

South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program

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New and Beginning
Farmer Program

2021 PROGRAM OUTLINE

CLEMSON
EXTENSION



THIS OUTLINE SHOULD BE REVIEWED COMPLETELY AND CAREFULLY BEFORE APPLYING FOR THE 2021 PROGRAM OR BEFORE MAKING FURTHER INQUIRIES. CHANCES ARE THE ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS ARE INCLUDED HERE.

The South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program (SCNBFP) is now accepting applications for the 2021 program. The SCNBFP is focused on enabling new and beginning farmers to be successful, productive, and innovative members of their local agricultural community. The program provides new and emerging farmers with the tools, knowledge and skills necessary to be successful entrepreneurs; sound business managers; exemplary stewards of SWAPA (soil, water, air, plants, and animals); 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 as a result of their investment and participation in the industry of South Carolina agriculture.

NOTE: ALTHOUGH PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN OPTIONAL PRODUCTION-RELATED WORKSHOPS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROGRAM IS FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT THE BUSINESS SIDE OF FARMING. OUR GOAL IS NOT TO TEACH FARMING PRACTICES, BUT TO EQUIP OUR PARTICIPANTS WITH THE TOOLS NECESSARY TO DEVELOP A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS.

Program Management

The SCNBFP is administered by Clemson University Extension's Agribusiness division, with Ben Boyles serving as program director. Program supporters, advisors, and collaborators include Clemson University, Clemson University Cooperative Extension, Clemson University's Emerging Crops Program, USDA – Rural Development, South Carolina Farm Credit, the SC Department of Agriculture, USDA – Farm Service Agency, USDA – NRCS, SC Farm Bureau, AgSouth Farm Credit, ArborOne Farm Credit, AgFirst Farm Credit, SC DHEC, Grow Food Carolina, the Catawba Farm & Food Coalition, Richland County Soil & Water Conservation District, Lowcountry Local First, SC Ag Council, SC State University, Small Business Development Centers, SC Dept. of Education, Land in Common, Mattson Consulting, MRP Associates, and many others.

Who May Apply?

Any legal resident of South Carolina, 18+ years of age, who is just beginning farming or who has actively farmed for *less than 10 consecutive years* is eligible to apply for the SCNBFP. The class is limited to 50 participants who will be selected by senior program staff through a competitive application process. Multiple individuals from the same farm enterprise may apply, but each should submit their own application which will be evaluated on its own merit. It is not necessary to have access to land or be actively farming in order to apply. Please see the “**Selection Criteria**” section below for further details.

Why Apply?

- Learn best agribusiness practices and develop a business plan.
- Network with peer farmers in your own area as well as throughout the state.
- Engage with state and federal government agencies in order to better leverage public resources and increase participation in their programs.
- Learn more about yourself and identify/refine your business goals.

Program Objectives

- Teach fundamentals of farm business management and provide exposure to more advanced topics.
- Increase participant awareness and familiarity with local, state and federal resources.
- Help beginning farmers to better understand their personal and professional goals, values, and motivations, to better “know thyself.”
- Encourage the development of thoughtful business plans, including selection of legal structure, development of land acquisition strategies, and multiple marketing strategies.
- Provide contact with willing and able advisors/mentors.
- Facilitate and encourage peer learning, networking, and support.

Program Location & Schedule

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ***the 2021 program will be conducted entirely online***, through the Zoom platform. If you do not feel you are a good candidate for remote participation, you may want to apply in 2022 when we hope to return to an in-person workshop format. However, online delivery planned for 2021 may be an ideal opportunity for those who may find travel difficult or prohibitive.

The core program runs from May 2021 through October 2021 and includes eleven (11) farm business development workshops. Topics include business concept/plan development; financial and risk management; legal and regulatory issues; marketing strategies; an introduction to federal, state, and local agriculture resources, and more.

Dates for the full-day online ‘core’ agribusiness workshops are listed below. Regional programming runs June 2021 through September 2021. Topics and dates for regional programming are not pre-determined and will be posted/announced throughout the program.

- Friday, May 7, 2021 (Welcome & Orientation)
- Friday, May 21, 2021
- Friday, June 4, 2021
- Friday, June 18, 2021
- Friday, July 9, 2021
- Friday, July 23, 2021
- Friday, August 6, 2021
- Friday, August 20, 2021
- Friday, September 10, 2021
- Friday, September 24, 2021
- Friday, October 8, 2021 (Graduation & Class Presentations)

Program Time & Location

- Core workshops listed above are all on Fridays, from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. These will all be delivered remotely, through Zoom. The all-day format will include morning & afternoon breaks, as well as a one-hour lunch break.
- Days, times, and duration of regional programming will vary. We will plan to deliver all regional programming remotely, but MAY include some outdoor, on-farm events as appropriate and safe.

Because we are still confirming guest speakers and finalizing agendas, you will not receive a calendar listing the specific topics to be covered on these dates until shortly before the program begins. The dates above, however, are confirmed, and you should check your availability carefully before applying for the program.

