# **Common Ground:** Why Should University Faculty Partner with Virginia Cooperative Extension?

## with Virginia Cooperative Extension?

tersion Agents Extension agents identify the complex needs and issues of people in the local community and explore potential solutions with university faculty.

Benefit: Educational resources, research-based programs, and program impact

University Faculty Extension specialists and agents partner with university faculty to develop research-based resources and programs that create behavior change.

> Benefit: Scholarly research. publications, and outreach

### Benefits to All

Valuable opportunities to use applied research to affect complex issues

Enhanced grant proposal and scholarly publication opportunities

The ability to multiply the breadth and depth of scholarly research for all partners (scholarly research that impacts more people)

> A potential to create change and produce powerful social and economic impacts

Extension specialists **bring** other university faculty and agents together to identify potential projects, programs, and/or curricula that produce the greatest social and economic impact.

> Benefit: Measurable economic and social impact Strension Specialists

Students engage with university faculty and Extension specialists through formal coursework, research projects, study abroad, and internships.

Service Lean

Benefits: Career-ready graduates, handson experience, professional Community development

Extension volunteers expand the outreach of our research-based, educational programs and strengthen our connections to local citizens.

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Benefit: Expanded outreach, greater program impact, and leveraged community assets

Developed in collaboration with CALS associate deans and Karen Roth Gehrt, assistant director, planning, accountability and impact communications.

Nothing is more impactful than university faculty using the tripartite mission of discovery, learning, and outreach to impact people and their communities. University and Extension faculty, volunteers, associations, and students have wonderful opportunities to partner through applied research projects and educational programs that foster positive changes in the lives of Virginians. Let's work together for the benefit of everyone!



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### A powerful potential to change the lives of people

through research, behavior change, and economic and social impact.

## Here's an example of how community—university—Extension partnerships benefit everyone involved...

#### The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Program

Starting a farm is difficult, and succeeding beyond the first few years may be even more so. Beginning farmers and ranchers nationwide face unique challenges to achieve their farm goals and aspirations. The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Program (VBFRCP) is a collaborative effort through Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech that reaches across the commonwealth to provide educational opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers to establish and sustain viable agricultural operations. Unique to this program is its community-based participatory framework where a coalition of 27 organizations and farm business work together to support beginning farmers and ranchers through whole farm planning programs, online resources, and farmer-to-farmer mentoring.

APPALACHIAN Sustaînable Development "The VBFRCP has proven to be a welcomed partner in our efforts to provide meaningful education and marketing opportunities to farmers in far Southwest Virginia. We can see the whole farm planning curriculum becoming a regular part of our agricultural training efforts, and the mentorship program developing into an effective platform to aid new producers. The program has also provided opportunities to network and partner with groups across the commonwealth to further the advancement of agriculture for all Virginians."

-Tom Peterson, education coordinator and farmer, Applachian Sustainable Development, Abingdon, Virginia



"Many of us provide services to young and beginning farmers in addition to offering a wide array of farm programs, so having a place where we can communicate with other service providers is vital to our collective success. The VBFRCP not only helps us share ideas and resources, it also leads to new programs, partnerships and collaborative efforts that can and will make a difference in agriculture's future. We are pleased that important programs like the VBFRCP and those of coalition members are working to help the next generation of farmers."

#### -Ron Saacke, director of Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers, Richmond, Virginia

"This alliance is particularly beneficial to socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers and landowners who are either returning to their homesteads or have acquired rural property. The Small Farm Outreach Program, as a partner, is able to provide beginning farmers access to technical assistance and educational resources; and most importantly, small farm outreach agents will further support the beginning farmers' development by facilitating mentoring relationships between beginning farmers and experienced farmers in their service areas."





Amber Vallotton

"As a Virginia Cooperative Extension agent, I regularly receive inquiries from citizens wanting to begin farming and needing assistance in moving their dream from vision into concrete reality. I have found the VBFRCP to be an invaluable support to this work because of the diverse composition and expertise of the coalition, and the development of comprehensive whole farm planning tools and approaches. Equipped with these many tools, I am confident that Virginia beginning farmers will continue to greatly benefit."

-Amber Vallotton, agriculture and natural resources Extension agent, Rockingham County, Virginia



The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition is a collaborative effort represented by Virginia beginning farmer stakeholders from across the commonwealth. The program is housed in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. Funding is sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Award # 2010-49400. www.vabeginningfarmer.org.

Developed in collaboration with Kim Niewolny, assistant professor and Extension specialist for agricultural and extension and education; and Karen Roth Gehrt, assistant director for planning, accountability, and impact communications.