



January 25-28, 2023

Little Rock, Arkansas

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Arkansas Grown program is partnering with Arkansas agriculture associations and organizations to host the first-ever Arkansas Grown Conference & Expo! The Arkansas Grown Conference & Expo is open to all parties interested in the Arkansas agriculture industry, the state's largest industry, and focuses on the farmers and producers who grow for our local food system.

In addition to the sessions, workshops, and a trade show, the conference includes an Arkansas wine tasting Thursday evening at the Sunset Lodge at Rusty Tractor Vineyard in Little Rock. The event will also host an equipment expo featuring River Valley Tractor's Kubota line. Friday afternoon we will take farm tours at Barnhill Orchards in Lonoke and The Nurserie in Little Rock, followed by a culinary showcase of products from Arkansas farmers and a spotlight on Arkansas craft beer at the Culinary Arts & Hospitality Management Institute at UA Pulaski Tech.





January 25-28, 2022
Little Rock, Arkansas

Schedule

WEDNESDAY

January 25, 2023

	ROCK ISLAND BALLROOM
3:00	<p>Opening Session Welcome from Secretary Wes Ward, Arkansas Department of Agriculture</p> <p>How the State Supports Our Local Food System Arkansas Department of Agriculture Mark Cutrer, <i>Forestry</i> Patrick Fisk, <i>Livestock & Poultry Division</i> Chris Colclasure, <i>Natural Resources</i> Scott Bray, <i>Plant Industries</i> Cynthia Edwards, <i>Shared Services</i> Russ Summers, <i>Laboratory Services</i> Billy Black, <i>Law Enforcement</i></p>
4:00	<p>Trade Show</p> <p>Reception in Hospitality Suite, Room 233 Hosted by Arkansas Agritourism Association</p> <p>Check in for Hotel Guests</p>
6:00	<p>Welcome Dinner “What I’ve Learned from 9,000 Years of Farming” Randy Frazier <i>Humorist, Naturalist, Storyteller, and Native Arkansan</i></p>
8:00	Trade Show



THURSDAY MORNING

January 26, 2023

Breakfast for hotel guests is in the lobby starting at 6:30 a.m.

	ROCK ISLAND BALLROOM
8:00	Business Trends from a Market Manager's Perspective Roby Brock <i>Talk Business & Politics</i>

Workshops are 45 minutes with a 15-minute break between each session unless otherwise indicated.

Time	MURRAY	JUNCTION I	JUNCTION II	TWO RIVERS
Focus	Grape Growers	Produce Safety	Strawberry Growers	Business
9:00	Considerations in Establishing or Expanding Vineyards Gill Giese <i>Arkansas State University</i>	Produce Safety Basics to be Market Ready (morning session) Amanda Philyaw Perez <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i> & Iris Crosby <i>UA at Pine Bluff, Extension</i>	Strawberry Cultivar Trials and Research Updates (1 hour on zoom) Mark Hoffman <i>North Carolina State University</i>	Protect Yourself and Your Farm Rusty Rumley <i>National Ag Law Center</i>
10:00	Using Quality Grapevine Plants for Vineyards (1 hr) Dennis Rak, <i>Double A Vineyards</i>	Practical Tips for Proper Produce Washing and Agricultural Water Regulations Amanda Philyaw Perez & Gaby Sanders <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Grower Profile: Tim Odom, <i>Holland Bottom Farms</i> <hr/> Spring Fertility Management Amanda McWhirt <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Navigating the Workforce World Dan Bremmer <i>AgWorks</i>
11:00	Managing Vineyard Floors: Soils, Cover Crops, and Weeds (1 hr) Michael Cook <i>Texas A&M</i>	Managing Wildlife on the Farm Becky McPeake <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Disease Management from Tips to Pre-Dormancy (1 hr) Bill Cline <i>North Carolina State University</i>	Resources for Business Success Angela Gardner, <i>Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center</i>



