



Hello ##[Name | First]##,

With the unfurling of this season of gratitude we thank the region's farmers who work hard every day to nourish communities and local supporters who buy, eat and gather around local foods. In this season of giving and gifting, the OAK staff looks to you for generosity. **Today starts the [Good Giving Challenge](#), we hope you will consider a gift to OAK.** By supporting OAK, you will invest in a resilient food and farming network. Visit [OAK's GGC profile](#) to make your gift and stay tuned on our social media for match opportunities!

Give yourself the gift of inspiration this winter. The new year is a season for learning and community connection! Have you registered for the 14th Annual **OAK Conference in Frankfort on January 23-25, 2025**? Read on and [register today](#). There is early bird pricing until December 13th AND OAK members receive a discount, so don't delay.

In partnership with the KY Horticulture Council, OAK is curating the organic session track at the [Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference](#) in Lexington on January 6-7, 2025. The organic track will feature practical, production-oriented sessions that provide actionable ideas to growers using organic practices and building on-farm resilience.

As you read on, remember to check out the resources at the end of this newsletter where you can find new funding opportunities and an array of virtual and in-person events.

Warmly,
Robin Verson
Membership and Communications Coordinator

YOUR GIFT
**CULTIVATES A MORE
SUSTAINABLE KENTUCKY**

The Blue Grass Community Foundation's [Good Giving Challenge](#) starts today and we need your help! The Good Giving Challenge is our biggest fundraiser of the year. If you share our vision of growing healthier communities, we ask that you consider a donation of any size. Your support will provide the tools, resources and education to farmers and consumers to create lasting change. Please visit our [Good Giving Challenge profile](#) to learn more and make your donation.

By supporting OAK, you are investing in a resilient food and farming network that ensures access to healthy, local food for generations and builds a more sustainable Kentucky. Visit [OAK's profile](#) to make your gift and stay tuned on our social media for match opportunities!

 **DONATE TODAY**
TO SUPPORT ORGANIC
AGRICULTURE IN KENTUCKY.
[Visit Our Profile!](#)

Register for OAK's 2025 Conference by December 13 for an Early-Bird Discount!

Join us for the 14th Annual OAK Conference, *Grounded in Organics: From Soil to Market*, on January 23-25, 2025. This gathering is a not-to-be-missed event featuring Kentucky and regional farmer-speakers, production deep-dives, research highlights and networking opportunities over three days of learning and growing together. All registrations include locally-sourced lunch from Kentucky farmers.

[Register Today](#)

Pre-Conference Workshops Offer Deeper Learning on January 23:

MORNING WORKSHOPS (9:30-12:30pm ET)

Agroforestry in Practice: Adding Perennials to the Farmscape - Marissa Arnoldussen, OAK; Daniel Mays, Frith Farm; Margaret Shea, Dropseed Native Plant Nursery; Ian Zeglin, Greenacres Foundation; Jesse Frost, Rough Draft Farmstead (Moderator)

Walk-Behind Tractors A to Z: History, Applications, Use and Maintenance - Joel Dufour - Earth Tools; Maggie Dungan - Salad Days Farm

Dealing with the Squeeze: Finding Profit When All Input Costs are High - Ellen Polishuk - Plant to Profit

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS (1:30-5:30pm ET)

Silvopasture in the Eastern Hardwood Forests - Brett Chedzoy, Angus Glen Farms LLC / Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County; Greg Brann, Big Spring Farm / Greg Brann Consulting; Marissa Arnoldussen, Organic Association of Kentucky (Moderator)

Storage Crop Success: Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes and Winter Squash - Jeff Poppen - Long Hungry Creek Farm

Mini-Mastermind for Experienced Growers - Ellen Polishuk - Plant to Profit; Sarah Geurkink - OAK

[Workshop Details and Conference Agenda](#)



Applications are currently being accepted for Year 2 of OAK's five-year Soil Health and Climate-Smart Farming Project. OAK's project works with farmers across Kentucky to provide incentives (\$3000 per year) for using climate-smart farming production practices. Farmers also receive \$500 per year for to complete a whole-farm sustainability assessment, which provides data that farmers can use in marketing and in decision-making about future production.

Participating farmers receive free one-on-one technical assistance and meet with OAK's Soil Health Specialists, working together to optimize the impact of climate-smart practices on the farm to improve soil health, promote environmental benefits and increase overall resilience on their farmland. Free soil and water testing is provided through the project. OAK and project partners are also working with regional buyers to develop market opportunities for the commodities grown and raised through this project to increase regional sales and access emerging markets.

