

# VIRGINIA Beginning Farmer & Rancher COALITION PROGRAM



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## **Happy New Year from the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program**

Fall and summer was busy with activity for the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program (VBFRCP). Most notably, we celebrated our 3rd year as a state-wide and Coalition-based Extension program this fall. Thank you for your support and participation! We are looking forward to continuing our efforts to help establish and sustain viable agricultural operations through whole farm planning programs, online resources, social networking, and farmer-farmer mentoring. This issue includes 2013 updates and activities available this coming year for beginning farmers, mentor farmers, and the agricultural service providers who work with the farming community. -Kim Niewolny, VBFRCP Director

### **Whole Farm Planning Courses and Workshops for**

**Beginning Farmers:** Several *Whole Farm Planning* courses and workshops were offered in 2013, while new ones are in the works for 2014. These new events will place in a number of locations and provide participants with much needed classroom instruction, farmer-farmer networking, and resources from our VBFRCP *Whole Farm Planning* curriculum and Coalition service provider network. See below for updated programming options near you. For more details, please visit: [www.vabeginningfarmer.org](http://www.vabeginningfarmer.org).

### **Certified Farm Seekers Program**

VA Farm Bureau Young Farmers and the VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services — *networking and resource intensive self-study available throughout 2014*

### **VSU Whole Farm Planning for Beginners Series**

Virginia State University, Small Farm Outreach Program — *full day workshops and networking available for winter 2014*

### **Growers' Academy**

Virginia Tech's Catawba Sustainability Center and VCE — *8 week learning series in Roanoke available Feb-April 2014.*

### **Whole Farm Planning in Southwest Virginia**

Appalachian Sustainable Development and VCE — *topical workshops ongoing*

### **Beginning Farmer Support on the Blue Ridge Plateau**

Grayson LandCare — *grass-based beef production technical assistance and networking ongoing*

### **Whole Farm Planning for New Vineyards and Wineries**

Attimo Winery — *technical assistance trainings ongoing*

### **SustainFloyd's Pocket Farm Course**

SustainFloyd — *12 week course recently completed for 2013*

### **Farm School for Beginners**

Virginia Association for Biological Farming (VABF) — *6 week course being planned for spring 2014*

### **Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program**

VCE and Fauquier Education Farm — *multiple-week course being planned for spring 2014*

## **Working Toward a Common Agenda: Supporting Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Across Virginia**

**Farmer Mentoring:** Mr. C.J. Isbell is our state-wide farm mentor coordinator. C.J.'s familiarity with new and transitional farming communities helps makes him an ideal leader for our mentoring activities. Several mentors and mentees are currently working together. We are also planning for several "mentor farmer trainings" to take place in February. If you are interested in participating as a mentor or mentee in the Virginia Farm Mentor Network, or you would like to know more about our mentoring programming, please contact C.J. at [cjisbell@vt.edu](mailto:cjisbell@vt.edu) or (540) 553-2278. You may also find our updated mentor and mentee applications on the VBFRCP website.

### **Whole Farm Planning "Train the Trainer" with Service Providers:**

Upon request of the service provider community that makes up the VBFRCP, we developed four "train the trainer" sessions. These trainings wrap up in January 2014, where 70 service providers will have learned best practices to implement our *Whole Farm Planning* curriculum as trainers. The full day trainings are lead by Kim Niewolny and Martha Walker of Virginia Cooperative Extension, along with a number of VBFRCP resource specialists active in the Coalition. Pictured below are trainers and participants at the November training session in Petersburg, VA.



**Coalition Building from the Bottom Up:** We believe a key ingredient in growing new farmers is to create a collaborative network of farmers and service providers to help steer our community-based programming. This fall, the VBFRCP elected a new governing body to do just that. The Transitional Advisory Group of the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition consists of eight individuals who represent both farmer and service provider perspectives. This elected advisory group is responsible for providing input to guide program activity to best address the expressed needs of the Coalition. Please welcome our new advisory team!

