Joanée was really perfect, and getting to have a continued relationship with her is invaluable. The resources Katie provided especially regarding land and credit access are also amazing. The most valuable thing I’ve come out with is confidence!”

– Rowan, **Aspiring Farmer Mentee**



“I was surprised to find that my meetings with mentees always left me newly inspired about my own farm business”

- Alex C., **Farmer Mentor**



“I got inspired by my new farmers and all the new and exciting ways they want to use the land.”

– Joannee D., **Farmer Mentor**

