

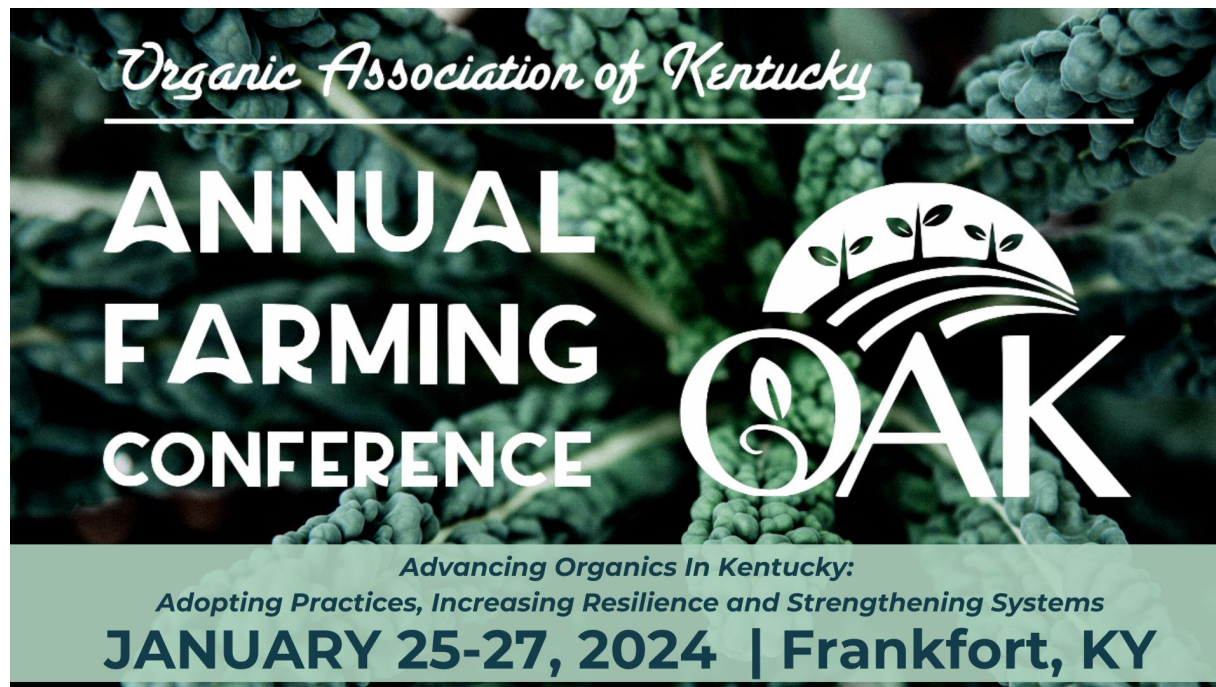


## Secure Your Spot at OAK Conference!

Join us for OAK's 13th Annual Farming Conference: *Advancing Organics in Kentucky: Adopting Practices, Increasing Resilience and Strengthening Systems*! This January 2024 gathering is a not-to-miss event featuring Kentucky farmers, production deep dives, research highlights, food system innovations, market opportunities and the expanding OAK network for three days of amazing learning and growing together.

[View the Agenda here](#)

This event is open to everyone. Take advantage of early bird pricing, register today and join the OAK community in January 2024 at [KSU's Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm](#).



[Register Now for #OAK2024](#)

### OAK Offers Conference Scholarships Thanks to Partner Support

Scholarship requests for OAK's 2024 Conference will be reviewed and awarded on the business day nearest to the 1st and 15th of each month, up until the event and as funds allow. Scholarship awardees will receive a discount code via email to use in the conference registration form.



Scholarships are applied to the regular conference session days, January 26 and 27. Pre-Conference Workshops are not included in scholarships at this time. We share gratitude for our partners that make it possible to offer scholarships: Charlie's Compost, Grow Appalachia, Kentucky Horticulture Council, Kentucky State University and University of Kentucky.

