



Hello ##[Name | First]##,

The balmy weather in Kentucky might have folks thinking it is still September, but November is here and with it, shorter days, longer nights of the final months of 2024. It is a season of reflection, planning, hoping and giving.

If you are able, please plan to support OAK during December's [Good Giving Challenge](#). Details are below and any gift to OAK, however small or large, fuels our programming and works to build a healthier Kentucky and food and farming system.

Secondly, the OAK Team is thrilled to announce that registration is open for [OAK's 14th Annual Conference](#). Early bird pricing is available now - register today!

**Finally**, OAK's Climate Smart Project has wrapped up it's first year. Read below for an inspiring Annual Report and an opportunity to join the project during Year 2 in 2025.

Warmly,  
Robin Verson  
Membership and Communications Coordinator

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**Registration for the 14th Annual OAK Conference is Now Open!**

# 14th Annual OAK Conference Registration Now Open



Register at [oak-ky.org](https://oak-ky.org)

Join OAK for three days of learning and sharing on January 23-25, 2025, in Frankfort. The theme of #OAK2025 is *Grounded in Organics: From Soil to Market*, and topics range from agroforestry to specific crop production, organic transition to on-farm research, grazing to conservation and pollination to policy. Hear from an inspirational lineup of speakers in 24 sessions, 6 half-day workshops, an organic farmer panel on Friday and a Saturday keynote address by Jesse Buie of Ole Brook Organics. See agenda details [here](#). Register by December 13 for early-bird pricing! Scholarships are available for Friday and Saturday; apply [here](#).

Register Today



### Get out and Vote Kentucky!

The OAK Team hopes you have plans to vote today. Here is a link to the State's polling locations to assist. <https://elect.ky.gov/Voters/Pages/Polling-Locations.aspx>

Free Webinar: Conservation on Small-Scale and Urban Farms

Join this free one-hour webinar on November 12 to learn details of conservation practices and support that is available with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Urban grower Velvet Welch will share her story of working with NRCS to support her small-scale Louisville farm. Conservation and Education Coordinators from the Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) and Kentucky NRCS Urban Conservationist Nathan Lind will provide details on technical assistance and financial incentives and recommend next steps in working with OAK and NRCS for conservation support. This event is supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Register Now

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Climate-Smart and Soil Health Project

# YEAR 1



Year 1 of OAK's USDA Climate-Smart Project is wrapping up, with 50 farms participating and numerous victories to celebrate. [Click here](#) to view the Year 1 Annual Report and explore the many impacts made during the first year of this brand-new program.

Explore the Year 1 Annual Report

As part of the project, OAK is working closely with partners who focus on everything from farmer outreach to value chain and business plan development to marketing. In Year 2, OAK and project partners will focus on building and expanding durable markets to help farmers earn premiums on enrolled commodities. Applications are now being accepted for Year 2. Learn more and apply at [oak-ky.org/climate-smart-project](https://oak-ky.org/climate-smart-project), and follow along with this five-year project by signing up for the [Climate-Smart newsletter](#).

Apply Now for Year 2

## Lighten Your Mental Load with OAK's Production Program

Planning season is nearing, and OAK's Organic Production Program is a great resource for farmers who want assistance creating, dialing in or troubleshooting a crop, cover crop or system plan. This service is available to experienced or beginning farmers across certified organic and conventional crop and livestock operations. OAK's Organic Production Specialist is available via phone, virtual meeting and on-farm consultations.

OAK's Organic Production Specialist will collaboratively develop plans, help track progress and provide necessary follow-ups and referrals to help a farm reach desired production goals.

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



OAK's biggest fundraising event, the Blue Grass Community Foundation's Good Giving Challenge is just around the corner! By supporting OAK, you're investing in a resilient food and farming network that ensures access to healthy, local food for generations by building a healthier, more sustainable Kentucky. Mark your calendars for December 3-6, 2024 for special match opportunities to make your gift go further!

## Valley Spirit Farm Field Day Reflection

“If you don’t like the tools you work with every day, you’re not going to like moving your herd every day.” Practicalities like this motivate Joseph Monroe and Abbie Scott-Monroe of [Valley Spirit Farm](#) to continually improve their rotational grazing systems within the whole-farm context of a split vegetable-livestock operation, healthy work-life balance and a farming ethic built around healthy communities.



