
VBFRCP Past Participant Survey Report

Evaluation conducted spring 2016



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August 3, 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the evaluation findings for the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition (VBFRC) Past Participant Survey in March 2016. The VBFRC aimed to understand how the attitudes and farming practices of participants in VBFRC Whole Farm Planning Programs of 2012-2015 have changed since completing their programs. The VBFRC Whole Farm Planning Programs provide farmers with a range of classroom-based workshops, farm tours, field instruction, and networking opportunities using a holistic approach to farm planning. The five areas of whole farm planning included in the curriculum are: *Introduction to Whole Farm Planning, Marketing, Business Management, Land Tenure, and Sustainable Farming Practices.*

A Qualtrics survey was distributed to approximately 224 individuals, with 38 responses being received. The survey was disseminated through email by the VBFRC Program Director. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected and is presented below. Qualitative data is presented verbatim.

At this point in time, our recommendations include: 1) setting clear expectations for program participants by describing in detail the whole farm planning curriculum and program goals prior to registration, and 2) continuing to include guest speakers in whole farm planning programs while aligning presentations with program curriculum.

Introduction

This report describes the qualitative and quantitative data collected from the survey distributed to past participants of VBFRC Whole Farm Planning Programs from 2012-2015. The goal of the Whole Farm Planning Programs is to improve opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers in Virginia by using a holistic approach to farm planning that includes an Introduction to Whole Farm Planning, Marketing, Business Management, Land Tenure, and Sustainable Farm Practices.

The VBFRC aimed to learn what past participants remember from their programs and see if and how they are implementing the information from the programs today.

This report includes information on program participation, demographics of program participants, reviews of the five Whole Farm Planning modules, farm networking and knowledge, participants who are no longer farming, and takeaway points mentioned by survey participants. Qualitative and quantitative data are presented together to most accurately represent the data collected.

Methods

The survey instrument was developed during the Fall of 2015 through the Winter of 2016 (See Appendix). The Qualtrics survey gathered information on program participation, current farm operation characteristics, the Whole Farm Planning curriculum, farm networking and knowledge, and demographic data.

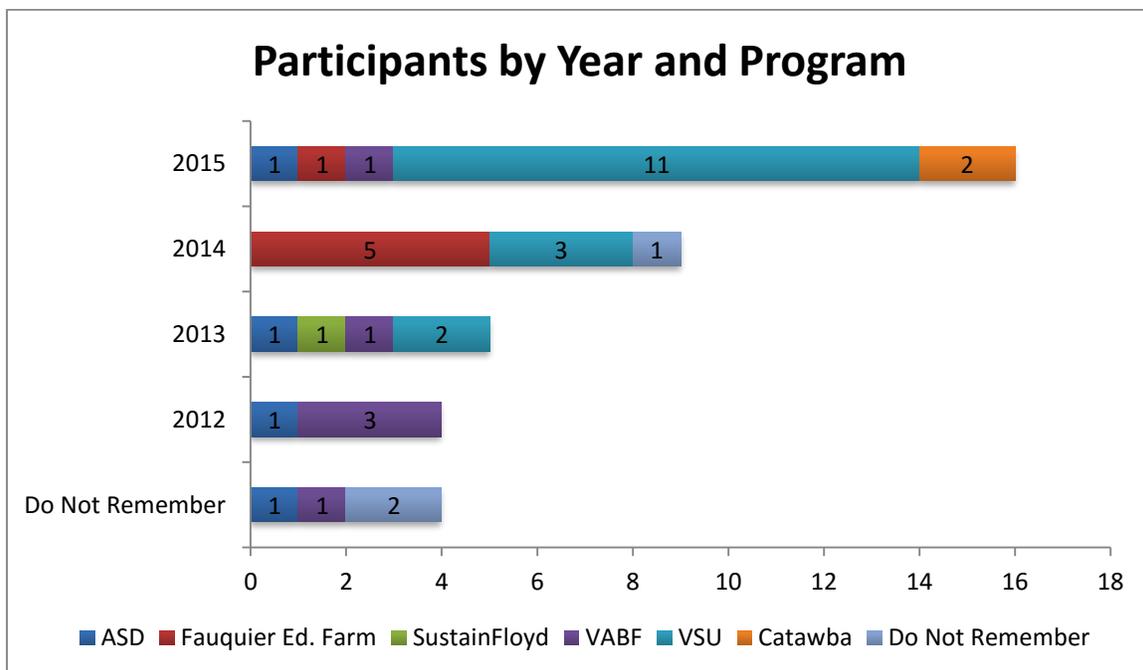
Analysis

Qualitative data is reported verbatim. Quantitative data was aggregated using Qualtrics and appropriate graphics were made to best communicate the questions in the instrument.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Participation. Survey respondents participated in whole farm planning programs between the 2012 and 2015. The programs included in the survey were Appalachian Sustainable Development’s Whole Farm Planning in Southwest Virginia; Fauquier Education Farm, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Fauquier County Agricultural Development Office’s Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program; SustainFloyd’s New Strategies for Small Plot Vegetable Farming; Virginia Association for Biological Farming’s Whole Farm Planning Farm School; Virginia State University’s Beginning Farmer Program; and Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center’s Growers’ Academy.

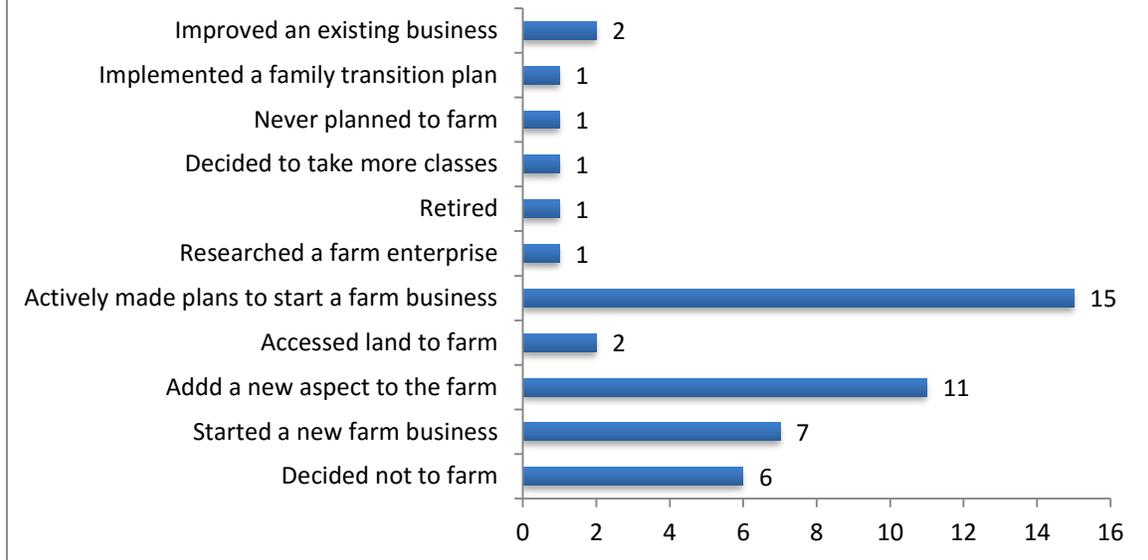
Three whole farm planning programs from this time period were not included in this survey. Those programs include: Attimo Winery’s Whole Farm Planning for New Wineries and Vineyards; Grayson LandCare’s Beginning Farmer Support on the Blue Ridge Plateau; and Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers and the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Certified Farm Seeker’s Program. The Attimo Winery and Grayson LandCare programs were not included due to an inability to retrieve participant contact information. The Certified Farm Seeker’s unique model lent itself to a separate survey to be discussed in another report.



Responses=38

Farm Decisions. The whole farm planning curriculum ties all the planning farmers do together for the whole farm. This holistic approach is based on the short and long-term vision of the farm and, after completing the program, participants are more prepared to make a number of decisions about their farm enterprise. The following decisions have been made by participants since participating in a whole farm planning program (participants could select more than one).

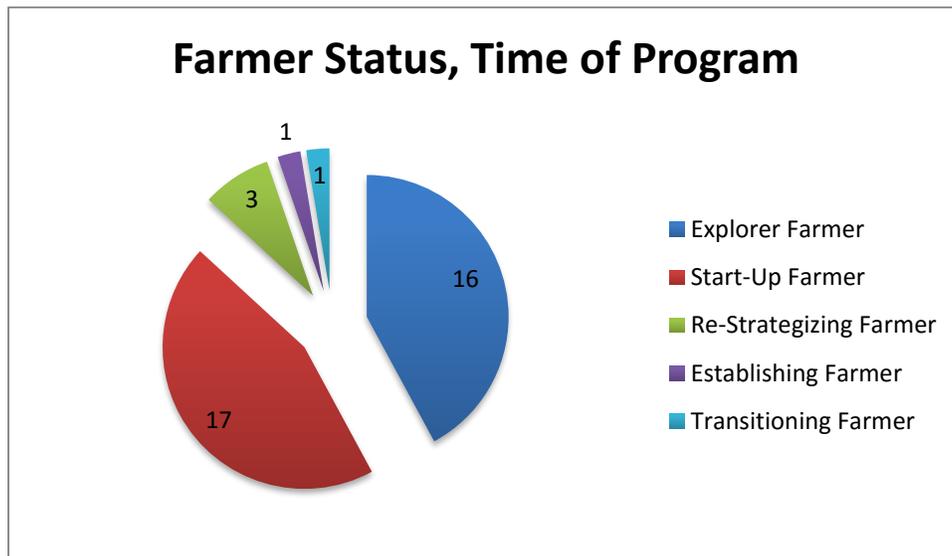
Decisions After Program Participation



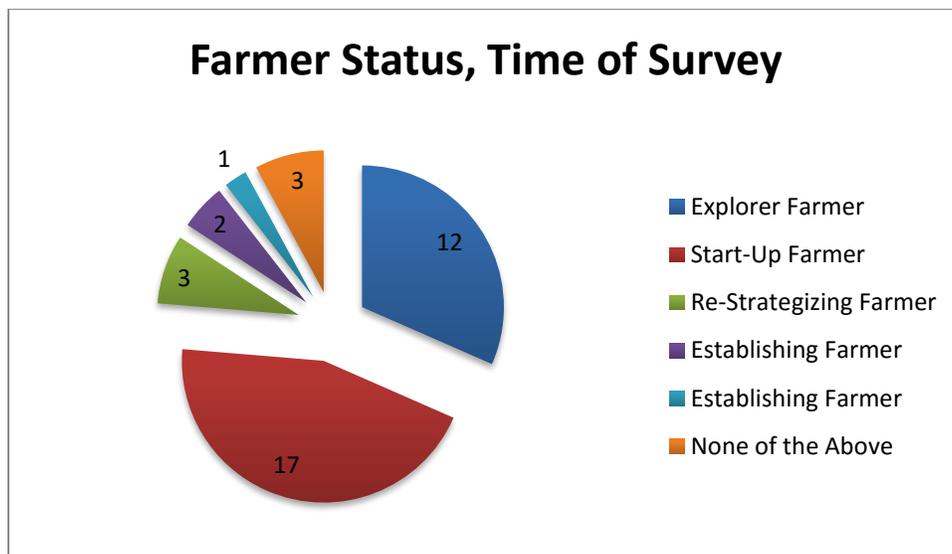
Responses=38

DEMOGRAPHICS

Farmer Status. Participants were asked to indicate their farmer status at the time of the program as well as the time of the survey. An explorer farmer is an individual interested in starting a farm or ranch. A start-up farmer is an individual who is in the early stages of their agricultural operation. A re-strategizing farmer is a farmer who is making changes to his or her operation after an initial period of farming. An establishing farmer is a farmer who is expanding, diversifying, and stabilizing his or her farming operation. A transitioning farmer is an individual who is a family farm member who has a decision making role on the farm without having primary farm operator status. A response of “None of the Above” indicates that the individual no longer farms or is no longer interested in farming.

