



## Register Today for OAK Conference - Prices Increase on December 16!

Join us for OAK's 13th Annual Farming Conference: *Advancing Organics in Kentucky: Adopting Practices, Increasing Resilience and Strengthening Systems*, January 25-27! 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.

### Pre-Conference Workshops Offer Deeper Learning on January 25

Don't miss the opportunity to immerse yourself in a half-day pre-conference workshop with experienced farmers and content experts, on January 25, 2024.

#### MORNING WORKSHOPS

**Introduction to Seed Growing in the Southeast** - Chris Smith

**Five Steps to Your Regenerative Resilience Plan: A Workshop for Farmers** - Laura Lengnick

**No-Till Cover Cropping Strategies on a Small to Medium Scale** - Jesse Frost and Susana Lein, with Joel Dufour, Shawn Lucas

#### AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

**Regenerative Grazing Ecosystem Function and the Tool of Livestock** - J. Dylan Kennedy, with Adam Jones, Mike Wilson, Annie Woods

**The Science and Practice of Off-Season Organic Production** - Tony Silvernail with Joel Dufour, Krista Jacobsen, Nathan Lind, Shawn Lucas

**Want to Grow Fruit? Small Fruits for Kentucky** - Blake Cothron

**Raising Goats in Kentucky** - Von Barnes, Emily Clement, Fatima Jackson, Holly Robinson, McKinley Stonewall

[View the Agenda here](#)

*Organic Association of Kentucky*

# ANNUAL FARMING CONFERENCE



*Advancing Organics In Kentucky:  
Reserve Your Hotel Room for Conference Today!*

*Adopting Practices, Increasing Resilience and Strengthening Systems*  
OAK has reserved two hotel blocks for conference-goers. One block expires on December 27th and the other on December 29th. Read about the hotel accommodations on OAK's website and book a room soon!

Book Your Hotel Room

## 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 is Hiring for Conservation, Climate and Soil Health Positions!

The Organic Association of Kentucky seeks candidates to serve in four new positions. Three of these positions are full-time and will be working on OAK's new Climate-Smart Project. One position is part-time and will expand OAK's outreach around USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. Anyone who is interested in learning more about these roles is encouraged to visit the [OAK Careers](#) web page and **apply by December 15, 2023 for full consideration - positions will remain open until filled.**

### Current Job Openings at OAK:

- **Climate and Conservation Project Manager** - provides leadership and strategic management for the implementation of OAK's five-year Climate-Smart Project to increase the adoption of conservation practices on Kentucky farms, collect farm-level data on greenhouse gas emission reductions and soil carbon, develop markets for climate-verified products and collaborate with partners and enrolled farmers.

- **Soil Health and Conservation Specialist** - delivers on-farm technical assistance to farmers enrolled in OAK's Climate-Smart Project and develops management plans based on NRCS practice standards to improve soil health.
- **Soil Health and Conservation Specialist** - delivers on-farm technical assistance to farmers enrolled in OAK's Climate-Smart Project and develops management plans based on NRCS practice standards to improve soil health. Yes, OAK is hiring for two of these positions.
- **Conservation Outreach Coordinator** - develops educational and outreach programming and communications to engage farmers in conservation practices and NRCS programs, with a particular focus on small and urban farming operations.

A hiring banner for the Organic Association of Kentucky. The background is dark blue with a light blue abstract shape on the left. The text is white and blue. At the bottom left is a white megaphone icon on a blue circular background.

ORGANIC ASSOCIATION OF KENTUCKY

# HIRING

## OPEN POSITIONS

Climate and Conservation Project Manager  
Soil Health and Conservation Specialist  
Soil Health and Conservation Specialist  
Conservation Outreach Coordinator

**APPLY NOW**

Learn more at [oak-ky.org/careers](https://oak-ky.org/careers)

[View Job Openings and Apply Here](#)

## OAK Provides Organic Production Assistance to Farmers

OAK now offers dedicated organic technical assistance program for Kentucky farmers who are currently using or interested in using organic practices. OAK's Organic Production Specialist, Sarah Geurkink, is available to respond to production-related inquiries and meets with farmers one-on-one

via phone, virtual meetings and on-farm consultations. This service is for commercial farms and market gardens that are currently or are planning to sell their products. It is accessible to experienced or beginning farmers across certified organic and conventional crop and livestock operations and 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 livestock systems; livestock and grazing management and more.

