



OAK Field Notes - May 2025



Climate-Smart Project Update

In mid-April, OAK received an update that the USDA had cancelled the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities (PCSC) Program and terminated OAK's signed agreement, which was slated to bring \$4.7 million to Kentucky. The funds allocated for PCSC will be redirected to a new initiative called Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP). USDA invited many PCSC projects, including OAK's, to revise their proposals to align with new "farmers first" priorities of the AMP program.

OAK always endeavors to put farmers first and shape programming around farmer-identified needs. Farmers who participated in OAK's climate-smart project touted the benefits of in-depth and on-farm technical assistance and the monetary incentives for adopting climate-smart conservation practices. OAK hopes to continue offering these meaningful services to farmers through AMP or other programs.

In the meantime, please join us in celebrating the significant impacts OAK's project has made across Kentucky.

[Check out this Impact Report](#)

[Meet The Farmer: Zach Selby](#)



Zach Selby knows good food. Attending cooking school during the day and working as a professional chef at night for many years, Zach immersed himself in the art of cooking good food. Working as a chef in Kentucky and Washington, Zach was inspired by farmers, anglers and foragers selling their products directly to restaurants: “Farmers would bring their fresh goods, which were worlds above what we’d get from the daily delivery truck.” Zach experimented with growing herbs and vegetables in his Lexington backyard for culinary and family use. After several years expanding his “expensive backyard hobby,” he realized he loved growing good food and wanted more. In 2020, Zach expanded his gardens on a friend’s farmland outside Lexington, and by 2022, Zach’s full-time market gardening career had begun! OAK is delighted to highlight Zach’s farming journey in preparation for a Farmer Field Day at DreamTime Market Gardens on June 10, 2025. Learn more below.

[Get to Know Zach Selby](#)



OAK goes to Italy: Advancing True Cost Accounting at the Global Summit

OAK’s Executive Director, Brooke Gentile, recently took the international stage at the [True Cost Accounting Global Summit](#) in Rome, Italy. Hosted by the [True Cost Accounting Accelerator](#) at the [Food and](#)

[Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), the summit brought together over 150 changemakers including investors, researchers, farmers, economists and policy advocates, all united by one goal and working to transform our food systems through scaling implementation of true cost accounting (TCA).

Brooke joined in conversation with Janet Maro of [Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania](#) to share firsthand insights on farmer engagement. Their session explored tools, the power of peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and real-world examples of tracking farm impacts through environmental, social and economic lenses. OAK's work piloting the Global Farm Metric Farm Sustainability Assessment (GFM-FSAT) Tool in Kentucky provided a powerful case study for farmer-centered innovation. Brooke connected with partners at the [Sustainable Food Trust](#), celebrating shared progress and purpose in using the [Global Farm Metric framework](#) they have created and stewarded through the years.

The summit included a memorable farm-to-table dinner at Villa Quintili and an inspiring conversation with Eric Schlosser, award winning journalist and author of *Fast Food Nation*.

Join the Conservation Conversation on May 20th



Join farmer and gardener peers in a conversation about conservation needs, resources and successes. Fleming County farmers Marietta Labbato and Perrie Williamson of Loving Farm will share stories of their on-farm conservation successes with pollinator plantings.

With NRCS Soil Conservationists and OAK staff available to share resources, this free virtual event allows Kentucky growers and farmers to voice inquiries and curiosities and hear from others' experiences for farmer-to-farmer support.

[Register here.](#)

Join the OAK Field Day at DreamTime Market Gardens on June 10

OAK is delighted to partner with DreamTime Market Gardens to share the infrastructure and production systems of this organic Fayette County farm. Join us for the **June 10** Field Day, *First Five Years of an Organic Market Garden*, to:

- Tour DreamTime's fields, high tunnels, pack shed and greenhouse
- Hear about Zach's crop production planning and processes
- View demonstrations of seeding equipment and cultural practices
- Hear Zach's inside perspective on working with restaurants and chefs
- Gain insight into the challenges of living off-farm and farming with limited water access



[Learn More and Register Today!](#)

Resources from OAK's Organic Transition Team



OAK's Organic Transition Team is here to support you throughout the process of certification. One of the first steps is to explore organic certifiers in your area.

There are several USDA-accredited organic certifiers operating in Kentucky. When choosing a certifier, OAK offers a detailed resource comparing the offerings of different organic certifiers in Kentucky, see ["How to Choose an Organic Certifier"](#) and get started.

As a partner on the USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) since its launch in 2022, OAK is excited to share the [2024 TOPP Impact Report](#).