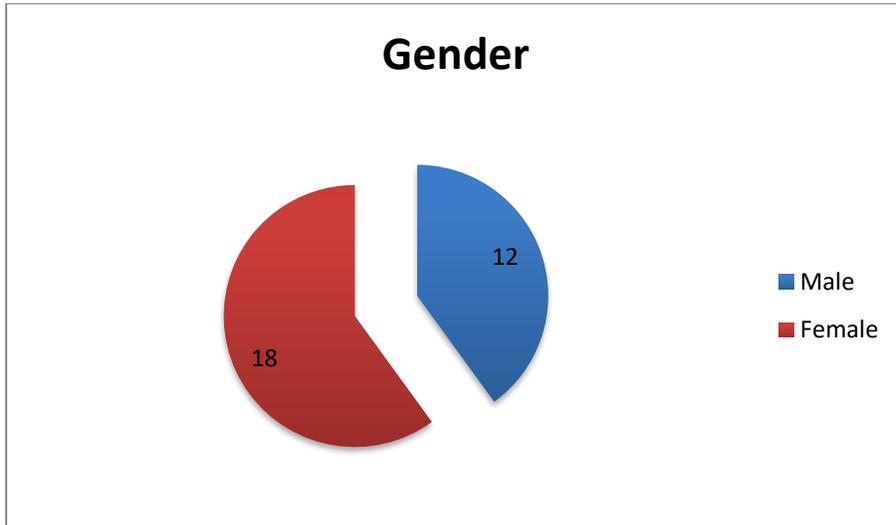


Responses=38



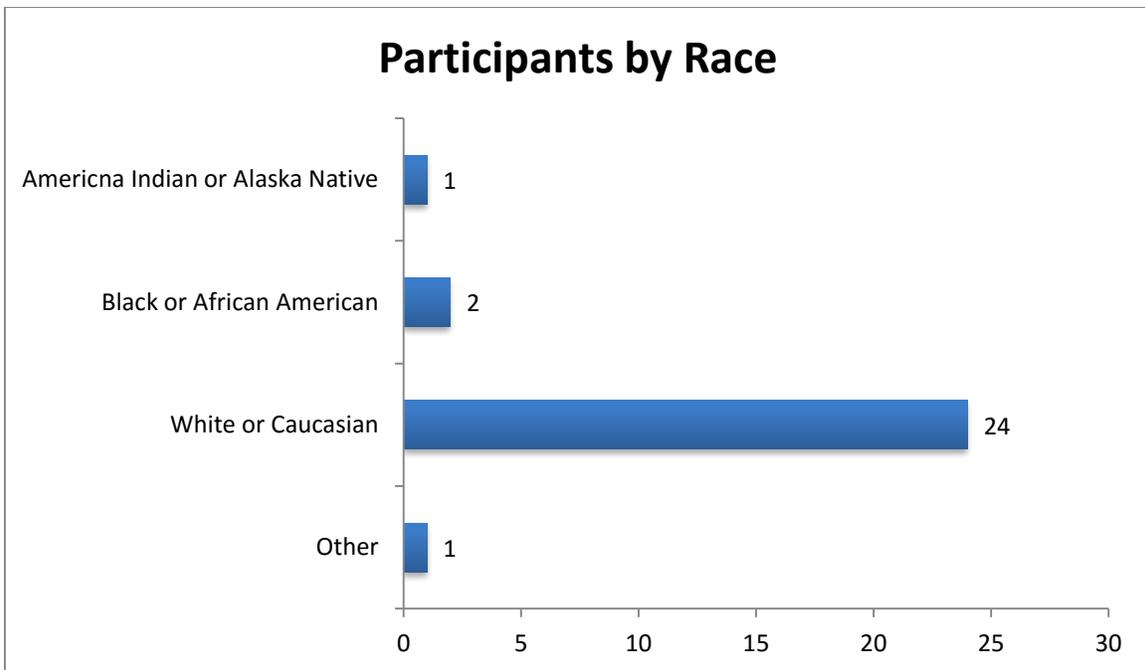
Responses=38

Age and Military Status. Age was reported by 28 survey participants and was evenly spread between 28 and 75. 3/30 participants (10%) reported having military veteran status.



Responses=30

Reported Race. The following chart contains the races indicated by survey participants. Participants were given the option to select all races that apply to them. No participants selected Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; Asian; or Hispanic or Latino. One participant indicated "Other" but did not specify.



Responses=28

Farmer Location. The list and map below indicate the locations (by county) and number of survey participants. 27 individuals live in Virginia, and 2 individuals are not currently located in Virginia but did not specify.

- I am not located in Virginia (2)
- Albemarle (1)
- Amelia (1)
- Dinwiddie (1)
- Fauquier (3)
- Goochland (1)
- Hanover (1)
- Henrico (1)
- Isle of Wight (1)
- James City (2)
- King and Queen (1)
- Loudoun (4)
- Montgomery (1)
- Northumberland (1)
- Prince George (1)
- Stafford (1)
- Surry (1)
- Tazewell (1)
- Washington (2)
- Westmoreland (1)
- Wythe (1)

Farmer Locations in Virginia



FARM OPERATION INFORMATION

This information was not asked of those survey participants who indicated that they were no longer farming or interested in farming. Participants were asked about their farming experiences and current operations.

Farm Location. The list and map below indicate the locations (by county) and number of survey participants' farms. 19 individuals have farms in Virginia, 2 individuals have farms in Bristol, TN; one individual has a farm in Unicoi County, TN; and three individuals are not currently farming.

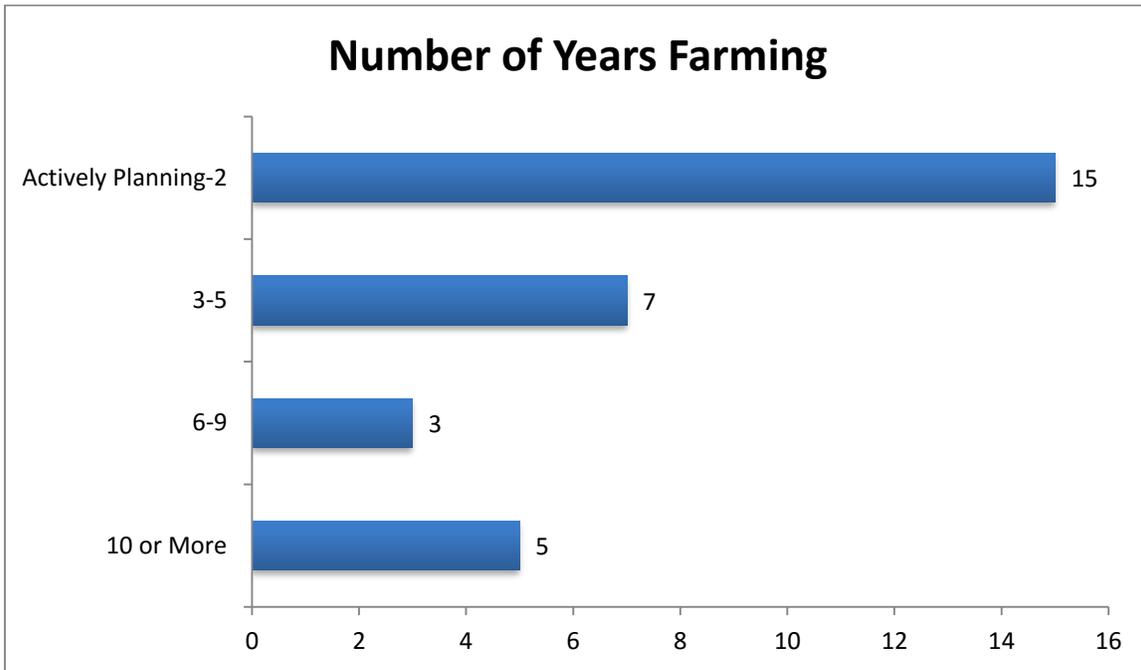
- My farm is not located in Virginia (3)
 - Bristol, TN
 - Sullivan County
 - Greenhouse plants in Bristol TN
 - Unicoi Co., TN
- Albemarle (1)
- Brunswick (1)
- Charlotte (1)
- Chesterfield (1)
- Fauquier (3)
- Hanover (1)
- Isle of Wight (1)
- James City (2)
- King and Queen (1)
- Loudoun (2)
- Northumberland (1)
- Prince George (1)
- Tazewell (1)
- Washington (1)
- Wythe (1)
- I am not currently farming (2)

