



Newsblast

VIRGINIA
Beginning Farmer & Rancher
COALITION PROGRAM

April 6, 2021

Photo by Eric Bendfeldt

A Message from VBFRC

Happy Spring! I hope this newsblast finds you well as the flowers begin to emerge from the ground. This newsblast features a number of announcements, workshop series, and events coming up this Spring.

Starting this month we will begin sending out our newsblast at the beginning of the month instead of bi-monthly. We will continue to send announcements out on the listserv and update our website in between the newsblasts. If you would like your event added to our listserv, newsblast, and website, send an email with the event details to the coalition coordinator, Katie Trozzo, at ketrozzo@vt.edu

Partner Highlights

The Virginia Tech Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics has been offering a webinar series titled [Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education](#) since January, which will continue on through April. Their [website](#) has links to recordings of all the webinars offered to date as well as the registration links for the upcoming webinars. Check out their offerings!

April 12 Food waste, food prices, the environment and Hunger

April 15 Understanding income statement and balance sheets

April 20 Food Insecurity and hunger in Virginia

April 26 Marketing the health and nutrition benefits of food products

April 29 Sustaining agriculture with farm labor uncertainty

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Virginia Forest Landowner e-Update

The Virginia Forest Landowner spring newsletter is now available. Check it out!

Loudoun County's AgroEcology Hub

Check out this resource available for Loudoun County that help residents identify, select, and sequence available classes and courses. The Department of Extension Services has partnered with the Department of Economic Development to update the AgroEcology Hub. The "Hub" is an online clearinghouse of agricultural, natural resources, food system information, and education programs.

COVID-19 Farmer Impact Survey

Virginia Tech/Virginia Cooperative Extension invite you to participate in this study, to assess and quantify the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on your farm or business. The purpose of this survey is to understand the effects of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Virginia commercial farms and agribusinesses throughout the Commonwealth. The survey results will help to inform Extension programming to better serve stakeholders in response to ongoing challenges.

Training Series

Fauquier Education Farm's 2021 Workshop Series

The Fauquier Education Farm Workshop Series is a learning resource for farmers and home gardeners of all experience levels. You can pick and choose any workshops that may interest you with no expectation that you need to attend them all. These workshops are free and open to everyone. These will be held rain or shine and children are always welcome. Unless otherwise indicated, all workshops are held at the Fauquier Education Farm: 8428 Meetze Rd, Warrenton, Virginia.

VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program Workshop Series

SFOP provides outreach and learning opportunities to small farmers for production management, financial and risk management, marketing, USDA assistance programs and more. Check out their upcoming workshops!

Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education

Running from January to April and including 20 webinars, this series developed by the Virginia Tech Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics gets to the heart of what sustainability is and what it looks like for your farm and agribusiness.

April Events

April 8: VA SWaM Workshop

Increase market opportunities for your farm or food business by becoming certified as Small, Woman-owned, Minority-owned and Micro Businesses. Courtney Mustin, with the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity, will give an Introductory Overview of the Procurement Process in The Commonwealth of Virginia, Registering with eVA, and The Basics about SBSD Certification.

April 8: Faces of Virginia Farming

Behind every piece of food and fiber is a person with a unique story. Virginia Farm Bureau Federation is pleased to present a new webinar series, “Faces of Virginia Farming”, featuring conversations with farmers from across the Commonwealth. Kicking off the series, we are excited to partner with the Federation of Virginia Food Banks to host Coley Drinkwater and TR Jones of Richlands Dairy and Creamery as they share how the farm lives up to its promise to do good within the community. A panel discussion will follow to talk through current farm-to-food bank efforts and how anyone can get involved.

April 8: Family Financial Wellness

Hosted by VSU’s Small Farm Outreach Program.

