



OAK Field Notes - February 2026



OAK Conference 2026: Gratitude & Reflection

The OAK Team is filled with gratitude for a truly remarkable 15th annual OAK Conference. We share thanks with 326 conference attendees (who made it despite the winter weather), including 46 phenomenal speakers (32 Kentucky farmer-speakers!), 18 resource-rich trade show exhibitors, many generous volunteers, our conference hosts at Kentucky State University and the OAK Conference sponsors, funders and partners who helped make OAK2026 a success. Some OAK 2026 highlights that you've shared include "connecting with other farmers" and "hearing practical lessons from real farmers" - and we couldn't agree more!

*Had to miss the OAK Conference because of the weather? Everyone who registered for the conference will receive an email with session recordings and resources later this month.

** Attended the OAK Conference and still haven't shared your thoughts? Check your email and fill out the conference survey **by TODAY (Monday, February 9), for a chance to win free conference registration in 2027!**



Your Guide to Kentucky CSA Farms

Join us for the 7th annual Kentucky Proud CSA Week, happening on **February 16-20!** This online campaign celebrates community supported agriculture (CSA) farms across Kentucky, helping consumers discover the benefits of CSA and connect with local farmers. CSAs are unique in that they provide farms with reliable, upfront funding, while members enjoy consistent access to fresh, in-season, high-quality food. It's a win-win that strengthens the regional food system and builds lasting relationships.

CSA Week will feature over 70 CSA farms, offer a special event giveaway and provide followers with the *2026 Partner Farm Guide*. To participate, join the [CSA in Kentucky Facebook Group](#) and register for the webinar "[Member Tips for Success](#)" on **Wednesday, February 18**, from 12:00-12:30 pm ET, to learn best practices for how to succeed and thrive with your CSA share this season.

February 18 Webinar: Conservation Resources for Organic and Organically-Managed Farms

Increased pollination, greater plant diversity and improved forage are on-farm benefits that Joseph Monroe of Valley Spirit Farm has experienced through his partnership with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Webinar participants will learn from Joseph, NRCS staff and OAK's Conservation Coordinator about NRCS conservation programs and how to select the best programs to meet conservation goals on all working lands, certified organic or conventional.

Participants with prior NRCS experience and those new to NRCS alike will receive valuable and current updates. This webinar will be recorded.



Fertility Planning Insights from OAK's Production Specialist



NEWS & IDEAS FOR LOCAL VEGETABLE & FLOWER GROWERS
VOLUME 35
NUMBER 1
JANUARY 2026

Understanding macronutrients for macro impact

By Sarah Geurkink and Sam Oschwald Tilton

Dear plant and soil tenders, in the past few issues of this magazine we looked at managing the soil's micronutrients and pH. Those topics were micro. Now, our goal for deeper knowledge is macronutrients—those nutrients that plants use the most of. How could one writer possibly share some helpful theory and practical tips about nine plant nutrients, all in one article? One mortal writer is not enough. No, to do macronutrients justice two soil nerds of the first degree teamed up. We will discuss how nutrients move in the soil and the plant, common issues to watch out for, and big picture questions. Come along, won't you?

Let's start by considering soil nutrients in the context of a complex commercial farm. While macronutrients are crucial for healthy plants, they are one of several components of soil management that promote bountiful crops. The illustration below suggests that it won't serve you to need out about micronutrients (or even macronutrients) without also attending to more foundational soil issues: soil drainage/moisture/irrigation, pH, and biological activity.

Now that we've understood macronutrients as part of the bigger picture of plant health, let's recognize the diversity of mindsets on soil fertility, because not everyone will agree with how we approach this article (and that's okay). On one hand, soil fertility can be perceived through a purely chemical lens, where individual nutrients and their function are identified and singled out to make fertility management. It's like following a recipe, where you find the limiting ingredient and add it. On the other hand, soil fertility is regarded as an infinitely complex natural process that should be managed holistically, focusing on increasing organic matter, providing enough moisture, and inoculating soil with "good biology."

We have learned from growers, researchers, and advisors with various mindsets on the topic, and try to keep our feet on the ground and stay open to new perspectives and data. That being said, we've both worked with farmers who have taken a more vibes-based approach to fertility management for several years, which resulted in real nutrient-related challenges that impact crop quality, pest and disease pressure, and yield. We've also seen a vibes-based fertility approach grow great crops. In managing soils with an eye toward preventing and solving these problems, we try to acknowledge both the ecological and chemical ways of understanding soil fertility.



Healthy and beautiful crops
Macronutrients
Micronutrients
Biologically active soil
Soil pH
Drainage and soil moisture

It won't serve you to nerd out about micronutrients—or even macronutrients—without also attending to more foundational soil issues: soil drainage/moisture/irrigation, pH, and biological activity.

ing organic matter, providing enough moisture, and inoculating soil with "good biology."

We have learned from growers, researchers, and advisors with various mindsets on the topic, and try to keep our feet on the ground and stay open to new perspectives and data. That being said, we've both worked with farmers who have taken a more vibes-based approach to fertility management for several years, which resulted in real nutrient-related challenges that impact crop quality, pest and disease pressure, and yield. We've also seen a vibes-based fertility approach grow great crops. In managing soils with an eye toward preventing and solving these problems, we try to acknowledge both the ecological and chemical ways of understanding soil fertility.



Managing rodents this winter / 9
Sweet corn without chemicals / 15
Growing for weddings part four / 22

This winter—that-won't-let up—is a great time to dial in your fertility program. In January's issue of [Growing for Market Magazine](#), OAK's Production Specialist, Sarah Geurkink, teamed up with Sam Oschwald Tilton to write an article demystifying soil nutrients and organic fertilizer options. Check out "[Understanding Macronutrients for Macro Impact](#)" and let us know what you think.