Additional Regional Programming

Core programming will be complemented by regional workshops developed and delivered by Clemson staff representing the SC regions of Upstate, Catawba, Midlands, PeeDee, and Lowcountry. These workshops will offer critical opportunities for local peer and resource networking, as well as provide additional instruction on production and/or additional agribusiness topics tailored for each region. There will be a minimum of fifteen (15) regional workshops offered between June and September; we will plan for online delivery of these workshops, although some on-farm training opportunities may be offered when/if it becomes safe to do so.

Participants will have access to all regional programs and are welcome to attend any or all workshops that are of interest. Regional programs run from June 2021 through October 2021. Regional programming dates will vary, and an initial schedule of topics/dates for each region will be announced at the beginning of the program and updated throughout. There are no additional

workshop fees for participants to attend these regional workshops, and SCNBFP participants may attend any regional workshop inside or outside their 'home' region. Participants will need to follow registration instructions for individual regional workshops.

(Note that regional workshops are also open to the public at a nominal per-workshop fee. If the full SCNBFP program is not a good fit for you at this time, we encourage you to attend any regional workshops that may be of interest. The schedule/registration info will be posted on our website at www.scnewfarmer.org and will be updated throughout the program year).

Attendance Policy

Core agribusiness workshop topics are selected and designed to provide learning opportunities to help participants become more successful in the development and operation of their farm business. Therefore, it is in the interest of each participant to make every attempt to attend all core sessions. However, we realize that participants might face circumstances requiring them to be absent from a particular session. No makeup sessions will be offered. ***In order to earn a Certificate of Completion***, participants are required to attend a minimum of eight (8) of the eleven (11) core workshops. In addition, each participant must participate in a minimum of three (3) regional workshops. Be aware that in order to receive credit for core workshop attendance, each participant will be asked to check in through Zoom at the start of each class, and again after lunch. Participation will be monitored throughout the day and genuine engagement is expected, including enabling audio and video, and participating in regular small group activities during class. Participants will also be expected to complete a short online assignment after each class. Assignments are not graded but are designed to help you formulate a thoughtful and compelling business plan.

Any participant who meets these requirements and achieves perfect core workshop attendance will receive a Certificate of Completion with Honors.

(Note that these certificates are recognized by certain resource providers and can have tangible value to your business for years to come. Every effort to earn a Certificate of Completion is highly encouraged).

Participant Costs

The SCNBFP Program receives some grant and/or partner funding to largely support the program, significantly helping to subsidize participant costs. (Actual program costs and value to you are \$3000+ per participant).

SCNBFP program fees are \$350 per person. Fees include all core and regional workshops, access to workshop materials, and graduation certificate to those who qualify.

Online payment option will be available; debit and credit cards will be accepted.

Full payment is due by 11:59 pm, April 4, 2021.

Application Process

Because the South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program is limited to 50 participants per year, interested parties must participate in a competitive application process. The application collects important demographic and contact information, and also consists of a number of questions designed to assess your readiness and sincere interest in the program. *Submitting an application does not guarantee acceptance.* Applications are available online only, and can be found at the SCNBFP website:

WWW.SCNEWFARMER.ORG

Applications are due by 11:59 PM, FEBRUARY 21st, 2021

Please review the application carefully and follow all instructions for submission. Applications will be reviewed, and participants selected by the SCNBFP senior staff.

Applicants will be emailed an acceptance or deferment notice the first week of March. *Those accepted will be asked to confirm their participation in the program and pay in full.* **Anyone who does not confirm as instructed will not be considered an active participant.** At that time, anyone who wishes to rescind their application and decline acceptance before the program begins may do so without penalty – you will be welcome to apply again in the future. **No refunds will be issued after APRIL 30, 2021.**

Selection Criteria

The SCNBFP staff will be primarily looking for individuals who express a passion for farming; a general vision for their enterprise; clear personal and business goals; *expectations that fit the scope of the program*; and the ability/commitment to complete the program. Questions that address these topics should be answered thoughtfully, honestly, and thoroughly.

SCNBFP staff will also look for applicants that have access to a reliable internet connection and equipment suitable for online learning; these will be critical to your successful completion of the program. Due to the remote delivery of the 2021 program, you must have reliable internet access and the ability to connect through Zoom well enough to fully participate, including enabling video (with or without virtual backgrounds) and audio. This includes equipment (computer or tablet with a webcam) with a display large enough to view presentations and class materials. In our experience, a phone-only connection (even with video) is not adequate for a full learning experience.

Not sure if you can connect to Zoom? Test your connection here: <https://zoom.us/test>

Applicants without basic computer skills are encouraged to seek at least minimal training in word processing, internet, and email use.

Incomplete applications will not be considered, so please do not leave any questions blank. If a question does not apply to you, please answer “non-applicable,” or even “not sure” so that we know you did not miss or ignore the question.

It is NOT necessary to be actively farming or to have current access to land in order to participate in the program. We do suggest however, that you have already identified farming as a strong personal/career goal, as either a commercial or legal non-profit enterprise – even at a small-scale level. The SCNBFP is probably not appropriate for individuals who simply wish to explore the *idea* of farming or wish to pursue only hobby-farming or homesteading.

Questions?

Please refer to our online FAQ sheet:

<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/newfarmer/prospective/faq.html>

For additional questions, please feel welcome to contact us!

PROGRAM QUESTIONS:

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Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.

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