April 8: Soil Health from a Grazier’s Perspective

Building soil through animals as the intermediary is an entirely different paradigm than that of crop production. Cedric Shannon, with his wife, Sarah, own and operate Weathertop Farm, LLC. Through rotational grazing, they raise sheep, cows, hogs, layers, broilers, turkeys, and occasionally some duck. All animals get rotated through the pastures in one form or another, providing delicious and nutritious meat, all while improving and building the soil—the true foundation of the whole operation. This webinar will consist of the presentation followed by a Live Q and A session. Participants will be able to submit questions throughout the webinar using the Q and A feature on Zoom and questions will be answered at the end of the presentation.

April 12: Food waste, food prices, the environment and Hunger

The seventeenth in a series of 20 webinars in the Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education Initiative. Presented by Dr. John Bovay, Assistant Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech.

April 13: Flame Weeding for Market Farms and Gardens

Join Common Grain Alliance and Virginia Association for Biological Farming for the third in a 3-part series on protecting your crops. Learn best practices, tools, and techniques for flame weeding from Charlie House. Charlie has been gardening professionally since 1983. He has worked in crop science research and is a certified horticulturist. His company, Earth and Sky Solutions consults on flame weeding with farms of all sizes. He also works with manufacturers to optimize equipment for smaller-scale farms.

April 13: VA Fresh Match/SNAP

Learn how to participate in the Virginia Fresh Match program that doubles the value of SNAP EBT (food stamps) for fresh fruits and vegetables. This webinar will inform you how healthy food incentives are used to increase consumer purchasing power so families with tight food budgets can bring home more fruits and vegetables. Learn how nutrition incentives work in your community, and how participation in the Virginia Fresh Match network can help you reach new customers and benefit your farming operation.

April 14: Soil Health...To Go! Lunchtime Webinar

Pull up a chair and join us for a quick serving of soil health information. In this half-hour session, organic grain farmer, Matt Nielsen, will share his experience with managing a grain operation from a healthy-soils perspective. Matt owns and operates Tidewater Organics, LLC, a certified organic grain farm formed in 2017 and based in Centreville, MD.

April 15: USDA Information Session

Learn about eligibility requirements and how to apply for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans and grants from USDA. Beginning, minority and veteran farmers can get help to prepare applications for farm ownership and operating loans and obtain the required borrower training.

April 15: Understanding income statement and balance sheets

The thirteenth in a series of 20 webinars in the Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education Initiative. Presented by Dr. Travis Mountain, Assistant Professor of Financial and Economic Well-Being, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech.

April 15: Maintaining the Garden: Beginning Vegetable Gardener Series

Unfortunately, a garden won't take care of itself. From weeding and watering to keeping an eye out for pests, find out what you should be doing throughout the season to care for your vegetables. This session will include some show-and-tell about tools you'll need to keep your garden in top shape. Although there is no fee, advance registration is required and space is limited. Registrants will receive information through their email on how to join the Zoom webinar.

April 20: Recreational Marijuana Informational Session

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Join the VSU SFOP and Virginia Small Farm Resource Center for an engaging conversation on the legalization of adult use recreational marijuana and what it could mean to small farmers with representatives from various state agencies, stakeholders and legislators. Small farmers will get an opportunity to ask their questions, share their concerns and hear about potential opportunities for legal growing operations in the Commonwealth.

April 20: Food Insecurity and hunger in Virginia

The eighteenth in a series of 20 webinars in the Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education Initiative. Presented by Tim Pierce, Graduate Student, Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech.

April 20: Spring Planting, Bed Prep, and Soil Health at Gathering Springs Farm [In person]

Gathering Springs Farm in Middleburg, Virginia, to learn how Pamela Jones and Sarah Waybright are building their operation while farming part-time and raising families. Located just an hour outside of DC, Gathering Springs is home to vegetables, mixed perennials, and laying hens.

April 21: Flower Field Walk and Demonstration

Susan Cheek will take a one hour walk through the flower field at Randolph Farm in the SFOP plot. This is an opportunity for the general public to see some of what has been going on at the farm during the crisis. Farmers and gardeners alike will have a chance to see a demonstration to include drip irrigation installation, direct seeding sunflowers, and inspecting and harvesting of flowers in season at the time. This project gives everyone a look into the world of growing cut flowers for profit or pleasure.

April 21: An Introduction to Building Soil Health: A Farmers Perspective

This webinar features Brent Wills, a farmer and soil consultant, and Khalil Hassan, a produce/market farmer. Brent will provide a brief overview of the basics of soil health, reasons to invest in the soil, indicators of health and imbalances, options for soil testing, and the quick nuts and bolts of taking a good soil sample in the field. Khalil will share about his experience building soil health on his farm including specific practices and approaches he has applied, changes over time, and lessons learned.

April 22: USDA Information Session

Join us for an inviting conversation with various agencies of USDA including Farm Service Agency (FSA),

Rural Development (RD), Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS) among others. USDA officials from around the state will share the agencies programs and opportunities for small farmers and will answer your questions concerning eligibility and participation. Join us to stay informed on all the new and current programs USDA has to assist our Virginia farmers.

April 26: Marketing the health and nutrition benefits of food products

The nineteenth in a series of 20 webinars in the Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education Initiative. Presented by Dr. John Bovay, Assistant Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech.

April 27: Growing Small Grains Organically

The Small Farm Outreach Program will hold a virtual panel discussion for Virginia's small farmers raising small and specialty grains with organic production principles for livestock, mills and human consumption. We will discuss issues such as seed selection, weed control, pest control, no or limited tillage, commodity pricing, marketing, harvesting and harvesting equipment innovations, storage, transporting and useful agricultural technologies.

April 27: Farm Equipment Safety

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program.

April 28: Hive Inspection and Expansions

State Apiarist, Keith Tignor, will present a Zoom lecture followed by a hands-on demonstration via livestream on how to inspect hives and how to expand hives for the start of the bee season. This workshop is geared toward those with no experience up to 5 years' experience. The focus of this workshop is to learn how to open a hive for inspection, how to expand hives before they swarm and methods to collect swarms to start a new hive. Topics will also include bee ecology, hive components and construction, beekeeping equipment, bee nucs, bee packages, feeding and caring for bees, integrated pest management and colony collapse disorder.

April 28: Raising Rabbits

Veteran farmer, Al Becker of Emporia Rabbitry, will discuss the necessary steps needed to start a successful breeding operation, equipment needed, feeding and care, the importance of record keeping, marketing and ways to improve your breeding stock. Emporia Rabbitry is dedicated to breeding and raising superior quality New Zealand White meat rabbits. Following the European model of semi-intensive rabbit management, Emporia Rabbitry continually strives to improve the supply of commercially produced meat rabbits for use by high-end restaurants and individuals. New Zealands are prized for their quick growth rate and meat production.

April 29: Sustaining agriculture with farm labor uncertainty

The final of a series of 20 webinars in the Virginia Sustainable Farms and Agribusiness Education Initiative. Presented by Dr. Diane Charlton, Assistant Professor, Agricultural Economics, Montana State University.

May Events

May 3: Conservation incentives for farmers

Join us for a webinar on conservation incentives programs for farmers and the interface between resource conservation and farm profit. Presented by Dr. Maria Bowman, USDA Economic Research Service.

May 5: High Tunnel Types and Construction

A high tunnel is an agricultural structure that allows a grower to extend the growing season and protect crops from adverse weather conditions. Workshop participants will learn about using high tunnels to grow horticulture crops. Topics covered will be structure selection, management, maintenance and costs associated with high tunnel production. Special emphasis will be placed on all phases of high tunnel construction. Participants will learn about proper crop selection for protected culture. Also covered will be resources for materials and supplies.

