



Newsblast

November 21, 2022

Photo by Katie Trozzo

A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone,
We hope the cooler weather is treating you well. We are excited to send along our monthly newsblast with a number of events coming up in the next few months along with a few announcements. We hope you enjoy!

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

Partner Highlight

Season 2 of A Taste of Farming is now live! This “learn as you go” online series will help you get a taste of different farming practices and concepts. We release two new Taste of Farming videos each month; a few weeks after a moderated Q & A session is held. Check out our full schedule on [the website](#) and see below for our new videos and upcoming moderated Q&A Session.

New Video: Floriculture

Hear from Erin Small, Prince Edward County Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent on floriculture from field to vase.

New Video: Vineyard Establishment

Hear from Beth Sastre-Flores, Loudoun County Virginia Cooperative Extension Commercial Horticulturalist on vineyard establishment

December Moderated Q&A Session: Thursday, December 8 from 7-8 pm ET

Hear more from Erin Small, Prince Edward VCE Ag Agent, on Floriculture, and Beth Sastre-Flores, Loudoun VCE Ag Agent, on Vineyard Establishment in this virtual Q&A session. Bring your questions!

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Farm Financing and Conservation Planning Seminar Hosted by the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture

One of the top priorities of Governor Youngkin is to help the next generation of agricultural producers find success. Access to financing is one of the most challenging barriers beginning farmers face. The New York Times just ran a story last week on this very crisis. In order to address this issue, our Agriculture and Forestry Secretariat has partnered with key lending institutions and state and federal agencies to host an educational workshop, called the Farm Financing and Conservation Planning Seminar. Their goal is to provide all available resources to interested producers to help them see what options they have. They are also incorporating a conservation component since cost share funding is at an all-time high. There will be two offerings. The first will be held at the State Fairgrounds in Doswell on December 8 and the second will be held at Blue Ridge Community College in Augusta County on December 16.

2022 Census for Agriculture

The 2022 Census for Agriculture will begin being mailed out on November 22.

Why respond?

- Combined responses show the value and importance of U.S. agriculture.
- Census data inform decisions about policy, farm and conservation programs, infrastructure and rural development, research, education, beginning farmer programs, and more.
- Response is required by federal law. The same law requires USDA to keep all personal information confidential.
- The Census of Agriculture is your opportunity to have a voice in the future of U.S. agriculture



The graphic features four photos of diverse farmers: a man with a beard holding a chick, a man with a beard and glasses holding a piglet, a man in a field, and two women. Text includes '2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE', 'COMING THIS NOVEMBER. nass.usda.gov/AgCensus', and 'YOUR VOICE. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR OPPORTUNITY.' Logos for USDA and the National Agricultural Statistics Service are at the bottom.

Online FAMACHA Certification Training

Virginia State University and Fort Valley State University is offering this online FAMACHA Certification training for Small Ruminants and Camelid Producers in Virginia.

AgrAbility Virginia Fundraising Campaign

AgrAbility Virginia promotes safety, wellness, and accessibility on the farm through education,

rehabilitative services, and assistive technology. They work directly with farmers and gardeners and make recommendations for assistive technologies that can help them continue to or begin to operate a farm or cultivate a garden. USDA NIFA funds their program but the federal funding does not cover the assistive technologies they recommend to farmers. They recently launched a fundraising campaign through Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) Advancement. Contributions to the fund are tax deductible through the Virginia Tech Foundation (details are provided upon donation). If you're interested in supporting them, please visit crowdfund.vt.edu/agrabilityva to contribute. Your support helps farmers with illness, injury, and disability access the assistive technologies they need to meet their farming goals.

Farm Manager Position for Project Grows

The farm manager will possess strong experience and knowledge of ecological, year-round vegetable production as well as the temperament and interpersonal skills to train and lead volunteers and staff in farm tasks. A demonstrated aptitude to cultivate new and existing relationships within our community and a strong, self-motivated work ethic are important aspects of this position, as is a passion for sustainable and regenerative agriculture and a desire to work collaboratively with others to explore and develop ways for the farm to support and advance the food education and food access goals of the organization. The ideal candidate will be adaptive and possess a strong willingness to learn and grow in their role.

A Taste of Farming

Are you aspiring to farm or just starting out with farming? If so, this series is for you. We designed this “learn as you go” online series so you can get a taste of different farming practices and concepts to help you explore your interests, gain a basic understanding of many different farming topics, avoid common pitfalls, and get to know the Extension professionals in Virginia who are here to assist you.

In this Series, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) agents and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Associates post short videos (15-20 min) highlighting key information and considerations about different farming practices and concepts on topics they have had years of experience helping aspiring and new farmers navigate. Season 1 ran from October 2021 to March 2022 and videos are archived on [the VBFRC website](#). Season 2 is now live! Each month between October 2022 and March 2023 we will release two new Taste of Farming videos for you to watch. A few weeks after a moderated Q & A session will be held with the video presenters where you can hear more from them and have your questions answered. Check out our full schedule on [the website](#) and see below for our new videos and upcoming moderated Q&A Session.

- **New Video: Floriculture**
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4 the Soil Highlights



World Soils Day is coming up on Monday, December 5th!

Join the movement and take the pledge to be 4 The Soil, 4 The World.

Featured Resource: *What Your Food Ate: How to Heal Our Land and Reclaim Our Health* by David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikle

Most people have heard the common adage: you are what you eat. However, we rarely think about that adage in relation to plants and the food we eat. What do plants actually eat and how does that potentially affect human diets and health? In their new book *What Your Food Ate*, David Montgomery and Anne Bikle offer a review and discussion about aspects of nutrition that generally do not receive equal consideration in regards to human health. The authors argue that often the focus of nutrition is solely on specific nutrients and caloric intake but that more research and consideration should be given to micronutrients, phytochemicals, certain fats, and forms of fiber that are critical for human development, growth, and resilience. David Montgomery and Anne Biklé conducted research based on 10 paired comparisons of farms with different farming practices that they defined as regenerative and conventional. They specifically analyzed soil organic matter levels, soil health scores, and baseline levels of certain vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals in harvested crops. The authors conclude there are no guarantees for good health, however, they do surmise that the way we raise and tend our crops and livestock does affect human diets and health, particularly as we learn more about the roles of anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory food sources.

David Montgomery and Anne Biklé were key resource speakers at the 2018 Virginia Farm to Table Conference at Blue Ridge Community College and Virginia State University and shared findings and insights from previous research conducted for their books *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*, *The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health*, and *Growing A Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life*.

Episode 22 - 21: Farming and Soil Health by the Square Foot with Brian Downing of Crooked Row Farm

Will soil health work on your farm? That is a question that farmers often ask related to soil health-building principles and practices, particularly in relation to multi-species mixtures and diversified enterprises. Brian Downing of Crooked Row Farm is a second-generation farmer located in Randolph County in central North Carolina. He shares his perspective on farming by the square foot and making soil health work on his farm. Faced with a soil compaction resource concern, he began experimenting with cover crop mixtures, a diversity of livestock and crop species, and enhancing the carbon currency on his farm. Brian highlights the need to understand what is happening on your farm by the square foot and to realize your farm has its own micro-economy that requires investments and savings in carbon and soil health. Additionally, farming and soil health accounts require sound recordkeeping to know where, how, and if

wealth and health are growing and accruing as part of a stable micro-economy that naturally includes deposits and withdrawals.

[Episode 22 - 22: 'Soil is Meant to be Covered' with Mike Phillips of Valley View Farms](#)

The 4 the Soil: A Conversation podcast was collaboratively launched on October 12, 2021, to bring farmers, graziers, market gardeners, agricultural professionals, educators, researchers, conservationists, and community leaders together to hear and share stories about agriculture, soil health principles, and shared values. The First Anniversary Edition is aimed to be a "best-of" episode to celebrate the milestone and offer a sample of memorable conversations of the first year.