[Request an Organic Production Consultation](#)

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## KYFSC Endorsed Farm Application is Open

Kentucky Farm Share Coalition (KYFSC) is a program coordinated by OAK to strengthen community supported agriculture (CSA) across the state. We are now accepting applications from Kentucky-based produce CSA farms interested in participating in employer CSA voucher programs during the 2024 season. KYFSC Endorsed Farms must offer a minimum of 20 weeks of produce CSA, have 3+ years of CSA experience and locally-source 100% of share items. Learn more about KYFSC endorsed farm membership benefits and requirements on our website and apply by December 15, 2023. KYFSC will also have two other membership options rolling out soon! If you are interested or have questions, please reach out to discuss these opportunities by contacting OAK's CSA Marketing and Outreach Manager, Katie Harvey, at [katie@oak-ky.org](mailto:katie@oak-ky.org).

[Learn More & Apply](#)

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## Become an OAK Board Member

Interested in serving as a Board Member for the Organic Association of Kentucky? OAK is looking for future board members and is requesting your nominations! As a part of our community, you or someone you know may be the right person to bring time and talent to serve in this important role.

The Board of Directors actively supports OAK and promotes its mission, vision, programs and fundraising efforts. OAK is looking for individuals who are interested in helping grow the sustainable and organic farming movement in Kentucky. We especially need Board Members who have experience in the areas of fundraising, finance, law and organic farming.

Help OAK flourish! Learn more and nominate yourself or someone else.

[Share your interest here](#)

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## Not-To-Miss Opportunities and Updates

**Good Idea Mini Grants Provide Support for Edge-of-Field Conservation Practices**

Producer and farm advisor pairs are invited to submit proposals to implement a low-cost edge-of-field conservation practice on the producer's operation and create a video or podcast about what they did and learned to be shared with other producers via [One Good Idea](#). **The application deadline is January 15th, 2024.** Awards are up to \$8,000 and support practices like vegetated buffers, prairie strips, grade control structures, water control structures, controlled drainage, grassed waterways, 2-stage ditches, drainage water management, saturated buffers, constructed or restored wetlands, phosphorous filter, bioreactor, drainage water recycling, tailwater recovery system, vegetated drainage ditch, buffered drain pipe, winter water holding. [Learn more and apply here](#).

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## USDA Improves Crop Insurance to Better Support Conservation, Climate-Smart Practices

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is updating federal crop insurance to affirm USDA conservation practices as Good Farming Practices in crop insurance. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recently released an [updated Good Farming Practices handbook](#), which is part of the agency's broader efforts to support conservation and climate-smart activities as well as to improve crop insurance for agricultural producers. [Read more here](#).

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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](#), 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](#).

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## Upcoming Partner Opportunities

### Kentucky LFPA Farmer Office Hours

**December 15, 2023, 10am ET**

**Location: Virtual via Microsoft Teams**

All Farmers Interested In Diversifying Their Agribusiness By Finding New Retail Markets Are Encouraged To Attend! Join this Kentucky Department of Agriculture call to learn about how to get involved in the [Local Food Purchase Assistance \(LFPA\) Grant Program](#) and ask any questions that



you may have. This webinar is open to all farmers or producers of local, high-quality fruits, vegetables, fish, seafood, dairy products, meats (beef, pork, lamb, etc.), poultry, eggs and more. [Click Here To Register To Attend!](#)

## Event Recap and Recordings: Kentucky State University Composting Workshop

This composting workshop was hosted at Kentucky State University on December 6-8, 2023. For more information about composting and organic agriculture at Kentucky State University, contact Dr. Shawn Lucas at [shawn.lucas@kysu.edu](mailto:shawn.lucas@kysu.edu). [View the presentations here](#).

