



Newsblast

November 5, 2024

Photo by [Kateryna Hliznitsova](#)

A Message from VBFRC

As we settle into the cozy days of November, we hope you're enjoying all the warmth and wonders this season brings! We're excited to share a bountiful collection of workshops, programs, grants, conferences, and more in this month's NewsBlast. Grab a warm drink, snuggle up, and dive into the opportunities awaiting you!

The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition is a state-wide and coalition-based Extension program, housed in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education. Funding is sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Award #2020-49400-32326. This funding is led by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program.

Partner Highlight

Regenerate Virginia Grants for Farmers 2024-2025 Cycle Now Open!

The Mid-Atlantic team at American Farmland Trust is launching two grant opportunities to support Virginia farmers in building long-term resilience and enhancing farm vitality. These grants are designed to help farmers adopt regenerative practices and access tailored business consulting services.

- **Healthy Soils Grant:** Awards up to \$50,000 to support innovative soil health initiatives, empowering farmers to implement sustainable soil practices.
- **Farm Vitality Planning Grant:** Provides up to \$10,000 for customized, impactful business consulting services from the consultant of the farmer's choice, promoting transformative changes in operations.

Applications are open until 11:59 PM on November 15, 2024.

Visit the Mid-Atlantic AFT website for grant guidelines, application details, and to sign up for Q&A sessions.

For further information, reach out to Amanda Cather at acather@farmland.org.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

2024 Annual Small Farm Conference

Join Virginia farmers, landowners, and agriculture professionals at the 2024 Annual Small Farm Conference! This event offers a valuable opportunity to learn about resources, smart business strategies, and successful production practices, with a focus on supporting new, beginning, and small-scale farmers aiming to make their operations profitable and sustainable. The conference is free for registered attendees and includes a bus tour, educational sessions, networking opportunities, presentations, awards, and meals as outlined in the agenda. Attendees are responsible for overnight accommodations and any meals not covered by the conference.

Southern SARE Producer Grants

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) is now accepting proposals through November 8th for their Producer Grants. The grant program aims to allow farmers to test, on a small scale, an idea, practice or technology to a production or marketing problem (either as an individual or as a group), evaluate whether the results sustainably address the problem, and share how those efforts can benefit other farmers.

Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grants

Southern SARE is now accepting proposals through November 22nd for their On-Farm Research Grants. On-Farm Research Grants provide opportunities for ag professionals working directly with farmers and ranchers to conduct on-farm research projects in sustainable agriculture.

Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grant Program

Applications open October 15 and due November 15th! Virginia farmers and groups of producers can apply for grants of up to \$30,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for groups to pilot innovative soil health projects. This program, in collaboration with the Virginia Soil Health Coalition, supports projects that fill gaps and address barriers to adopting soil health-building systems. Eligible expenses include farmer labor, equipment, farm inputs, infrastructure, and more. Projects must be located in Virginia and focus on soil health principles with an educational component.

Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Infrastructure Grant Program

The AFID Infrastructure Program offers grants of up to \$50,000 to political subdivisions for community infrastructure development projects that support local food production and sustainable agriculture. The Fall 2024 AFID Infrastructure Grant Round opens on October 1st and runs through November 15th, 2024.

Forest Farming Interest / Experience Survey

The Accelerating Forest Farming in Central Appalachia Team would LOVE to hear from you! The Appalachian Regional Commission recently sponsored a project through its Appalachian Regional Initiatives for Stronger Economies (ARISE) program focused on improving services and infrastructure for forest farmers. This short survey will help organizations learn about your needs and interests. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for general reporting purposes. Please provide your contact information if project leaders want to contact you for more discussion. The survey should take between 5 and 15 minutes depending on your level of experience.

Hurricane Helene/ Natural Disasters Resources

Virginia Farm Relief Fund Now Open for Donations and Assistance Applications

In the wake of Hurricane Helene, the Virginia Farm Relief Fund has been activated to support Virginia agriculture affected by natural disasters. Housed within the Virginia Foundation for Agriculture Innovation & Rural Sustainability (VAFAIRS), the Fund allows for tax-deductible donations to aid in recovery efforts. The Fund is accepting applications for assistance from agricultural producers in Bedford, Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pittsylvania, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, Wythe, and the independent cities of Bristol, Covington, Danville, Galax, Norton, and Radford—areas significantly impacted by the storm and subsequent flooding. Please see the above link for donations and/or assistance application.

