



SFOP Quarterly NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022

Dear Small-scale Farmers, Ranchers and Veterans,

Happy New Year! This is our sixth edition of The Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) Quarterly Newsletter. In this edition, we will inform you about upcoming workshops and some key grants that allow the SFOP to provide you with the services needed to develop a successful farming operation.

The 2021 Small Farm Conference, held in November in Roanoke, VA, was a success. Anthony Flaccavento, the Keynote Speaker, and James Hankins, who gave the opening address, had timely and relevant agriculturally-impacting presentations. There were workshops on Farm Tax; Agribusiness and Financial Management; Organic No-Till; and How COVID Changed Farming and Selling. There were also networking opportunities, where farmers interacted with each other, mentors, Agricultural Agencies, and vendors.

The following awards were presented at the conference:

- NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee Farmer of the Year: Ora Scruggs McCoy of Scruggs Farm
- VSU-SFOP Andy Hankins Small Farmers of the Year: Mark and Lona Chandler of Chandler Gardens
- VSU-SFOP Small Farm Volunteers of the Year: Dennis and Sarah Williams of Beesknees Farm
- VSU-SFOP Small Farm Program Assistant of the Year: Roland Terrell.

SFOP is here to provide you with outreach, training, and technical assistance. To learn more about our program, visit our webpage at <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/small-farm-outreach-program> for our calendar of events and link to our online Small Farm Resource Center at vasmallfarmers.com.

We encourage you to stay safe and practice the Center for Disease Control (CDC) safety precaution guidelines for COVID-19.

VCE SFOP at VSU keeping you informed,
William Crutchfield, SFOP Director



What SFOP Can Do for You

VSU-SFOP provides services to all counties in Virginia, as well as twenty neighboring counties in North Carolina and the Maryland Eastern Shore. We provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to limited-resource, small-scale, socially disadvantaged veteran and beginning farmers and ranchers (SDVBFR). The approach is holistic, in that we help individuals to make informed decisions about their current and prospective farming operations, by supplying tools, resources, and opportunities. We offer over thirty agriculture-related training workshops each quarter, covering an array of topics that are practical and beneficial to the small farmers and ranchers we serve. See pages 5-6 for current workshops.

These workshops address business management, planning, planting, harvesting, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), marketing, risk management, and farm safety. We also provide mentorship, networking opportunities, connection to USDA Agencies, other agriculture-related agencies programs, and one-on-one on-the-farm technical assistance.

These are just a few of the programs that we offer:

Creating and Sustaining Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Beginning Farmers in Virginia (Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program). This is a three-year program funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Its goal is to equip SDVBFR in Virginia with the tools needed to enter into and operate successful farm businesses. In the first year, the program starts with an Introduction to Farming. The second year features Training, Mentoring, and Skills Enhancement; and in the third year Farm Expansion, Marketing and Refinement are added. Participants in this program are provided with many materials, including a Beginning Farmer Binder, Whole Farm Planning Workbook, SFOP contact information, Resources and Milestone Tracker, Market Farming Success book, and The Organic Farmer Business Handbook. The New Farmer Orientation class also provides a wealth of information about USDA programs and other agricultural agencies.