Their cattle pastures are actively managed with adaptive grazing techniques, including rotational grazing, improved forages and periods of rest or disturbance based on continual experimentation and observation of the animals and forage conditions. The Monroes shared their pastures, practices and tools with a recent Field Day audience, alongside conversations of drought management, forage selection and improvement and whole-farm ecosystems - from the birds to the dung beetles.

[Read the Event Summary and Explore Resources](#)

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## Apostles Garden Field Day Reflection

The soil, the farmer and the community are interconnected for Jackson Rolett. Paying attention to changes and needs, adapting practices and efforts based on the learnings over time and working towards healthy outcomes allows his family’s market garden to thrive - from the roots and micro-organisms belowground to the supporting ecosystems aboveground to the greater community the garden serves.



[Apostles Garden](#) is a ½-acre vegetable farm on the family’s church grounds that serves Bowling Green’s Community Farmers Market, church members, the Rolett family, a pair of part-time staff and various community needs. At this Farmer Field Day, Jackson shared his strategies for creating efficient systems of year-round vegetable production; developing and maintaining conservation practices in and around the garden; supporting work-life balance with part-time, collaborative farming and treating a labor of love as a business that is healthy and profitable.

[Read the Event Summary and Explore Resources](#)

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## Opportunities, the Latest News & Calls to Action

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## Hurricane Relief

**From Appalachian RC&D Council:** As a hub for farm and food systems work in East Tennessee, ARC&D has established the Resilient Farmer Fund and are accepting donations that will go directly to support farmers impacted by the Helene storm damage and flooding. They are working to solicit donations from a number of foundations, businesses and individuals with a goal to raise at least \$100,000 for immediate relief needs. The fund will help farmers and food producers survive in the face of existing storm damages and position themselves to thrive and grow more resilient in their farming operations in the face of potential future extreme storm events. Donate [here](#)

**From TN Local Food:** TN Local Food's Farmer Relief Fund is open and accepting applications from TN farmers who incurred damage. Donate [here](#)

**From RAFI:** Want to help farmers affected by climate disaster hurricanes Helene and Milton? Contribute to RAFI's Hurricane Farmer Relief Fund to provide critical, on-the-ground assistance. 100% of donation goes directly into farmer hands. >>> Find out more [HERE](#)

**From VA Cooperative Extension:** Donations for Farmers Affected by Helene in Virginia - Southwest Virginia has had significant damages for farmers with some farmers who have had catastrophic damages, especially along the New River and Holston River. If you are interested in donating specific supplies such as hay, fencing, etc., please fill out the [form](#) to let their staff know of any materials or services that you are willing to donate. Extension agents are working to assess farmer needs and the availability of donations.

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## Urban Agriculture Courses Available Free Online

From NCAT: The Cornell Small Farms Program's Urban Ag project announced that [four new online courses](#) are available on the promise of urban agriculture. The courses for commercial urban agriculturists, city planners, and policymakers are Deciding Where to Farm in the City, Urban Farm Planning and Management, Urban Farming by Community Nonprofits, and Urban Agriculture Skills for Planners. Access to these courses is free until January 31, 2025, thanks to an introductory enrollment offer.

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## Educational & Farming Support

### In-person Events Throughout the Region

#### Heritage Food Festival

November 8-10, 2024

Terrapin Hill Farm in Harrodsburg, KY

Join the 2nd annual Heritage Food Festival. Workshops, community, music, good food, and a long weekend camping/glamping/RVing/or staying at a nearby hotel with other folks on the journey to health. Day passes and work trade tickets also available.

Register at <http://heritagefoodfest.org>

## Kentucky Farm to School Summit

December 3 - 4, 2024

Hardin County Extension Office / Elizabethtown, KY

This gathering is for stakeholders across sectors who are interested in or working on farm to school activities across Kentucky. Those activities may be centered in the cafeteria, on the farm or in the classroom. Sessions at the summit will encompass all aspects of farm to school. The morning's activities will break out into sectors for sessions specific to farmers, school food professionals and classroom educators. The afternoon's activities will be a series of cross-sector roundtable discussions, with an emphasis on problem solving related to some of the challenges in farm to school. All day long, the Getting Started Track will offer sessions for those who are exploring interests in farm to school and/or are just getting started. The day will conclude with time for teams of partners to get together to compare notes from the day and identify any action planning ideas for their school or district.

[https://whova.com/portal/registration/kftss\\_202409/](https://whova.com/portal/registration/kftss_202409/)

## 2025 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference

January 6-7, 2025 with pre-conference events on Sunday, Jan. 5

at the Marriott Lexington Griffin Gate Lexington, KY.