Hurricane Helene: Emergency Resources for Farmers

Our hearts go out to the Appalachian communities deeply impacted by Hurricane Helene. While the devastation is difficult to witness, we are inspired by the overwhelming support from agencies, organizations, and citizens providing supplies and volunteer assistance. The Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) is actively working to connect regional farmers with critical emergency resources. This resource list will be updated daily as new information becomes available. See the above link for federal and national support resources, business-based resources, state resources, and emotional support resources.

Agriculture Needs for Producers Affected by Hurricane Helene in Virginia

Are you a farmer affected by Helene? Notify us of your agricultural needs (hay, fencing, feed, etc) so that we may be able to connect you with the proper donors! Complete the following form or call your local extension office. Southwest Virginia farmers have experienced significant damage from Hurricane Helene, with catastrophic losses reported along the New River and Holston River. Extension agents are actively assessing the needs of affected farmers and coordinating the availability of donations to support recovery efforts.

Donations for Farmers Affected by Hurricane Helene in Virginia

Southwest Virginia farmers have suffered significant damages from Hurricane Helene, with catastrophic impacts especially along the New River and Holston River. If you are interested in donating specific supplies such as hay, fencing, and more, please fill out the form to let us know about any materials or services you can provide. Extension agents are working to assess farmers' needs and coordinate donations.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA) Natural Disaster Resources

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) offer several programs to assist landowners with recovery and mitigation efforts following natural disasters:

- NRCS Act Now Program – Provides support for immediate relief efforts.
- NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program – Offers assistance for streambank stabilization to reduce future risks to life and property from flooding.
- FSA Emergency Forest Restoration Program & Emergency Conservation Program – Provides financial aid to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters, including debris removal, land grading, and repairs to conservation structures.

Series

Fifteen Minutes in the Forest

The award-winning Fifteen Minutes in the Forest video series features a wide-array of topics and are shown every other Friday at 12:15 on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube Premier](#)

- November 15 – A Forester Can Provide A Clear View of Your Forest – Part 2 – Selling Your Timber

Ask an Agroforester: 2024 Season Now Open for Registration

Join us for this season's *Ask an Agroforester* series, offered as a "Lunch and Learn" opportunity. All sessions are free and will take place from 12:00 – 1:30 pm EST.

- Tuesday, Nov. 19: Who's Who in National Agroforestry Featuring the National Agroforestry Center (NAC), The Agroforestry Coalition (TAC), and The Association for Temperate Agroforestry (AFTA).
- Thursday, Nov. 21: Centering Racial Justice in Agroforestry Featuring Ruth Tyson and Rafter Ferguson of Interlace Commons.
- Tuesday, Nov. 26: Honey Locusts and Forest Exploration Featuring Zach Elfers of Future Forest Plants.
- Friday, Dec. 13: Yellowbud Hickory, a Rising Star in Agroforestry Featuring Jesse Marksohn of Yellowbud Farm.
- Monday, Dec. 16: Nut Collectives – Lessons from the Fields and Facilities Featuring the New York Tree Crops Alliance and Keystone Tree Crops Cooperative.

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode 24 - 21: A Love and Fascination for the Soil with Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils (Part I)

Join us for an insightful conversation in *4 The Soil: A Conversation* with soil expert Nicole Masters, founder of Integrity Soils and author of *For the Love of Soil*. In this episode, Nicole shares her passion for soil health and explores how a love for the land can drive sustainable agricultural practices. Discover how agroecological principles can transform farm systems and build resilience from the ground up. Tune in to learn more about her journey and insights into regenerative agriculture.

Episode 24 - 22: Finding Your Agroecological Voice and Lens with Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils (Part II)

In this episode of *4 The Soil: A Conversation*, Nicole Masters, founder of Integrity Soils and author of *For the Love of Soil*, joins hosts Jeff Ishee, Mary Sketch Bryant, and Eric Bendfeldt to discuss how an agroecological lens can transform farm systems by valuing human dynamics. Nicole shares her journey

of fostering a deep fascination with soil health, while acknowledging the risks and challenges that come with regenerative practices. She reflects on “Biological Barbecues” in New Zealand, gatherings that encouraged open discussions on innovative practices in a relaxed environment. Nicole’s advice? Start small and build soil health intentionally—because it just makes sense.

4 the Soil Blog

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

November

November 3, 2pm –6pm: Annual WNC Medicinal Herb Growers Grower Buyer Event (Mills River, NC)

Join the WNC Medicinal Herb Growers for their 8th Annual Grower & Buyer Social at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center in Mills River, NC. Network with regional growers, attend buyer presentations, and get sourcing updates. Share samples of herbs and planting stock in this engaging event. Register today for \$12. For more information, contact margaret_bloomquist@ncsu.edu.