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Time	ROCK ISLAND V	ROCK ISLAND VI	ROCK ISLAND VII
Focus	Pecan Growers	Sustainable Ag	Livestock Producers
9:00	Tri-County Pecan Team Are Boots on the Ground in Arkansas Sherri Sanders <i>UA Cooperative Extension Service</i>	Arkansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Sponsored Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable and Networking Lizzy Herrera <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	State Meat Inspection Program Dan Douglas <i>Arkansas Department of Agriculture</i>
	Sanitation Practices in Pecan Jennifer Acuff <i>UA System, Department of Food Science</i>		
10:00	Tips and Reminders for Disease Management in Commercial Pecan Production Rebecca Melanson, <i>Mississippi State University</i>	Arkansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Sponsored Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable and Networking Lizzy Herrera <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Supporting our Livestock & Poultry Producers Patrick Fisk <i>Arkansas Department of Agriculture</i>
	Pecans....to prune, not to prune, how much to prune? Dr. Jackie Lee <i>UA System, Fruit Research Station</i>		
11:00	Growers Roundtable John Bruhl, Treasurer, Arkansas Pecan Growers Association	Arkansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Sponsored Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable and Networking Lizzy Herrera <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Growing Fodder When You Don't Have Pasture Ruth Pepler <i>Dogwood Hills Guest Farm</i> Grace Pepler <i>Dew Line Dairy</i>



THURSDAY AFTERNOON

January 26, 2023

Lunch will be served during this presentation.

	ROCK ISLAND BALLROOM
12:00	The Next California Project: Opportunities for Arkansas Growers Julia Kurnik <i>World Wildlife Fund</i>

Workshops are 45 minutes with a 15-minute break between each session unless otherwise indicated.

Time	MURRAY	JUNCTION I	JUNCTION II	TWO RIVERS
Focus	Grape Growers	Produce Safety	Strawberry	Business
1:00	Mechanization Options for Small to Medium Vineyards (1 hour) Justin Scheiner, <i>Texas A&M</i>	Introduction to Composting and Biological Soil Amendments of Animal Origin (BSAAO) Eric Simon <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Fungicide Spring Bloom Spray Schedule Reminders and Research Updates Aaron Cato <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Infrastructure Needs for Improved Operations Elizabeth Young, <i>Elizabeth Young Consulting</i>
2:00	Grape Cultivars and Winemaking (1 hr) Renee Threlfall <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Produce Safety Basics to be Market Ready (afternoon) Amanda Philyaw Perez <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i> Iris Crosby <i>UA at Pine Bluff, Extension</i>	Strawberry Promotion Project and Marketing Materials Lizzy Herrera <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Building a Sustainable Direct-to-Market Farm Business Natalie Ackerley <i>Barn2Door</i>
3:00	Avoiding Faults in Wine Quality (1 hr) Alicen Rouse, <i>Scott Laboratories</i>	Food Safety for Home and Commercial Food Entrepreneurs Amanda Philyaw Perez & David Hill <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Insights on the Strawberry Industry and Discussion (45 mins on zoom) Barclay Poling <i>North Carolina State University</i>	How to Write Grants Debbie Bousquet <i>Arkansas Department of Finance & Administration</i>

4:00	Reception in Hospitality Suite, Room 233 Hosted by Northwest Arkansas Food Systems Initiative
4:00	Reception in Hospitality Suite, Room 914 Homegrown By Heroes

5:30 5:45 6:00	Board buses in front of hotel for Sunset Lodge at Rusty Tractor Vineyard Equipment Expo and Arkansas Wine Tasting with Dr. Renee Threlfall <i>Research Scientist, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture</i> Sharing the Land Grant Mission Dr. Deacue Fields <i>Vice President for Agriculture, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture</i>
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Time	ROCK ISLAND V	ROCK ISLAND VI	ROCK ISLAND VII
Focus	Health	Food Security	Business Support
1:00	Managing Your Mental Health Brittney Schrick <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	DHS Programs: Purchasing Local Food from Arkansas Farmers Jim Ponzini <i>Arkansas Department of Human Services</i>	Balance Sheets, Credit Worthiness, and Other Financial Topics Emily Russell <i>Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas</i>
2:00	Growing Hope: Combating Stress in Agriculture Levi Agee Director of Production Corey Womack Producer of The Growing Season Jennifer Gibson Producer of Growing Hope: Combating Stress in Agriculture <i>Arkansas PBS</i>	Addressing Food Access in Arkansas: A Report & Recommendations from the 2022 Arkansas Governor's Food Deserts Working Group Kathy Webb <i>Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance</i>	Small Farm Efficiencies Sean Pessarar <i>The Mindful Farmer</i>
3:00	That Farm Life Mandi Barham <i>Agri-Health Network</i>	Food System Networks Andrew Carberry Aryn Blumenberg <i>The Wallace Center</i>	Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future for Arkansas Billy Van Pelt II <i>American Farmland Trust</i>

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FRIDAY MORNING

January 27, 2023

Breakfast for hotel guests is in the lobby starting at 6:30 a.m.

