Hello Farmland Advisors,

                On \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you are registered to participate in the Fostering Good Landowner-Tenant Relationships Networking Call.  The following Farmland Advisors will be participating: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The number to use for this call is: (605) 475-4810, 487106#.

These calls are an important part of building a strong Farmland Advisors’ network, a group of agricultural and land conservation professionals who share resources, strategies and creative solutions.   We hope they will provide a forum for peer learning and information exchange.  To make the most of these calls, please take time to review the information included in this email and come to your Networking call prepared to participate.

Prior to your call, please review the below questions.   The facilitator for your call will use these questions to guide the conversation.   Because the calls are structured to be interactive discussions, each Advisor will be asked to share his or her perspective around a question to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.  The following questions and issues will be discussed during your Networking Call:

1. Getting started on the “right foot” – What are some principles of good (and formal/legal) agreements between farmers and landowners (i.e. honest, candid communication; mutual respect; good farming practices; and fair, up-to-date, written agreements)?  How do you help establish realistic expectations?  How does “social capital” influence good relationships?
2. How can we address or recognize issues of culture, gender, age / experience or any other “bias” or challenge /opportunity in the relationship?
3. How are relationships different between landowners with experience in agriculture and non-farming landowners?
4. What are common issues that providers have experienced in dealing with landowner – tenant relationships?  From the landowner perspective?  From the Farmer perspective?  Examples may include:
   1. Security (tenure)
   2. Disputes around growing practices / lack of education on part of landowner
   3. Changes in farm approach, practices, or goals of either party
   4. Sale of property during lease term
   5. NIMBY / Aesthetic / Management concerns
   6. Change in roles of landowners (heirs, third party, new decision-makers?)
   7. Other?
5. How can service providers facilitate good working relationships between landowners and farmers?  What is our role?  Share best practices and summarize next steps or resources available.

                Please note that I’ve attached a few documents as background information on the call’s topic.  You are invited to review these documents prior to the call.  I’m also copying below some additional questions as food for thought and which may be addressed during the call.

1. What are the benefits of a legal (contractual) document compared to a “hand shake” / oral agreement?  How to address changes during term?
2. How do these farm agreements dictate or influence the nature of the relationship between landowner and tenant/farmer?  Landlord-tenant, employer-employee, or partnership?  Cash lease, crop / livestock share?  Does an agreement supersede the need to regularly communicate?
   * Are there examples of how farmers you work with practice good communications with their landlords?  Annual reports?  Annual meetings?  Education about business / growing practices and realities of farming?
3. Does lease duration affect the landowner-tenant relationship?  (Lease types include tenancy for years (for a certain term), year-to-year (periodic), tenancy at will, and tenancy at sufferance)  Is it important to include appropriate termination provisions / notice or dispute protocol?
4. How are infrastructure and/or long-term land improvements addressed in any relationship or agreement?
   * Does joint investment / ownership in equipment / infrastructure change the relationship?
5. What are good resources or approaches for resolving disputes between landowners and farmers?
   * Arbitration / mediation services
   * Local agricultural commissions
   * What is the service provider role in assisting to resolve disputes?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your hard work and for helping to participate in and build the Farmland Advisors’ Network.

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