



August 10, 2017

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Young and Beginning Farmer Interim Study Committee  
Senate Committee Room 357, Colorado State Capitol

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Requested by Senator Jerry Sonnenberg  
President, Pro Tempore Colorado Senate  
Chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources and Energy Committee

## **Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association**

### **EARLY HISTORY –**

In 1969, a statewide study initiated by CO's secondary Ag educators and advocates, found that there was a defined need for:

- Regional coordination by state educational institutions to improve the quality and quantity of adult agricultural education and provide in-service training to vocational Ag instructors and educators. This was strategically important to the success of adult education in agriculture in Colorado.
- Instructional materials and assistance in locating informational resources were needed to ensure the success of Colorado's agronomic education for adults.
- The involvement of local and regional educators and administrators, in the promotion of Ag educational programs, would result in a higher quality of resources available to Colorado's young farmers.
- Developmental and technical resources were needed by young and beginning farmers, those preferred by local and regional communities, in order to enhance their economies.

These results led dedicated agricultural advocates to the belief that there was a need for a state association specifically designed to and challenged with helping young and beginning farmers in Colorado.

The Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association was founded in 1970, grown out of the vision of the then Colorado Association of Young Farmers membership, statewide secondary education institutions, high school and college vocational Ag educators, among other interested CO agriculturalists. The CYFEA was formed as a statewide non-profit and non-political organization, of men and women who were directly involved or interested in agriculture.

## **OUR MISSION –**

CYFEA's stated mission is to provide support and resources for its local Chapters to develop and strengthen their education, leadership, and advocacy with Colorado's agriculture community. This organization provides opportunities for its members to grow, both personally and professionally, beyond their local Chapters and communities.

Since 1970, the CYFEA has been a key organization in Colorado, providing educational, informational and technical resources to young and beginning farmers and their local communities. This need has increased steadily over the past 48 years of CYFEA's existence.

Colorado's Young Farmer Educational Association has twelve local Chapters statewide, and exists to provide assistance to those Chapters and their memberships. The CYFEA enlists the support of Colorado's extensive educational and agricultural business network and helps to promote desirable relationships between Ag producers and the general public consumer. An important aspect of the CYFEA is that it provides its Chapters and their members with certain leadership opportunities, including local and regional community resource and communication networking links.

## **CYFEA TODAY --**

The Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association has continued to grow and mature into a productive and respected organization of farmers and agricultural advocates of all ages. The Association is genuinely interested in increasing agronomic education, awareness and leadership, and assists Colorado's Ag industry in promoting cooperative relationships in all areas of agriculture.

## **PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES --**

Ag education for young and older adults is a large part of the Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association's network. The CYFEA works closely with state colleges and universities in this mission, supporting classroom instruction and programs that will benefit the next generation of farmers by helping them to understand the unique opportunities found in Colorado's agricultural economy.

The CYFEA has an agricultural advocacy program, titled a "Call to Action". This leadership curriculum, developed in conjunction with Colorado State University, are forms of module instruction that encourage communication with groups or individuals on opposing sides of difficult issues, within the scope of agriculture. This program includes communication strategies on major issues related to agriculture, often found in today's media or at the forefront of the general consumer population's image and knowledge of agriculture.

In partnership with CSU, the CYFEA became involved in this agricultural advocacy "Call to Action" curriculum also as a way to engage an adult interested in agriculture also on: how to promote Ag in their local and regional communities; develop, expand, and reinforce their knowledge of current Ag topics; and encourage overall advocacy and collaboration throughout the Colorado Ag industry.

Most recently, along with the help of the Colorado State University Extension and the sponsorship of Farm Credit of Southern Colorado, the CYFEA is about to embark on a new business resource for women farmers, both beginning and established. Annie's Project, is a national program that we are currently working to bring to Colorado. Through a six week period, Annie's Project curriculum will help empower farm and ranch women here in Colorado, giving them resource information and the various agri-business tools that they need to be successful. This program will be offered to the CYFEA membership and others, and covers important agronomic education in five risk areas: production, price/market, legal, financial, and human/personal. This course will teach women about agri-business networking and how to manage and organize critical farm related information and decisions.

Other CYFEA annual activities include agricultural farm tours, both locally and nationally, community service involvement, agri-business education, vocational Ag educator support, FFA advocacy, a Legislative Day at the Capitol, and even international travel to foreign countries, to better understand agriculture in other parts of the world.

Annually, the Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association holds a State Institute for its members and constituents, held in February each year. This meeting is often in conjunction with the Colorado Farm Show which is attended by approximately 3000 to 5000 people from all over Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas.

At this yearly informational and educational Institute, among other activities, the CYFEA recognizes outstanding individuals and group achievements in Colorado's agricultural community. Some of CYFEA's annual awards include: CO Spokesperson for Agriculture, Outstanding CO Farmer, Outstanding CYFEA Chapter, Outstanding Young Farmer Advisor, Outstanding Young Farmer Community Service, and Outstanding CO Agri-Business.

Also, the CYFEA provides \$5000 worth of educational scholarships every year to outstanding college bound students. Young men and women who are entering their secondary education, majoring in an agricultural related field of study at a Colorado accredited college or university, are eligible and encouraged to apply for these academic scholarships.

### **CYFEA COMMUNITY SUPPORT –**

The main sources of funding for the CYFEA comes from the annual membership dues, much needed sponsor contributions--both financial and in-kind, and personal and private donations. There is no state or federal funding for this Association.

Agricultural industry support has been consistently provided to the CYFEA by: Colorado's commodity groups, such as corn, wheat, bean growers; seed companies; state banks and credit organizations; insurance groups; farm cooperative agencies; state and local equipment companies; Colorado's educational institutions; service organizations; oil and gas companies; communication networks; and numerous agricultural supply groups statewide.

### **NATIONALLY --**

Colorado's Young Farmers Education Association is an active member of the National Young Farmers Educational Association. The National Young Farmer Educational Association (NYFEA) is proud to be an association that helps to educate our future agricultural leaders. Founded in 1966, it is a leadership development and community service organization focuses on young and beginning producers and young agribusiness professionals.

The NYFEA seeks to provide support for the next generation of farmers by helping them understand the opportunities found in the broad network of agriculture. This dynamic undertaking provides seminars and resources to train individuals in agricultural leadership and business management. Finally, NYFEA recognizes individuals who participate in this educational plan by providing numerous national awards. NYFEA annually salutes the top producers and agribusiness leaders at its national convention, which is attended by hundreds of farmers and agricultural advocates in the United States.

## CONCLUSION --

In conclusion, the Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association helps provide a valuable resource network to young and beginning farmers in Colorado. The CYFEA's statewide Chapter-led membership assists in many opportunities within Colorado's agricultural educational systems, young and beginner farmer resource programs, farm information and technical support plans, community service happenings, along with numerous programs for personal and professional agricultural leadership development.

Agriculture fulfills a most basic need – for us to eat and feed the world. It touches all of us, daily. The Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association is proud to be a valuable tool in our state's young and beginning farmer network!

Thank you for this opportunity,

*Sharon Pattee*

Sharon Pattee, Executive Director  
Colorado Young Farmers Educational Association