Need help making a nutrient management plan? [Reach out for free production technical assistance!](#)

OAK members can subscribe to *Growing for Market* at a 30% discount! Check out the full list of [member benefits](#) and become a member today.

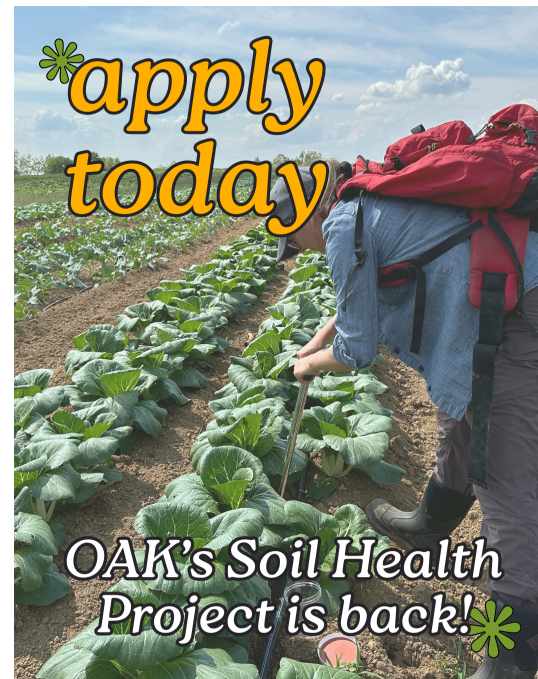
Farm Resilience Meets Marketing - Join In!

Increase your farm's resilience with the FARM Kentucky Project! Work with OAK's soil health specialists for **free technical assistance** creating a whole-farm management plan AND receive [incentive payments](#), starting at \$8,500 annually.

Farmers can benefit from this project for three years, building toward their goals and accessing project resources. Learn to market your farm's values, access premium markets and elevate the local food and farming system in Kentucky and beyond.

Enrollment is filling up - complete your farm's application today!

[Dig In & Learn More](#)



Local Listings, Farm-Friendly Finds

Do you want to work in KY agriculture?



Are you looking for a farm job? Do you need to advertise that piece of farm equipment that no longer serves you?

Explore OAK's Classifieds! This page features job openings, items for sale (equipment, livestock), OAK staff finds, a "wanted" section and more!

Active OAK Members can place any number of listings on the Classifieds page - for free (as a member benefit!). Submit an ad [here](#) and let OAK help you spread the word.

There are some interesting opportunities listed on the page right now, so click the button below to see if there's the perfect option for you!

[Check Out OAK's Classifieds](#)

In-Person Events Throughout the Region

The Kentucky Forest Health Conference

Feb. 17, 2026, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET

Lexington KY

Hosted by the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, the conference will provide a practical update on current issues and potential threats and includes speakers from around the Commonwealth. The agenda is built around the latest news on what's spreading and what's slowing down, which control options are working, and what questions still require answers.

[Learn more and register here.](#)

Community Farm Alliance AgVocacy Day at the Capitol

February 19, 2026

Frankfort, KY

From 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. WT, [Community Farm Alliance \(CFA\)](#) members from across the Bluegrass State will come together to speak directly with elected officials about the policies that impact Kentucky farms, food system and rural communities.

Kentucky Black Farmers Conference 2026

March 6-8, 2026

Clark & Madison Counties

Join the Kentucky Black Farmers Association and Community Farm Alliance at the 2026 Kentucky Black Farmers Conference for a powerful gathering centered on collective care, shared knowledge, and long-term sustainability. Guided by the theme "We Got Us: Rooted in Community. Ready for What's Next," the conference will feature hands-on workshops, farmer-led sessions, and expert panels focused on resilience, land stewardship, business continuity, succession planning, and navigating evolving systems that impact our farms and foodways. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Virtual Events

Intro to Farm Animal Welfare Certifications in 2026

February 10, 2026, 1 pm ET

In this webinar from Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT), learn the basics of farm animal welfare certification programs- what they are, the differences between existing programs, the value of certification, how to become certified and funding opportunities to help farms achieve certification. Whether a farmer is already considering certification for the farm or still in the information-gathering stage, this webinar can help!

[Register](#) | [Download ASPCA's Guide to Farm Animal Welfare Certification](#)

Organic Livestock and Grazing Management: Insights from Research

February 17, 2026, 2-3:30 pm ET

Join the Organic Farming Research Foundation and Natural Resources Conservation Service to learn about research related to organic livestock production and grazing management. Topics such as animal health, feed, grazing and pasture management, and crop-livestock integration will be discussed. The webinar will provide detailed scientific information and give insight into peer-reviewed research treatments and results. The webinar will conclude with a Q+A session, and participants will also have the opportunity to answer quiz questions and earn Certified Crop Advisor Continuing Education Credits. [Register here](#).

Farming with Soil Life - Virtual Short Course: Southeast Region

February 18, 9 am ET

Join the Xerces Society to learn about beneficial soil life! This online course will highlight the importance of macro and micro animals in soil that contribute to maintaining healthy and productive soils on working lands, the functions they perform, and guidelines for optimizing land management practices to support diverse soil fauna. [Register here](#).

Find Funding
Opportunities Here

Find Farming Resources
Here

Search OAK's Find-a-Farm
Directory

Your tax-deductible gift helps germinate,
cultivate and activate a resilient

food and farming network.

Donate

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

Renew your OAK Membership

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

Follow Along:

