For Truckenbrod, being a soprano is hard work

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Preparing a new generation of farmers

By SUSAN JONES

The age of farmers in Illinois is growing older, and the number of farmers facing a retirement is increasing. As a result, the younger farmer population is shrinking. This trend is not unique to Illinois; it is a nationwide concern. Currently, about 90% of farmers in Illinois are over the age of 50, and the average age of a first-time farmer in Illinois is 58 years old. This means that the majority of farmers are reaching retirement age, and there is a critical need for new farmers to replace them.

To address this issue, the state of Illinois has implemented several programs to support and encourage the growth of new farmers. These programs include the Illinois Young Farmer Program, which provides financial assistance to young farmers who are starting their own farms, and the Illinois Farm Business Enterprise Program, which offers training and resources to help new farmers succeed.

In addition to these programs, there are several organizations and individuals who are working to support the development of new farmers. These include the Illinois Farm Bureau, which provides educational resources and networking opportunities for farmers, and the Illinois Farm Management Association, which offers training and support for farmers.

As the number of new farmers continues to grow, it is important to ensure that they have the support and resources they need to succeed. This includes access to land, funding, and educational opportunities. By investing in new farmers, we can ensure the continued viability of Illinois agriculture and the preservation of our rural communities.

For additional information on these programs and how to get involved, visit the Illinois Department of Agriculture website or contact your local Farm Bureau office.