November 4, 9:30am – 11:30am: Balanced Living with Diabetes Program (Petersburg, VA)

Join us for the *Balanced Living with Diabetes* program, starting Monday, November 4th, at the VSU Wilder Building Demo Kitchen. This 6-week program is designed to help individuals with Type 2 diabetes take control of their health through better food choices, increased activity, and effective blood sugar management.

November 6, 10am – 2:30pm: High Tunnel Production for Fall and Winter (Wedgewood Golf Center, Halifax, VA)

Explore year-round high tunnel production to maintain a stable supply of high-value crops through fall and winter. This workshop will cover essential techniques for successful off-season production and strategies for effectively marketing your crops. This session is especially valuable for new farmers looking to enhance their skills in high tunnel farming. Register for your spot!

November 7, 1pm – 4pm: Virtual Fencing at George's Mill Artisan Cheese (Lovettsville, VA)

Join Future Harvest and expert cheesemaker Molly Kroiz at George's Mill Artisan Cheese for a demonstration of Nofence technology, which allows virtual boundaries for dairy goats in areas that are challenging to fence. Loudoun Economic Development will provide lunch, including a cheese sampling. Please register by November 1 at 11:59 pm. Tickets are \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members, and free for BFTP and ALDI participants.

November 11, 6pm – 8pm: Opportunities for Veteran Farmers (Online Zoom Event)

Join VSU SFOP, Carter Farms, and Africulture as we honor and acknowledge the valiant service of U.S. Armed Forces veterans on Veterans Day. Veterans will share and discuss various opportunities and programs for military veterans in agriculture. This virtual workshop, moderated by Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms LLC and Africulture, will cover programs, incentives, and initiatives, as well as how farming can serve as therapeutic support for veterans facing post-military challenges.

November 13-15: Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Conference (Richmond, VA)

Join us at the Doubletree by Hilton in Richmond, Virginia, for the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Conference! This 3-day event will bring together farmers, market managers, agriculture policymakers, and community partners to explore the latest in farms, food access, small business, healthy communities, and farmers markets. This year’s conference offers targeted workshops and opportunities with three tracks for New Market Managers, Experienced Market Managers, and Vendors.

November 14, 11am – 12pm: Food Loss and Waste Policy (Zoom Event)

Join us for an insightful session on Food Loss and Waste Policy. This event will explore strategies and policies aimed at reducing food waste and supporting sustainable practices across the food system. Participants will learn about impactful approaches to minimizing loss and waste in agriculture and food supply chains. Register now to secure your place!

November 14, 4pm – 6pm: Emergency Preparedness (VSU Randolph Farm, Petersburg, VA)

Preparedness is key to surviving natural and man-made disasters. Join representatives from Chesterfield Emergency Management as they discuss essential items for emergency situations, including how to build a kit, make a plan, and stay informed. The workshop will also cover crop and animal protection options during disasters, with insights from a Chesterfield environmental educator. Chesterfield County firefighters and first responders will be on hand to share fire prevention tips for the home and farmstead.

November 15, 12pm – 1:30pm: Farming With Probiotics (VSU Randolph Farm, Petersburg, VA)

Looking to boost soil health, enhance compost quality, improve livestock health, and create your own organic fertilizer affordably? Join us for a workshop covering these topics and more, including the benefits of lactic acid bacteria (LAB) in farm inputs. Learn how to create and store LAB to keep it shelf-stable.

November 19, 9am – 11am: Small Farm Orientation (Zoom Event)

This two-hour Zoom course is designed for new farmers with zero to five years of experience. Join Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, and Dr. Nartea, VSU extension specialist, as they guide you through developing a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual to support their journey. Register now to secure your spot!

November 19, 6pm – 7:30pm: Carbon Farming and Monitoring Workshop (Virtual Zoom Event)

Are you using climate-smart practices and looking for a way to measure the impact on your soil, operation, and community? Join Carter Farms, Africulture, and American Climate Partners as we explain USDA National Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) CEMA 221 latest programs. We'll answer your questions and share how these measurement tools can benefit your farming operation.

November 19, 6:30pm – 8:30pm: VDACS Animal Lab Tour (250 Cassell Rd, Wytheville, VA)

Ever wonder where your animal's diagnostic samples go after they're collected? Join us for an exclusive tour of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) laboratory in Wytheville. Discover what happens between the collection of samples and the delivery of results. Producers will learn about the lab's diagnostic services and gain insights into diseases affecting sheep and goats. The tour includes a behind-the-scenes look at one of the 35 Level 1 National Animal Laboratory Health Network certified labs in the U.S. Space is limited to 20 participants—register now!

