

SMALL FARM OUTREACH PROGRAM



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William Crutchfield
SFOP Director

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments.



- ABOUT US -

The VSU Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) began as a pilot project in 1984 with a team of five staff members and officially transitioned into a full program in 1991. Since then, it has grown to over 30 staff to include a Director, Assistant Director, Field Coordinator, Regional and State Program Assistants, which includes an Hispanic Coordinator & Veteran Coordinator), Program & Grant Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, Field Tech, & Student Interns.

- OUR MISSION -

The mission of the Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) is to provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to small, veteran, and beginning farmers and ranchers, empowering them to make informed decisions about their farm operations.



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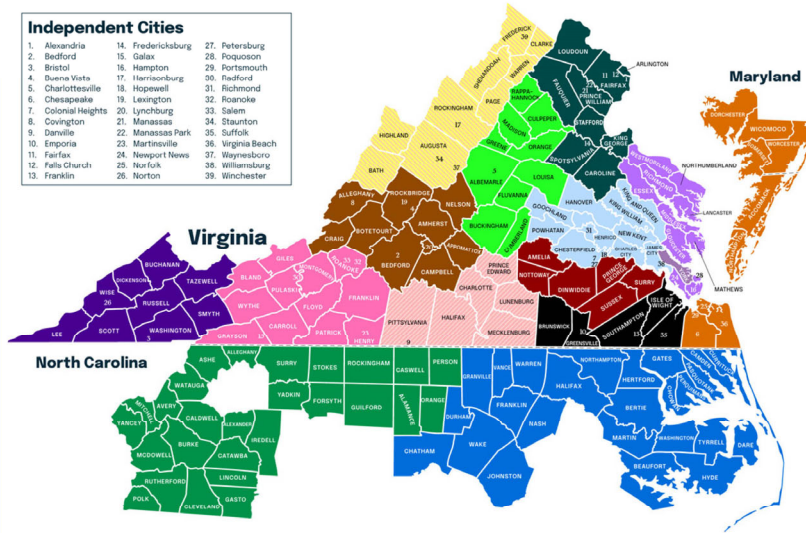
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• SFOP TERRITORIES MAP •

Contact Our Program Assistants

Independent Cities

1. Alexandria	14. Fredericksburg	27. Petersburg
2. Bedford	15. Galax	28. Roanoke
3. Bristol	16. Hampton	29. Portsmouth
4. Buena Vista	17. Harrisonburg	30. Radford
5. Charlottesville	18. Hopewell	31. Richmond
6. Chesapeake	19. Lexington	32. Roanoke
7. Colonial Heights	20. Lynchburg	33. Salem
8. Covington	21. Manassas	34. Staunton
9. Danville	22. Manassas Park	35. Suffolk
10. Emporia	23. Martinsville	36. Virginia Beach
11. Fairfax	24. Newport News	37. Waynesboro
12. Falls Church	25. Norfolk	38. Williamsburg
13. Franklin	26. Norton	39. Winchester



Regional Program Assistants*

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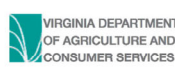
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• OUR PARTNERS •



SFOP is supported by our partnering agencies through grants and Cooperative Agreements.

- AgrAbility
- Arcadia
- Brunswick Farm To Families
- DCR Division of Soil and Water Conservation (DCR)
- Farm Service Agency
- Fauquier Education Farm
- Minority Veteran Farmers of Virginia
- Natural Resource and Conservation Services
- Southern Extension Risk Management

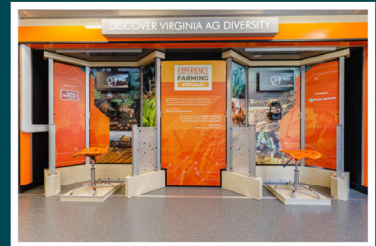


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MOBILE EDUCATION UNIT (MEU)

The MEU offers comprehensive lesson plans & interactive exhibits across various agricultural topics, technologies & innovations.



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• FULLY AUTOMATED HIGH TUNNEL PRODUCTION SYSTEM •



- Automated Systems for Power, Water & Ventilation
- Alternative Energy Systems & Storage
- Water Collection & Storage Solutions
- Back-Up Power Systems
- Applied Economic & Agronomic Data Research
- Potential for Scalability & Increased Efficiency
- Technology and Training Initiative



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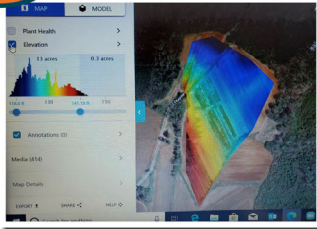
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• DRONE PROJECT •

We train farmers on the benefits of using drones to take aerial photos to detect problem areas on land. These findings help with spot applications and targeted actions.



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• MOBILE PROCESSING UNIT (MPU) •



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• THE CATTLE PROJECT •



Randolph Farm and the Minority and Veteran Farmers of the Piedmont are partnering on a cattle demonstration unit to help small farmers and ranchers diversify their operations.