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## Upcoming In-Person Events

### 2024 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference January 3-4, 2024

This collaborative annual event will be held in-person at the Holiday Inn Sloan Convention Center in Bowling Green, KY. The event will begin on Tuesday, January 2nd with a pre-conference Farmers Market Short Course, Farm Food Safety Plan Writing Workshop, and a Bringing the Farm to School Grower Training followed by Vegetable and Tree and Small Fruit Round Table Discussions. Conference sessions include Direct Marketing, Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Production, Organic Production, Protected Ag (High Tunnel) Production, a return of the popular Cut Flower Short Course, Beginning Farmer Basics, Marketing and Business Management, and more. Speakers include a number of growers as well as excellent out-of-state speakers. The \$50 meeting pre-registration fee or \$75 registration on site includes a year's membership in the Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association (KVGA), Kentucky State Horticultural Society (KSHS), or the Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) and entrance into all educational sessions as well as lunch on both days. View the [complete agenda here](#) and [register online here](#).

### Ohio State Organic Grains Conference January 4-5, 2023

Oregon, Ohio

Featured presenters for this year will include **Klaas Martens** of Lakeview Organic Grain in New York, **Steve Culman** from Washington State University (formerly Ohio State), **Léa Vereecke** from Rodale Institute, and **Eugene Law** from USDA-Agricultural Research Services. Attendees will learn, eat, and connect on everything from weed control to technology. [Learn more and register here](#).

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## Upcoming Virtual Events

### Webinar: NRCS & KCARD - Preparing for 2024 Funding TODAY, December 14, 2023, 7-8pm ET

NRCS and Myrisa Christy with KCARD will prepare you for conservation resources and grant funding announcements for 2024. Farmers will know what funding is available through NRCS as they prepare for the spring, including opportunities in 2024, such as grants.gov submissions, preparing a business plan for the Value-Added grant, and what a farmer needs to

know when presenting a proposal for the KDA Specialty Crop Block Grant. [Click this link to attend.](#)

### **Energy Conservation in Livestock & Poultry Operations**

**December 15, 2023, 2:30pm ET**

Livestock and poultry production are not cheap ventures. To be sustainable, producers need to conserve energy while still maintaining or improving their facilities and the lives of the animals they house. During this webinar, presenters will discuss ways to improve energy conservation with good ventilation systems and tighter barns. Additionally, we'll hear about recent research that measured overall energy usage on swine and dairy facilities and the recommendations for improvements. For more information or to register, go to [lpeic.org/upcoming-webinars/](https://pelc.org/upcoming-webinars/).

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## **Educational and Farming Support**

### **Cost-Share Assistance for On-Farm Grain Storage in Areas with Limited Commercial Capacity Due to Severe Storms**

**This application period closes December 29, 2023**

Last week USDA announced that Kentucky producers in counties affected by the December 2021 tornadoes, among other states affected by eligible disaster events, can apply for cost-share assistance through the Emergency Grain Storage Facility Assistance Program (EGSFP). An initial allocation of \$20 million in cost-share assistance is available to agricultural producers in affected counties impacted by the damage to or destruction of large commercial grain elevators as a result of natural disasters from Dec. 1, 2021, to Aug. 1, 2022.

For more information visit the [program webpage](#) or the [EGSFP fact sheet](#). USDA also has an existing [Farm Storage Facility Loan Program](#) that can immediately provide low-interest financing for eligible producers who may not be eligible for EGSFP but are in need of on-farm storage capacity.

### **Expanding Agroforestry Project Incentive Payment Program**

**Application Deadline: January 1, 2024**

The Expanding Agroforestry Project, an effort funded by the USDA's Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities initiative, is paying out over five years \$36 million to producers in direct incentive payments to transform 30,000 acres spanning 30 states into agroforestry systems, thus building a foundation for expanding agroforestry practices nationally. Farmers and ranchers wishing to establish alley cropping, silvopasture, or windbreak systems are encouraged to apply for the program, which will offer direct financial incentives and technical assistance. For more information, please visit [nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry](https://nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry).

