Priority 14: **RECRUIT YOUTH, MINORITIES, AND MILITARY VETERANS** into farming

**143 out of 584 respondents (24%) ranked this topic as highest priority. Of those, 95provided justification as follows:**

* 31 respondents (or 33%) commented that it is necessary to recruit youth, minorities, and military veterans into farming to create the next generation of farmers and replace those who are aging and nearing retirement.

*“Someone needs to replace the farmers who are retiring and we don’t have enough old white guys to fill those boots.”*

* 18 respondents (or 19%) commented that in recruiting youth, minorities and military veterans, it is important to recreate the image of farming as a viable, desirable career option and to address the devaluing of farming in our culture.

*“Our culture has devalued farming. We need to make people aware of the positive virtues of farming as a lifestyle and a career.”*

* 16 respondents (or 17%) commented that recruiting youth, minorities and military veterans into farming can simultaneously create jobs to address unemployment and alleviate the difficulty of finding farm labor.

*“Unemployment is clearly a problem throughout our state, and the country as a whole. Yet agricultural jobs exist that aren’t filled. It’s hard, low-paying work that requires physical strength and stamina. We need to connect interested people with training for farm positions.”*

* 13 respondents (or 14%) commented that youth, minorities and military veterans are especially important populations to recruit into farming for their ability to bring energy, technology and innovation to the industry and given farming’s therapeutic effects, particularly for veterans.

*“Our youth today are so modern with technology that they are the ones who will create ways to better farm in America.”*

* 10 respondents (or 11%) commented that it is important to provide opportunities for underserved populations and that diversity is crucial to the health and sustainability of the farming industry and helps to ensure equal representation within the food system.

*“Youth and minorities are under-represented in farming today. Military veterans are returning to an America with few jobs to offer. We, as leaders in agriculture, can use this opportunity to increase diversity in farming, which will strengthen agriculture as a career.”*

* 6 respondents (or 6%) commented that recruiting youth, minorities, and military veterans into farming is important for reviving local communities and strengthening local ties.

*“I think re-localization is the only movement that can restore sanity to our fractured society.”*

* 1 respondent (or 1%) did not agree that recruiting youth, minorities, and military veterans into farming is a high priority, but that energy should be focused instead on recruiting individuals in their 30s-50s, who are more likely to have capital and relevant experience.

*“I think you’re wrong. You need to get 30 to 50 somethings involved, not youth. That’s where the desire is and those age groups are where the dreams are and the track record of work.”*