

Educational Objectives:

- Beginning farmers will gain information/skills needed for successful new- farm operations.
- Participants will start new farm businesses after the completion of the program.
- Military personnel/veterans will start transitioning into farming.
- Beginning farmers including veterans will implement sustainable production and management practices.

Program Activities/Teaching Method:

Programs Implemented: Slow Your Roll Workshop Series, TSU New Farmer Academy (expanded to statewide in 3 regions) '7 Secrets of Effective Farmers' Webinar Series.

Slow Your Roll Workshop Series:

The three-year workshop series emphasize on farm management, production fundamentals and funding opportunities. Presentations, fields trips and hands-on activities are implemented. Flyers, emails and social media promotions were applied to market the program. Partnerships include USDA, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and the Farmer Veteran Coalition. Materials and recordings were made available online for participants. Topics and activities include the followings:

- *2018 Plan Before Planting Workshop Series:* small farm planning, USDA programs/ veterans-specific; livestock/forages, gardening, fruit, hemp, beekeeping, and business planning.
- *2019 Phase II: Establish Your Farm Business Workshop Series:* setting up a legal business, farm finance 101, soil, cover crops, online marketing. Participants visited farms to observe operations such as livestock, vegetable and flower farming.
- *2020 Phase III: Adopting Sustainable Practices:* diversified livestock systems, mushroom & hemp production, USDA programs veterans-specific, and farm finance 102. On-farm visits were cancelled due to Covid-19; however, agents created videos with farmers on site and presented to participants virtually.

Tennessee State University New Farmers Academy (NFA):

TN (NFA) originally started in 2014 when Finis Stribling, TSU Area Extension Specialist, saw a need for more beginning farming educational outreach, plus how to make money farming by staying informed on research-based resources. In 2018, TBFOP expanded it statewide by networking with partners. Valuable experiences and opportunities to introduce farm basics with educational workshops and hands-on training across state and Nationally. NFA is a seven-month certificate program, that meets once a month, designed for those interested in becoming agricultural entrepreneurs.

This annual seven-month certificate program is held in East, Middle and West TN since 2018. The key to success for this program is partnership of Extension Specialists & Agents from both TSU and UT, and support of local industry professionals who all helped to address the diversity of topics that come up in the series with real life applicable research-based information. Brochures, conference exhibits, emails and social media promotions were implemented to market the program.

Topics covered in all NFA series include Farm Planning, Goal Setting, Budgeting with emphasis on identifying what a realistic return on investment for the enterprises discussed might be, NRCS programs, Soil Testing and Restoration, Equipment Safety, Use and Calibration, Facilities, Fence Building, Rotational Grazing, Pasture Renovation and Management, Multi Species Grazing, Animal Handling, Small Ruminants, Beef Cattle, Poultry, Forestry and Timber Management, Vegetables, Pollinators, Hemp, Hops, Berries, Grapes, Greenhouses, Niche Crops, AgriTourism, Farmers Markets, and AgrAbility that

addresses a wide variety of disabling conditions in agriculture. Presentations and fields trips are implemented.

'7 Secrets of Effective Farmers' Webinar Series:

This seven-month webinar series focused on farm management topics including Farm Tax Filing Tips, Business Planning and Recordkeeping, Budgeting, Marketing for Value-added or Niche Products, Risk Management, Labor Management, and Succession Planning. Press release, flyer, email and social media advertisement, program website was put in place to market the program. Partnered with Center for Profitable Agriculture, UTIA, and UT Martin to promote and teach program. Materials and recordings were made available online for participants.

Results/Impact Statement

Through the BFOP, The number of new farmers with increased awareness of knowledge and competencies of various programs from 2018 - 2020 totals over 700. The number of military personnel and others completing components of the program is 85 for 2019 and a total of 281 for the program. Veterans' Outreach on Ft. Campbell, approximately 1,500 +/- veterans and active-duty military were made aware of these programs.

Slow Your Roll Workshop Series: Over three years, a total of 214 participants have reported gained and expanded overall knowledge of production techniques and farm management.

With 48 of 214 responding to the follow-up evaluation:

- 37 producers adopted GAP on farm to improve food safety/enhance marketing opportunities
- 34 increased business skills/planning/marketing
- 21 started new agricultural business
- 12 implemented business plans; attended Quickbooks, fIRM and/or other record keeping workshops
- 34 implemented a financial plan for their business
- 8 increased profitability
- 6 participants started new farm enterprises; reported total increased income at around \$50,000
- Over 192 copies of literature distributed to participants.

In 2020, Yarborough Organics reported that they expanded their farm operation from 500 square feet to 5 acres after attending the 2018 series. Additional crops such as popcorn, squash, cucumbers, and heirloom tomatoes were added to the operation. The producer increased \$30,000 income for the past two years. She also participated both USDA and TDA funding programs, and received a total of \$5,200 in cost share for adding irrigation and a high tunnel greenhouse.

Tennessee State University New Farmers Academy (NFA): Over three years, a total of 199 participants, 34% veterans, reported gained and expanded overall knowledge of production techniques and farm management; gained direct marketing knowledge/skills to increase sales revenue, reduce costs, prevent losses, increase payroll or make one-time capital purchases; increased their knowledge and skills in farm and financial planning; evaluated new farm enterprises and value-added activities; implemented partial budgeting decisions.

“Every year we’ve been growing and growing,” said Finis Stribling, TSU Coordinator-NFA. “There’s a lot of interest.” “I have this dream of owning a farm,” said one middle TN participant, a retired president and chief financial officer for an electronics company. “It’s a dream I’ve had for the last couple of years.” With the help of NFA, he plans to make that dream a reality when he moves to Tennessee. Quote from East TN participant: “I learned a lot, and the most valuable thing for me was understanding the support network out there – people’s faces and names, the grant money and all the UT and TSU publications that are available.”

Quote from West TN participant, she [Jo Anne Waterman] is my awesome friend and extension agent here in Shelby County. She was my coordinator in my TSU New Farmer Academy. I graduated from 2019. Lots of learning to be had! Worth checking out!

‘7 Secrets of Effective Farmers’ Webinar Series:

171 participated in the webinars and 172 viewed the recorded webinars. Reached a diverse audience from U.S., Brazil, India and Lebanon. 117 responded to the evaluations after each session. 112 participants (96%) said their knowledge of farm management fundamentals increased as a result of the webinars. 101 participants (86%) said they set goals to implement new or improved financial management skills in decision making. 3 responded to the final evaluation, 2 participants (67%) said they have developed a business plan or financial plan; 3 participants (100%) said they have implemented the strategies learned to evaluate business records, of these, 3(100%) increased sales revenue, increased savings or reduced costs, with a total value of \$25,000.

Method of Evaluation

- Gathered data through class attendance/observation/conversations.
- Online follow-up evaluations utilizing Question Pro.
- Post-workshop phone/email follow-up surveys are conducted to collect intermediate and long-term impacts.