

Building Capacity & Sustainable Partnerships: A Community-Based Participatory Approach to Beginning Farmer Training in Virginia

VIRGINIA
Beginning Farmer & Rancher
COALITION PROGRAM



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Improve opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers in Virginia to establish and sustain viable agricultural operations through the development and enhancement of whole farm planning programs, online resources, and farmer mentoring networks.



Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)



U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



2010 Funding Aim:

“Assist beginning farmers and ranchers with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, and enhance their sustainability.”





Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)



U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



Beginning Farmer and Rancher Definition:

“...those who have operated a farm or ranch for 10 years or less either as a sole operator or with others who have operated a farm or ranch for 10 years or less.”



Following Sheils & Descartes (2004), the VBFRCP uses these categories to understand the “start-up” pathway:



“Prospective” or Explorer farmers = individuals interested in starting a farm or ranch. This includes next generation farm family members as well as those who do not come from a farming background.

Start-up farmers = individuals who are in the early stages of their agricultural operation, often within one to three years of farming or ranching

Re-strategizing farmers = farmers who are making changes to their operation after farming for approximately four to seven years. The individuals usually have increased decision-making responsibility and commitment to farming.

Establishing farmers = those farmers that are expanding , diversifying, and stabilizing within years eight to ten of the beginning farmer period.

Transitioning or heritage farmers = individuals who are family farm members who have decision making roles on the farm without having primary farm operator status.

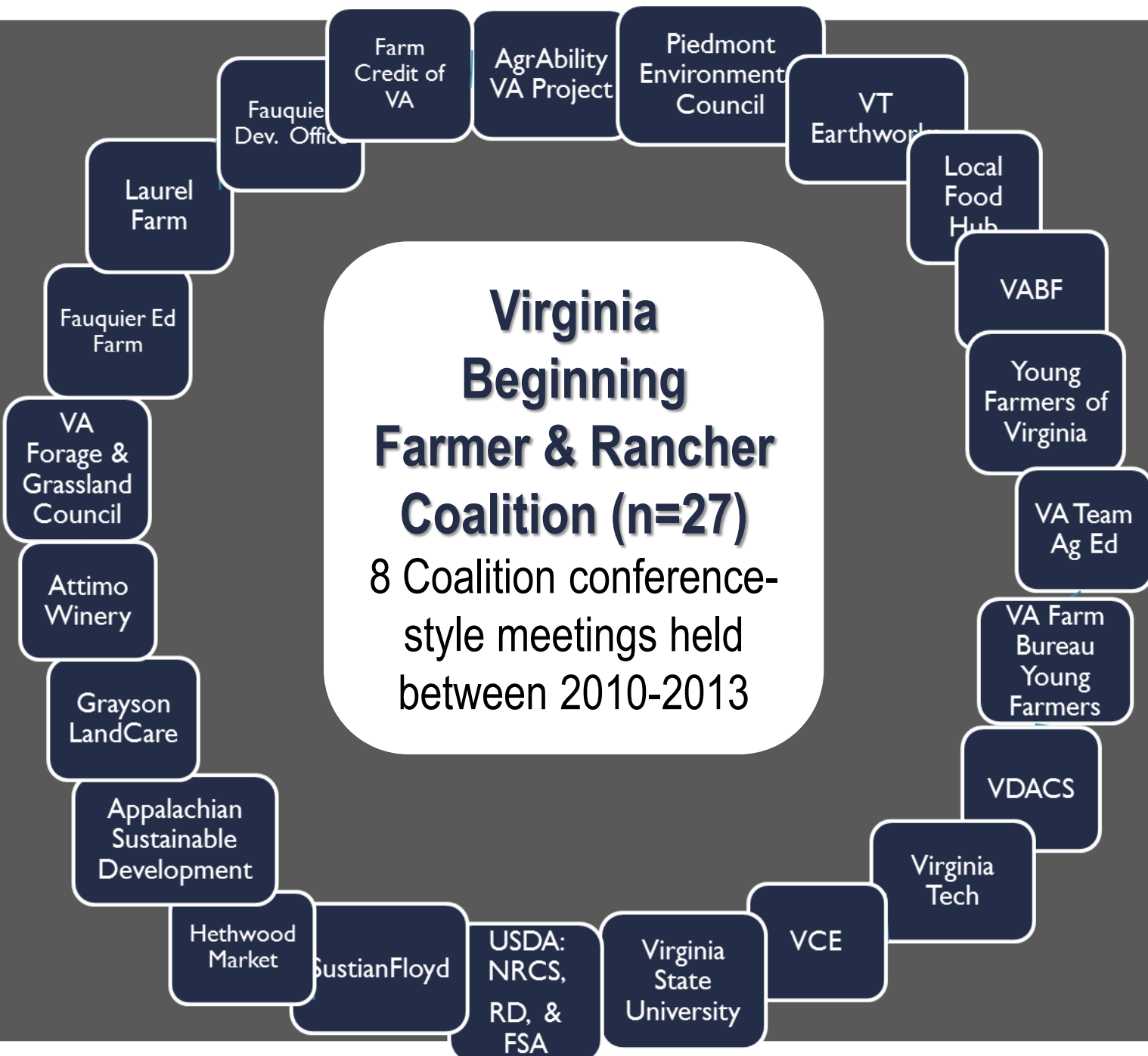
Coalition Building:

Establish a diverse coalition of stakeholders to support the development and growth of education and training opportunities for/ with Virginia's beginning farmers/ranchers.



Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition (n=27)

8 Coalition conference-
style meetings held
between 2010-2013



Coalition Building: A Community-Based Participatory Approach

CBP (or CBPR) is an action-oriented framework that aims to equitably involve all partners in the process of conducting research and educational programming

The CBP process recognizes the unique strengths that each stakeholder brings to the Coalition. Process helps build healthy partnerships and community capacity for sustainable outcomes.



Whole Farm Planning Curriculum



Collaboratively develop & deliver whole farm planning curriculum using experiential learning & classroom delivery methods in five focus areas.

Whole Farm Planning Modules

Intro to Whole Farm Planning

Land Acquisition & Tenure

Whole Farm Business Management &
Planning

Marketing

Sustainable Farming Practices

Whole Farm Planning Curriculum Committee

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Bette Brand, Virginia Farm Credit
Cathryn Kloetzli, Virginia Coop Ext
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Virginia Whole Farm Planning: An Educational Program for Farm Start-up & Development

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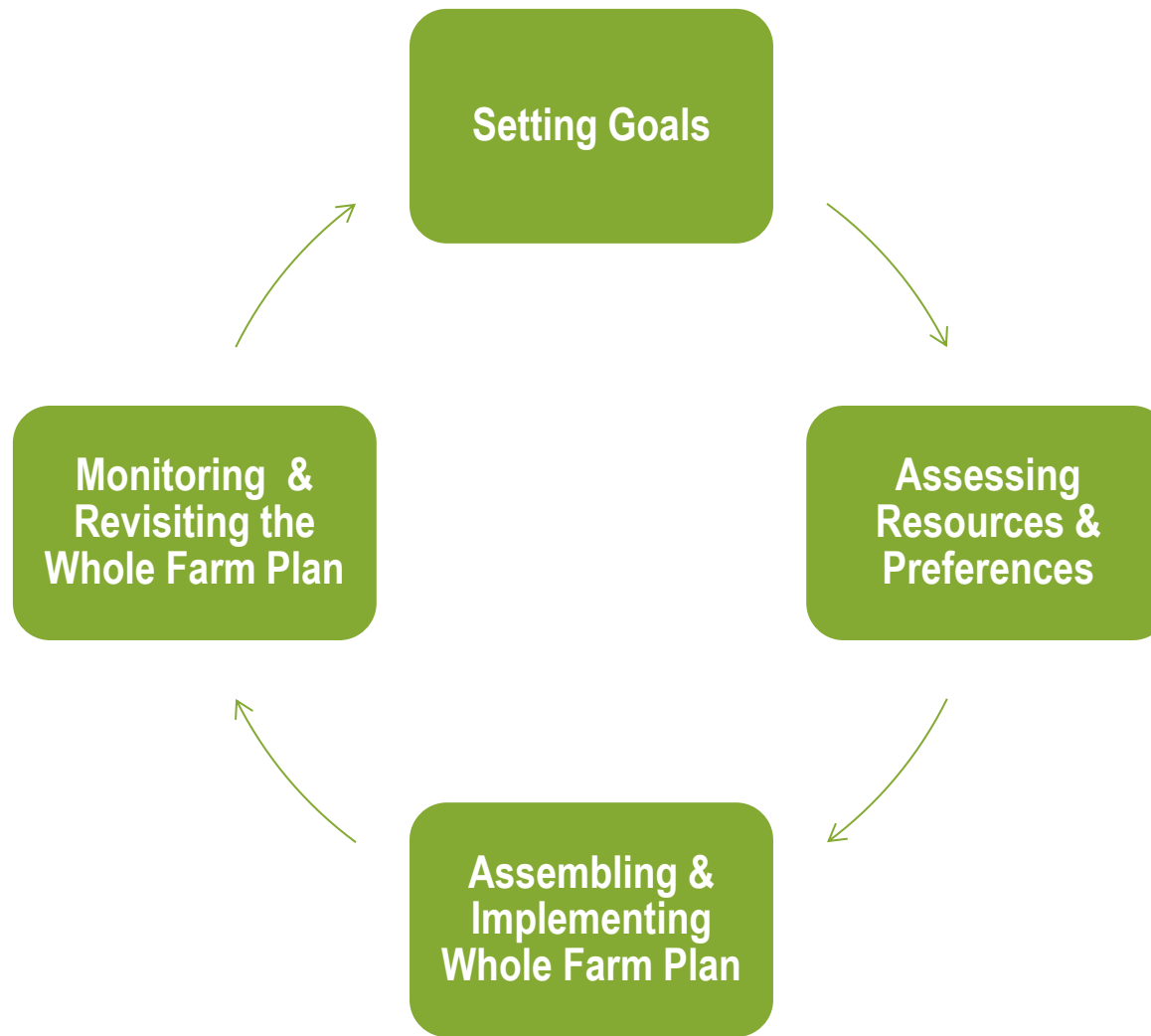
Introduction to Whole Farm Planning

The purpose of the *Introduction to Whole Farm Planning* module is to help beginning farmers and ranchers in Virginia to make informed farm planning decisions by introducing them to the whole farm planning process.

This first module includes key concepts, worksheets, and case study examples to provide the framework and inspiration you will need to plan your own farm.