This premier, state-wide event annually brings together approximately 600 growers, researchers, and technical support providers. The conference is devoted to fruit, vegetable, and cut flower production, handling, harvesting, marketing, storage, and related topics.

Registration and more information is here: <https://kyhortcouncil.org/kentucky-fruit-and-vegetable-conference/> Beginning Farmer Scholarships Available!

For more information about the conference, registration, or scholarships, email [dakota@kyhortcouncil.org](mailto:dakota@kyhortcouncil.org).

## Third Thursday

Don't forget, the monthly Third Thursday workshops can be viewed in-person at the [Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm](#) or streamed live at [www.youtube.com/kysuag/live](http://www.youtube.com/kysuag/live).

## Virtual Events

### Farmer Work Groups - Organic Farmers Association

Join OFA to discuss and workshop ideas for working with NRCS on organic farm projects. Register for one or all the workgroup sessions: <https://organicfarmersassociation.org/workgroups/>

### Appalachian Sustainable Development's "Ask an Agroforester" Webinar Series

Wed, Nov 13, 12pm - Dec 13, 1:30pm EST

Come together for a deep dive into detailed information about specific Agroforestry topics. Host Emilie Tweardy stewards deep conversations on emerging topics and perennial favorites. Bring your questions. These events are online only. Webinar links will be emailed to registrants the week before the event, with reminders the day before. Registration for each webinar closes at 10AM the previous day. All webinars will be recorded and posted to ASD's Youtube channel for your viewing convenience.

<https://events.humanitix.com/ask-an-agroforester-fall-24-webinar-series-free>

**FACT** has weekly, relevant free webinars.

Check out the [full schedule here](#).

**Rodale Institute** weekly, relevant free webinars.

Check out the [full schedule here](#).

## OFRF 2025 Farmer-Led Trial Applications Open

Are you an organic or transitioning farmer or rancher who wants to test out a new agricultural practice on your farm?

OFRF's Farmer-Led Trials program provides farmers with funding and technical assistance to investigate and learn about solutions to their most pressing production challenges. Applications for the 2025 season open Oct 14th – Dec 1st.

Organic farming and ranching takes dedication, financial investment, and a great deal of trial and error to adapt to a growing array of pest, disease, and soil health challenges. In order to address the challenges certified organic and transitioning-to-organic producers face, OFRF's FLT program will provide support for on-farm learning trials aimed at testing new practices, inputs, varieties, or animal breeds that can improve profitability and environmental sustainability, leading to more resilient organic farms and ranches.

Visit <https://ofrf.org/research/farmer-led-research-trials/> to learn more about the program.

## Small Farms, Big Community" Regional Conference Scholarship

Save the dates for the inaugural [SOWTH](#), a regional "small farms, big community" conference hosted by Georgia Organics! Taking place February 4-6, 2025, at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, this three-day gathering will feature several distinct educational tracks, a distinguished keynote speaker, farm tours, and over 1,000 farmers and leaders committed to sowing a strong sustainable agricultural and local food movement across our Southern region and beyond. SOWTH Scholarship Applications are open through Nov. 13, 2024.

<https://georgiaorganics.wufoo.com/forms/sowth-scholarship-application/>

## <https://www.appalachiarfbc.org/business-builder-subawards> Organic Certification Cost Share

**Program (OCCSP)** is available for operations submitting applications or renewing certification. OCCSP provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the [National Organic Program](#) (NOP). Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid during the program year, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope. The deadline to apply is October 31, 2024. Some certifiers process cost share requests through the certification application, others do not. If your certifier does not process certification cost share then you can apply for cost share through your local USDA Farm Services Agency office. Learn more [here](#), and contact your certifier or [local FSA office](#) for details.

## USDA Commits Greater Conservation Assistance for Producers Transitioning to Organic Production

On April 10, 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced details about its \$75 million investment in conservation assistance for producers transitioning to organic production. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is dedicating financial and technical assistance to a new organic management standard and partnering with new organic technical experts to increase staff capacity and expertise. NRCS will dedicate \$70 million to assist producers with a new organic management standard under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program is for farmers who are beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification. OAK is in conversation with NRCS Kentucky and will work to communicate with farmers about the opportunity to apply for this new Organic Management Practice when it is available. Stay tuned for more info in upcoming e-newsletters and a webinar this fall! Click here to access a factsheet on certified organic production created by NRCS-Kentucky

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lomjSqOY20mOYKQWrLXblSef9e7HPcZT/view>



### **\$1 Billion Available to Help Farmers Invest in Renewable Energy**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is accepting applications starting on April 1 for \$1 billion in grants to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses invest in renewable energy systems and make energy-efficiency improvements. USDA is making the \$1 billion in grants available under the [Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#), with funding from President Biden's landmark Inflation Reduction Act, the nation's largest-ever investment in combating the climate crisis. For additional information on application deadlines and submission details, see page 19239 of the March 31 [Federal Register](#).