Reflections from Seedleaf's Headwater Farm Field Day

In 2017, Lexington nonprofit [Seedleaf](#) leased two acres in Fayette County for an urban farm, creating opportunities for growers to produce nutritious food for the community without the barrier of land cost. In 2023, Seedleaf acquired 30-acre Headwater Farm to expand its community education and provide land access to Seedleaf Market Garden Program participants and local refugee farming groups.

Dozens of local growers, farmers and allies gathered for a recent Field Day at Headwater Farm to learn about Seedleaf's community approach to food access, education and conservation.

Read OAK's [event summary](#) to learn more.



Latest News

OAK 2025 Recordings and OAK 2026 Save the Date

OAK 2025 recordings from January's conference are now publicly available! [View the recordings on OAK's website](#). Get inspired for the season with farmer-focused content ranging from agroforestry to row covers to cattle grazing, and SAVE THE DATE: the 15th Annual OAK Conference will be January 30-31, 2026, in Frankfort, KY. Team OAK looks forward to gathering again at Kentucky State University's Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm. Be on the lookout for the 2026 call for proposals in June 2025.

[OAK's Classifieds Page](#) is Bursting with Opportunities

There are new opportunities published on OAK's Classifieds page, check them out!

If you are a current OAK Member and you have a job to post, hay for sale or a piece of farm equipment that needs a new home, let us know. Any and all of these can be posted on OAK's Classifieds Page.

Spring is a Great Time to Get Ahead of Crop Diseases

For organic and conventional farmers alike, the strongest tools available for disease prevention and management are growing resistant cultivars and practicing good sanitation. UK's Plant Pathology Extension team regularly publishes [\(organic-relevant\) resources](#) that can help growers set up systems for proactive disease management, from [crop planning](#) to [disease identification](#) to [treatment](#). Commercial producers interested in developing a disease management plan should reach out to their county extension agent or OAK's Organic Production Specialist at sarah@oak-ky.org for assistance.

Take Kentucky State University's Organic and Conventional Farmer Survey

The Organic and Conventional Farmer survey will support KSU's cooperative extension services to understand the challenges, research needs and insights to improve organic farming in Kentucky. We want to hear from farmers! <https://forms.office.com/r/SjaDwuBeH3?origin=lprLink>

Education & Funding Support

In-Person Events Throughout the Region

NRCS Local Work Group Meeting for Farmers in Bourbon, Clark, Fayette and Jessamine Counties

May 13, 10 am - 12 pm ET

Bluegrass Livestock Yards, Lexington, KY

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is hosting a Local Work Group meeting for local farmers and organizations to discuss NRCS personnel issues and projects in the Shelbyville work unit. The discussion will feature topics like staffing changes, EQIP & CSP funding, easement programs and more.

Biochar Workshop at Black Roots Farm, Winchester, KY

Friday, May 30th, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

We invite OAK staff to attend or to set up a table in our tent area to share resources and connect with attending farmers and conservation partners. [Find out more here.](#)

Virtual Events

Starting a Seed Business Webinar with Trouvaille Farm

May 6, 6:30 - 8 pm ET

Join seed saver Lindsay Klaunig at Rural Action's virtual webinar to learn the ins and outs of starting & marketing a seed saving enterprise. [Learn more and register online.](#)

Webinar: Markets ROI of Organic Transition for Grain Farmers

May 7, 2025 from 9:30-10:30 am ET

Are you considering the transition to organic farming for your grain farm and or interested in improving the return on investment for your organic farm through markets? Join us for an insightful virtual webinar designed to help you understand the economic potential of organic markets and equip you with the tools to evaluate your own transition. [Register Here](#) FSMA PSA Grower Training

May 15, 2025, 8:00 am - 5 pm ET (Zoom)

For fruit and vegetable growers and others interested in learning about produce safety, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), co-management and the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. The trainers will spend approximately seven hours of instruction time to cover the content contained in these seven modules: Introduction to Produce Safety; Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training; Soil Amendments; Wildlife, Domestic Animals, and Land Use; Agricultural Water; Postharvest Handling and Sanitation; and How to Develop a Farm Food Safety Plan. [Register online](#) and [email Paul Priyesh](#) for more information.

Climate Resilient Farming Strategies: Virtual 3D Skillshare Series

May 27, 4 - 5:30 pm ET

The Soul Fire Farm 3D series is a multidimensional workshop series designed for B.I.P.O.C. (Black, Indigenous, & People of Color) to deepen skills in specific farming and land stewardship practices in a culturally relevant, supportive, and joyful environment. [Learn more and register for the virtual event.](#)

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