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SFOP Quarterly NEWSLETTER

Spring | 2025

Director's Letter



William Crutchfield
SFOP Director

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Farming has always been a demanding profession, but in today's world, farmers face a unique and growing set of challenges. From climate change and rising operational costs to market access and labor shortages, the pressures on modern agriculture are immense. However, innovative solutions and strategic adaptations can help farmers navigate these difficulties and build a more resilient future for agriculture.

Climate Change and Unpredictable Weather Patterns
Erratic weather patterns, prolonged droughts, heavy rains, and rising temperatures significantly impact crop yields and livestock health. These changes make it increasingly difficult for farmers to predict growing seasons and maintain productivity.

Rising Costs of Production
The cost of essential inputs such as seeds, feed, equipment, and fuel continue to rise, squeezing farm profits. Prices for crops can fluctuate widely based on global market demands, trade policies, and competition. This volatility creates financial uncertainty for farmers who rely on consistent income. Inflation and supply chain disruptions have further exacerbated financial strain, making it harder for small and mid-sized farms to remain viable.

Labor Shortages and Workforce Challenges
The agricultural sector is experiencing a shortage of skilled labor, driven by shifting demographics and a declining number of younger workers entering the industry. Many farmers rely on seasonal workers, but restrictive labor policies and visa limitations have made it harder to secure a reliable workforce.

Soil Degradation and Resource Depletion
Years of conventional farming practices have led to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and depletion of essential nutrients. Without proper soil management techniques, long-term productivity is at risk.

Pest and Disease Management
The rise of resistant pests and diseases poses a threat to crop health. Farmers must stay updated on the latest pest management strategies, which can involve significant research and investment.

Solutions for a More Resilient Future

Implementing Climate-Smart Agriculture
Farmers can adopt climate-resilient practices such as using cover crops, agroforestry, and rotational grazing to improve soil health and increase resilience to extreme weather. Investing in water conservation techniques, such as rainwater harvesting and efficient irrigation systems, can help mitigate drought impacts.

Strengthening Local and Direct-to-Consumer Markets
To overcome market access challenges, farmers can explore farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, and online direct-to-consumer sales. There is a growing consumer demand for organic produce and specialty crops. Farmers can tap into these markets by adopting organic practices or growing unique varieties that command higher prices. Establishing relationships with local restaurants and food cooperatives can also provide more stable revenue streams.

—continued on page 2



The SFOP quarterly newsletter reaches over 5000 people and provides up to date information about agricultural topics, workshops/events and "lessons from the field."



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A sample of the types of workshops offered by the Small Farm Outreach Program.

Small Farm Orientation

October 13, 2022 · 9-11 am · **FREE!**
Space is limited to 30 participants!
Join us on Zoom!

This two-hour Zoom session will provide participants with an overview of the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program and its resources. Participants will also have the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the program.

Register at ext.vsu.edu

Farm Equipment Safety

October 25, 2022 · 10 am-12 pm
Lawrenceville, Virginia
FREE · Space is limited to 10 participants

Pedro Lopez, Hispanic Mentor Farmer, will host participants on a Fall Tour in four hoop houses. The Spring Tour was very successful with participants learning about the innovative activities, so Pedro agreed it would be a great interval in the innovative activities. He grows ethnic Hispanic crops, local vegetables, do it again in the Fall. He grows ethnic Hispanic crops, local vegetables, tropical fruits and herbs. Pedro will show participants how he uses rebar fabric over the beds instead of plastic for total weed control and water retention. He will also show participants how he uses solar panels for lighting and fans for ventilation.

Hispanic Hoop House Fall Tour

October 25, 2022 · 7:30-9 pm · **FREE**
Join Us on Zoom!

Fall is often a time of rest for sheep and goat producers. The ewe and doe flock is in varying stages of pregnancy and does not require as much attention. But sound management at this time is important. Proper vaccination programs, mineral and other nutritional factors can directly affect success. Join us for an evening of learning and a Q&A session with Greiner, Extension Sheep Specialist with Virginia Tech.

Small Ruminants: Preparing for Winter

October 25, 2022 · 7:30-9 pm · **FREE**
Join Us on Zoom!

DCR Information Session

The 3 Baby Steps to Building Risk-Ready Markets

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The SFOP provides ongoing training and technical assistance.






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SFOP Program Assistants demonstrating to small farmers





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The SFOP provides ongoing training and technical assistance.





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PAs provide hands-on, educational experiences for small farmers and ranchers.





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Amanda Fletcher
2024 PROGRAM ASSISTANT
OF THE YEAR



Anthony & Tonja Martin
2024 FARMER OF THE YEAR








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SMALL FARM RESOURCE CENTER

• <https://vsusmallfarms.com/> •



With funding from the Virginia Department of Health and Community Development, the SFRC serves as a centralized hub for Virginia's small and beginning farmers, offering comprehensive resources to support business growth, profitability, and long-term success.



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For more information about the Small Farm Outreach Program, contact:

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