[Apply Now for a Scholarship](#)



## OAK Offers New Equity Membership Opportunities



**In case you missed it - OAK has added new membership levels!**

In celebration of Kentucky's rich agricultural community, OAK invites you to join in these **free**, three-year memberships: the ***equity individual grower membership*** and ***equity farm membership***. These new membership levels offer access to OAK's member benefits, including discounted

registrations to OAK's conference, and to participatory opportunities for members to mold OAK's future work.

In a step towards equity and abundant inclusion, within an industry that has and continues to disenfranchise underserved, marginalized groups, OAK now offers these free membership levels to **farmers, market gardeners, beginning farmers and aspiring growers who self-identify with one or more of the below:**

- is a member of a historically marginalized group – Black, Indigenous or people of color (BIPOC); persons with a disability; etc.
- is experiencing food or housing insecurity
- has immigration-related expenses
- has medical expenses not covered by insurance

And never forget, **all OAK Members receive discounted registration to the annual conference!**

Join OAK via Free Equity Membership

## The Organic Farmer Mentorship Program is Now Open - Apply Today

**Attention all owners, managers, employees or retired producers of certified organic operations: mentors are needed! Calling all farmers interested in organic transition and certification: apply now to be a mentee!**

This fall, OAK launches a new organic farmer mentorship program in collaboration with the Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). The program actively seeks mentors who are experienced and knowledgeable certified organic producers and passionate about organic production and helping others succeed in organics. Enrollment is also open for mentees interested in pursuing organic transition and certification for their operation.

Mentorship pairing will happen this fall and winter, with programming starting in 2024. Learn more and apply using the button below, or contact Kenya Abraham, OAK's Organic Transition Program Manager, for more information: [kenya@oak-ky.org](mailto:kenya@oak-ky.org).

Tell Me More About Becoming a Mentor or Mentee!



United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
National Organic Program  
Transition to Organic Partnership Program



## OAK Provides Organic Production Assistance to Farmers

OAK is launching a dedicated organic technical assistance program for Kentucky farmers who are currently using or interested in using organic practices!

OAK's Organic Production Specialist Sarah Guerink is available to respond to production-related inquiries and meet with farmers one-on-one via phone calls, virtual meetings and on-farm consultations. This service is for commercial farms and market gardens that are currently selling or planning to sell their products. It is accessible to experienced or beginning farmers across certified organic and conventional crop and livestock operations. OAK Membership is not required to receive assistance.

Organic production support can include: crop and cover crop planning; managing weeds, pests and diseases; soil testing assistance and interpretation; nutrient budgeting; recommendation on inputs, equipment, infrastructure and tools; high tunnel management; integrated crop and livestock systems; livestock and grazing management and more.

Sarah will collaboratively develop plans, help track progress and provide necessary follow-ups and referrals to help farms reach desired production goals.

The Organic Production Assistance Program aims to:

- Reduce barriers to adopting organic farming practices
- Improve farm efficiencies, production capacity, product quality and farm resilience
- Improve profitability by helping farmers to start earning organic premiums with greater efficiency
- Support farmer needs and the success of the growing organic industry in Kentucky

To request an Organic Production Consultation, fill [out this form](#).

Just have a quick question? Send an email to Sarah Geurkink at [sarah@oak-ky.org](mailto:sarah@oak-ky.org)

*This program is supported by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund.*

[Request an Organic Production Consultation](#)

## Not-To-Miss Opportunities and Updates

### Reminder! Use your OAK Member Discounts for Seeds, Soil Amendments and More!

OAK Members, don't forget to log in to the [Member Center](#) on the website to access the discount codes for supporting organizations like High Mowing Organic Seeds, Johnny's Seeds, Ohio Earth Food, Thoroughbred Landscaping, Earth Tools and more!

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### Webinar Recap: How Will the New Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Rule Impact My Farm?

OAK's November 3rd webinar, "How Will the New Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Rule Impact My Farm?" was geared toward operations that were certified organic or had previously sold, aggregated and distributed certified organic products; and therefore, might be required to become a certified organic "Processor/Handler" as a result of the new SOE rule.

