The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition formed to as a way to collaboratively address start-up needs of Virginia’s beginning farmers and ranchers by offering high impact outreach, training and resource support. The Coalition acts as an umbrella network of organizations to assist in the development and enhancement of whole farming planning programs, online learning, social networking, and farmer mentoring.

Lessons, Strategies, & Future Aims:
- Work together for a common agenda
- Communication, networking, and strategic planning for capacity building
- Co-create assessment, whole farm planning curriculum and programming for co-learning and shared metrics
- Evaluate programs, curriculum, and coalition model;
- Accountability through steering committee and working groups with farmers and service providers

“One Stop” website and electronic resource inventory: www.vabeginningfarmer.org

- A coalition member listserv (n=141) and beginning farmer listserv (n=450)
- Facebook (n=471 “Likes”) and blog site provides social networking opportunities
- A YouTube Channel showcases beginning farmer stories (n=20 videos)
- Webinar series highlights Coalition expertise with whole farm planning topics
- Web and print assessable VBFRCP materials (e.g., Technical Assistance Directory, Guide to Successful Start-up, and State-wide Assessment Report)

The VBFRCP is a state-wide and coalition-based Extension program represented by beginning farmer stakeholders across the commonwealth of Virginia. It is housed in Virginia Tech’s Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. Funding is sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Award # 2010-49400. To find more resources and programs for beginning farmers and ranchers please visit www.Start2Farm.gov, a component of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Contact Kim Niewolny, Program Director and Extension Specialist, at niewolny@vt.edu or 540-231-5784, for more information. www.vabeginningfarmer.org

The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Steering Committee represents both farmer and service provider perspectives in Virginia. This elected committee is responsible for guiding program activity to best address the expressed needs of the Coalition.

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Donna Westfall-Rudd, Virginia Tech
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