

# Informing the Future Generation of Farmers

Victoria Abohasen, Steve Holland, Blake Piper, Nicole Rothner,  
Sarah Schroeder

# What Was Our Objective?

# What Was Our Approach?

# What Was Our Objective?

Motivate and encourage a future generation of farmers by providing a more personalized and streamlined way to learn about farming requirements and resources related to:

- Accessing Capital
  - Land Management
  - Conservation Practices
  - Risk Management
  - Recovering from Damages
  - Finding Local Markets
  - Connecting to Other Farmers
-

## What Was Our Approach?

- User Interviews
  - Competitor and Heuristic Analysis
  - Content Strategy
  - Prototyping
  - Usability Testing
-

# Who Are Our Users?

# Who Are Our Users?

Semi-structured interviews with two USDA employees and one beginning farmer were conducted to gain a better insight into who our users are, what their goals are, and what impediments they currently face.

- **Motivated** by love of outdoors, producing food
  - **Demographics** trend young: Inspiring the next generation
  - **Experience** with agriculture and USDA may be limited
  - **Experience** with technology usually moderate to high
  - Very busy with a lot to juggle (e.g., other jobs, family, farm work and marketing) in terms of everyday **behavior**
-

# Luise Gonzales

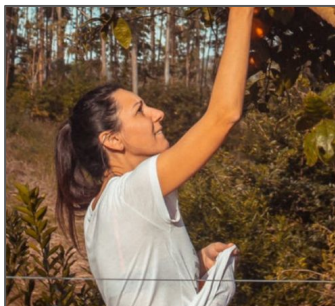
## Demographic

Female 32 years

Florida Panhandle

Married

Farmer, part-time paralegal



## Motivations

- Started farming with her husband because they love working outdoors and producing their own food
- Wants to promote a sustainable lifestyle for her family

## Frustrations

- Wants to take advantage of government resources for farmers, but she finds the bureaucracy hard to navigate
- She and her husband are both busy with their jobs and childcare on top of farming responsibilities and marketing their products

## Skills

Produce and Livestock



Tech Experience



Government Farm Programs



Marketing and Social Media



## Quote

“

*I want to build my farm into a self-sustaining long-term enterprise that supports my family, so that me and my husbands can quit our jobs.*

”

## Background

- Owns 5 acres of land in the Florida panhandle with her husband
- Sells goat milk soap and produce at local farmers markets; markets goat meat to local restaurants
- Works part-time as a paralegal
- Has a 4-year-old son

## Goals

- Identify additional profitable crops that grow my region.
- Figure out which government programs I can use to expand my business.
- Find opportunities to buy land.



# What Are Existing Impediments?

## What are Existing Impediments?

- Time management: Farmers have other work and family responsibilities
  - Costs associated with getting started
  - Many potential paths: Hard to find the right directions
  - Hard to navigate available resources
-

# Competitor Review - Farm Aid Resource Network



What best describes you? Type of Farm?

Farmer Vegetable/Fruit

Search for resources within which state?

Virginia

**Type of Help Needed?**

- ☐ Financial Counseling & Business Planning
- ☐ Crisis Assistance
- ☐ Legal Help & Mediation Services
- ☒ Resources for Beginning Farmers
- ☐ Resources for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
- ☐ Funding Opportunities for Farmers
- ☐ Direct Marketing Assistance
- ☐ Institutional & Wholesale Markets
- ☐ Organic/Sustainable Transition & Support
- ☐ Conservation Programs
- ☐ Land Access
- ☐ Farm Energy Options
- ☐ Industrial Ag & Factory Farm Issues
- ☐ Activism & Organizing