Farm Locations in Virginia

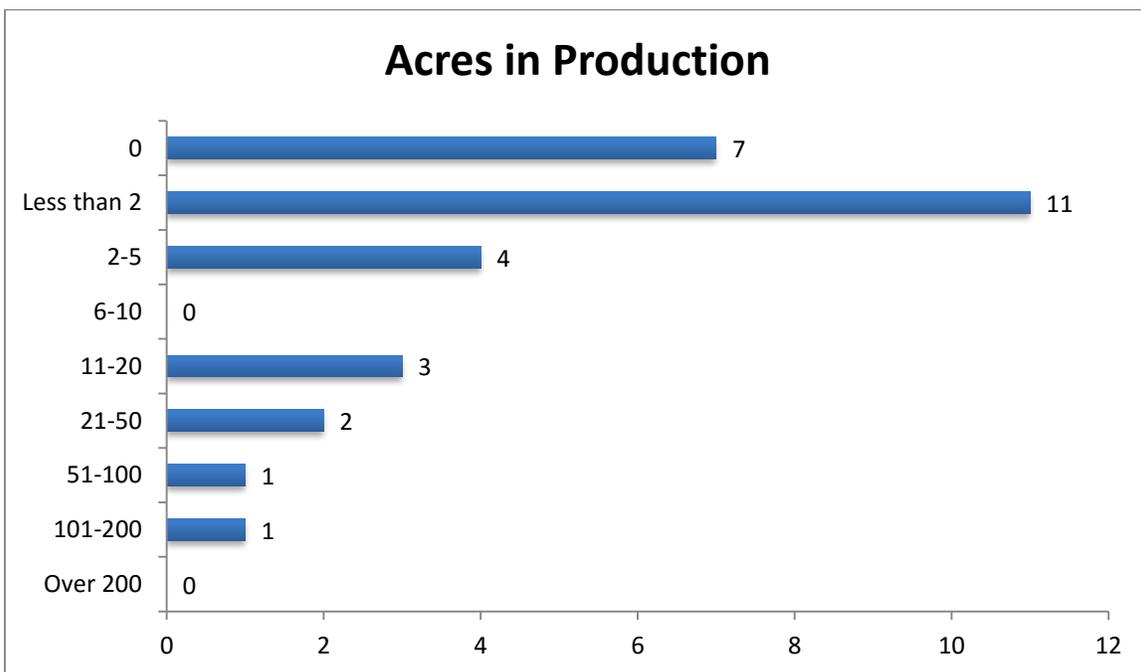


Farm Products. Survey participants could indicate one or multiple products that they grow or plan to grow on their farm enterprise. The top products or commodities that survey participants grow (or plan to grow) include vegetables (n=18, 64%) and fruits (n=10, 36%). However, participants produce or are interested in producing a wide range of commodities, including: Poultry (n=9, 32%), greenhouses (n=6,

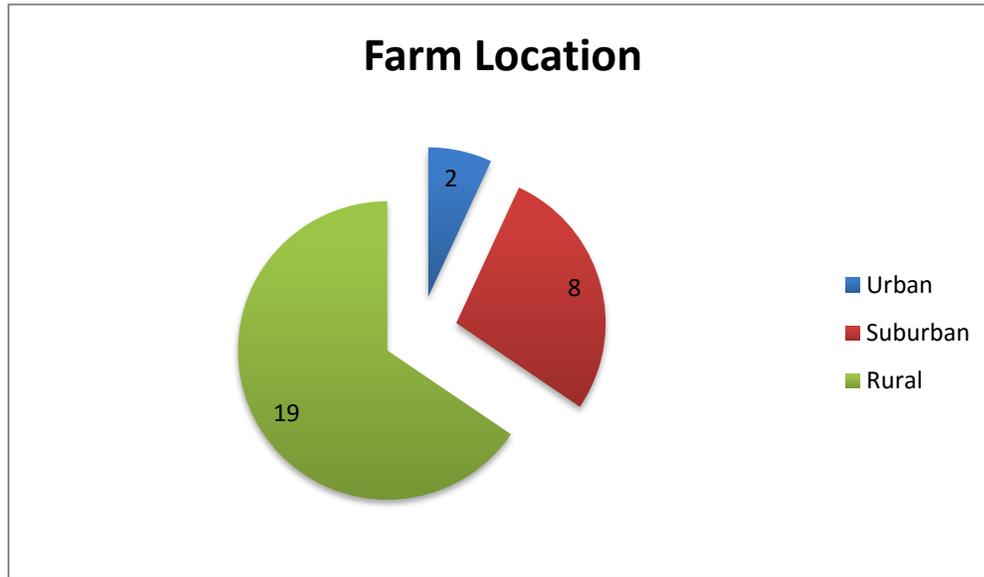
21%), flowers (n=5, 18%), swine (n=5, 18%), beef (n=5, 18%), forages/hay (n=3, 11%), hops (n=3, 11%), dairy (n=2, 7%), nursery crops (n=2, 7%), other livestock (n=2, 7%), honey bees (n=2, 7%), medicinal herbs (n=2, 7%), eggs (n=1, 4%), sheep (n=1, 4%), equine (n=1, 4%), fiber (n=1, 4%), feed grains (n=1, 4%), grains/dry beans/oil seeds for human consumption (n=1, 4%), are undecided (n=1, 4%), or rent land (n=1, 4%).



Responses=30



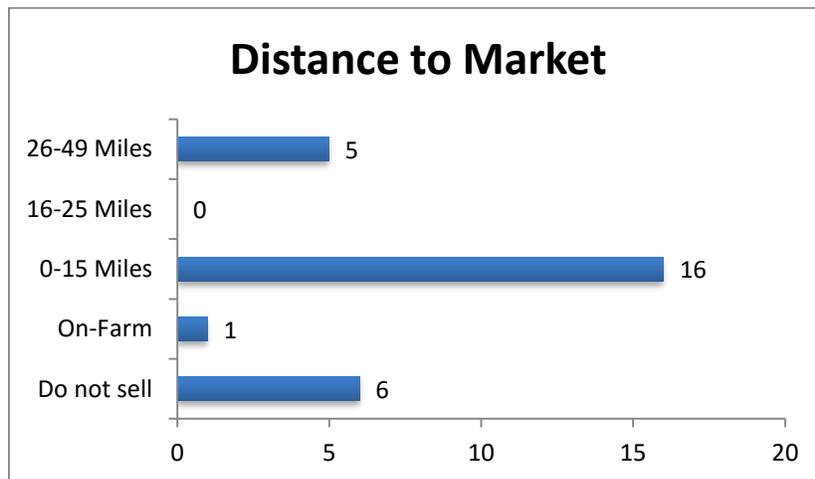
Responses=29



Responses=29

Market Outlets. Survey participants could select multiple market outlets through which they currently sell or plan to sell their products. Survey participants sell (or plan to sell) their products primarily at farmers markets (n=16, 64%). Other market outlets include restaurants (n=7, 28%), home delivery (n=6, 24%), roadside stands (n=5, 20%), CSAs (n=4, 16%), wholesale (n=4, 16%), retail stores on-farm (n=4, 16%), livestock auction (n=3, 12%), retail store (n=2, 8%), marketing coop (n=2, 8%), U-Pick (n=1, 4%), food banks (n=1, 4%), off-farm sales (n=1, 4%), other ranchers (n=1, 4%), or are undecided (n=1, 4%).

Distance to Market. Survey Participants were asked to indicate approximately how far away their farm is from their primary market. No participants stated that their primary market was more than 49 miles away.



Responses=28

Farm Labor. Survey participants were asked to indicate what type of labor they currently utilize or plan to utilize on the farm, selecting all options that apply. Labor on survey participants' farms is provided mainly by immediate family members (n=21, 72%). Apprentices (n=8, 28%) and volunteers (n=7, 24%) are also common labor sources. Other sources of labor include extended family (n=3, 10%), part-time employees (n=2, 7%), seasonal domestic farmworkers (n=2, 7%), H-2A guest farmworkers (n=2, 7%), YMCA campers (n=1, 3%), friends (n=1, 3%), are undecided (n=1, 3%), or hire no additional labor (n=3, 10%).

Additional Information. Lastly, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional information about their farm or farm planning situation. Their responses are given below.

- After a year experimenting, only selling at a small farm market, we are increasing production and offering CSA shares as a means of funding start-up costs such as a grow light system for starting transplants, irrigation set up. We have taken advantage of the many learning opportunities in Fauquier and Loudoun Counties, and visited other area growers.
- As well as the farm, we have gardens in Washington Co. and City of Bristol. The government has been a big help in getting us going as the 64 acres we purchased was VERY beautiful and flat but had no barns, no fences, no water well...etc. Our learning curve has been very high! I LOVED the classes we took and look forward to more learning experiences in the future. Thank you.
- I had been selling from a garden I'd cultivated on land I rented for 30 years. I bought my own land/home in 2009 and am starting over here. The land and resources are entirely different and nowhere close to the productivity of the old garden.
- Work a lot with school children and the students harvest the produce to use in a certified kitchen they serve the public at.
- Would be nice to have some support from VSU/VT for beekeepers. The extension agents have no experience or very little with beekeeping and VDACS/State Apiarist (Keith Tignor) and the inspectors are busy folks.
- Our farm is designed to be a community "teaching" garden for residents interested in growing vegetables.
- The class was useful for the visiting lecturers and tge other class participants, but as a beginner I would have like a class on farm equipment and a teacher more familiar with the whole farming concept.
- Access to land (and other capital) currently precludes my entry into farming. Additionally, the necessity of health insurance coverage makes leaving a fulltime job with benefits, or dropping to part time status and losing access to health insurance coverage, is a major hurdle on the path to entering farming. The VABF program was extremely beneficial to me and I still have the "farm dream."
- We are currently in the start-up phase and are open to any suggestions and/or opportunities. Our farm about 20 acres will be located in Dinwiddie, Va. near Blackstone.
- We have sold the farm - moved out of state - retired.
- We were so grateful to receive the study and the forester that came out to walk the 100 acre property and explain ideas of future ideas. My husband had a hip replaced last year and our

daughter is graduating from college in May to come home to help us implement all of the suggestions. We are excited for our future and the possibility of finally seeing success on this beautiful piece of woodland farm.

- I am in the process of purchasing land in Goochland.

Introduction to Whole Farm Planning

24/27 (89%) Survey respondents discussed an introduction to the whole farm planning process in the program they participated in, while 1 participant (4%) did not remember.

18/23 (78%) of participants agreed that they are now able to make informed decisions about developing a working Whole Farm Plan.

19/23 (82%) of participants agreed that they now know of people who they can go to for further support for their farming goals and objectives.

21/23 (91%) of participants agreed that they now know of additional resources they can access regarding implementing their farm goals.

Whole Farm Planning Goals. Common goals for the upcoming years include expanding farm and improving practices (n=6), expanding markets and increasing sales (n=5), and increasing production and/or decreasing expenses (n=4). Specific responses are given below:

- Find out these things for starting a hop yard: What incentives are available in Loudoun, and/or VA, to help with this very big new local product market?
- Increase production, decrease expenses.
- Increase production to accommodate a 20 share CSA. Grow our own transplants - variety selection is partly based on information from field days at Fauquier Educ Farm. Keep better track of expenses.
- increase production get a better handle on what and when to plant increase customer base and, of course, someday make money at farming!
- Create pasture/hay fields, obtain livestock, raising vegetables
- Sell 1000 lbs of onions. Maintain a productive kitchen garden. Find new sources of biomass.
- 1) Acquire more land 2) Expand markets and sell more consistently 3) Involve more students from the local school in the growing and harvesting.
- Expand apiary and business base.
- Move to more organic production; improve soil; increase amount of produce grown
- Expanding retail & restaurant sales Gaining access to more land Acquiring more cattle and finding markets to finish more pigs (**dealing with cash flow restraints & expansion**)
- 1. Continue to grow beef cattle herd through breeding with newly acquired bull 2. Complete fencing all pastures, install drinkers according to John Marshall plan 3. Start rotational grazing
- We will do more crop trials and more research. would like to purchase infrastructure for hopyard but am hopeful for a tax credit (like wineries have)
- Gain access to land in order to establish perennial crops, with intention to begin harvesting for sale within the next five years.
- Get a loan to buy land Development of new garden beds, huglekulter, for longer-term sustainability and drought resistance, a new walapeni pit greenhouse for year-round food

production, and workshops on alternative building such as straw bale, cordwood, earth home, etc.

