Priority 6: Identify **ALTERNATIVE FINANCING STRATEGIES** accessible to small farms

**247 out of 584 respondents (42%) ranked this topic as highest priority. Of those, 94 provided justification as follows:**

* 26 respondents (or 28%) commented that alternative financing strategies are necessary given the inability of traditional and commercial lending sources such as banks and government programs to serve small farmers, whether because of their unwillingness to loan money to high-risk businesses or because of prohibitively high interest rates.

*“Financing for farms and farmers is difficult to get, and requires burdensome requirements, where banks fall over themselves to lend to non-farm homeowners.”*

* 19 respondents (or 20%) commented that alternative financing strategies could foster the initiation of new small farms by helping beginning farmers overcome high start-up costs.

*“For young and beginning farmers, access to credit is a huge issue. Both for operating loans and for mortgage assistance, the programs that exist don’t seem to be oriented to help young people trying to get into farming. Without that assistance, the gap between the older, retiring generation of farmers and the new wave that will hopefully replace them is only increasing.”*

* 14respondents (or 15%) commented that all small farmers, despite their product or years of experience, require access to funds in order to maintain the ins-and-outs of their farm businesses.

*“Access to capital is critical to developing and maintaining a farm business. Any alternative strategies that are or could be accessible will enable more of us to succeed.”*

* 12 respondents (or 13%) commented that alternative financing strategies could enable small farmers to more easily grow and expand their farm businesses, whether by diversifying, investing in equipment and/or infrastructure, or purchasing or cultivating additional land.

*“We work so very hard around the clock and year round and still have little to spare to do all the things we want to do to better our farm, i.e. equipment, help, seed cost, overhead expenses, all the usual expenses…”*

* 12 respondents (or 13%) commented that alternative financing strategies are necessary to ensure the survival of individual small farms, such as by keeping farmers on the farm rather than seeking additional sources of income, and to consequently promote the viability of the small farm sector.

*“Small farms need to have a safety net of resources available to them… It keeps farms in business and growers focused on farming!”*

* 6 respondents (or 6%) commented that alternative financing strategies could foster the initiation of new small farms by helping beginning farmers access and purchase land on which to start their businesses.

*“I want to farm on a small holding basis, but acquiring access to land is a major concern to me, being on a tight budget.”*

* 5 respondents (or 5%) commented that alternative financing strategies are important for encouraging the growth and viability of small farms and subsequently promoting environmental stewardship and healthy communities.

*“Small farms need government support large agriculture does not. Factory farms that are harming the quality of life and economy do not deserve public support. Small local agriculture sustaining a local community deserves government encouragement and a source of such support should be readily accessible and easy to apply for.”*

* In addition to providing justification for their prioritization, 6 respondents (or 6%) also commented that small farmers would benefit from more clearly defined and easy to navigate alternative financing strategies and funding resources.

*“There is currently a hodgepodge of ways that small producers have managed to launch their businesses, and it can be incredibly tricky to successfully navigate all options and resources by oneself.”*