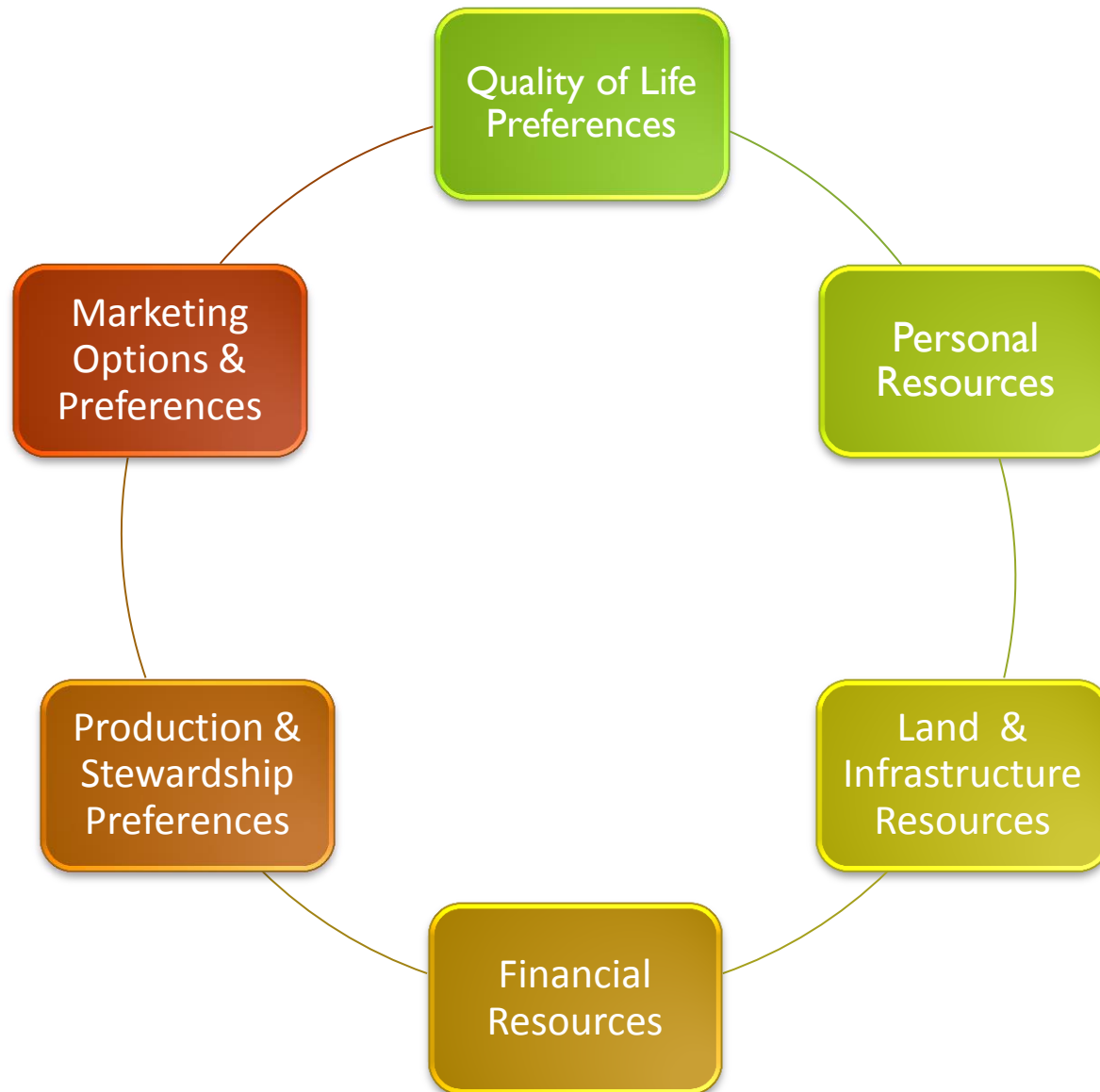
Whole Farm Planning Process



Marrison, D. (2007). *Whole Farm Planning Model*. Fact Sheet. Ohio State University Extension, Ashtabula County.
Janke, R. (2000). *Whole Farm Planning for Economic and Environmental Sustainability*, Kansas State University.
Sullivan, P. (2011). *Holistic Management: A Whole Farm Decision Making Framework*, National Center for Appropriate Technology.



Whole Farm Plan Inventory



Land Acquisition and Tenure

The *Land Acquisition and Tenure* module is designed to help beginning farmers and ranchers develop and implement farm tenure and transfer goals as part of the whole farm plan. Established farmers who are planning for the transfer of their farm may also find this module useful. The module includes key concepts and worksheets to help you assess land resources, land acquisition needs, and land transfer preferences.

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Marketing

The *Marketing* module is designed to help beginning farmers and ranchers develop and implement their goals for market analysis, product establishment, and development of viable marketing channels. The module includes concepts and worksheets to help you assess your potential customers, product options, available markets, & dynamic marketing strategies.

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Whole Farm Business Management & Planning

The *Whole Farm Business Management & Planning* module is designed to help beginning farmers and ranchers develop and implement early financial and resource management goals as part of the whole farm plan. The module includes concepts, worksheets, and case study examples to help you assess your financial, human, facility and natural resources to make informed whole farm planning decisions to develop your agriculture production goals.