- Be more profitable
- more classes.
- 1. Add meat and dairy goats. 2. Clear 20 acres for new pasture. 3. Clear 10 acres for vegetable seed production.
- Increase sustainability of apiary
- Establish local market
- I would like to do something in 5 years.

Important Resources and Concepts. Participants were asked the most important planning idea or resource they learned about from their programs. The most common responses were county extension agents and other service providers (n=4), financial statements and business plans (n=4), and planning ahead and moving slowly (n=3). Survey responses are listed below:

- Soil testing
- Resources. County extension agent and Fauquier Ed farm.
- The course made you think about your personal goals, made you find out whether the people you thought were going to help you understood that you were depending on their help (in my case, occasional help with labor), made sure you understood that most people don't make large profits and that is important not to invest more than you can afford to lose.
- several good ideas. Not just one.
- Taking it slow, baby steps to grow into what we want
- The program was not helpful to me. The guest speakers were interesting and knowledgeable but the content was not relevant. It was one of the most poorly presented classes I've ever attended. By the end, few students were attending.
- Knowing yourself is the most important first step, and not taking out more money than you can pay back.
- Farm Bureau has support available
- Identifying specific individuals to ask for assistance when needed
- putting the farm plan on paper to present to the class leaders for feedback
- There are a lot of people and resources out there to help; don't be afraid to ask questions and use those resources
- actually, the personal connections with extension and with other events and educational opportunities.
- Not yet farming, but the emphasis on soil health with organic/biological farm operations was enlightening.
- Financial statements and finding out about loan programs
- Our woodland has far greater potential than we previously planned. Mushrooms, woods walks and workshops on wild harvesting, sustainably cutting of wood for firewood and adding more beneficial species.

- Be better at planning
- That a prospective Lender should know what a pole barn is.
- The XLS spreadsheet.
- Planning, planning, planning
- Unsure
- The finance portion of the beginning farmers program.

Common Challenges. The common challenges to long-term success reported by survey participants included: access to affordable land (n=7), financial resources (n=5), access to dependable labor (n=3), and productivity (n=3). Participant responses are listed below:

- Finding time to work on it. We were advised not to "quit your day job," and we never will. But there's not much time left to build a hopyard and all the planning and financial questions etc.
- Keeping soil acidity correct. (Blueberries)
- Last year it was marketing/sales, so we decided to try the CSA route. This year it will be the challenge of giving our members their money's worth!
- how to be productive and having the rest of the family understand that we need to keep records
- Financial resources and land
- Financial
- Enriching poor soil so I have enough crop to sell profitably. I can sell everything I grow and always sell out at the market....with requests for more.
- land access and being able to afford supplies
- Running bees is a very big challenge these days unlike when I started some 40+ years ago.
- having enough workers
- Cash flow for expansion and infrastructure, land access and time (we work FT and are investing cash into the farm to get it off the ground, but we are fairly stretched thin on time and balancing things animal processing and delivery is really challenging as well as when unexpected items happen). On certain days it is very hard to balance work/farm and the increasing administrative tasks of the farm. It's also hard to have to use limited paid time off days to attend conferences that happen during the week to enhance skills/network. Our main goal is to grow enough that next year I can work somewhere PT and do the farm or farm FT, but expansion and market growth have to happen to get to that point. We need more land but don't have time to manage animals at property not located close to us.
- working on our run-down property to get it to the point of regular maintenance instead of the major maintenance we are doing now
- cash, plus general ignorance of field tests and crop data for hops in northern va.
- Access to affordable land and necessity of having health insurance.
- Labor. My husband is 70, I am 54, and we will have a daughter joining the team to breathe new life into the farm. We also have a group of friends planning to build alternative housing on the property to join us in collective farming and community-based neighbor living.

- Red rooted pigweed, corporate capitalism, environmental destruction brought on by careless and thoughtless humans bent on short term profit above even their own health and livelihood
- not ready, yet (financially or land-wise). not a land owner.
- Affordable and dependable seasonal labor.
- Integrated pest management
- Dealing with generational land issues
- The Land transition is an important part of my plan.

MARKETING

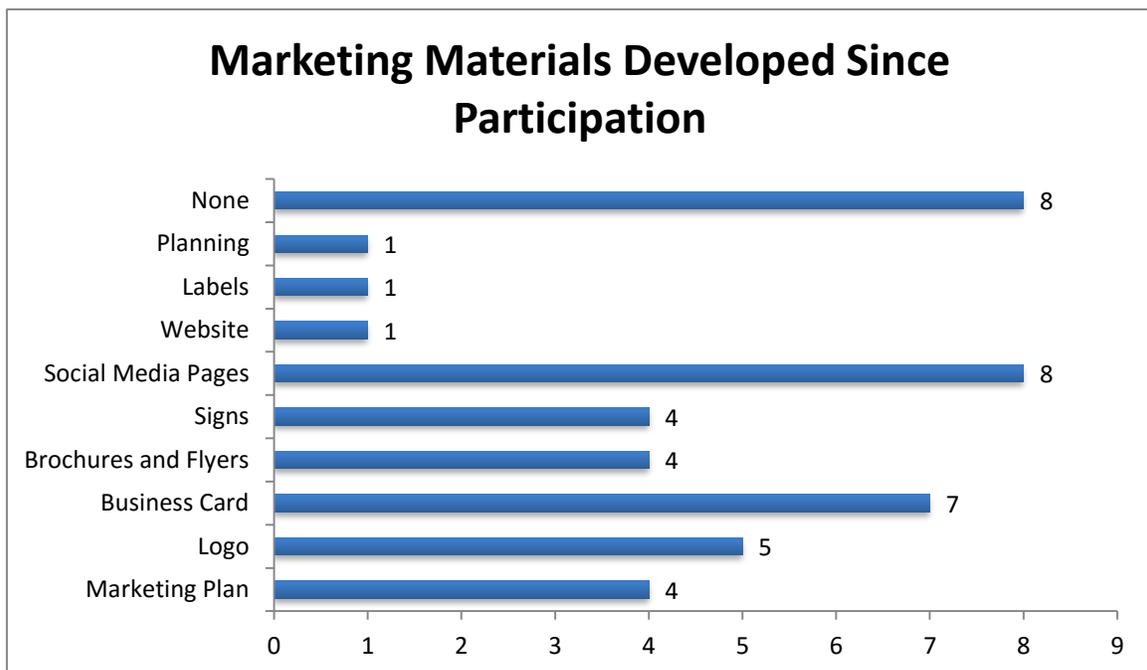
18/25 (72%) Survey respondents discussed marketing in the program they participated in, while 4 participants (16%) did not remember.

15/20 (75%) of participants agree that they are now more able to make informed decisions about marketing and selling farm products.

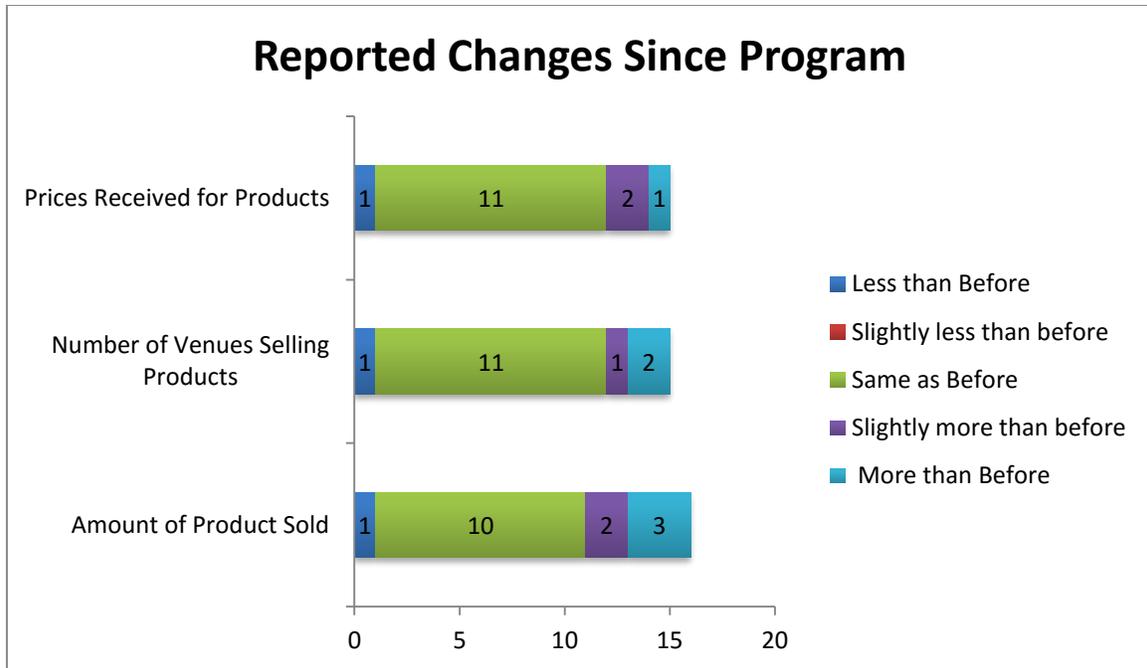
12/20 (60%) of participants feel confident in their ability to participate in a market to sell their farm products.

7/19 (36%) of participants feel that their current marketing strategy is meeting their farm business needs

14/20 (70%) of participants know of additional resources they can access regarding marketing and product/farm promotion



Responses=20



Responses=16

Marketing Changes. Since participating in the program, participants have made the following changes to their marketing plans:

- I still haven't produced enough blueberries to market. Hopefully this is the turn year.
- I took the class before I had any produce to sell - so there is not before/after experience. The class gave me info about VDACS program and the promotional items they offered free. I took advantage and used their pricing notecards and displayed the large Virginia Grown banner at my stall. Customers liked knowing everything was grown close by.
- I market all that I sell at a good price. It is growing enough that is a challenge.
- Suggestion: I think reviewing labeling requirements (produce, eggs, etc) and how to set up a meat label would be really helpful. Label set up for us was huge and we had to start from square one w/o any help - definitely many lessons learned along the way.
- We were quite successful at area Farmer Market venues in the past but are going to be adding different products, pricing and marketing techniques in the coming future.
- I have not done any marketing. I did the assignment, of questioning/speaking with the Farmers/Vendors at the Farmer's Market.
- I have taken so many because I work in the field every of extension.

