

Class of 2022 Press Release

South Carolina
New and Beginning
Farmer Program

Clemson University Cooperative Extension Agribusiness

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SC New and Beginning Farmer Program Awarded Three Year USDA-NIFA Grant, Now Accepting Applications for 2022 Class

Columbia, SC – South Carolina residents looking to launch or grow their farm businesses have access to comprehensive entrepreneurial education and business training thanks in part to a \$600,000 three-year grant from the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) that will support the Clemson University South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program through 2024.

The South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program (SCNBFP) is a Clemson University Cooperative Extension-Agribusiness public education program focused on enabling new and beginning farmers to be successful, productive, and innovative members of their local agricultural community by providing them with the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary to be successful entrepreneurs, sound business managers, exemplary stewards of the natural environment, and successful marketers of the unique products they create. Most importantly, the SCNBFP seeks to develop individuals who have a sense of pride and enjoy a quality of life because of their investment and participation in South Carolina's #1 industry – agriculture.

Entering its 12th year, this is the third time the SCNBFP has been awarded a significant

USDA-NIFA grant. To date, the SCNBFP has graduated over 400 new and aspiring farmers from the program and expects to reach over 2000 farmers through its training programs over the next three years. The SCNBFP will be extending its reach through strategic collaborations with additional agricultural support organizations such as South Carolina State University 1890 Research & Extension, the Farmer Veteran Coalition of South Carolina, SC Agricultural Council, Annie's Project, and the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association.

“One in four South Carolina producers are considered new and beginning farmers with less than 10 years of experience,” says SCNBFP Director and Clemson Extension Agribusiness Agent Ben Boyles. “These emerging farmers need targeted training and technical assistance to make sure they have the skills necessary to sustain and grow their new farm businesses. Our program helps participants accelerate the development of their farm business so they can accomplish their goals faster while helping to improve access to healthy, locally-produced food for South Carolina consumers.”

The SCNBFP Class of 2022 cohort program will run from May – August 2022 and include a series of ten core agribusiness workshops focused on farm business management. Topics include business concept/plan development; financial and risk management; legal and regulatory issues; marketing strategies; soil health and pest management; and an introduction to federal, state, and local agriculture resources. While open to any qualified farmer applicant, the SCNBFP typically serves small, family farms with a focus on environmental stewardship and local food systems.

Core cohort programming will be complemented by advanced workshops developed by Clemson Extension staff throughout the state. These workshops will offer important opportunities for local peer and resource networking, as well as provide additional instruction on advanced agribusiness and production topics. All advanced workshops will run from September – November 2022 are open to members of the cohort program as well as the general public. A calendar of advanced programming workshops is posted on the SCNBFP website.

At this time all program workshops are scheduled to be hosted in person; however, “SCNBFP staff will continue to monitor the COVID-19 environment and are prepared to adjust program delivery methods as needed” says Assistant Program Director Diana Vossbrinck. Vossbrinck noted that the cohort programs in 2020 and 2021 “were delivered successfully online through Zoom out of concern for the health and well-being of participants and program staff and we are prepared to do so again as the need arises.”

Any legal resident of South Carolina, at least 18 years of age, who is just beginning to farm or who has actively farmed for less than 10 consecutive years is eligible to apply for the SCNBFP cohort program. As many as 50 applicants will be accepted for the 2022 cohort program. Additional information, including program outline, workshop schedule, fee structure, and an online application can be found at www.scnewfarmer.org. The deadline to apply is February 20, 2022.

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