Special thanks to all of our guests and listeners. We hope you will join us in this celebration and continue to support and share the 4 The Soil: A Conversation podcast as we work together for the common good and health of the soil and the future.

[Episode 22 - 23: Appropriate Technology for Soil for Water with Lee Rinehart of the National Center for Appropriate Technology \(NCAT\) Part I](#)

What are appropriate and inappropriate technologies for soil to benefit water? Lee Rinehart of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) shares the history behind this question as well as how the question relates to their ongoing Soil for Water initiative. People may hear of appropriate technology in relation to an international context but Lee reminds us that no matter the context appropriate technology should be locally-adaptive, place-based, and people-centered to be most beneficial socially, ecologically, and economically.

Lee tells several stories of when technologies were introduced and did not have the desired anticipated benefits but disrupted relationships that were naturally more integrated such as the carbon cycle and the integration of livestock in agricultural and rural landscapes.

[4 The Soil Blog: New posts every week!](#)

Have you visited the [4 The Soil Blog](#) yet? There are new posts every week on the four core principles, soil health champions across the state, and more. Check it out and share with your family, friends, and colleagues!

November Events

[November 22: Wholistic Management \(Virtual\)](#)

Wayne Knight, Executive Director of Holistic Management International, and member of the Southern SARE project team, will present on "What is wholistic management?" Wayne will talk about growing up in South Africa, his family's experience as one of Allan Savory's first clients, and what Holistic Management means to him personally. He'll also explain why he sees this approach as just as relevant now as ever. We have an amazing project team in Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia, and over the next several months we'll be creating more opportunities for you to get to know the other. Please try to participate. Questions? Problems? Get ahold of Luz Ballesteros, luzb@ncat.org.

[November 22: Backyard Rabbit Marketing \(Emporia, VA\)](#)

Veteran farmer Al Becker of Emporia Rabbitry will discuss how he uses social media to market a successful rabbit breeding operation. He sells his processed rabbits at farmers markets and animal swaps. He will also talk about equipment, feeding and care, the importance of recordkeeping, and ways to improve breeding stock.

November 28-29: 2022 Virginia Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention (White Sulfur Springs, WV)

The Virginia Farm Bureau is offering their annual convention at the Greenbrier Resort this year. Come join them for exhibits, presentations, and meetings.

November 29-December 2: HACCP for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Packinghouses (Virtual)

The course will teach participants how to develop and document a food safety management program based on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) for their specific operations.

December Events

December 1: USDA Information Session (Virtual)

Learn about eligibility requirements and how to apply for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans as well as programs, service and cost share opportunities from other USDA agencies. Beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers can get help to prepare applications for farm ownership and operating loans and learn about the requirements for borrowing. Find out about the resources and current grants that are available from USDA, including the Rural Development Renewable Energy for America (REAP) grant and loan guarantee program, Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs are also available. These programs can help you implement conservation practices to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters.

December 1-2: Cumberland Shenandoah Fruit Workers Conference (Winchester, VA)

The 98th Annual Cumberland-Shenandoah Fruit Workers Conference will include a Plenary Session with a keynote presentation along with our traditional call of the states. Following the Plenary Session, you can expect presentation sessions dedicated to research and extension topics in tree fruit horticulture, plant pathology and entomology. We are planning on a registration deadline of Tuesday November 1st with a conference early registration fee of \$100 per attendee. Online registration after November 1st will increase to \$150, and finally the registration fee will be \$200 at the door.

