

Hundred Young Farmers Program by the Council of Agriculture

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Source: Council of Agriculture (COA)

In 2013, the Council of Agriculture (COA) started a program to select potential young farmers around Taiwan. The program aims to help young farmers for at least two years and resolve problems in land, capital and skill by an integrative industry-academia-government resource. Specifically, the companion assistance of production skills and management covers agricultural training, farmland and capital, facilities and equipment subsidy, production-sales matching, and executive assistance. The cross-sector resource integration is implemented via the companion program as a platform. Through the platform, young farmers might stabilize management towards production scale or innovative development. More importantly, some successful models in this program may further encourage other young farmers.

During the first-year of Hundred Young Farmers program (June 2013~May 2015), a total of 321 young farmers have been selected in the first, second, and third annual year. COA invested 5,668 expert-times for young farmer assistances, four times of domestic/international benchmarking workshops, NT\$28.14 million facility subsidy, 189 items of new varieties/ technology, 269 projects of product design and story telling marketing assistances, 36 pieces of information technology or automation system setups, and NT\$4.09 million innovative value-added projects. As a consequence, those affiliated young farmers should improvement of an averaged production value by 61% in various outcomes in terms of large operation scale, premium product quality, and industry value upgrade, such as an extra of 510 hectares of operation scale, 243 products of certification, 102 items of processing R&D, 353 cases of channel extensions. Continuously, the second- and third-year of the Hundred Young Farmers program started in January 2015 and July 2016, and still ongoing.

In addition, COA consults city and county farmers' associations via 16 local young farmer exchange service hubs to get connections with a total of 2,314 local young farmers. Those hubs are responsible for hosting learning, studying and networking events on the basis of the government consulting programs. The short-term goal is to build exchange experiences to facilitate mutual collaboration in farmer successions. The middle-grand goal is to brainstorm young farmers to develop organizational

operations as a community. The long-term goal is to encourage young farmers to develop into agribusinesses via cross-industry collaborations in combination with consolation resources towards international competitiveness or towards local unique clusters. Eventually, these efforts and outcomes should further create social consensus in agricultural activities.

The creativity, passion, dedication, and judgment are always necessary to move the society forward via economic and social innovation. The public policy in promoting young farmers in investing themselves in the agricultural sector is the core strategy of Taiwan's agricultural competitiveness. COA has never given up in assisting industry structural transformation and in integrating every resource for synergy. More importantly, COA recognizes potential new ideas generated from multi-disciplinary talents, and intends to transform young farmers in mindset changes on agricultural operation, marketing, and social responsibility. If young farmers can succeed, they might turn in revolutionary changes in the conventional agricultural production cooperatives. From cooperatives towards agribusinesses or social enterprises might become a next-stage foundation for a new Taiwan agriculture.

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