

Welcome to the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program: A Spring Update

Winter has passed, spring is finally here, and our coalition is looking great and continues to move forward. The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program (VBFRCPP) is still working hard to improve opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers to establish and sustain viable agricultural operations through whole farm planning programs, online resources, social networking, and farmer-farmer mentoring. Of these aims, our seven whole farm planning teams have been very busy with numerous examples of programmatic success to share. They continue to provide programming for a number of beginning farmers and ranchers across Virginia. These programs have been effective by providing a number of networking opportunities, workshops, farm tours, field instruction, and self-study opportunities using our newly developed Whole Farm Planning curriculum. Below are the seven teams and their programs. For more details and contact information, visit www.vabeginningfarmer.org.

Certified Farm Seekers Program

VA Farm Bureau Young Farmers and the VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Whole Farm Planning for New Wineries and Vineyards

Attimo Winery

Whole Farm Planning for Working Model Farm and Land-Based Learning Center in Floyd County

SustainFloyd

The Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program

Fauquier County Ag. Development Office, Fauquier Education Farm, and Virginia Cooperative Extension

Whole Farm Planning in Southwest Virginia

Appalachian Sustainable Development and Virginia Cooperative Extension

Beginning Farmer Support on the Blue Ridge Plateau

Grayson LandCare

Whole Farm Planning Farm School

VA Association for Biological Farming



Certified Farm Seekers Program team members, Stefanie Kitchen (Farm Bureau) and Kevin Schmidt (VDACS), attended a farmland transitions training in Lancaster county, PA, in April. The training was hosted by the International Farmland Transitions Network (IFTN).

Working Together for a Common Agenda: Supporting Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Across Virginia

The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition held another successful state-wide meeting in March. The spring 2013 meeting was the 8th meeting of our Coalition and was held at the 'Crossroads Institute, Higher Education Center', Galax, Virginia. There were over 40 service providers and farmers in attendance. The meeting gave the opportunity for Coalition members to network while learning more about our Whole Farm Planning Teams, Farm Mentor Networks, Whole Farm Planning Curriculum, on-line resources, as well as transitions the Coalition are undergoing. As a central program aim, the group undertook a networking exercise; an update activity on that can be found on page 2. Also announced was Kelli Scott's move from the VBFRCPP as Farm Mentor Coordinator for SW VA, to Montgomery County Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE). As a VCE Agent, Kelli will still be participating in Coalition programming along side the rest of our VCE colleagues.



CJ Isbell is giving a tour on his own operation in Hanover County, Keenbell Farm

Farm Mentoring: We are excited to share that Farm Mentor Coordinators, Jim Hilleary and CJ Isbell, have been working with over 30 mentors to date. They have also helped pair over a dozen mentee farmers with a mentor farmer. Together, these farmers are teaming up to support varying levels of farm start-up for the next generation. Jim and CJ are now busy making plans for spring and summer mentoring activities and events. Contact CJ (Central) or Jim (Northern) if you would like to learn more about our Farm Mentor Networks.

Whole Farm Planning Program Highlight: Certified Farm Seekers

The CFS program is designed to help interested farmers produce a business plan and resume, as well as demonstrate on-farm experience. CFS uses five of the *Whole Farm Planning* modules to help guide participants through this process. To date, over 50 interested farm seekers have submitted applications and are at various stages of completing the requirements for the CFS program. In addition, workshops are being conducted across the state to allow participants an opportunity to complete the *Introduction to Whole Farm Planning* module with a staff member present. In order to continue past the life of the grant, the program is exploring potential, future funding options from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Virginia Farm Bureau.





Webinar Series for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Have you seen our new, monthly webinar series? These are monthly webinar presentations that showcase topics pertinent to Virginia beginning farmers and ranchers. The webinars also highlight the Coalition's many service providers who are primed to share their knowledge and experiences with the beginning farmer and rancher community. Recent webinar presentations include:

Exploring Farm Credit Programs—Mr. Pete Adamson & Ms. Kim Despasquale, USDA Farm Service Agency

Exploring Best Food Safety Practices —Mr. Wythe Morris, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Business Assistance Resources for VA Beginning Farmers and Ag Entrepreneurs— Mr. Stephen Versen, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Farmland Transition Hurdles and Strategies—Mr. Matthew Miller, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Looking for a previously recorded webinar? Check out our program website at www.vabeginningfarmer.org for recordings of past webinars and to see what other exciting initiatives are being developed! More webinars to come. Stay tuned!



Wythe Morris, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Carroll County

Are you interested in presenting a webinar? We would love to hear from you. We are now seeking webinar presenters for the fall 2013 season. The VBFRCPC is prepared to set up and manage the online technology that is required for the webinar presentation. If you would like to be a part of this webinar series, please contact Matt Benson at mcbenson@vt.edu.

The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program is a collaboration of beginning farmer stakeholders across Virginia. The program 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.

Contact Kim Niewolny, Program Director, at niewolny@vt.edu or 540-231-5784, for more information.

Coalition Member Programs, Workshops and Events

At the last held VBFRCPC meeting, coalition members were given the opportunity to network among themselves to learn what each is doing across Commonwealth. Each person networked with at least one other member, named the member and the organization to which he/she is affiliated, and highlight what farmer/rancher activity they learned about. Not only did we come up with a great list of events to share with our beginning famers and ranchers, the groups learned how they can better connect for enhanced programming, communication, and outreach. Below is an abbreviated list of spring and summer events and programming opportunities sponsored by Coalition members:

- Virginia Forage and Grassland Council's Fencing for Controlled Grazing Systems Workshop, Buckingham, VA—3/27
- Attimo Winery Spring Internships, Christiansburg, VA—5/02
- Taste of the Farm Plant Sale and Open House, Local Food Hub, Scottsville, VA—5/11
- American Forage and Grassland Council National Tour, Syria, VA—5/22– 24
- Small, Women, and Minority (SWaM) certified business Workshops, Virginia State University (May-July)
- VAFB Young Farmers Summer Expo, Wytheville, VA—8/2-4
- 2013 Ag Expo, Virginia Beach, VA—8/1
- Kentland Farm Field Day, Blacksburg—8/23
- Great Outdoors Expo, VCE, Glyn Lyn, VA (Giles County)—9/24

To learn more, or to share your events, please visit our news page on our website,. Also visit our Facebook site for event postings.

Join the conversation online: Social Media for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers:

VBFRCPC website: www.vabeginningfarmer.org

Beginning Farmer Connections, A VBFRCPC Blog
www.news.cals.vt.edu/vabeginningfarmer/

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

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