**A BIT ABOUT US** **OUR ANNUAL CONCERT** **ALL ABOUT GOOD FOOD** **HELPING FAMILY FARMERS** **JOIN IN TAKE ACTION**

Search for resources in this state:  
Virginia

**Type of Help Needed:**  
*For best results, choose just one "Type of Help Needed" for each separate search.*

- ☐ Financial Counseling & Business Planning
- ☐ Crisis Assistance
- ☐ Legal Help & Mediation Services
- ☒ Resources for Beginning Farmers
- ☐ Resources for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers

**Farmers**

- ☐ Funding Opportunities for Farmers
- ☐ Direct Marketing Assistance
- ☐ Institutional & Wholesale Markets
- ☐ Organic/Sustainable Transition & Support

**Support**

- ☐ Conservation Programs
- ☐ Land Access
- ☐ Farm Energy Options
- ☐ Industrial Ag & Factory Farm Issues
- ☐ Activism & Organizing

## FARM AID RESOURCE NETWORK

[Back to the Farmer Resource Network](#)

Displaying Organizations 1 - 5 of 79

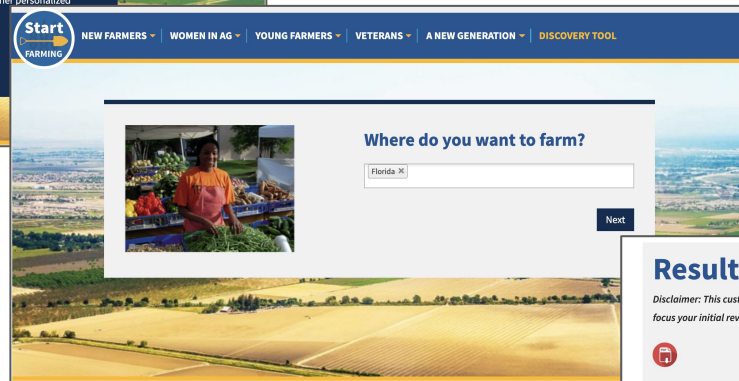
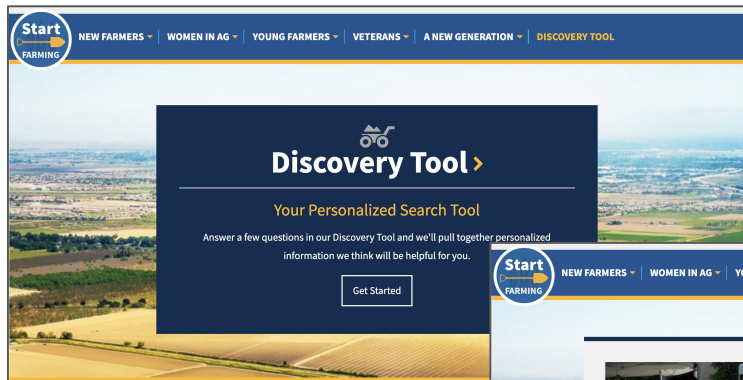
### Piedmont Environmental Council

**Address:** 45 Horner St, Warrenton, VA 20188  
**Phone:** 540.347.2334  
**Contact:** Sue Ellen Johnson  
**Email:** [pec@pecva.org](mailto:pec@pecva.org)  
**Website:** <http://www.pecva.org>

**Resource Description:** Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) works with the citizens of our nine-county region to conserve land, create high-quality communities, strengthen rural economies, celebrate historic resources, protect air and water quality, build smart transportation networks, promote sustainable energy choices, restore wildlife habitat, and improve people's access to nature. We run a variety of programs for farmers and consumers in the region.