[Apply Now for Year 2](#)

Apply by December 16 for the 2025 Organic Mentorship Program

OAK's Organic Transition Team has worked diligently in 2024 to connect producers transitioning to organic production with experienced organic producers who served as mentors. Mentors guided the transitioning

producers through the organic certification process and offered valuable insights into their own journeys as To grow the organic movement, farmer mentors are crucial. Experienced organic farmers are key to the success of new organic producers.



MIDWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

WWW.ORGANICTRANSITION.ORG



Sign up for Organic Mentorship today!

Mentors will receive a \$3,000 annual stipend for each mentee (up to 3).

Mentees will receive a \$500 stipend for travel & education requirements.

Mentorship Cohort Close on December 16.

Become a mentor. You will have the opportunity to guide and support producers, providing them with valuable insights, practical advice and industry best practices. All crop and livestock producers are welcome to apply!

Become a mentee. Receive free mentorship from an experienced organic producer. Work together to set goals for your farm and form a strong, supportive relationship. Connect with a wide network of organic producers across the region, starting with your mentor and cohort.

Don't miss this amazing opportunity to join the **2025 Organic Mentorship Program**.

Apply Now

Opportunities, the Latest News & Calls to Action

Attention Vegetable Growers: New Disease Resource Published

[A new publication from the University of Kentucky](#) provides excellent guidance for growers and technical assistance providers to determine possible causes behind various vegetable crop problems. The step-by-step checklist directs the user through the diagnostic process of observation and information gathering. County extension offices are also able to submit samples to the UK Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab—an invaluable *free* service to Kentucky producers. Information gathered using this guide, along with plant samples, photographs, and a completed submission form, are helpful in making a definitive diagnosis. Access the new plant pathology publication [here](#).

As always, OAK's Organic Production Specialist is available to help growers build a production plan, troubleshoot challenges, make referrals, and more. [Request an Organic Production Consultation](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking public input by December 23, 2024, on how to improve conservation practice standards to maximize climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits, as supported by peer-reviewed scientific literature. Conservation practices providing climate benefits are delivered through existing USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs popular with producers, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as well as NRCS technical assistance. The Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, and Farm Bill provide funding for these programs.

Public comments should be submitted through this [Federal Register notice](#) (or through one of the methods listed below) by December 23, 2024.

Businesses Must File New Beneficial Ownership Information by January 1, 2025

[From KCARD](#): “In 2021, Congress passed the Corporate Transparency Act, which creates a new Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) reporting requirement. The U.S. government believes this will make it more difficult for business owners to hide any unethical gains through shell companies or other opaque ownership structures.

A beneficial owner is an individual of a business who either exercises substantial control over the company or owns at least 25% of the company’s interest. You may ask yourself, what companies will be required to report BOI? According to the FinCEN, both domestic and foreign corporations and limited liability companies created by the filing of a document with the Secretary of State will be required to fill out BOI. Examples of these could include an LLC for a dairy farm, beef cattle farm, or produce farm and corporations for meat processing plants, fertilizer sales businesses, or on-farm creameries. A key item to mention is that non-profit organizations are exempt from filing a BOI report.

“

For more information on relevance to small food and farm businesses, listen to [this “My Digital Farmer” podcast](#) or reach out to KCARD at (859) 550-3972 or kcard@kcard.info.

Agroforestry Network Supports Knowledge-Sharing, Crowdsourcing

[The Agroforestry Regional Knowledge \(ARKx\) Exchange Network](#) is a peer-to-peer learning network where land managers/farmers, technical service providers, agricultural educators, business owners, non-governmental organizations and universities can generate and share knowledge with one another to help promote agroforestry throughout the United States.

Add your Agroforestry Farm Profile, Agroforestry Project, Demonstration Site, or Planting Stock Nursery for the CatalyzingAgroforestry.org website [here](#). The purpose of these profiles is to highlight local, regional and national agroforestry practices, allowing for current and potential farmers, groups and others to explore these profiles by region and by practice.

KY Master Naturalist Volunteer Program

Registration is now open and will close Dec. 8.

The Kentucky Master Naturalist Volunteer Program invites nature enthusiasts and conservation-minded individuals to apply for its 2025 spring cohort, offering a unique blend of online and hands-on learning opportunities focused on Kentucky’s natural landscapes. <https://naturalist.ca.uky.edu/about>

Educational & Farming Support

In-Person Events Throughout the Region

2024 Habitat Management Symposium

December 11-12, 2024

KSU’s Harold R Benson Research and Demonstration Farm, Frankfort, KY

Kentucky State University (KSU) has partnered with the University of Kentucky (UK), Kentucky Association for Environmental Education (KAEE), Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves (OKNP), Division of Forestry and Seiler Geospatial to conduct a 2-day symposium that will highlight natural areas practices and

demonstrations, case studies and recent conservation projects. The symposium will focus on forest and pollinator habitat, land management practices, technology and remote sensing in natural areas and wildlife management. Agenda and pesticide CEU's coming soon!