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Sustainable Farming Practices

The *Sustainable Farming Practices* module is designed to help beginning farmers and ranchers develop and hone their skills and knowledge in the fundamental production practices associated with establishing and growing a wide range of plants and animals. The module includes concepts and worksheets, to help you expand your knowledge base in plant and animal production in terms of whole farm planning.

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Virginia Whole Farm Planning Teams

Appalachian Sustainable Development and VCE:

Whole Farm Planning in Southwest Virginia

Attimo Winery:

Whole Farm Planning Program for New Vineyards and Grape Growers

Fauquier County Ag. Development with VCE & Fauquier Education Farm:

The Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program

Grayson LandCare:

Building a Beginning Farmer Coalition on the Blue Ridge Plateau

SustainFloyd:

Whole Farm Planning for Working Model Farm & Land-Based Learning Center

Virginia Association for Biological Farming:

VABF Farm School for Beginners

Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers and VDACS:

Certified Farm Seeker Program

Certified Farm Seeker Program

Whole Farm Planning for New Wineries & Vineyards

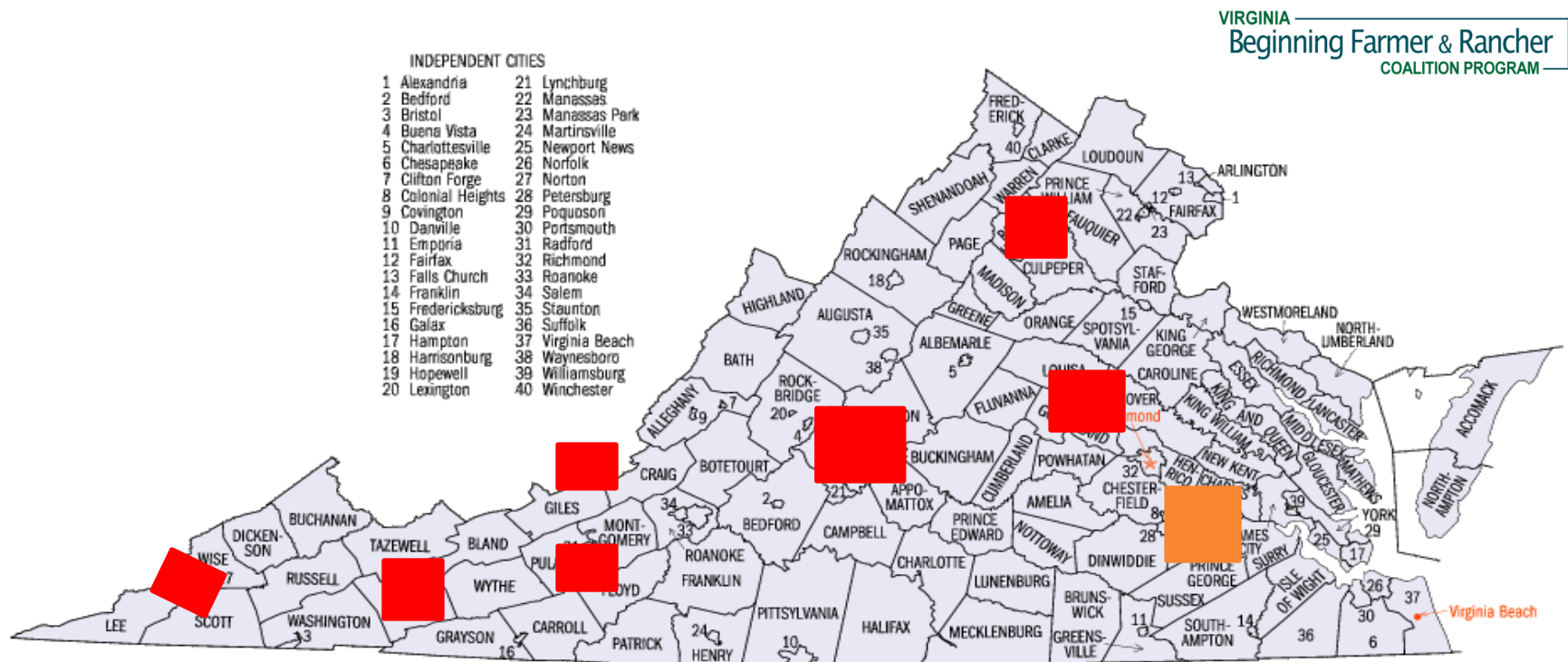
Whole Farm Planning for Working Model Farm

The Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program

Whole Farm Planning in Southwest Virginia

Beginning Farmer Support on the Blue Ridge Plateau

VABF Farm School



Online Learning and Resources

Collaboratively develop and deliver online learning resources using examples of whole farm planning curriculum activity and events.

- Electronic Resource Inventory: www.vabeginningfarmer.org
- A Coalition member listserv (n=112) and BF listserv (n=390) have successfully increased communication among BF and service providers.
- Facebook (n=450), YouTube Channel (views= 1310 views), and Blog provides social marketing and learning opportunities statewide.
- A YouTube Channel was launched with initial 6 BF cases (n=20 videos) that are designed for self-study application or within WFP programming.
- A webinar series highlighting Coalition member expertise with WFP programming across 5 modules.

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Webinar Series



Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition YouTube Channel

Teams have collaborated with farmers in their region to collect video of experiences unique to Virginia.

Video Production Process:
Videos can be used as self study or within Whole Farm Planning Programming to give insight into Virginia farmer's experiences first hand.



**Croushorn Farms (part 1):
“Starting a new farm enterprise”**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdDeCbCAIY0>

Virginia Farm Mentor Network

Mentoring is an informal educational opportunity where a new farmer/rancher can learn from an experienced person that has been working successfully in agriculture for several years.



- 3 mentoring networks: SW, Central, & Northern VA w/ 3 farm mentor coordinators (FMCs).
- 33 mentors identified & currently being matched with mentees who have participated in WFP programs.
- FMCs provide training to mentors and mentees.

Common Program Themes

- **Place-based programs using whole farm planning framework to address site-specific needs of BFRs:**
 - Averaged 4 of 5 modules for each program
 - Mix of experiential and direct instruction
 - Cohort development
 - Coalition as service provider network
 - Online learning as supportive learning
 - Farm Mentor Network provided “next steps”



Common Program Themes

- **Mentor farmer *networking***
 - Creates a sense of community
 - Farm Mentor Coordinators are essential for peer learning
 - Training for mentees and mentors is critical
- **Opportunities for service providers just as important**
 - Networking for organizational collaboration
 - Training for program development and evaluation
 - Emergent issues and learning needs:
 - Land transitions
 - Best practices for soil, water, and environmental health



Lessons and Strategies

- Work together for a common agenda
- Communication, networking, and strategic planning for capacity building and sustainable partnerships
- Co-create BFR need's assessment, WFP curriculum, and WFP programming for co-learning and shared metrics
- Evaluation: program, curriculum, and coalition building
- Accountability: steering committee and working groups with farmers and service providers



Next Steps: Coalition-Based Extension Program

- “Train the Trainer” Programming w/ Whole Farm Planning Curriculum
- Whole Farm Planning Programs
- Farmer Mentor Network in 2 Regions
- Coalition Model Assessment through Collective Impact Framework

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Acknowledgements:

Coalition Members:

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- Farm Service Agency (USDA)
- Fauquier Education Farm
- Grayson LandCare
- Hethwood Market
- Laurel Farm
- Local Food Hub
- Mountain View Farm and Vineyard
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA)
- Piedmont Environmental Council
- Rural Development (USDA)
- SustainFloyd
- Virginia Association for Biological Farming
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers
- Virginia Farm Credit
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Team Ag Ed
- Virginia Tech
- VT Earthworks
- Young Farmers of Virginia

Steering Committee:

- Alvin Blaha, Laurel Farm
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- William Crutchfield, Virginia State University
- Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech
- Megan Seibel, Mountain View Farm and Vineyard
- Scott Sink, Hethwood Market
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www.vabeginningfarmer.org



Virginia
Cooperative
Extension
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Thank you!

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