### **Silvopasture and Forest Farming Support / Funds Available**

The Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program is focused on implementing silvopastures and forest farming practices through direct support payments and will assist producers in designing appropriate projects using technical assistance and science-based planning strategies. The ultimate goal of the effort is to increase ecosystem sustainability and diversity by scaling up agroforestry practices. The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farming Coalition (ABFFC) project will provide up to \$1500/acre for silvopasture implementation and up to \$1000/quarter acre for forest farming implementation depending on project scale and scope. To enhance shared learning, producers who receive support will share successes and lessons-learned with their peers and other interested stakeholders. Minority, female, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers are highly encouraged to apply.

<https://www.appalachianforestfarmers.org/emef>

### **Slow Food Bluegrass Garden Grant**

**Deadline:** ongoing

**Link:** <http://www.slowfoodbluegrass.org/gardens>

Slow Food Bluegrass micro-grants support groups in Kentuckiana who foster education about and access to good, clean, fair food. Special priority is given to limited resource communities and to projects that demonstrate a strong buy-in from participants. Grants range from \$500 - \$1,000 and may be awarded throughout the year. If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach us at [slowfoodbluegrass@gmail.com](mailto:slowfoodbluegrass@gmail.com).

### **KSU Small Scale Farm Grant**

**Deadline:** The 1st day of every other month

**Funding Amount:** Up to \$5,000 for farmers, \$15,000 for groups benefiting multiple farmers

**Eligible Entities:** Kentucky farmers and Kentucky agriculture groups including farmers markets

**Link:** <https://www.kysu.edu/academics/college-acs/school-of-ace/co-op/small-scale-farm-grant-program.php>

**Overview:** The KSU Small Scale Farm Grant is designed with the small operation farmer in mind. This grant application is relatively simple to complete and the funds can be used to purchase needed equipment related to the proposed project. To qualify, applicants must be producing a value-added product, be an organic farmer, and/or be an aquatic farmer. Farmers markets are often eligible. Previously approved projects have included canning equipment, a walk-in cooler, a water line to a hoop house, a root cellar, a cool-bot for vegetables, and a trailer for keeping meat cool and recently added farmer education assistance with a maximum of \$500.

### **Kentucky Proud Promotional Grant**

**Deadline:** On-going

**Funding Amount:** Up to 10% annual gross farm income, max at \$8,000 per year; \$1 for \$1 match

**Eligible Entities:** Kentucky farmers and agribusinesses

**Link:** <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/grants.html>

**Overview:** The Kentucky Proud Promotional Grant is a cost share program to help Kentucky farmers and agribusinesses pay for advertising and marketing expenses. The award amount is based on 10% of direct farm impact; for a farmer it would be 10% of their total farm gross sales. The applicant must be a registered member of Kentucky Proud to apply and use the Kentucky Proud logo/brand in marketing

efforts paid for with program funds. Examples of fundable items include TV ads, radio ads, web expenses, hats, t-shirts, demos, sampling, labels, packaging, tradeshow, UPC, and bar codes. This is a great program that helps promote our local farms!

### **ON-Farm Energy Efficiency Incentives Program**

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year round

**Funding Amounts:** 50% cost share - up to a \$10,000 incentive, plus \$150 for an approved third party energy audit

**Eligible Entities:** Kentucky farmers with a gross farm income of at least \$25,000

**Find out more here:** <https://mtassociation.org/energy/funding-farm-energy-projects/>

**Overview:** The Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund offers an On-Farm Energy Efficiency Program to help Kentucky farmers with energy projects. These cost share funds are available to increase on farm energy efficiency and to support renewable fuel production projects. The applicant is required to have a third party energy audit completed. This program can be combined with the USDA-NRCS Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to get up to 75% of a total project cost covered.

Many thanks to [KCARD](#) for promoting many of these grant opportunities. Did you know KCARD can also answer questions about funding programs and help you prepare an application? [resources](#)

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

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