Light breakfast, lunch, coffee and registration for \$50 for both days. Proceeds generated from registration will fund a scholarship for a student planning to pursue an education in natural resources. More information on this coming at the start of the 2024 Habitat Management Symposium. [Learn more and register here.](#)

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.

2025 Ohio State Organic Grains Conference

January 9-10, 2025

Sandusky, Ohio

The 3rd annual Ohio State Organic Grains Conference will be January 9-10, 2025, at Kalahari Resorts & Conventions in Sandusky, Ohio. This event is managed by Ohio State University Extension and the OFFER program. Attendance for 2024 exceeded 240 and included farmers, suppliers, researchers, and educators from Ohio, Indiana, New York, Illinois, Michigan, and beyond. Read more about the 2024 event [here](#).

Early bird rate of \$140 lasts until December 6. Registration includes all meals during the conference and two full days of focused conference programming. [Register online](#). Attendee registration is now open. Unless you are a sponsor, please select general registration.

Practical Farm Woodland Management

January 17-19, 2024

The Berry Center Farm, Turners Station, KY

A three-day course providing landowners a practical approach to working with their woodlands. Includes pre-course connection and information gathering as well as post-course consultation. **Registration closes Monday, December 9.** Limit: 8 participants. [Learn more and register here.](#)

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. <https://sowth.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.

Virtual Events

Ask an Agroforester Webinar Series

Dec. 13, 1:30 pm ET - Yellowbud Hickory

Dec 16, 1:30 pm ET - Nut Collectives

Appalachian Sustainable Development's ["Ask an Agroforester" Webinar Series](#) is an opportunity to 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 for our regional Agroforestry heroes and have an opportunity to get real answers from real professionals.

(For those interested in Agroforestry practices, check out the [Agroforestry workshops and session at OAK's January conference.](#))

Good Idea Shop Talks is a weekly, virtual meet-up series for row crop and livestock producers to exchange ideas and problem solve together about how to be good stewards while protecting profitability. Our winter season will take place on the following Thursdays at 11:30am CT/12:30pm ET: December 12th, 2024; January 23rd, 30th, and February 6th, 2025. We meet via Zoom. The focus is on conversation and learning together as peers – there are no formal presentations from “experts”!

Here's the topic for our first Shop Talk on December 12th: How do you know your conservation practices are working, and how are you measuring progress?

Whether you are "conservation curious" or have been doing conservation practices for years, tune in to the conversation to share your ideas and learn from fellow producers!

Learn more and register here: <https://goodideafarm.org/shop-talks/>

Good Idea Shop Talks is organized by One Good Idea.

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 and other farmer working groups:

<https://organicfarmersassociation.org/workgroups/>

FACT webinars

[Food Safety Liability Basics](#), December 9 @12pmET

Rodale Institute weekly, relevant free webinars.

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

Resources & Funding for Farmers

Community-Based Garden Support Available

Approximately \$1 million in funding is available from the [People's Garden Initiative](#) through USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, in partnership with The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) 2025 Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration program. The program will fund projects that support community-based gardens promoting sustainable agriculture practices that benefit people and wildlife. Applications will be accepted until January 30, 2025.

Project must meet the People's Garden criteria:

- Join the People's Garden community by registering a garden at usda.gov/peoples-garden
- Grow the garden using sustainable practices that benefit people and wildlife
- Teach about gardening and resilient, local food systems

Priority will be given to projects that

- Educate and train local citizens, build diverse partnerships, foster local food systems and provide other socio-economic benefits
- Provide measurable ecological, educational and community benefits
- Support the conservation of fish, wildlife, and habitat, especially at-risk species including migratory birds and pollinators

For more information and instructions on how to apply, please see the [Request for Proposals](#). For more information about the People's Garden Initiative please visit [The People's Garden website](#).

Fund-a-Farmer Grant Applications

Each autumn FACT opens up another round of [Fund-A-Farmer grants](#) to support high welfare, humane, pasture-based livestock and poultry farmers. Eligible projects are awarded to farmers transitioning away from confinement, improving pastures and generally improving the well-being of their food animals.

Applications are now [OPEN](#) but keep an eye on the calendar because they close December 8, 2024. Read all about this year's Find-a-Farmer grants on the [website](#).

As funding allows, FACT also awards [scholarships](#) of up to \$400 for livestock and poultry farmers to attend educational events, including virtual events, to learn knowledge, skills and best practices related to humane animal management, business and farm finance, and/or value-added production processes. Have an event in mind? Tell them about it on your [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.

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.](#)

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[Become an OAK Member](#)

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