November 21, 9am – 12:30pm: Getting More From Your Milk (Golden View Guernseys, Alberta, VA)

Join Stacy West at her dairy farm, Golden View Guernseys, for a hands-on workshop on maximizing milk production. Stacy will discuss her choice of dairy cow breed, their care, and the benefits of A2/A2 whole milk. She'll also demonstrate how she creates value-added products, including cream, buttermilk, butter, yogurt, and flavored milks, for her herd share customers. Register now to learn how to enhance your dairy operation with value-added products.

November 21, 1pm – 6pm: Noell's Christmas Tree Farm (Salem, VA)

Christmas tree production is a viable option for small landowners. Topics will include site selection, pre-planting site preparation, species selection, planting methods, insect and disease management, tree and

sod maintenance, harvesting, and marketing. Additional topics will cover other income opportunities from Christmas tree farms. This outdoor workshop takes place on an active Christmas tree farm, so attendees should wear appropriate shoes and clothing.

November 21, 5:30pm – 7pm: Unveiling the Mystery of Palynology (Petersburg, VA)

Join us at VSU's Randolph Farm for an exciting series exploring the direct and multifaceted impact of pollinators and palynology on soil health, honey production, climate mitigation, and the broader agricultural landscape—even on marginal land. This series includes informational sessions, interactive workshops, demonstrations, laboratory investigations, field days, and a unique mystery-solving dinner theater event. Discover the tools and insights you need to enhance your agricultural operations!

November 25, 6pm – 7:30pm: Passing the Baton: Preparing Your Farm Operation for the Next Generation of Land Stewards (Virtual Zoom Event)

Join Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms and Africulture as we discuss how to ensure your farm's legacy continues with the next generation. This session will help you and your family or loved ones engage in essential discussions this holiday season. We'll explore strategies to involve younger generations in agriculture, establish plans for farm transitions, and build a sustainable farm legacy. This interactive virtual workshop encourages participation—come prepared with questions as we work together to secure a vibrant future for local agriculture in Virginia.

December

December 2, 11am – 12pm: Institutionalizing DEIA (Online Zoom Event)

Join L'Tonya Davis, USDA's first permanent Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, for an insightful session on institutionalizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) within the USDA. Since March 2023, Ms. Davis has led the USDA's efforts to advance DEIA initiatives as outlined in the Department's first-ever DEIA Strategic Plan. Drawing from her experience at the FDA and her current role, she will provide an overview of the USDA's DEIA mission, strategic goals, and future direction. Register now to gain valuable insights into USDA's DEIA journey.

December 3, 3:30pm – 5:30pm: Healthy Soils in High Tunnels Field Day Butterbee Farm (Pikesville, MD)

Join the Million Acre Challenge and Future Harvest at Butterbee Farm to explore minimal soil disturbance techniques for high tunnel growing, along with details on the Maryland Healthy Soils Grant. Owners Laura Beth Resnick and Jascha Owens will share their experience in cut flower farming and small business management. Tickets are \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members, and free for BFTP and ALDI participants.

December 3, 8am – 5pm: Controlled Environment Ag & Precision Ag Workshop and Tour (150 Slayton Ave, Danville, VA)

Explore the innovative world of Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) through a hands-on workshop and tour at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR). CEA practices, such as greenhouse cultivation and vertical farming, leverage controlled environments to optimize crop growth, support traditional farming, and ensure year-round production. Join us to learn how CEA addresses key agricultural challenges like climate change, resource scarcity, and food security, while enhancing crop quality. Register now to secure your spot!

December 3, 6pm – 7:30pm: Diversifying Streams of Revenue (Online Zoom Event)

As farming evolves beyond traditional practices, join Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms and Africulture

to learn how to boost revenue through unconventional farm products and soft skills. Winter doesn't have to mean a slowdown in earnings—let's explore innovative ways for farmers to increase their income year-round.

December 4, 1pm – 3pm: Agricultural Tax & Agribusiness Development (Carver Center, Rapidan, VA)

Join the Tennie Agriculture Group, a tax and accounting firm specializing in financial solutions for farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses, for a workshop on building sustainable and profitable operations. This session will cover key topics including tax compliance for agribusinesses and Schedule F, choosing the right entity structure, and financial literacy for farmers, ranchers, and veterans. Gain the tools and knowledge to strengthen your agribusiness for the future.

December 4, 2:45pm – 4:45pm: Harvest Field Day (Eden Green Farm)

Join us at Eden Green Farm for a Celebratory Farm Harvest Field Day, honoring the legacy of Mr. Luther "Deacon" Brown. This event will showcase the journey of a generational success story, culminating in a fellowship meal for family, friends, and community. Participants will learn about conservation, heirs property and estate planning, value-added products, post-harvest processing, and cooperative farming practices. Please RSVP to attend. The address and additional details will be shared via email five days before the event.