**Core Services:** Financial Counseling & Business Planning, Direct Marketing Assistance, Resources for Beginning Farmers, Land Access

# Competitor Review - New Farmers Discovery Tool



## Results

*Disclaimer: This customized information is not intended to be comprehensive of all USDA can offer a new and beginning farmer; it is merely a guide to help focus your initial review of resources. We encourage new farmers and ranchers to come to a USDA office near you to learn more.*



### Florida

#### > Florida A&M University, Cooperative Extension

The Cooperative Extension System, in partnership with NIFA, is a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families throughout the nation.  
<http://www.famu.edu/cesta/main/index.cfm/cooperative-extension-program/about-the...>

#### > University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension

The Cooperative Extension System, in partnership with NIFA, is a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to

# Competitor Review - USDA Farm Loan Discovery Tool

### Farm Loan Discovery Tool

Answer a few short questions to learn about USDA farm loans that might be right for you. USDA also offers other funding opportunities to help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners finance their business. Explore the [Fund page](#) to learn about these programs.

*Note: This tool is not optimized for Internet Explorer. Use Chrome, Edge, or Safari for the best experience.*

- Are you looking for a farm loan?**

Farm Loans can be used to start, expand, sustain, or make changes to your farm.

Yes ☒

No ☐
- Are you looking to fund an agricultural youth project (often associated with 4-H or FFA)?**

Yes ☐

No ☒
- What are you looking to fund?**

Land purchase or construction project (Ownership) ☐

Equipment, seed, livestock, etc. (Operating) ☐

Both (Ownership & Operating) ☒
- About how much money are you looking to borrow?**

Note: Outstanding FSA Farm Loans will be accounted for in determining the loan amount you are eligible for.

\$100,000 or less ☒

\$100,001-\$1M ☐

Over \$1M ☐
- Where is your farm/ranch located, so we can locate your nearest USDA Service Center?**

State: 

Virginia

County: 

Fairfax City

**VIEW LOAN OPTIONS**

### Your Results: Farm Ownership and Operating Microloan

Based on your answers, you might be interested in a combined "Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans"

**1** These results do not guarantee eligibility or approval for a farm loan. Please contact your local Service Center to confirm funding availability and your eligibility for a loan. The USDA Farm Loan Programs are administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), an agency of USDA.

#### Result Sections

- About Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans
- Loan Process
- Prepare for Visit to the Service Center
- Partner with Your Loan Officer
- Find Your Local Service Center

#### Download Your Application Quick Guide

Better understand how to apply and prepare for your visit to a Service Center.

For Microloans

**DOWNLOAD PDF**

After your review of the Application Guide, click here for the Microloan Application Form and Instructions.

For even more information on farm loans, download [Your Guide to FSA Farm Loans \(PDF\)](#).

#### About Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans

Funding a land purchase or construction project as well as equipment, seed, livestock, etc.

##### How much money can I get?

The maximum loan amount for each loan type, Farm Ownership or Operating, is \$50,000. There is no minimum loan amount. This means the maximum combined loan amount is \$100,000. Interest rates are calculated monthly and are posted on the 1st of each month. FSA's Direct Farm Ownership loan interest rate applies to Farm Ownership Microloan funds, while

**Show More**

##### What can I do?

Farm Ownership funds may be used to secure farm land, make a down payment on a farm, improve or expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

Operating funds may be used to purchase equipment, seed,

**Show More**

##### Who can apply?

This loan is only available to farmers and ranchers who are unable to get sufficient funds through a traditional commercial lender. For Farm Ownership funds, generally, you need experience operating a farm-related business.

If you are a minority, woman, or military veteran farmer or

**Show More**

##### When do I pay it back?

For Farm Ownership funds, the maximum repayment term is 25 years.

For Farm Operating funds, repayment terms vary from 1 to 7 years. The length of the loan depends on the amount and purpose of the loan.

##### Do you require collateral?

##### Anything else I should know?

## Heuristic Analysis

	Farmaid	USDA Discovery Tool	USDA Farm Loan Discovery Tool	Average Per Heuristic
Effectiveness	4	4.7	7	5.2
Efficiency	6.7	7.7	8	7.5
Satisfaction	3.3	4	8	5.1
Learnability	7	8.3	8	7.8
Average	5.3	6.2	7.8	6.4

Don't understand how to  
make selections  
Optional

Not immediately clear that you  
can select multiple options

Results are hard to  
navigate

Can't save results for  
later

## Who are you?

Make Selections \*Optional

Back

Next

## What are you farming?

Dairy

Eggs

Farm-raised Fish/Shellfish

Fiber

Forestry

Fruit and Vegetable



## Results

Disclaimer: This customized information is not intended to be comprehensive of all USDA can offer a new and beginning farmer; it is merely a guide to help focus your initial review of resources. We encourage new farmers and ranchers to come to a USDA office near you to learn more.