—continued on page 2

What SFOP Can Do for You, *continued*

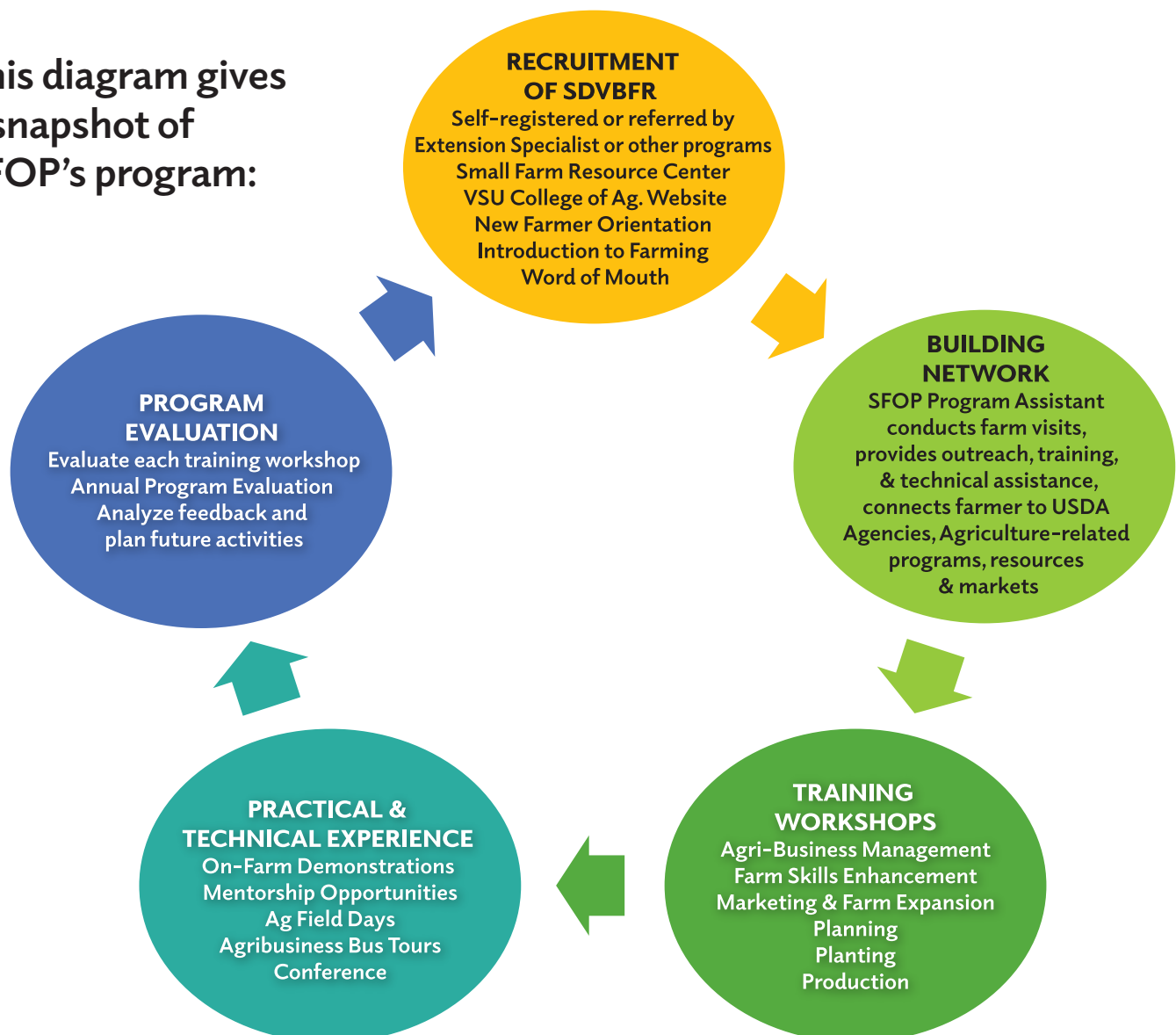
The **Agribusiness and Financial Management Education** training is designed for new and beginning farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Participants learn how to develop a productive and profitable farm operation. They are taught fiscal management strategies that will help their businesses become more profitable and sustainable. They also have the opportunity to visit local farms in person or by virtual tours and have the opportunity to visit with farmers and learn about their business enterprises. The training enables farmers and ranchers to better understand how to develop and maintain a business plan and set goals for their farm operations and/or enterprises.

The **Risk Management Education Packet** was compiled by the SFOP to educate small producers on ways to

mitigate financial, production, marketing, human, and other farming risks. Participants will learn proper planning and good recordkeeping. They will also gain an understanding of crop insurance, and be introduced to tools such as the Risk Management Checklist that will help them to identify and avoid various risks in production agriculture.

SFOP Outreach Workshops connect participants to the USDA and other agricultural agencies' programs which will benefit their farm operations. Informational meetings are held with farmers and our partners so that farmers can express their concerns directly to the agency/program representatives. If you need any of the services mentioned in this newsletter, do not hesitate to let us know. We are here to provide you with the education, resources, and tools needed for the success of your farm operation.

This diagram gives a snapshot of SFOP's program:



Pictures from the Winter Conference

The Small Farm Outreach Program Annual Conference is held each fall. In November we hosted 131 attendees in Roanoke. Here are some photos from the conference.



