

## Policy for Linking to External Web Sites

Start2Farm.gov



### Introduction

The Start2Farm Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse (S2F, also Start2Farm.gov) is a component of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), a competitive grant initiative that is part of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Legislative authority and background for the Start2Farm Clearinghouse include Section 7405(e) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 3319f(e)) (Pub. L. 107-171), as amended by section 7410 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246), which requires the Secretary to establish an online clearinghouse that makes available to beginning farmers or ranchers education curricula and training materials and programs.

The purpose and priorities for the entire Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program are "to provide U.S. beginning farmer and rancher producers and their families, as appropriate, with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, with the goal of enhancing success of beginning farmers and ranchers."

Therefore, as the online clearinghouse for the BFRDP, Start2Farm.gov supports access to the broadest range of information available within the specified mandate. With this mandate in mind, Start2Farm.gov seeks Web sites with links to a wide variety of information resources selected to meet the needs the clearinghouse's customers. As a function of the National Agricultural Library (NAL), this is done within the NAL's legislated mandate, in conjunction with established selection criteria, and in fulfillment of its role and responsibilities as a function of a national library. Therefore S2F uses the *Policy for Linking to External Websites: National Agricultural Library* except where the specific nature of S2F's focus requires clarification of or amendment to the policy.

### Policy Statement

The focus of S2F is to develop a national "one-stop" source of online accessible beginning farmer and rancher information. Links will be made from Start2Farm.gov's publicly available Web site to external Web sites when the information is appropriate to the focus of Start2Farm.gov and satisfies the selection and presentation criteria outlined below. The sponsoring organization for each external link will be clearly identified.

Start2Farm.gov cannot authorize the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked Web sites. Such authorization must be granted by the sponsor, author, or publisher of the linked information. However, S2F will include links to proprietary materials that are already available freely to the public on the Web without requesting permission from the copyright holders. Start2Farm.gov does not guarantee that linked Web sites comply with Section 508 (Accessibility Requirements) of the Rehabilitation Act <http://www.section508.gov/>.

## Policy for Linking to External Web Sites

Start2Farm.gov

The Start2Farm.gov Web site is mandated to provide information about each the grant recipients of the USDA NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and can include information on their products (in a variety of different formats) and/or their services offered (training, workshops, etc). The Web site will also link to other non BFRDP Web sites that are appropriate and publicly available unless directed not to by the site owner. All external links will be properly attributed to their source in Start2Farm.gov. Start2Farm.gov does not limit links by domain extensions (ex. \*.gov, \*.org, \*.edu, etc.) but does rank federal and educational links higher and does not include commercial links where the sole purpose of that site is to sell a product or service. Content that is linked to S2F must be more educational in nature than commercial.

### **USDA Commercial Endorsement Disclaimer**

The use of trade, firm, or corporation names in this web site is for the information and convenience of the reader. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by the United States Department of Agriculture or the Agricultural Research Service of any product or service to the exclusion of others that may be suitable.

Start2Farm.gov's mandate and Collection Development policy state that Start2Farm.gov is not limited to governmental programs. Therefore Start2Farm.gov will link to non-governmental Web sites if these Web sites provide relevant information and/or services. Through these links, Start2Farm.gov provides access, as a public service, to the broadest range of information consistent with its mission.

Though Start2Farm.gov content selectors use established criteria under appropriate management controls, Start2Farm.gov can neither endorse nor guarantee the services, advice, or products included in these Web site links. Furthermore, Start2Farm.gov neither controls nor guarantees the ongoing accuracy, relevance, or timeliness of the information contained in these other Web site links.

NAL Information Technology staff use appropriate tools to regularly test NAL Web site links to ensure they are active and have not been redirected to inappropriate Web sites. The results of these checks are conveyed to the Web page authors in a routine and timely fashion. Start2Farm will remove any links that are inactive or inappropriately redirected.

### **Criteria for link review**

#### **Introduction**

This document explains the criteria used by Start2Farm for evaluating external web links before using them on Start2Farm.gov. This document is based on and mirrors the criteria established in *Internal Guidance for Selecting and Managing Web Site Links: National Agricultural Library*.