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

**Applications must be submitted online by January 15, 2024**

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. Grants will be awarded in March 2024. [Learn more here.](#)

### **Conservation Agriculture Webinar Series**

OFRF, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has co-created a webinar series focused on soil health and organic farming. This series is facilitated by Jennifer Ryan and Lindsay Haines of NRCS and Thelma Velez and Mary Hathaway of OFRF. Each of the

webinars is led by Mark Schonbeck, OFRF's Research Associate. Topics covered in this series include soil health, nutrient management, weed management, cover crops, plant genetics, water management, conservation tillage, and climate resilience. Each webinar shares organic farming practices and research findings, and many share stories of farmer experiences in organic farming as they pertain to the topic of the specific webinar in the series. The USDA has made all the recordings available for free; [learn more and access the recordings here](#).

### **Local Craft Brewers Committed to Sourcing Local**

Kentucky Proud, Kentucky Guild of Brewers highlight beers infused with fresh-farm ingredients. Kentucky's craft breweries are taking a farm-to-glass approach to brewing by partnering with local Kentucky farms to create exceptional beers that reflect the flavors of the Bluegrass State throughout the year. For the past seven years, Kentucky Proud, the state's official agricultural marketing brand, partnered with the Kentucky Guild of Brewers and craft breweries across the commonwealth to plan limited-release brews for a celebration – the Kentucky Proud Beer Series. This year, Kentucky Proud and the Kentucky Guild of Brewers are highlighting craft breweries that have developed a sustained commitment to sourcing local year-round. [Learn more here](#).

### **Adapting and Expanding High Tunnel Organic Vegetable Production**

This webinar by Dr. Xin Zhao of the University of Florida took place on December 7, 2023, and was organized by eOrganic and the Organic Farming Research Foundation, with funding from NIFA OREI.

Commonly used for season extension and the production of high-value crops, cost-effective high tunnel protected culture systems are increasingly recognized by organic growers for their many benefits to help overcome site-specific challenges. This webinar discussed 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. [Learn more and watch recording here](#).

### **USDA Launches Nutrition Hub to Combat Diet-Related Diseases in Underserved Communities**

From Morning Ag Clips: USDA's new Nutrition Hub, informed by community conversations, will be an engine for providing science-based, nutrition-related information at the community level, particularly in underserved communities disproportionately impacted by diet-related chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. Future hubs will concentrate their efforts on additional high-need communities. USDA is following the successful Climate Hubs model that reaches more than 20,000 people yearly. This regional hub network links USDA research and programs to deliver timely, tailored, and authoritative information and decision-making tools. [Read more here](#).

### **The Best Way To Restore Ecosystems Is To Listen To Indigenous Peoples**

From Grist: Indigenous food systems and traditional land management techniques are the best options for tackling ecological restoration. However, outdated scientific models and conservative views on environmentalism have led many researchers to overlook and discount traditional ecological knowledge held by Indigenous peoples. That's according to a [new study in Frontiers](#). [Read the Grist article here](#).



### Developing Organic Strawberry Production in the Midwest

This researcher spotlight features Dr. Amaya Atucha at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and their work on day-neutral strawberry production. This blogpost includes a short video from Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)'s interview with Dr. Atucha, outlining how federal support through the Organic Transitions Program (USDA/NIFA) allowed her career to expand into organic agriculture. [Read more here.](#)

### New Grower Resource: 2023 Fruit IPM Webinar Video Series

Dr. Nicole Gauthier, UK's Plant Pathology Extension Specialist, has released three new videos related to fruit and vegetable diseases.

- Strawberry Leaf Diseases
- Choanephora Fruit Rot of Cucurbits
- Cane Blight of Brambles

Find a summary of Dr. Gauthier's presentation, video run time, and video links [here](#).

### From UK Entomology: 2023 Fruit IPM Webinar Video Series

The 2023 Fruit Integrated Pest Management (IPM) webinar series was conducted during the summer of 2023. Sessions from these webinars are now available online. These videos provide information for growers of all experience levels. [Find them 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

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