Left to right above: William Crutchfield, Dr. Gregory Goins, Dr. Janine Parker Woods and Dr. M. Ray McKinnie; below: Michael Carter, Sr., Roland Terrell (Small Farm Program Assistant of the Year) and Donald Jones



Winter Ag Tips from our Small Farm Program Assistants

- Identify which enterprise you would like to do and the location for each.
- This is the time of year to think about soil testing, to see what that pH is. Remember—pelletized lime activates in four to five months.
- Plant a good cover crop to add nutrients to the soil and help prevent soil erosion.
- Get your seedbeds prepared for planting.
- This is the time of year to order spring supplies for high tunnels and outside planting because they are normally more expensive when spring comes.
- Seed companies are having year-end sales. Take advantage of discounts before supplies run out.
- Get your orders in for seed potatoes and onions for early spring planting.
- The season for lambing and kidding is upon us, and small ruminant producers should remember these fundamental reminders for success:
 - Prepare your lambing/kidding facilities to be clean and dry.
 - Have all essential lambing/kidding supplies available—including colostrum.
 - Watch for birthing problems and know when to intervene, as well as when to call your veterinarian.
 - Monitor lambs and kids to make sure they are healthy and getting ample milk.
- Feed hay in different areas in the pasture to help distribute manure (nutrients). Watch to make sure the feeding area is safe so the kids and lambs will not be trampled.
- Recordkeeping is a vital part of your flock's health program. It is important to keep records of sick animals, treatments administered, and note milk and meat withdrawal times. Good records can help you choose animals to cull.
- Keep a record of all ag-related transactions as you develop your enterprise.
- If you haven't done so, this is a good time to participate in our Ag workshop and develop a network with other farmers.
- Volunteering at another farm can help you gain hands-on experience.



Are You “4” The Soil?

Soil is much more than the dirt under our feet.

Soil is a critical, finite resource that stores carbon and water, provides habitat for billions of organisms, and is the foundation of food production. Managing for soil health can improve water-holding capacity, build organic matter, save on inputs, and much more. It is critical that we properly care for the soil for the resilience of our landscapes and communities today and tomorrow.

But what is soil health really about and how can you build healthier soils on your land? It all starts with the 4 principles of soil health:

- 1. Keep Soil Covered.** It's the first step in protecting it from erosion, but also buffers soil temperature, slows rainfall runoff, and aids rainfall infiltration.
- 2. Minimize Soil Disturbance.** Both physical and chemical. This proactive measure can heal and protect properties of the soil and ultimately enhance the biological component.
- 3. Maximize Living Roots.** Doing this longer throughout the year fuels biological activity, aids nutrient cycling, and contributes to improved soil structure.
- 4. Energize with Diversity.** Use different crop species and integrate livestock where possible for specific purposes to enhance the chemical, physical, ecological, and/or biological aspects of the soil. It improves the whole system.

Soil is a living system with biological, chemical, and physical properties. Some properties are inherent to the soil type and how the soil was formed but all the properties can be affected by management or neglect. Thinking of soil as an ecosystem with various parts and players can help us understand that all soil change processes are integrated and interactive and shortcuts in decision-making may be shortsighted and can shortchange the system in the long run.

Join farmers, practitioners, and consumers from across Virginia in pledging your support 4 The Soil. Join the movement and find out more at www.4thesoil.org.

Contact Eric Bendfeldt at 540-232-6006 or Mary Sketch at 919-402-7241 with questions about this initiative and how to participate in the effort.

Check Out the New Podcast, “4 The Soil: A Conversation”

Soil. What is it, really? It's more than the dirt under our feet. Soil is living and life-giving. Listen as we unlock the mysteries of soil by speaking with people at the forefront of the soil health movement. Hear and learn from farmers, agricultural professionals, conservation leaders, master gardeners, and many more on how and why to be 4 The Soil.

“4 The Soil: A Conversation” is part of the 4 The Soil Awareness Campaign led by the Virginia Soil Health Coalition. The campaign's purpose is to raise awareness of soil as an agricultural and natural resource critical to social, economic, and environmental health.