Marketing Goals. Participants were asked to describe 1-3 of their current marketing goals. Common marketing goals include: developing a logo, business card, or other promotional materials (n=6); increasing product sold (n=5); and developing a loyal customer base (n=4). Survey responses are listed below:

- Name the hopyard. Find a place to process the harvested hops. Participate in a network that knows how to sell to local breweries, as opposed to me cold calling them all with no idea what to ask for price-wise etc.
- Sell all of my product. I already have a vendor wanting to sell. Any excess will be sold through Farmers Market or via value added products.
- Sell all of our 20 CSA shares. Develop a loyal customer base at the small farm market where I sell. Develop a good logo and make business cards and market to local restaurants.
- to be productive. to be recognized as a superior producer of natural grown foods to help the public learn good food choices
- Roadside signage, social media, word of mouth(networking)
- My goal is to grow enough to meet my customers' needs. At this point my marketing exceeds my product.
- Become more effective at getting customers on a regular basis. 2) Tap into the "home delivery" of the students we work with selling the produce to teachers at school. 3) To better cost-analyses before planting, a lot of times I waste a lot of money on buying whatever I want or spending on crops that don't have a good return.
- Grow Facebook & Instagram presence Host an event at the farm Continue to strengthen co-marketing partnerships
- logo. naming
- Focus on standing out by offering unusual products not already available. Breaking into previously untapped markets our farm wasn't reaching before. Becoming a teaching farm and a destination.
- Sell more
- not ready yet
- Start a CSA. 2. Increase signage.
- I am not there yet.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

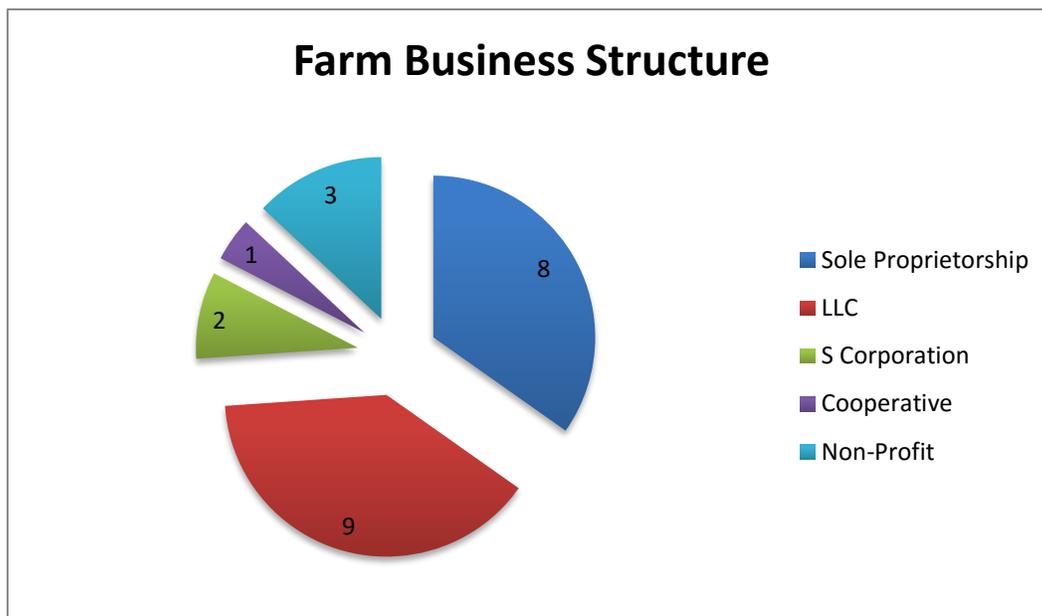
21/24 (88%) Survey respondents discussed business management in the program they participated in, while 3 participants (13%) did not remember.

14/23 (60%) of participants agree that they are now able to make informed decisions about farm business management

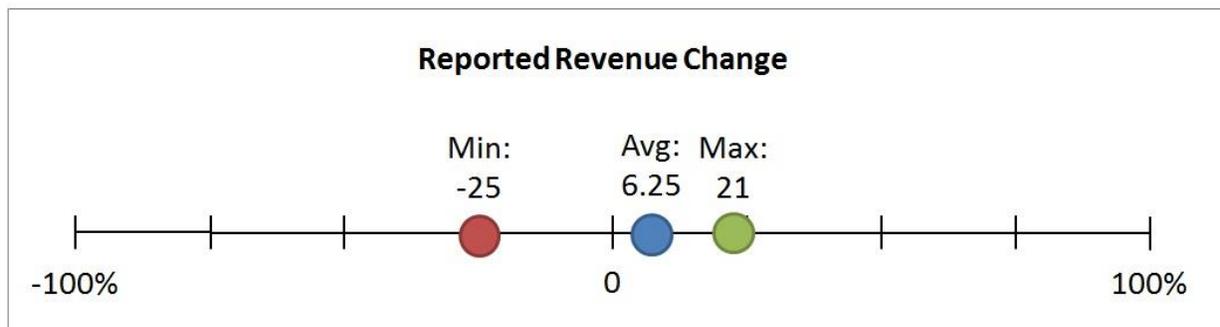
6/23 (26%) of participants have developed a complete business plan for their farms since completing the program.

3/23 (13%) of participants have been able to successfully obtain affordable capital or credit to start or improve their farm businesses

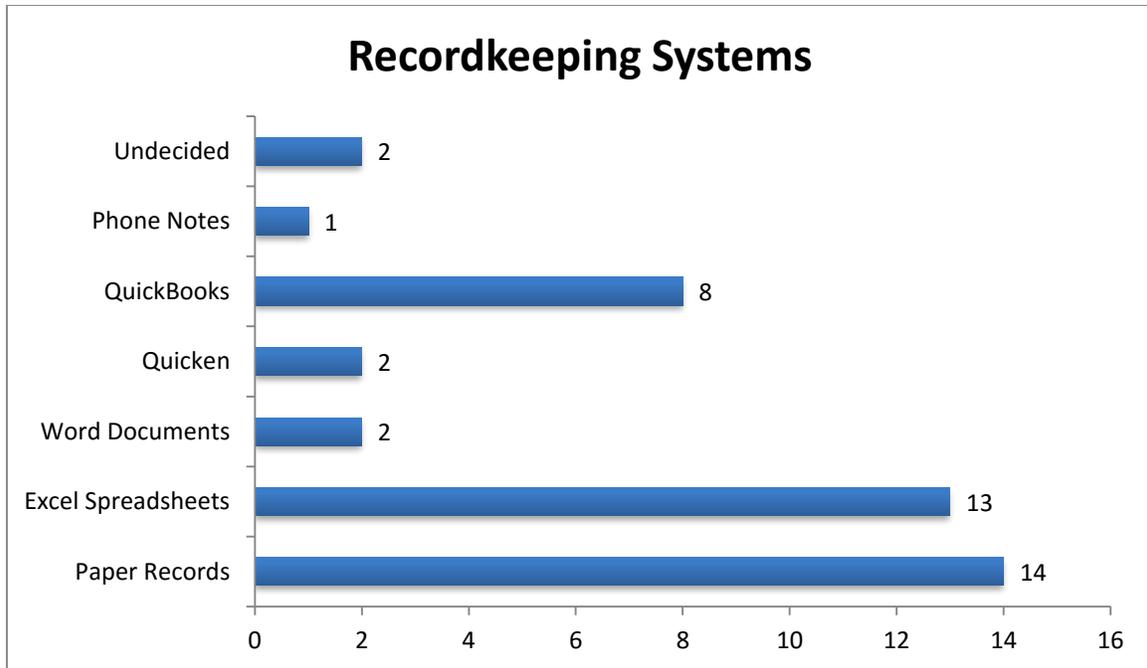
1/21 (4%) of participants are currently meeting their financial expectations and/or needs through their farm businesses



Responses=23



Responses=8



Responses=24

Business and Financial Management Goals. Participants were asked to share 1-3 of their farm business or financial management goals. Common goals related to farm business or financial management included: Changing or improving accounting system (n=4), Developing a formal business plan (n=2), Add or improve farm products (n=2), Increase sales and/or decrease expenses (n=2), and Become self-sustaining (n=2). Participant responses are listed below:

- Get an estimate for building the trellis and irrigation infrastructure for an approximately 1 acre hop growing space.
- Increase sales, decrease expenses.
- My husband attended a workshop offered by the county or extension (can't remember which) and he is the one who will be setting up our accounting system. Last year it was a simple excel spreadsheet.
- to have the rest of my family understand that paperwork is an important part of a business and a farm IS a business id you want it to be successful to finally have our basic equipment and building needs met and not need to keep pouring \$\$ into the farm (I realize it takes money to make money) but within seven years I hope to break even
- Convert my record keeping from computer to paper....I can not keep up with constant changes in technology. New Quicken is nowhere near worth what old Quicken did. I will try a spreadsheet.
- Right now I am managing a non-profit farm but I would like to use the skills I learned from this program to acquire a for-profit farm of my own
- Become self-sustaining

- We implemented quickbooks in January and hope to become much more efficient and knowledgeable about using it Work with farm credit to establish a line of credit and successfully execute the agreement Double revenue and look at offering an additional product next year
- Spend less than \$25K on equipment and materials 2. Complete John Marshall project by Dec 2016 so that we can be re-imbursed
- Write formal farm business plan and pursue low risk land acquisition
- To identify niche markets within our service area and develop a business plan.
- The farm has been supported financially by my work as a licensed massage therapist on and off the farm, a tent campground on the farm and will soon be supplemented by a 3-luxury suite inn onsite. We will be adding farm products into this plan again after several years of taking a break, this year.
- Improve as a grower, help grow local demand
- no decisions yet
- Improve paper filing system. 2. Set up Quicken to match farm tax record book and schedule F.
- Get apiary self sustaining
- N/A

LAND TENURE

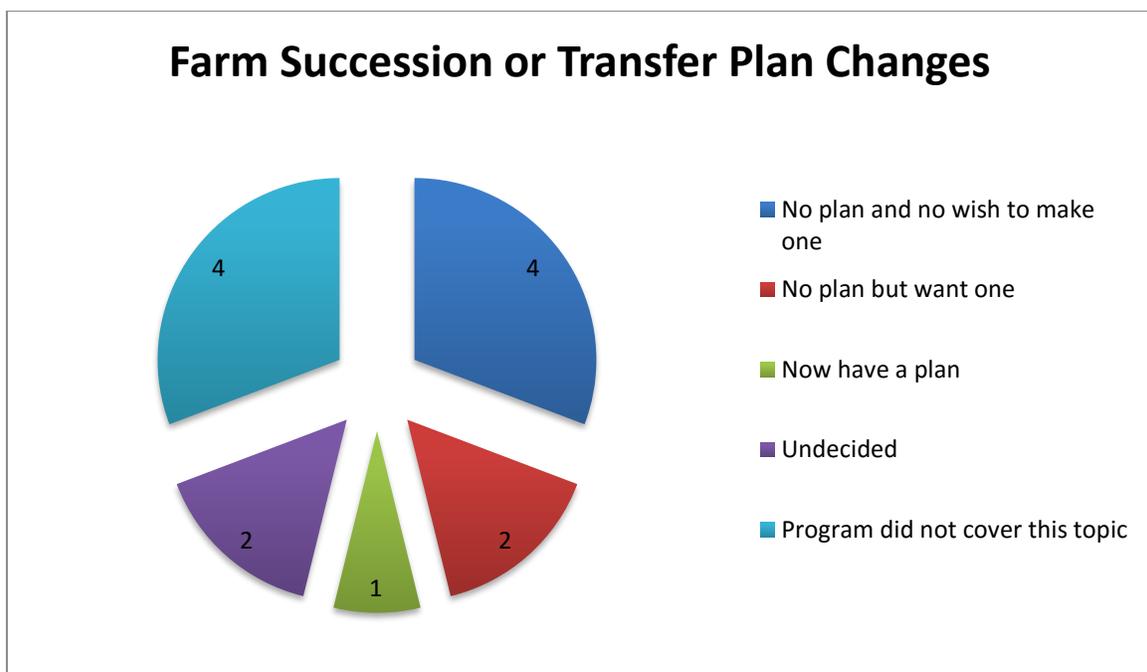
7/24 (29%) Survey respondents discussed land access and tenure in the program they participated in, while 9 participants (38%) did not remember.