During the webinar, Abigale George, Organic Program Manager at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, shared updates about the new Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule that will

take effect in March 2024. The webinar showed how operations can stay in compliance, highlighting specific areas for consideration, providing examples of exemptions and answering farmers' questions.

For more information on SOE, check out these [four informative webinars](#) that Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) recently published. You can also take the quiz “[Are You SOE Ready?](#)” to explore exemptions and requirements under SOE.

*Please reach out to your certifier if you have questions about how the new SOE rule might impact your operation. And please always consider OAK a resource as you navigate the NOP regulations. You can contact Kenya Abraham, OAK's Organic Transition Program Manager, with questions about certification and compliance at [kenya@oak-ky.org](mailto:kenya@oak-ky.org).*

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## 2023 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections Open Until December 4

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is taking ballots for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) [county and urban county committee elections](#) from all eligible agricultural producers and private landowners across the country. Elections are occurring in certain Local Administrative Areas for these **committee members who make important decisions about how Federal farm programs are administered locally**. Producers and landowners must return ballots to [their local FSA county office](#) or have their ballots postmarked by Dec. 4, 2023, for those ballots to be counted. [Learn more here](#)

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## KY State University's Small Scale Farm Grant: Deadline December 1

Kentucky State University's Small-Scale Farm Grant Program offers grants up to \$5,000. The next deadline to apply is December 1, 2023. Kentucky farms with sales between \$1,000 - \$250,000 in the previous two years are eligible. Priority areas for the grant are aquaculture/aquaponics, certified organic agriculture, value-added enterprise, food insecure area production, agroforestry, and farmer education assistance. <https://www.kysu.edu/academics/college-accs/school-of-ace/co-op/small-scale-farm-grant-program.php>

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## USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination: Financial Assistance Application Process Now Open!

The application period for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) has been extended **through January 13, 2024**. Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners are eligible to apply if they encountered discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs before January 1, 2021, and/or currently hold assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was subject to discrimination prior to January 1, 2021. Applications for this program are **free** and **do not require a lawyer**. All applications that are received by the deadline will be reviewed.

The Windsor Group LLC has opened a local office in Lexington, Kentucky. Anyone interested in applying or finding out more can visit the office in Lexington, KY, between 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. ET, Monday - Friday (except for Federal holidays):

*USDA Discrimination Financial Assistance Program – Kentucky Office  
107 W Loudon Ave., Ste 101*



Lexington, Ky. 40508

Producers also have the option to file applications online at [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov), by mail, or by turning in applications at the brick-and-mortar offices. The program call center number is 1-800-721-0970.

Further information can be found at [Farmers.gov/22007](https://Farmers.gov/22007).

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## Upcoming Partner Opportunities

### Building a Regional Seed Commons - TN Local Food Summit

November 30 - December 1, 2023

Lebanon, TN

As part of the annual Tennessee Local Foods Summit, join this evening kickoff and daylong track of sessions hosted by the Cumberland Seed Commons, with a focus on the ongoing work of building a regional seed commons. Sessions include Seeds for Community Resilience; Seed Saving, Storing, and Cleaning; Building A Seed Commons from an Indigenous People's Lens and more. Everyone is welcome to join. Learn more at [tnlocalfood.org/](https://tnlocalfood.org/)

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### Bulk Order for Vermont Compost Products

Fresh Start Growers Supply in Louisville is taking orders for Vermont Compost Potting Soil products, for arrival in Louisville in the first two weeks of January.

View the complete list of products and pre-order pricing below, and **order before December 1, 2023.**

Fort Vee 2 CY Sling Bag \$744.00

Fort Vee 60 Quart Bags (27 bags) \$1,038.00

Fort Light 2CY Sling \$744.00

Fort Light 60 Quart Bags (27 bags) \$1,038.00

Manure Compost 2 CY Sling Bag\* \$564.00

Perennial Blend 2CY Sling Bag\* \$724.00

Compost Plus 2CY Sling Bag\* \$836.00

Jolly Roger 2CY Sling Bag\* \$836.00

\*Smaller bagging available. Pallet minimum.