December 5: Grower to Grower (Harrisonburg, VA)

Friendly City Food Co-op & Sustainability Matters are hosting a free post-season meet & greet for commercial growers! Unload the stress of the growing season, and share challenges, solutions, and marketing thoughts. Find partners, mentors, and maybe even buyers for next season. All commercial growers, serious homesteaders, and those in grower-adjacent fields (buyers, lenders, agency folk, etc.) are welcome. Let us know if there's anything in particular you'd like to see included in the event. There'll be free food and a cash bar, with non-alcoholic drinks available. Registration requested, so we make sure to have enough food!

December 4-6: Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) Annual Meeting (Roanoke, VA)

Join the VASWCD for their 2022 Annual Meeting at the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center for what will be great networking and educational sessions.

December 7: Managing Cattle in Today's World (Emporia, VA)

Join us for updates about the current status of tick-borne illnesses in cattle, recommended immunizations and general health updates from Dr. John Currin, DVM with the Virginia-Maryland School of Veterinary Medicine. VA Cooperative Extension agents Cynthia Gregg and Taylor Clarke will provide information on grazing management. Dr. Kathryn Payne will discuss her current research at the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the importance of forage and hay testing for analysis. In

addition, Dr. Payne's graduate student will discuss his research on the integration of legumes with warm-season grasses for grazing. Finally, we will get an update on the research happening at Virginia State University from Austin Hilliard, cattle manager at Randolph Farm.

December 7: Cultivating Care from the Ground Up: From Mobile Markets to Community Art (Virtual)

Join the Roanoke Foodshed Network for the third session of their Fall Virtual Learning Exchange Series, featuring food systems leaders in the Roanoke region. Featured speakers for this session will include Bernadette (BJ) Lark of CommUnity Arts Reach and Kelly Key and Connie Kenny of the Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP).

December 8: Produce Safety Webinar with "Risky to You?" (Virtual)

This webinar will build off the prior webinar on agricultural water and will feature Dr. Don Schaffner from the University of Rutgers. He will explain what attributes of a water testing program need to be if it is to be risk based. Be sure to stick around for the live only Q&A where Dr. Schaffner will stay and answer audience questions. As a reminder: Each webinar will consist of a one-hour presentation followed by 30 min of interactive Q&A. Please join us - all welcome!

December 8: Whole Farm Planning (Petersburg, VA)

Whole Farm Planning helps beginning farmers maintain or improve profitability while enhancing their sustainability. With Whole Farm Planning, beginning farmers define long- and short-term goals to achieve a better quality of life at home and in the community. LEARN FROM: 1) VSU Small Farm Outreach Agents as they review the Whole Farm Planning manual, 2) Farm Credit representatives with instruction on how to develop a simple, one-page business plan, and 3) USDA agency representatives who will share information about available services and resources for farmers.

December 8: DCR Soil & Water Conservation District Information Session (Virtual)

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation Districts will give presentations about technical assistance and financial incentive programs for landowners and agriculture producers to implement conservation practices. Topics to be covered include program eligibility requirements, application processes and timelines, benefits to participation, and ways to improve soil and water conservation on your farming operation or property. Attendees will be able to ask questions at the end of each presentation.

January Events

January 6-8: 23rd Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference (Roanoke, VA)

Save the date for the 23rd Virginia Biological Farming Conference will be held January 6-8, 2023 at The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center in Roanoke, VA. Speaker proposals are being accepted now for half and full-day pre conference workshops and conference sessions. [Find the Speaker Proposal form on their website.](#)

January 12-14: 24th Annual Future Harvest Conference (College Park, MD)

Save the date! Now accepting workshop proposals for our 24th annual winter conference, which will take place in person January 12 - 14, 2023. The deadline to submit a proposal is September 15, 2022 and speakers will be notified by October 14, 2022.

January 18: Regenerative Food Production: Healthy Soil, Ecosystems, and Community (Virtual)

Join the Roanoke Foodshed Network for the fourth session of their Fall Virtual Learning Exchange Series, featuring food systems leaders in the Roanoke region. Featured speakers for this session will include Anna

and Brent Wills of Bramble Hollow Farm and Adam Taylor of the Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center.

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