6/15 (40%) of participants feel that they are able to make informed decisions about gaining access to farmland.

No participants have successfully obtained farmland to start or improve their farm businesses since completing the program.

5/15 (33%) of participants know of additional resources to help them gain access to farmland.

5/15 (33%) of participants know of additional resources they can access regarding the farm transfer process.



Responses=13

Land Acquisition or Transfer Situation Goals. Participants were asked their current land acquisition or transfer situation goals. The most common goal was purchasing or renting additional land (n=3).

- We own our land via a residential mortgage from Wells Fargo. We don't know the implications of trying to have a for-profit agricultural business on the property. And honestly I'm scared to ask them because they are happy to forfeit anyone and resell our house for more money now that we've improved it. I'm terrified of them, and I'm dubious about an extension office's contacts knowing how to handle them. I don't know what kind of legal and financial protection and changes I need, and I don't know who to safely ask.

- We plan to move in a year. We will sell the farm with the house.
- We are planning a small, biologically intensive sustainable farm that the two of us can handle with occasional help from our adult children and their spouses. We already own all the land we intend to farm.
- stable
- We acquired our farm through inheritance....No plans at this time to expand
- I hope to obtain a conservation easement and make arrangements to either donate land as sustainable agriculture/conservation or find someone who will carry this on. My land is A1 but it is in planned development area of Hanover.
- I would like to purchase land but am still not sure about how to go about it. I did receive a low-interest farm loan, but ended up quarreling with the friends I signed the loan with and the whole thing, the farm land we were renting, all the stuff we bought, ended up being a waste of money because we dissolved the partnership. So I am still paying this loan off and managing a non-profit farm in the meantime. I think I learned good skills through this program, but did not use good judgment in going in to business with friends and a boyfriend. VERY BAD IDEA and basically made every mistake possible. I would like to start a sole proprietorship on purchased land, and not deal with all these entanglements.
- We are putting in the last of our fencing this year and focusing on pasture improvement to be able to run more cattle on our land. We are planning to rent or possibly purchase additional land next year.
- Rent or buy up to five acres within 50 miles of my residence, within the next three years.
- no decisions yet

SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

14/24 (58%) Survey respondents discussed sustainable farming practices in the program they participated in, while 6 participants (25%) did not remember.

12/20 (60%) of participants feel they are able to make informed decisions about sustainable farming practices.

11/20 (55%) of participants now feel confident in their ability to prevent and/or manage common problems on the farm or future farm (e.g. pests, diseases, poor growing conditions)

13/20 (65%) of participants know of additional resources to access regarding farm production decisions and needs.

Sustainable Practices. Common sustainable practices used by participants to improve, maintain, and protect their farm products and resources include: Using cover crops (n=8), Crop rotation (n=5), Organic pesticides and fertilizers (n=3), No-till/low-till production (n=3), and Rotational grazing (n=3). All survey responses are listed below:

- Frequent communication with my extension agent. Planting sunflowers and buckwheat to fend off deer.
- Compost vegetative waste and horse manure. Plant nitrogen fixing cover crops on fallow sections. Crop rotation. Follow IPM practices, use organic pesticides on the rare occasions they are needed.
- we are in the government program to fence 35 feet from streams and brooks. We are planting trees. We have limed the soil and will plant cover crops with no till practice. We till and plant gardens in areas certified to not cause erosion. We rotate the free range chickens and goats. We use all organic fertilizers and bug control.
- cover crop, rotation, natural fertilizer
- My previous garden was layered with manure and shavings. Now that manure is contaminated and I've moved to poor soil, I am struggling to find a different method. I'm aiming for permaculture type swales with down trees. I am experimenting with cover crops.
- cover crops, no till, crop rotation, rainwater collection and distribution
- rotational grazing, cover cropping, lime/fertilizer inputs, underground watering systems.
- cover crops, integrated pest management
- Oh my goodness, we've always practiced sustainable farming. We are just lining up to boost these practices, and teach others. Our future goal is to become a 100% permaculture farm with using what we have here and not having to bring any outside ingredients to the farm such as mulch, feed, seeds, etc.
- Cover cropping, absolute minimum tillage, rotations
- no decisions yet. not farming yet
- Crop and animal rotation. Nutrient management. OMRI approved inputs.
- Yes

Sustainability Goals. Common sustainability goals mentioned by the participants include: Decrease harmful insects and increase beneficial insects (n=3), and Start rotational grazing or using crop rotation (n=3). Participant responses are given below:

- Figure out how to irrigate with our land's available resources, but not use polluted water from the waterways or get in legal trouble with Loudoun or EPA or who knows what.
- Decrease loss to deer. Decrease numbers of insects (Japanese beetles and stink bugs). Increase numbers of beneficial insects (preying mantis and lady bugs) Consider a bee hive.
- Phase out chemical fertilizer in favor of composting.
- we hope to someday be recognized as a prize winning eco friendly farm
- No use of chemical pesticides, no use of herbicides, all natural farming, heirloom seeding
- Develop efficient farm infrastructure and layout. Access biomass in some form or other. increase biodiversity
- rarely have exposed soil soil fertility and forage diversity wildlife and pollinator habitat areas
- start rotational grazing after completely fencing all pastures
- add water containment.
- Grow on our plans already in place. Add additional info. Learned from the study. Teach others.
- Try to convince just 1-3 other human beings that sustainability is actually something they should actually concern themselves with
- no decisions yet. not farming yet.
- Cover crops. 2. Plant flowers that attract beneficial insects. 3. Build hives that attract wild bees.
- N/A

FARM KNOWLEDGE AND NETWORKING

Post-Workshop Networking and Aid. One aspect of the whole farm planning programs involves connecting beginning farmers with service providers and farmer mentors during and after their participation in the program. Participants were asked how they kept in touch with any farm-related organizations or farmers in their areas for mentoring or other assistance. Local farmers (n=8) and County Extension Agents (n=4) were common resources mentioned. Participant responses are given below:

- I went to a day at Black Hops farm.
- Now a member of the Virginia Berry Growers Association. Talk with several farmers through that. Also work with Fauquier Ed Farm. Jim is a great resource. Talk to Co Ext Agent.
- Contacted a local hops grower and visited his farm, learned about his CSA. Many visits to the Fauquier Educ Farm. Participated in several workshops: fruit trees, winter vegetables, tomato grafting. member of Old Dominion Hops Cooperative. Participated in the 2015 and the 2016 hops conferences.
- most people in our group were not close to our area. We were not able to network with anyone. This is probably our biggest disappointment of the class. Everyone was very nice and we enjoyed their company but when the class was over that was the end of it
- None
- None
- I have friends who are also interested some of whom sell at the market, etc. One helps with my questions and starts plants for me. Participate in HCSWD 50-mile meal. Social media.
- Extension, People's Inc (loan), Appalachian Sustainable Development, local farmers.
- No
- Ext. office, Loudoun rural economic development, 4-H, marketing partnerships w/ other local farmers
- contacted John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation and started program to build fence and install drinkers 2. Keep in touch with extension office instructors 3. local rancher that we bought 4 cows from
- go to advertised vtech events, lectures
- We were featured in an exhibit at ETSU museum about Unicoi farming, past and present. We continue working alongside other like-minded growers, and several of these folks will be joining us on the farm to build their own structure and collectively help us move into the future.
- I solely questioned the farmers at the Farmers Market.
- I try to attend as many events as possible held by VSU SFOP and VA Beginning Farmer/Rancher Coalition. I am also routinely mentored by Cliff Slade.
- No
- No
- N/A

Farm Assistance Received. Participants were then asked to elaborate on which organization(s) or farmer(s) they work with and what specific assistance they have received. Survey responses are listed below:

- Pest damage assessment from Tim Ohlwiler (Ext Agent) Deer mgmt from Rick Crofford (VBGA) Plasticsulture from Jim Hankins (FEF)
- See above.
- None
- None
- Kevin Damian, Danny Adams, Pattie Bland, Mark Schonbeck, Eastern? Soil testing, Kevin starts plants for me, shares biomass resources and answers questions. Danny answers questions and offers solutions. Pattie visits for various issues....for instance to share farm to table ideas and get perspective on what's happening in the community. Mark did several soil analyses for me.
- NA
- Va cooperative extension
- Ext. office: classes & questions Loudoun rural economic development: marketing 4-H: Loudoun county fair and marketing partnerships w/ other local farmers: social media relationships, partner-selling opportunities
- Larry Dunn from John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation Tim Mize from VT Steve Mayes, rancher that lives nearby
- not applicable, yet.
- I try to attend as many field days and demonstrations at Randolph Farm. Cliff Slade continues to mentor me on his farm 1-2 times each year on organic practices and sweet potato production.
- Not applicable
- N/A

Whole Farm Planning Program Networking. Lastly, participants were asked in what ways, if any, they have stayed in contact with other farmers from the program they participated in. Respondents stated:

- We see each other at other events, like VBGA meetings, FEF training sessions, etc.
- Have not followed up with anyone in my class. However, have run into extension contacts at extension/county sponsored workshop and training events. All have been very helpful.
- None
- None
- No contact.
- None
- email and farm visits - I have been really happy with the connections I made during the class - VERY valuable to me
- have not stayed in contact, but have business cards for rancher that we bought 2 heifers from
- mailing list. email.
- I have not stayed in contact.
- I put contact info in my iPhone in case I need to text or email someone.