Learn more about the products [here](#)

[Fresh Start](#) may deliver to your location for an extra cost. Call Steve to get a quote or for more information: 502-741-4806 or 502-442-7883, or email [steve@freshstartgrowers.com](mailto:steve@freshstartgrowers.com)

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## Upcoming In-Person Events

### Women for the Land Learning Circle: Implementing Risk Management Strategies for Your Organic Farming Practices

**November 29, 2023, 9 am - 3 pm ET**

**Slak Market Farm, Lexington KY**

For anyone who identifies as a woman or non-binary person interested in agriculture, we invite you to join the Women for the Land program in Kentucky for a program focused on mitigating risks with your farming operation – including using tools such as crop insurance, crop diversification, and others. We will hear from technical service providers as well. Kenya Abraham, Kentucky Small Farmer of the Year, will co-facilitate this day and welcome us with a

tour of the farm as well. Food, goodies, and stipends are included in this day. [REGISTER HERE](#)



## Implementing Risk Management Strategies for Your [Organic] Farming Practices

[Register Here!](#)

**When: November 29, 2023**  
**Where: Slak Market Farm**  
**Time: 9 am - 3 pm**  
**For more information, visit [farmland.org/women](https://farmland.org/women)**

- Get connected with like-minded folks to further strengthen networks and farming operations
- Receive concrete, research-based information from technical providers on how to mitigate risks (crop insurance, diversification, organic practices etc.)
- Relax and unwind in a peaceful, natural setting
- Tour Kenya Abraham's dairy operation and learn from her expertise
- Enjoy snacks, catered lunch, a stipend, and other goodies for participating in the day

**Ohio State Organic Grains Conference**  
**Early bird pricing ends December 1, 2023.**  
January 4-5, 2023  
Oregon, Ohio

Attendees will learn, eat, and connect on everything from weed control to technology. Learn more and register here. <https://offer.osu.edu/organic-grains-2024>

## Upcoming Virtual Events

### **Organic Farmer Crop Insurance Working Group**

**TODAY, November 15, 2023, 1pm ET**

Organic Farmers Association is starting a Crop Insurance Working Group. Workgroups are a way for us to work together to identify challenges, propose solutions, and amplify organic farmer voices. Together we will take the ideas directly to our legislators and agencies to advocate for the changes we need.

If you're interested in improving the crop insurance system to better serve transitioning and organic farmers, please consider joining this group! The group will meet monthly for 1 hour on the 3rd Wednesday at: 1pm ET. [Sign up here](#)

### **Soil Microbes and Bean Nutrient in Organic and Conventional Systems**

**TODAY, November 15, 2023, 2pm ET**

Join this Rodale Institute webinar to learn about the recent findings on how cropping systems impact soil microbes, enzyme activity, and bean (green and black varieties) nutrient quality.

[Register here](#)

### **Organic Advisor Call Series**

**TODAY, November 15, 2023, 9 am ET** - "Bringing The Elevator Back to Life: Organic Offtake"

The Organic Agronomy Training Service's (OATS) Organic Advisor Call Series offers monthly Zoom discussions and Q&A for organic advisors with farmers and experts, facilitated by Nate Powell-Palm. [More information here](#)

### **Botanical Product Regulations and Health Claims Rules**

**November 16, 2023, 3pm ET**

Do you make botanical products like salves and teas from products you grow on your farm? Understanding who regulates your product and the rules they enforce with your production, labeling, and marketing is confusing. Is it the FDA, or your state Department of Agriculture, or even maybe your local health department? What health claims can you make about the benefits your products can provide to your customers? And if you overstep, what agency will be enforcing the rules? Get answers to these questions and more in Farm Commons practical webinar designed to help you sort out the issues and prioritize next steps for your operation.