### Alaska

- University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension**  
The Cooperative Extension System, in partnership with NIFA, is a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families throughout the nation.  
<http://www.uaf.edu/ces>
- State Department of Agriculture Directory**  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Directory provides information and resources on your State's department of agriculture, with contact information and a link to the State's official web site. Each State Department of Agriculture will be able to provide information specific to your state.  
<http://www.nasda.org/>
- BusinessUSA's State Resources Portal**  
Use the BusinessUSA's State Resources Portal map to find resources, events, and local business assistance centers in your area.  
<http://businessusa.gov/micro-site/state-resources>
- Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment**  
The Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program for Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (RTCP) reimburses geographically disadvantaged producers with a portion of the cost to transport agricultural commodities or inputs used to produce an agricultural commodity.  
<http://www.fda.usda.gov/programs-and-services/reimbursement-transportation-cost-payment>
- USDA StrikeForce**  
StrikeForce is a collaboration to leverage resources both within USDA and with other federal, state and local governments and other partner organizations to help improve economies in rural America. StrikeForce efforts have helped direct over \$2.6 billion in investments to create jobs, build homes, feed kids, assist farmers and ranchers, and conserve natural resources in the country's most economically challenged areas. In 2013 USDA StrikeForce teams operate in 180 counties in 21 states and Puerto Rico. Each StrikeForce project is a commitment to America's economic future.  
<http://www.usda.gov/programs-and-services/usda-strikeforce>

### Eggs

- Farm Storage Facility Loan Program**  
FSA provides low interest financing for producers to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.  
<http://www.fda.usda.gov/programs-and-services/loan-support/farm-storage-facility-loan-program>
- Livestock, Poultry, and Grain Market News**  
Market News reports assist industry members in making informed marketing decisions.  
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/market-news-quality-grains>

More specific questions  
to offer more relevant  
resources

3 What are you looking to fund?

Land purchase or  
construction project  
(Ownership) ☐

Equipment, seed,  
livestock, etc.  
(Operating) ☐

Both (Ownership &  
Operating) ☒

4 About how much money are you looking to borrow?

Note: Outstanding FSA Farm Loans will be accounted for in determining the loan amount you are eligible for.

\$100,000 or less ☒

\$100,001-\$1M ☐

Over \$1M ☐

Provides additional  
resources and an  
application guide



These results do not guarantee availability and your local agency of USDA.

Service Center to confirm funding availability with your local Farm Service Agency (FSA), an

### Result Sections

- [About Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans](#)
- [Loan Process](#)
- [Prepare for Visit to the Service Center](#)
- [Partner with Your Loan Officer](#)
- [Find Your Local Service Center](#)

### Download Your Application Quick Guide

Better understand how to apply and prepare for your visit to a Service Center.



#### For Microloans

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

After your review of the Application Guide, click here for the [Microloan Application Form and Instructions](#).

For even more information on farm loans, download [Your Guide to FSA Farm Loans \(PDF\)](#).



# How Can We Improve?

# Questions

- **Ask specific questions** catered to new and experienced farmers to help inform more **personalized search results**
  - Display results in broader categories to **improve discoverability and efficiency**
  - Encourage **profile setup** to
    - **Save resources** for later reference
    - **Access dashboard** that provides:
      - A calendar feature
      - Weather pattern updates
      - Market information
      - Ability to connect with other farmers
-

# Prototype

Figma File