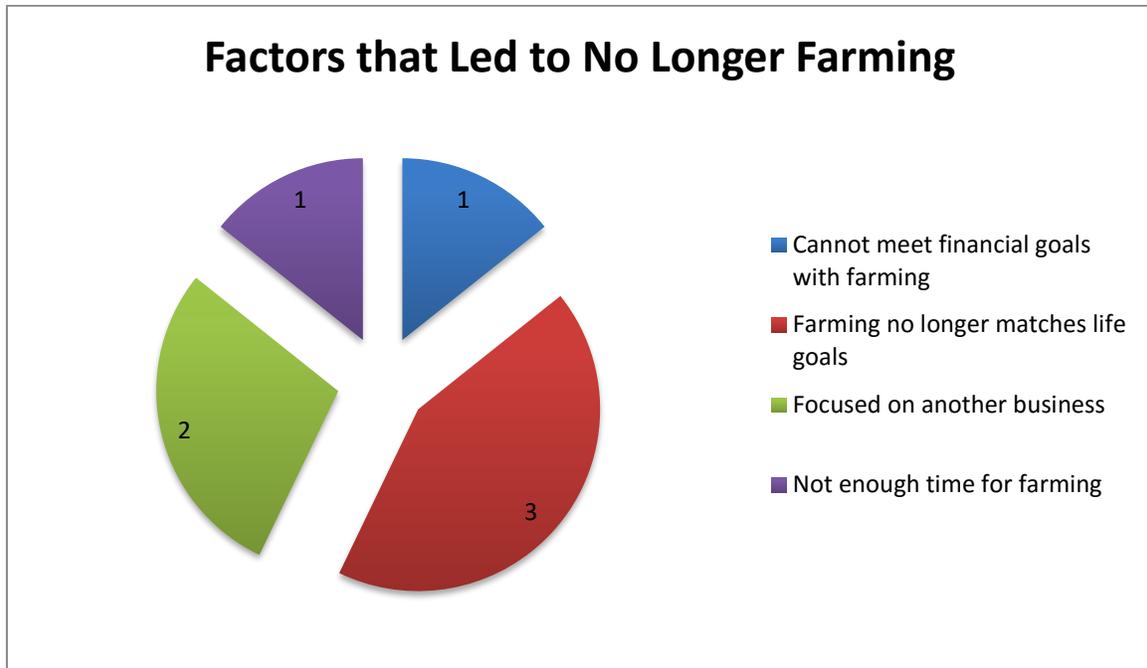
- Not applicable
- N/A

Deciding to Begin, Start, Expand, or Enhance the Farm. Participants used the information they learned in the whole farm planning programs to guide their farm-related decisions. Many survey participants reported that they learned many helpful tips and resources. The most common response was feeling more informed on the risk involved in farming and having a better idea of what it means to start a farm (n=3). Survey responses are listed below:

- It has left me a bit paralyzed by being confronted with the scope of my ignorance, and the high risk of agricultural business failure. I have acres of land doing nothing for me or local agricultural identity and industry, but I haven't heard any success stories.
- Helped me understand what I was getting into, showed me the many areas of support available to farmers. The presenters during the class are available to me by email when I have questions.
- too much to describe. there were many good tips
- Gave us ideas for a starting point, and will provide info for expansion in the future
- The information in the class was disappointing. I do not think it was a good use of funding and resources.
- Good overview, not much actionable information.
- better utilization of cover crops
- It was encouraging, very beneficial from the "explorer" standpoint. As a beginner farmer I probably wouldn't find the whole class as helpful as I would be more less interested in the comprehensive aspect and more interested in focused discussions that relate to our different enterprises (beef, pork, eggs, working with restaurants, etc.)
- stressed the need for planning, understanding true costs, and have a purpose for all that is done on the farm
- yes
- Many ideas and resources for further research!
- Ideas for using the resources we have and how to implement those ideas.
- Building confidence, connections
- I still have to reread the books. It rained on lots of days that the classes were held, and I missed several classes.
- I am always expanding my knowledge base with the programs I attend. I cannot express enough how important I feel these programs are for beginning farmers.
- Gave me some things to think about
- Yes
- N/A

NO LONGER FARMING

6/38 individuals (15%) reported that they were no longer farming or interested in farming after completing their programs. Some of the factors that led to this decision were:



Responses=6

Motivation for Decision Not to Farm. The participants were asked what they learned from the whole farm planning program that led them to make the decision not to farm. One individual's eyes were opened to the investment costs (n=1). Two other individuals enjoyed the workshops but pursued other business opportunities (n=2). Another individual was disappointed in the content of the workshops and did not pursue farming because they lack the information they desired (n=1). Participant responses are given below:

- That was the issue, we really expected to learn the nitty gritty, but instead it was all business and a large section on soil
- investment costs
- I loved every part of the program and learned so much, even though I had been farming for years. The handouts, interactions with other participants and class leader, and organization of the class were excellent. My other side business took off in sales so I made the decision to concentrate on it, which has fewer risk factors. I gave all class info in our new farm manager, who is using the spreadsheet.
- Decided to move from agriculture to horticulture and landscape maintenance. Lack of a partner interested in farming/homesteading and land access played a role in this decision.

Current Employment. Participants who were no longer farming or interested in farming were asked to describe what they are doing now. Their responses are given below:

- Working in media. Gardening. Promoting sustainability.
- Keeping our business up and running, and growing enough for family and friends
- Land and facilities management for a non-profit's 900 acre camp
- Started a nursery business specializing in heirloom veggie seedlings with emphasis on tomatoes and peppers.
- I am still in the garden area, which somebody else is managing. I built a new workshop in some of the space and am making yurt frames for my company - Blue Ridge Yurts.
- Landscape and ground maintenance for a private estate in Charlottesville.

FINAL COMMENTS

Lastly, participants were asked to describe the biggest takeaway that they still remember from their programs. 28 Individuals responded, with the most common responses being: The importance of networking with service providers (n=6), The importance of farm planning and setting goals (n=4), The resources were abundant and continue to be helpful even after completing the program (n=3), and Enjoyed live demonstrations (n=3). Survey responses are listed below:

- That we need expert on-site visits, but I can't remember who they are.
- Farming plan and the contacts.
- Understand your goals and plan carefully, use the many knowledgeable agriculture people available to you, and don't invest more than you can afford to lose.
- The importance of knowing the market demands. The importance of harvest and storage methods. The strategy for planning and budgeting is accessible and requires attention, but is doable. The amazing benefit of Virginia's climate and access to NE markets and Atlanta markets. Hoop houses make 3 season farming possible.
- receiving personal information, that is, group leaders were farmers not just lecturers
- soil is king
- I participated in the seminar last year and do not remember much of what was discussed. I do recall leaving the seminar wishing that many of the topics discussed had been more technical as opposed to personal and off the cuff so to speak. While it was obvious that the presenters were experts in their field their presentation of the material was a bit unprepared and not curriculum based. I enjoyed listening and was glad that I attended.
- Networking and utilizing the available services from VA Tech, VCU, and extension service
- The guest speakers were excellent. I was wondering if a requirement to farm was good speaking skills. The class lessons and subject matter were not helpful.
- whole farm planning
- The program continues to provide resources and education in assisting me as an Extension volunteer and Buy Fresh Buy Local member in helping local farmers / ranchers find the resources to help them.
- The coordinator was retiring almost immediately after the seminar. And that there are resources available if you want to chase them.
- Observing demonstration beds at VSU
- Because I did not grow up with computers, the biggest challenge was learning to work with a spread sheet. Seeing the possibilities for simplifying so many aspects of vegetable farming, (rotations, successive plantings, how many seeds to order, expected harvest amounts, how to set prices, etc.,) made me realize how much we wasted in time, effort, and produce, doing it the "old" way.
- Marketing session, putting ideas on paper and networking. I would definitely not know our extension agents as well.
- I was really struck by how encompassing the program was. Included talk from speakers in the field with experience and expertise. A very well-rounded, realistic approach that went beyond

romanticism. I really appreciated that. Also felt like I left the class and had connections I could reach out to for help- both speakers (ex Farm Credit) and classmates (fellow farmers in all stages and dynamics).

- plan everything, make sure there is a purpose/goal for each plan
- tax and insurance was eye-opening.
- It is possible, but not easy, to transfer into farming. It was great to be in a group of like-minded peers in terms of being committed to sustainable farming practices.
- So much positive energy and encouragement! The people really believe in what they are doing and believe in the participants of the program being able to succeed. Loved it!
- The program attended was very informative. It was like trying to take a drink of water from a fire hose. There appear to be a lot of services available but getting the information and contacts organized is overwhelming. The staff at VSU are wonderful and very supportive. Again as a new farmer the process is quite overwhelming.
- Having the forester come walk the property and pick his brain was invaluable to get an outside perspective from fresh eyes that were also knowledgeable.
- Glad i participated
- The classroom building, in Middleburg, was adjacent to a goat farm, and I loved going there after work; especially, in the Spring, when the Tree Frogs were "chirping". Thank you very much for offering the program!
- The spreadsheet. I don't remember the name of it, but it was taught by a contractor on the VSU Computer Bus and had numerous tabs on home and farm budget and crop budgets. It was very thorough and I am still learning to fully utilize it.
- There are resources available
- Just that it exists, really. Starting a farm is overwhelming.
- It was very informative on building a farm plan.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we briefly summarize main points gathered from this survey and provide recommendations for future program improvement. The two areas of recommendation are program expectations and guest speakers.

Program Expectations. A few participants reported that the content delivered in the whole farm planning programs was not what they expected and/or did not feel relevant to their situations. One participant reported that they received a “good overview, not much actionable information.” A second participant reported that “As a beginning farmer I probably wouldn’t find the whole class as helpful, as I would be less interested in the comprehensive aspect and more interested in focused discussions that relate to our different enterprises.” This led to a few participants feeling disappointed with their experience. It is our recommendation that program descriptions be explicit in describing what is and is not covered by the curriculum, allowing participants to make informed decisions about whether the whole farm planning programs are right for them.

Guest Speakers. Participants reported that the speakers were interesting and knowledgeable. One participant reported, “While it was obvious that the presenters were experts in their field, their presentations of the material was a bit unprepared and not curriculum based. I enjoyed listening and was glad that I attended.” Another participant state, “The guest speakers were excellent. I was wondering if a requirement to farm was good speaking skills.” It is our recommendation that guest speakers remain a solid foundation within the whole farm planning programs, perhaps with more detail given to aligning presentations with program curriculum.

APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to gather current information from participants of whole farm planning programs that took place between 2012 and 2015, so we can improve future programs to better meet the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers. The goal of the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program is to improve opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers to establish and sustain viable agricultural operations in Virginia through the development and enhancement of innovative educational programs, services, and social networks. Two important steps to take in reaching this goal are to identify the needs of Virginia's beginning farmers and ranchers and assess how the program is meeting these needs.

Who should take this survey?

Past participants of whole farm planning programs sponsored by the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program taking place between 2012 and 2015. These whole farm planning training programs were led and organized by:

- Appalachian Sustainable Development
- Attimo Winery
- Certified Farm Seekers Program
- Fauquier Education Farm, Virginia Cooperative Extension, & Fauquier County
- Grayson LandCare
- Sustain Floyd
- Virginia Association for Biological Farming
- Virginia Farm Bureau & Virginia Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program
- Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center

The topics covered in these programs may have included an introduction to whole farm planning, marketing, business management, land access and tenure, and sustainable farming practices.