May 6: Pastured Poultry Workshop

The Small Farm Outreach Program will hold a virtual panel discussion in reference to small farmers raising and pasturing poultry. Topics will include layers versus breeders, space needed, disease management, predator management, processing and markets.

May 10: Small Farm Orientation

The program is geared to new and beginning farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Participants are directed through the process of developing a productive and profitable operation. Small Farm Outreach agent Vernon Health, developer and instructor for the program, has over 40 years of work experience in the Virginia agriculture industry. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation Manual developed by the instructor.

May 12: Hispanic Field Day

Registration opening soon.

May 12: Flower Field Walk and Demonstration Part II

This month's flower field walk at Randolph Farm's SFOP plot with Susan Cheek will include demonstration of installing transplants into plastic, harvesting flowers from the field, and checking irrigation system. The audience both young and old will have a chance to see more as the season progresses at the flower field at the farm. Flowers give a hope and beauty to look at as well as a means of making a little or a lot of extra cash if managed correctly. We are hoping to show our past, present, and future visitors of the farm a little ray of sunshine on the horizon.

May 13: Aquaponics

Aquaponics is the integration of growing plants and fish into one system. Find out how to begin small scale aquaponics systems for hobbyists, schools, and as an enterprise for a farm or urban setting. A small scale aquaponics unit will be demonstrated as part of the workshop.

May 14: Orange Women in Agriculture Gathering [In person]

This Gathering provides women farmers, landowners, and agriculture enthusiasts with opportunities to network with peers, hone technical skills, and discuss solutions to the unique challenges they face.

May 18: Buckingham Women in Agriculture Gathering [In person]

This Gathering provides women farmers, landowners, and agriculture enthusiasts with opportunities to network with peers, hone technical skills, and discuss solutions to the unique challenges they face.

May 18: Growing Ethnic Vegetables

Registration opening soon.

May 19: Cover Crop Field Day and Demonstration

Registration opening soon.

May 21: Wytheville Women in Agriculture Gathering [In person]

This Gathering provides women farmers, landowners, and agriculture enthusiasts with opportunities to network with peers, hone technical skills, and discuss solutions to the unique challenges they face.

May 21: Suffolk Women in Agriculture Gathering [In person]

This Gathering provides women farmers, landowners, and agriculture enthusiasts with opportunities to network with peers, hone technical skills, and discuss solutions to the unique challenges they face.

May 22: WV Forest Farming Field Day at Yew Mountain Center

The West Virginia Forest Farming Field Day is an in-person event at the Yew Mountain Center in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Six Groups of 10 will spend the day rotating through seven field stations, each with a different forest farming topic. COVID safety protocols will be in place and participants will be required to follow them; facemasks will be worn. This event will happen rain or shine!

May 26: Hispanic Field Day

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Registration opening soon.

June Events

June 10: Retirement planning considerations for farmers and agribusiness operators

Join us for a webinar on retirement planning considerations for farmers and agribusiness operators. Presented by Dr. Travis Mountain, Assistant Professor of Financial and Economic Well-Being, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech.

June 14: Small Farm Orientation

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Registration opening soon.

June 15: Flower Field Walk and Demonstration

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Registration opening soon.

June 16: Marketing Your Farm Products (Promotion, Pricing, Packaging & Display)

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Registration opening soon.

June 19: Bees and Mushrooms—Farm Field Day

Participants will celebrate the upcoming national Pollinator Week by learning how native bees and managed bees enhance crop production. A farm tour of The Old Virginia Farm's new endeavor of growing several varieties of forest mushrooms will display the importance of giving bees a feeding location, along with helping protect bees from viruses. Local honey will be available. Experienced beekeeper and mentor with Highlands Beekeeping Association, Maria Jenkins, will be sharing her expertise and suggestions for ways you can help protect our vital pollinator partners. Free pollinator garden seeds will be available for participants.

June 24: USDA Information Session

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Registration opening soon.

June 30: Hispanic Field Day

Hosted by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program. Registration opening soon.