#### **Link Priority**

Externally-linked Web sites are assigned to one of three tiers based on level of associated risk. Start2Farm.gov may choose to link or not to link to any of these types of web sites. All links should stand up against review criteria regardless of tier.

Tier One Web sites:

- National and regional government agencies and international treaty organizations
- State and local government agencies, including State Extension Services

## Policy for Linking to External Web Sites

Start2Farm.gov

- Quasi-government agencies and Web sites created by public sector/private sector partnerships
- Digital publications (ejournals, databases, etc.) licensed commercially by NAL for its digital collection
- Links to full text documents from the AGRICOLA database records

Tier Two Web sites:

- Voluntary, nonprofit, and professional organizations serving the public
- Universities, other educational institutions and libraries
- Foundations and advocacy groups (e.g., American Diabetes Association)
- News media

Tier Three Web sites:

- Commercial Web sites not included in Tiers One and Two providing unique and/or supplementary information
- Web sites expressing views in opposition to Departmental policy
- Other Web sites not included in Tiers One and Two

### General Selection and Presentation Criteria for Linking to Web sites

Start2Farm.gov observes best practices in selecting and presenting links for its Web site.

*Start2farm.gov will select and present links that:*

- Adhere to Start2Farm.gov's mission and focus;
- Meet the criteria of the collection development policy;
- Are accessible and applicable to the intended audience;
- Are well-maintained, current, and stable;
- Present information considered to be reliable and accurate;
- Have education and/or information as the primary intent, rather than persuasion, conversion, or selling;
- Are linked directly to the page(s) containing the relevant information;
- Clearly state if any fees, charges or registration processes are required for use of the site.

The mandate of the Start2Farm.gov Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse is to gather all programs and resources available to beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States. Start2Farm gathers this content from all sources available without regard for type of farm or farming practices. If any particular viewpoint or farming practice seems to be emphasized in S2F, it is a reflection of the types of organizations that are currently producing curriculum resources and training programs. Start2Farm does not create or endorse any particular training or curriculum and therefore no effort of Start2Farm will be able to change any perceived incongruities.

### Denying or Removing Links

The Start2farm.gov Web site links to a range of organizations and information such that the Web site will be viewed as both useful and informative. Links may be denied, replaced and/or removed to manage and/or refresh information resources. Further, Start2farm.gov reserves the right to deny or remove a link for any or all of the following reasons:

## Policy for Linking to External Web Sites

Start2Farm.gov

- The link is determined to be in conflict with or fails to meet Start2farm.gov 's mission or policies including the *Start2Farm Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse Collection Development Policy*.
- The link conflicts with USDA's policies on Ethics, ([www.usda-ethics.net](http://www.usda-ethics.net)), and Non-Discrimination, including, but not limited to:
  - ✓ advocating a specific political party position; or
  - ✓ promoting a specific religious or other social agenda.
- The link contradicts the position or information conveyed in emergency directives issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.
  
- The link exhibits hate or discrimination.
- The link contains or directly links to illegal, or otherwise inappropriate, content including pornography or gambling.
  
- The link utilizes technology, which creates unreasonable inconveniences (i.e., multiple pop-up advertisements, inability to exit the site, etc.).
- Advertisements or commercial links contained in the linked site are not clearly separated from educational or informational content.
- The link is to specific commercial products or companies that do not include an educational component or service deemed appropriate under the S2F collection development policy.
  
- Authorship, sponsorship, or other establishment of authority and responsibility for the site content are difficult or impossible to determine.
- The link contains misleading information or unsubstantiated claims.
- The information contained in the linked site is not properly and effectively referenced or is purely opinion and conjecture.
  
- The linked site is out of date, contains numerous broken links, is difficult to read and/or navigate, has substantial grammatical errors, or otherwise badly maintained.
- The link is redundant or not the best URL for the content linked.
- The link does not go directly to the relevant content or information or to a place in the linked site where it is easy to find the content.

04-06-2011