

Class of 2025 Press Release

Clemson University Cooperative Extension Agribusiness

South Carolina
New and Beginning
Farmer Program

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SC New and Beginning Farmer Program accepting applications for 2025

Clemson, S.C. — With over 550 farmers who call themselves graduates, the South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program (SCNBFP) enters its 15th year of supporting the state’s No. 1 industry by giving agricultural producers the tools they need to succeed.

South Carolinians looking to launch or grow a farm business have access to comprehensive entrepreneurial education and business training thanks in part to a \$600,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) that runs through this year.

The SCNBFP is a Clemson University Cooperative Extension Agribusiness public education program focused on enabling new, beginning, and aspiring farmers to be successful, productive and innovative members of their local agricultural community.

“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,” SCNBFP Director and Clemson Extension Agribusiness Agent Ben Boyles said.

The SCNBFP works to accomplish this by providing farmers with the tools, knowledge, skills, and resource connections 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 No. 1 industry — agriculture.

Entering its 15th year, this is the third time the SCNBFP has operated under a significant USDA-NIFA grant, graduating over 550 new and aspiring farmers from the cohort program and reaching many more through additional training programs.

“One in four South Carolina producers are considered new and beginning farmers with less than 10 years of experience,” Boyles said. “These emerging farmers need targeted training and technical assistance to ensure they have the skills to sustain and grow their new farm businesses.”

The SCNBFP Class of 2025 cohort program will run from April through August and includes 9 full-day agribusiness and production workshops focused primarily 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 focusing on environmental stewardship and local food systems. In the interest of increased accessibility, all 2025 workshops will be hosted online. “There is great value in the peer-to-peer networking that occurs during in-person workshops,” Assistant Program Director Diana Vossbrinck said. “At the same time, we appreciate that the SCNBFP can be more inclusive when travel requirements are limited.” “We endeavor to find a place in the middle by incorporating a great deal of discussion and small group activities into each online workshop in order to foster camaraderie and peer networking.”

For the first time in program history, the 2025 SCNBFP will offer both ‘Audit’ and ‘Certificate’ options. Auditors will enjoy the flexibility of attending only those workshops of interest, while those seeking certification may enjoy extra program benefits such as participation in a business plan pitch contest, sponsored by SC Farm Credit.

Any legal resident of South Carolina who is at least 18 years of age, is just beginning to farm, or has actively farmed for less than 10 consecutive years is eligible to apply for the SCNBFP cohort program at either the ‘Audit’ or ‘Certification’ level.

Additional information, including program outline, workshop schedule, fee structure, and application, can be found at www.scnewfarmer.org. The deadline to apply is February 9, 2025.



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