The podcast is a collaboration of Virginia Cooperative Extension, On The Farm Radio, USDA-NRCS, and the Virginia Soil Health Coalition with specific funding from the Agua Fund and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Listen wherever you get your podcasts (Apple, Spotify, SoundCloud, Spreaker). New episodes are released on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month.

Take the 4 The Soil pledge at 4thesoil.org.



SFOP WORKSHOPS — February–March 2022

DATE	WORKSHOP	TIME	LOCATION	PROGRAM ASSISTANT	LIMIT	COST
2/9/22	Farming/Gardening with Pollinators in Mind	2–4 pm	Virtual	Roland Terrell		
2/9/22	How to Select and Brood Chicks	11:30 am–1 pm	Virtual	Tracy Porter	50	
2/10/22	Backyard Poultry for Beginners	10 am–12 pm	Virtual	Leonard Elam	12	
2/14/22	Small Farm Orientation	9–11 am	Virtual	Vernon Heath	15	
2/17/22	Pruning Your Vines To Make More Wine	12–1 pm	Virtual	Leonard Elam	20	
2/19/22	Starting a Community Garden	6–7:30 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr	30	
2/23/22	DCR Informational Meeting	10 am–12:30 pm	Virtual	Derrick Cladd		
2/23/22	Early Production with Raised Beds	11:30 am–1 pm	Virtual	Tracy Porter	50	
2/24/22	VDACS Farmer Farmland Match & Virginia Market Maker	1–3 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr		
2/28/22	Estate Planning for Farmers	10 am–12 pm	Virtual	Clifford Somerville		
3/3/22	Forestry Hot Topics	10 am–12 pm	VCE Prince Edward Office, 100 Dominion Drive, Farmville, VA 23901	Leonard Elam	15	
3/9/22	Pastured Poultry	9 am–12 pm	Virtual	Tracy Porter	50	
3/10/22	Farm Equipment Safety & Maintenance Basics	3–5 pm	Glade Spring, VA	Mandy Fletcher	30	
3/12/22	Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program	9 am–5 pm	VSU Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Derrick Cladd	20	\$25.00
3/14/22	Small Farm Orientation	9–11 am	Virtual	Vernon Heath	15	

SFOP WORKSHOPS— February-March 2022

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3/15/22	Estate Planning for Farmers	1-3:30 pm	Lake Country Advanced Knowledge Center, 118 E Danville St., South Hill, VA 23970	Marilyn Estes	20	
3/16/22	Laying Plastic and Using a Seeder	10 am-12 pm	Warfield, VA	Marilyn Estes	10	
3/16/22	Bedding Sweet Potatoes for Slip Production	11 am-1 pm	Virtual	Tracy Porter	50	
3/16/22	Basic Computer Skills for Farmers	6-8 pm	Milford, VA	Michael Carter Sr	6	
3/17/22	Mapping with Drones for Precision Agriculture	1-3 pm	Culpeper, VA	Leonel Castillo	5	
3/17/22	Good Agriculture Practices Dos and Don'ts	5:30-7:30 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr	30	
3/17/22	VDACS Farmer Farmland Match & Virginia Market Maker	10 am-12:30 pm	Virtual	Derrick Cladd		
3/22/22	Using The High Tunnel for Vegetable Production	10 am-12 pm	Virtual	Clifford Somerville		
3/22/22	Making Wreaths Highlighting Plant Materials	10 am-12 pm	Virtual	Roland Terrell		
3/23/22	Preparing for Honeybees: New Hives and Hive Expansion	9 am-12:30 pm	VSU Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Tracy Porter	25	
3/23/22	Greenhouse Ethnic Vegetable Production	2-4 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr	30	
3/24/22	Small Ruminant Series: Weaning for Success	4-6 pm	Glade Spring, VA	Mandy Fletcher	30	
3/26/22	Spring Gardening: Early Growing Tips	3-5 pm	Damascus, VA	Mandy Fletcher	25	
3/29/22	Farm Equipment Safety & Maintenance Basics	6-8 pm	Remington, VA	Michael Carter Sr		



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Where Virginia's small and beginning farmers
and ranchers access comprehensive resources to help make their farm
businesses profitable and sustainable.

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...And More

The Virginia Small Farm Resource Center is developed and supported by Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program.