December 5-6, 8am – 4pm: Virginia Farm to Table Conference 2024: Connecting Food, Farms, and Health (Weyers Cave, VA)

You're invited to the 2024 Virginia Farm to Table Conference at Blue Ridge Community College's Plecker Workforce Center! Join us for two days of collaboration, conversation, and community with farmers, practitioners, researchers, and more. This year's conference will gather a wide range of food system stakeholders, including farmers, producers, buyers, restaurateurs, food entrepreneurs, community organizers, and regenerative agriculture advocates.

December 5, 5pm – 7pm: Game Night @ SFOP (Jeopardy and Farmer Feud) (VSU Randolph Farm, Petersburg, VA)

Join us for a night of fun, fellowship, and friendly competition at VSU Randolph Farm! Test your knowledge of agriculture, SFOP, and government programs designed to support producers with rounds of Jeopardy and Farmer Feud. Participants will receive a Prep Guide, participation awards, and prizes for winners.

December 13-14, 2024: Cattle & Equipment WISE 2024 (The Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex, Chatham, VA)

Join us for a comprehensive two-day program designed to enhance skills in cattle and equipment management. On Friday, December 13, the Cattle WISE Program will cover essential topics like herd health, testing protocols, reproduction, calving, and low-stress cattle handling. Optional sessions include BQA Certification, a hands-on cooking session with beef, and a "Branded for Success" dinner featuring Michele Payn. On Saturday, December 14, the Equipment WISE Program focuses on practical skills for tractor and skid steer operation, safe handling of trucks and trailers, chainsaw use, fencing techniques, farm fire safety, and pesticide handling. An optional CPR and First Aid session will close the day.

December 18, 2pm – 3pm: Farm Number (Zoom Event)

Did you know that having a farm number is an essential first step in applying for most USDA funding? Join this interactive online workshop to learn why a farm number is important, how it can support your goals for farm profitability, and the steps to obtain one. Don't miss this valuable session!

January

January 10-12: 25th Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference! (Roanoke, VA)

We are excited to announce new sponsorship opportunities for the Virginia Biological Farming Conference, including the Taste of Virginia Expo & Market Sponsor, Tote Bag Sponsor, and our Demonstration Add-On. Sponsors will enjoy enhanced benefits and recognition through our extensive promotional channels. Held January 10-12, 2025, at The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. Proposals for both Pre-Conference Workshops and Conference Sessions are due by August 29, 2025.

January 17th - 18th: 26th Annual Future Harvest Conference Silver Spring Civic Building (Silver Spring, MD)

Join us for two days of workshops, lectures, farmer-to-farmer chats, farm-fresh meals, and networking at our 26th annual conference. Early bird registration, which saves you \$25, is open until December 14. Scholarships and work trade opportunities are available. Conference speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, and participants in the 2024 or 2025 Agricultural Leadership Development Initiative will receive a code for a complimentary ticket.

January 18, 2025: VT Beef Cattle Health Conference (Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA)

The VT Beef Cattle Health Conference offers essential insights for cattle producers, featuring sessions on dart gun use, mineral supplementation, fly control, colostrum management, and more. Hands-on labs will focus on preventing chute injuries, managing colostrum, and selecting genetics for strong hooves. For more information, contact Lisa McCormick at (540) 231-2792. Registration is \$20 (cash or check only), and the deadline is January 16, 2024.

Early Winter

2025 Advanced Soil Health Training (ASHT) in the Mid-Atlantic

American Farmland Trust is excited to launch the 2025 Advanced Soil Health Training (ASHT) program in the Mid-Atlantic, funded by the USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program. In collaboration with Truterra/Land O' Lakes, AFT will sponsor and train soil health advisors to deepen their expertise and support their communities. This program is designed for experienced farmers and farm advisors, equipping them to share advanced soil health practices with a wider audience. For more information, contact gsalazar@farmland.org.

Training Dates (2025) & Locations:

- **February 3-4: Harrisonburg, VA**
- March 5-6: Central MD
- July 23-24: Lancaster, PA
- December 3-4: Eastern Shore, MD

February 22, 2025: Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conferences (Blacksburg & Culpeper, VA)

Join fellow landowners, natural resource professionals, and outdoor enthusiasts for the *2025 Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conferences* on February 22nd. These day-long tours will explore sustainable forestry and wildlife management practices across private, public, and industry-owned lands.

Locations:

- Squires Student Center, Virginia Tech, Southwest Virginia - Blacksburg
- Daniel Technology Center, Germanna Community College, Northern Virginia - Culpeper

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