Instructions:

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may refuse to or answer certain questions. You can choose to discontinue your participation at any time. There are no significant risks or benefits associated with participation in this survey. Completion of this survey will constitute informed consent. Results of this survey may be published. All information collected as part of this survey will remain confidential. Should you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject,

you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu.

Completing this survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Kim Niewolny, Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program Director, at niewolny@vt.edu

To learn more about the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition, visit our website at vabeginningfarmer.org

Program Information

Please select the name of the organization that led the program you participated in. Please note: Program names are also listed next to each organization.

- Appalachian Sustainable Development (Whole Farm Planning in Southwest Virginia)
- Attimo Winery (Whole Farm Planning for New Wineries and Vineyards)
- Grayson LandCare (Beginning Farmer Support on the Blue Ridge Plateau)
- Fauquier Education Farm, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Fauquier County Ag. Development Office (Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program)
- SustainFloyd (New Strategies for Small Plot Vegetable Farming)
- Virginia Association for Biological Farming (Whole Farm Planning Farm School)
- Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers & the VA Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services (Certified Farm Seekers Program)
- Virginia State University (VSU's Beginning Farmer Program)
- Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center (Growers' Academy)
- I do not remember

Please select the year during which you participated in the program. (Please select one)

- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- I do not remember

When you participated in the whole farm planning program, did you consider yourself a . . . (Please select one)

- Explorer Farmer: Individual interested in starting a farm or ranch. This includes next-generation farm family members as well as those who do not come from a farm background.
- Start-Up Farmer: Individual who is in the early stages of an agricultural operation, often within one to three years of farming or ranching.
- Re-strategizing Farmer: Farmer who is making changes to an operation after farming for approximately four to seven years.
- Establishing Farmer: Farmer who is expanding, diversifying, and stabilizing within years eight to 10 of the beginning farmer period.
- Transitioning Farmer: Individual who is a family farm member who has a decision-making role on the farm without having primary farm operator status.

Currently, do you consider yourself a . . . (Please select one)

- Explorer Farmer: Individual interested in starting a farm or ranch. This includes next-generation farm family members as well as those who do not come from a farm background.
- Start-Up Farmer: Individual who is in the early stages of an agricultural operation, often within one to three years of farming or ranching.
- Re-strategizing Farmer: Farmer who is making changes to an operation after farming for approximately four to seven years.
- Establishing Farmer: Farmer who is expanding, diversifying, and stabilizing within years eight to 10 of the beginning farmer period.
- Transitioning Farmer: Individual who is a family farm member who has a decision-making role on the farm without having primary farm operator status.
- None of the Above: Individual who no longer farms or is no longer interested in farming.

Information on your Operation

Since your participation in the program, did you. . . (Please select all that apply)

- Decide not to farm
- Actively make plans to start a farm business
-

- Start a new farm business
- Add a new aspect (product, market, etc.) to your farm
- Access land to farm
- Other

Please indicate how many years you have farmed or have been farming (Please select one)

- I have not farmed but am actively planning to start a farm
- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10 or more years

Please indicate how many acres you currently have in production (Please select one)

- None
- Less than 2
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- Over 200

**Please indicate the products or commodities you currently produce or plan to produce.
(Check all that apply)**

- Dairy
- Beef
- Sheep
- Swine
- Equine
- Poultry

- Other Livestock
- Fiber
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Nursery
- Greenhouse
- Flowers
- Feed Grains
- Forages, Hay
- Grains, Dry Beans, Oil Seeds for Human Consumption
- Other

Please indicate the market outlets you currently utilize or plan to utilize. (Check all that apply)

- Commodity markets
- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Home delivery
- Wholesale
- Farmers markets
- Marketing coop
- U-Pick
- Restaurants
- Institutional sales (e.g. farm to school, farm to hospital, farm to prison)
- Roadside stand
- Retail store
- Retail store on-farm
- Produce auction
- Livestock auction
- Other

In addition to yourself, what types of labor do you utilize? (Check all that apply)

- None

- Volunteers
- Immediate family (e.g. domestic partner, spouse, children)
- Extended family
- Interns and/or Apprentices (paid and/or unpaid)
- Full-time employees (year-round)
- Part-time employees (year-round)
- Seasonal domestic farmworkers
- Migrant farmworkers
- H-2A guest farmworkers
- Labor contracted through a third party
- Other

**Please choose the option that most closely matches your farm or proposed farm location.
(Please select one)**

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

Approximately how many miles away is your primary market? (Please select one)

- I sell my products at my farm
- 0-15 miles
- 16-25 miles
- 26-49 miles
- 50-100 miles
- 101-150 miles
- 151-200 miles
- 200+ miles
- I do not sell any products

If you are currently farming, please select the county in which your farm is located from the drop-down menu below.

Please indicate where your farm is located, if not in Virginia.

Feel free to use the space below to add any additional information you would like us to know about your farm or farm planning situation.

Introduction to Whole Farm Planning

Did the program you participated in discuss an introduction the the whole farm planning process? (Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Please indicate your level of disagreement or agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, since completing the program, I am able to make informed decisions about developing a working Whole Farm Plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a result of this program, I know of people I can go to for further support for my farming goals and objectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

As a result of this program, I know of additional resources I can access regarding implementing my farm goals



Please describe 1-3 of your farm goals for the upcoming year(s).

What was the most important planning idea or resource you learned about from your program that is helping you succeed in farming?

What is currently your biggest challenge to your long-term farming success?

Marketing

Did the program you participated in discuss marketing? (Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Please indicate your level of disagreement or agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, since completing the program, I am more able to make informed decisions about marketing and selling my farm products.	●	●	●	●	●
I am now confident in my ability to participate in a market to sell my farm products.	●	●	●	●	●
My current marketing strategy is meeting my farm business needs	●	●	●	●	●
I know of additional resources I can access regarding Marketing and Product/Farm Promotion.	●	●	●	●	●

Which marketing materials have you developed since your participation in the program, if any? (Select all that apply)

- Marketing plan
- Logo
- Business card
- Brochures and flyers
- Signs
- Social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
- None
- Other

In reference to marketing knowledge gained, which changes have taken place since you participated in the program, if any?

	Less than before	Same as before	More than before
Amount of your product being sold	●	●	●
Number of venues selling your products	●	●	●
Prices received for your products	●	●	●

Please describe any other marketing changes that have taken place since you participated in the program, if any.

Please describe 1-3 of your current marketing goals.

Business Management

Did the program you participated in discuss business management? (Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Please indicate your level of disagreement or agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, since completing the program, I am able to make informed decisions about farm business management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Since completing the program, I have developed a complete business plan for my farm.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Since completing the program, I have been able to successfully obtain affordable capital or credit to start or improve my farm business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My farm business is currently meeting my financial expectations and/or needs.



If applicable, please describe how your farm revenue has changed since participating in the program.



Please select the business structure that best describes your farm (Please select one)

- Sole proprietorship
- Partnership
- Corporation
- S Corporation
- Limited Liability Company (LLC)
- Cooperative
- Non-Profit
- Other

Please describe the record keeping system utilized on your farm. (Check all that apply)

- Paper records
- Excel Spreadsheets
- Quicken
- QuickBooks
- Other

Please describe 1-3 of your farm business or financial management goals for the upcoming year(s).

Land Access and Tenure

Did the program you participated in discuss land access and tenure? (Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Please indicate your level of disagreement or agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, since completing the program, I am able to make informed decisions about gaining access to farmland.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Since completing the program, I have been able to successfully obtain farmland to start or improve my farm business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I now know of additional resources to help me gain access to farmland.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I now know of additional resources I can access regarding the farm transfer process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe how your farm succession or transfer plan has changed since participating in the program, if at all. A farm succession or transfer plan describes what will happen to your land when you decide to stop farming it. You may elaborate in the text box

below. (Please select all that apply)

- I did not have a plan and do not wish to make one
- I did not have a plan and have now developed one
- I had a farm transfer plan and made changes to it
- I had a farm transfer plan and it has not changed
- I have already transferred to a different farm or land
- My program did not cover this topic
- Other

Please describe your current land acquisition or transfer situation or goals.

Sustainable Farming Practices

Did the program you participated in discuss sustainable farming practices? (Please select one)

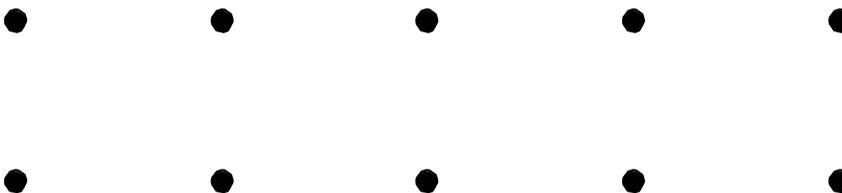
- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

Please indicate your level of disagreement or agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, since completing the program, I am able to make informed decisions about sustainable farming practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I now feel confident in my ability to prevent and/or					

manage common problems on my farm or future farm (e.g. pests, diseases, poor growing conditions)

I know of additional resources I can access regarding farm production decisions and needs.



Please describe any sustainable practices you now use to improve, maintain, and protect your farm products and resources (e.g. cover crops, tillage, crop rotation, nutrient management, rainwater collection)

Please describe 1-3 of your current sustainability goals.

Farming Knowledge and Networking

Since your participation in the program, in what ways have you been in touch with any farm-related organizations or farmers in your area for mentoring or other assistance?

Please elaborate on which organizations or farmers you work with and what specific assistance you have received.

In what ways have you stayed in contact with other farmers from the program you participated in, if at all.

How has the information you learned in the program been useful to you in deciding to begin, start, expand, or enhance your farm?

Questions for Participants that are Not Farming

If you are no longer farming or interested in farming, please select all of the factors that influenced your decision. (Please select all that apply)

- Cannot meet my financial goals with farming
- Farming no longer matches my life goals
- Do not have land access
- Cannot find enough labor to support my farm goals
- Cannot obtain enough capital or credit to develop or sustain my farm
- Markets are not attainable
- Other

If you are no longer farming or interested in farming, what did you learn from the program

that led you to make this decision, if anything?

If you are no longer farming or interested in farming, please describe what you are doing now.

Demographic Information

Please indicate your gender

Please indicate your age

Military veteran status

- Yes
- No

Please indicate your race (Please select all that apply)

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American

- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

Please select the county in which you are located from the drop-down menu below.

Final Comments

Please describe the biggest takeaway that you still remember the program?

Would you be willing to be interviewed by a member of the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition to help us better understand your program experiences?

- Yes
- No

Please provide an email address and/or phone number in the text box below in order to be contacted by the VBFRC team. This information will be kept separately from your responses, which will remain confidential.