**Adrianna Vargo, Local Food Hub**

**Alvin Blaha, Laurel Farms (farmer rep)**

**Carey Edwards, Small Farm Outreach Program participant (farmer rep)**

**Carl Stafford, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Northern District**

**Jerry Moles, Grayson LandCare**

**Kelli Scott, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Southwest District (chair)**

**Mike Burton, SustainFloyd**

**Stefanie Kitchen, Farm Bureau Young Farmers**

The next VBFRCP Coalition meeting will take place on February 12th in Staunton, VA. This meeting will bring together our mentors and service provider network to share best practices and continue building our state-wide referral system!

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## Webinar Series for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Have you participated in the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Program webinar series? We are happy to continue offering free webinars that showcase important start-up topics and resources for Virginia beginning farmers and ranchers. The webinars also highlight the Coalition's many service providers who are primed to share their knowledge and experiences with the beginning farmer and rancher community. Recent webinar presentations include:

**Access to Credit: Farm Credit - A Partnership for all Farmers—** Paul Eberly and Teresa Harris, Farm Credit of the Virginias

**Access to Land: The Leasing Option (Legal Aspects of Leasing Land for Beginners—** Jesse J. Richardson, Jr., Virginia Tech

**Connecting Beginning Farmers to New Markets: Start-up Advice & Resources for Gaining Access to Farmers Markets—** Leanne DuBois, VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Ellen Stewart, Blacksburg Farmers Market; Meredith Ledlie, Virginia Cooperative Extension.



The Farm Credit of the Virginias' team presented on "Access to Credit"

**Looking for a previously recorded webinar?** Check out our program website at [www.vabeginningfarmer.org](http://www.vabeginningfarmer.org) for recordings of past webinars and to see what other exciting initiatives are being developed! More webinars to come in 2014!

**Are you interested in presenting a webinar?** Do you have a suggestion for a topic? We would love to hear from you. The VBFRCP is seeking webinar presenters for the 2014 season. If you would like to be a part of our successful webinar series, please contact us!

The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program is a state-wide and coalition-based Extension program housed in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. Funding was sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Award # 2010-49400. Program activity is currently funded, in part, with an integrated, competitive grant from VAES, VCE, and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech. For more information, contact Kim Niewolny, Program Director and Extension Specialist, at [niewolny@vt.edu](mailto:niewolny@vt.edu) or 540-231-5784.

## Making Connections: Events to Attend in 2014

We have updated our *Events* page on the website. This new format allows you to more easily find Virginia and regional opportunities to continue planning and implementing your new farm. Visit us to find a number of workshops, conferences, farm tours, and more! Below is an abbreviated list of winter opportunities sponsored by Coalition members and other provider networks, you may consider attending:

- ◆ Prince Edward Cannery and Commercial Kitchen Open House, Farmville, VA —Jan 15, 2014
- ◆ Appalachian Sustainable Development's *Choosing Markets for Your Farm Products* Workshop, Wytheville, VA —Jan 18, 2014
- ◆ Future Harvest's 15th Annual Farming for Profit and Stewardship Conference, College Park, MD — Jan 17 & 18, 2014
- ◆ Virginia Biological Farming Conference, Richmond, VA — Jan 31 – Feb 1, 2014
- ◆ America Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference, Virginia Beach, VA — Feb 7-10, 2014

To learn more, or to share your events, please visit the *Events* page on our website. Also visit our Facebook site and Listserv for postings.

## Join the conversation online! Social media from the VBFRCP!

VBFRCP website: [www.vabeginningfarmer.org](http://www.vabeginningfarmer.org)

Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition is on Facebook. Like us!

Virginia Beginning Farmers & Ranchers YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/VABeginningFarmers](http://www.youtube.com/user/VABeginningFarmers)

Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Flickr: [www.flickr.com/photos/virginiabeginningfarmers](http://www.flickr.com/photos/virginiabeginningfarmers)



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Webinar Series



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