[Register here](#)

### **Managing Risk Related to Livestock Operations**

**November 17, 2023, 2:30 PM ET**

In the Livestock and Poultry Environmental Learning Community, we are well aware that @#\$% happens. Insurance is a means for providing some protection from both foreseen and unforeseen forces. While accidents are never pleasant, we can learn from past events to prevent, as best as possible, these misfortunes in the future. The speakers will share stories of events in barns and during manure hauling, and how these events interweave with standards and premiums. The speakers will share insights on private and public insurance programs related to livestock production and manure management. For more information or to register, go to [lpelc.org/upcoming-webinars/](https://pelc.org/upcoming-webinars/)

### **Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Public Meeting**



**November 29, 2023, 1-3pm ET**

The USDA is holding a "Public Meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production," on November 29. Topics for the upcoming meeting will include addressing public comments and discussing the following recommended topics:

- Federal crop insurance for innovative producers
- Research, extension and education in innovative production
- Access to technical assistance
- Urban soil health and safety
- Scholarship and education support

The Committee will deliberate and vote on proposed recommendations and address public comments during the meeting. USDA will share the agenda between 24 to 48 hours prior to the meeting on the [Committee's webpage](#). To attend virtually, register by Nov. 29, 2023, on the [Committee's webpage](#).

**Adapting and Expanding Organic High Tunnel Vegetable Production****November 30, 2023, 2pm ET**

Join eOrganic and the Organic Farming Research Foundation for a webinar on high tunnel vegetable production by Dr. Xin Zhao of the University of Florida. This webinar will present and discuss up-to-date findings and recommendations from a NIFA OREI funded research project with a focus on enhancing high tunnel organic vegetable production for the Southeast.

The interdisciplinary team included researchers and Extension experts from the University of Florida, Florida A&M University, University of Georgia, and USDA-Agricultural Research Service. Integrated high tunnel organic crop systems and production practices were evaluated in Florida and Georgia to tackle challenges associated with crop management for season extension, environmental management for microclimate manipulation, soil health and nutrient management, and pest and disease management. We also assessed factors influencing high tunnel adoption among organic growers. [Please register in advance.](#)

**Mental Health Grower Gathering****November 30, 2023, 7:30-9pm ET**

This event is brought to you by FairShare CSA Coalition and Midwest Vegetable Growers Network (MVEG).

Seasons are changing and stressors are shifting. Let's gather for a very loosely facilitated conversation around farming challenges and what we can do now to implement changes for the 2024 season to invite more ease into our farming routines.

If you're looking for space to connect with your peers around how to manage stress and support mental health and wellbeing for both farm owners and farm employees, join us for this grower gathering. Bring your questions, experiences, and tips while also holding space for others to share.

Space is limited so we can keep this discussion more intimate. It will not be recorded. Farm owners, farmworkers, and farm adjacent professionals are welcome to attend.

Registration is free, and you can sign up [here](#).

**Growing Your Farm and Food Business Workshops****December 5, 2023, 5-6:30pm, and****December 7, 2023, 7-9pm - Two-part virtual workshop**

KCARD is bringing back these great opportunities for producers to meet resource providers, funding agencies, and KCARD representatives and to be exposed to the many opportunities to grow and finance your business. [Register here](#)

Be sure to check out KCARD's [website](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) as they share answers to frequently asked questions, upcoming events, grant deadlines, and more!

## Educational and Farming Support

### **Support CFA's Mattie Mack Farmer Fund\*** **(\*Previously the Kentucky Black Farmer Fund)**

The Mattie Mack Farmer Fund, organized by Community Farm Alliance (CFA) supports BIPOC farmers across Kentucky. If you would like to donate to assist with this fund, please [click here!](#) Applications for interested farmers open in Fall 2023. Those eligible to apply must satisfy all of the following:

- BIPOC-operated, family farms in Kentucky with fewer than ten employees;
- Farms who are actively part of the local food system, including produce, livestock, edible herbs, honey, maple syrup;
- Currently farming; and
- Selling products through local markets (i.e. farmers market, roadside market, Community Supported Agriculture, farm share, local restaurants, etc.)

Please contact CFA staff members Tiffany Bellfield El-Amin at [tiffany@cfaky.org](mailto:tiffany@cfaky.org) and Laurie White at [laurie@cfaky.org](mailto:laurie@cfaky.org) for assistance.

### **From UJAMAA: Market Opportunities for Culturally Meaningful Seed and Food**

The [Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance](#) (Ujamaa) is a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)-led collective seeking to increase grower and crop varietal diversity in the United States. In partnership with the University of Vermont, we are conducting a research study to examine how food and agriculture can better enhance access to culturally meaningful seeds and food. This information will support farmers and other participants in the seed value chain to expand regionally adapted, sustainably grown and less commercially available varieties of seed (and the crops that come from these seeds).

To do this, we need your help! As an essential participant in the seed value chain, you are being invited to participate in a survey entitled Market opportunities for culturally meaningful seed and food. Completing the [survey](#) will take about 20 minutes.

Participating in the survey is completely voluntary, and your responses will be kept confidential. If you do participate, you can opt into a raffle for one of 50 \$100 gift certificates.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Principal Investigator (PI) of this research study, Daniel Tobin, at [uvmseeds@uvm.edu](mailto:uvmseeds@uvm.edu), or you can reach out to Ujamaa directly at [ujamaacfa.researchsurvey@gmail.com](mailto:ujamaacfa.researchsurvey@gmail.com)

### **ATTN Boyle County Farmers and Landowners**

Through the [Gulf Hypoxia Program](#), the Boyle County Conservation District will provide cover crop and pasture seed, along with tree seedlings in Nutrient Priority Areas around Lake Herrington. Contact Kimberly Bartley for more information at [kimberly.bartley@ky.gov](mailto:kimberly.bartley@ky.gov)

### **Discussion: Prioritize perennial grain development for sustainable food production and environmental benefits**

Lee DeHaan, Lead Scientist for the Kernza Domestication Program at The Land Institute, and three other Lead Scientists at the organization collaborated with 28 global research partners working with perennial grains to provide a holistic overview of the benefits to food production and ecological health associated with perennial grains and the need for direct and immediate investments in development efforts. [Read the article here](#)

### **Fund-a-Farmer Grants**

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) awards competitive grants of up to \$3,000 to working, independent farmers located in the 50 United States and five major U.S. territories who raise beef cattle, bison, broiler chickens, dairy cows, ducks, geese, goats, laying hens, pigs, sheep and/or turkeys. Before submitting your [online application](#), please read FACT's complete set of eligibility guidelines. Applications must be submitted online by 11:59pm ET on January 15, 2024 to be considered for this round of funding. Grants will be awarded in March 2024.

<https://www.foodanimalconcernstrust.org/grants>

### **2024 Soils Planner is Now Available**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is pleased to announce that the 2024 Soils Planner is now available. This educational, calendar-style planner is free to the public while supplies last. Copies can be ordered from the [NRCS Distribution Center](#). Enter the keyword "Planner" and click "Search." This year's theme, "Back to Basics," spotlights the importance of basic soil properties and characteristics. Understanding basic soil properties and characteristics enables soil scientists to work with conservationists, engineers, local planners, land managers, farmers, and landowners to help ensure a healthy and sustainable world.

### **Recording: Indigenous Perspectives on Novel Forests and Ecosystem Change**

For hundreds of years Indigenous people have maintained relationships with forests despite massive social, environmental, and economic change. This talk will put the concepts of novel forests and ecosystem change into conversation with long-term Indigenous perspectives. The talk will provide insights into how Indigenous leadership can develop 21st century forestry that respects all species and peoples while confronting our current social, environmental, and economic challenges. [Find the recording here](#)

### **Recording: Becoming an NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP): Who, what, why, how?**

TSPs expand the number and availability of conservation technical experts capable of offering customized, one-on-one conservation advice to agricultural producers, bringing farm producers additional options to access technical services. Join guest, NRCS Maryland State Planning Specialist Michael Baker, to learn more about what's involved in TSP certification. [Watch the recording here](#)

**Your tax-deductible gift helps germinate, cultivate and activate a resilient food and farming network.**

**Join us! The organic farming network in Kentucky is growing. Together we are creating a more regenerative and organic food system.**

Donate

Become an OAK Member

Organic Association of Kentucky  
PO Box 22244, Lexington, KY 40522  
e: [info@oak-ky.org](mailto:info@oak-ky.org) | p: 1.502.219.7378

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