	ROCK ISLAND BALLROOM
8:00	Federal Support from the United States Department of Agriculture: Panel Discussion Dr. Dewayne Goldmon, Senior Advisor for Racial Equality, <i>USDA</i> Doris Washington, State Executive Director, <i>USDA Farm Service Agency</i> Michael Sullivan, <i>State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> Steve Mosher, <i>USDA Rural Development</i> Eugene Young, <i>USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service</i> Danielle Coco, <i>Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA)</i>

Workshops are 45 minutes with a 15-minute break between each session unless otherwise indicated.

Time	MURRAY	JUNCTION I	JUNCTION II	TWO RIVERS
Focus	Farmers Markets	Agritourism	Selling	Vegetables
9:00	Selling at Farmers Markets: Tips for Success Jeff Jackson <i>Arkansas Department of Health</i>	"Why the Heck Would I Want People on My Farm?" Agritourism Opportunities Panel Discussion facilitated by Ruthie Pepler <i>Dogwood Hills Guest Farm</i>	Connecting with Community—Selling Direct to Consumer Logan Duvall, <i>Me & McGee Market</i>	Sustainable Vegetable Production in Arkansas Henry English Shaun Francis <i>UA Pine Bluff</i>
	Business Resources for Your Market Angela Gardner <i>Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center</i>			Disease Management in Cucurbits Rebecca Melanson <i>Mississippi State University</i>
10:00	Andrew Schwerin, <i>Sycamore Bend Farm</i>	Culinary Lens of Agritourism Panel Discussion facilitated by Margie Raimondo <i>Urbana Farmstead</i>	Selling to Distributors Brad May, Ben E Keith Dan Spatz <i>Healthy Flavors, AR</i>	Insect Management Cucurbits Aaron Cato <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>
	Shelly Smith <i>Rogers Local Food Market</i>			Disease Management in Tomatoes Rebecca Melanson <i>Mississippi State University</i>
11:00	SNAP/EBT Equipment Grant and Technical Assistance Lisa Roach <i>MarketLink</i>	Arkansas Agritourism Association Annual Meeting	Selling to Restaurants Jack Sundell <i>The Root Café</i> Brandon Gordon: <i>Five Acre Farm</i>	Managing Insects in Tomatoes Aaron Cato <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>
	Double Up Food Bucks Arkansas Farmers Market Association Annual Meeting			Perspectives on Growing Vegetables in Southern Arkansas James Meeks, <i>Triple M Farm</i>



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Time	ROCK ISLAND V	ROCK ISLAND VI	ROCK ISLAND VII
Focus	FLORAL	BLUEBERRY	PROCUREMENT/WHOLESALE
9:00	Everlasting Floral Design and Direct to Consumer Sales Jill Forrester <i>Whitton Farms</i>	Blueberries Past, Present, and Future (1 hour) Les Dozier & Clyde Fenton <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	The Local Food Act--Selling to Institutions Erica Benoit <i>Arkansas Department of Agriculture</i> Ally Mrachek <i>University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences</i> Melanie Berman <i>Arkansas Procurement Technical Assistance Center</i>
10:00	What Flowers Will Work for Your Farm? Jill Forrester <i>Whitton Farms</i>	Fertility Management Patrick Byers <i>University of Missouri</i> <hr/> Irrigating Blueberries Ryan Neal <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Selling to Schools Erica Benoit Lindsey Cartwright <i>Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School Team</i>
11:00	Jumpstart and Extending the Season with Flowers (Forcing Bulbs) Jill Forrester <i>Whitton Farms</i>	Insects and Disease Management of Blueberries Bill Cline <i>North Carolina State University</i> <hr/> Economics of Blueberry Production: On Farm Experience from NWA Ryan Neal <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	NWA Local Food System Initiative--Programs and Vision Emily English <i>Walton Family Foundation</i> <i>NWA Food Systems Initiative</i>



FRIDAY AFTERNOON

January 27, 2023

12:00	ROCK ISLAND BALLROOM
	The Food Freedom Act—Operating a Home-Based Business in Arkansas Jeff Jackson <i>Arkansas Department of Health</i>
	The State of Rural Broadband in Arkansas-- Beyond the Three Pillars Glen Howie <i>Arkansas Economic Development Commission</i>
1:30	Board buses in front of hotel for farm tours and dinner
	Barnhill Orchards <i>Lonoke, Arkansas</i>
	The Nurserie <i>Little Rock, Arkansas</i>
ETA 7:00	Arkansas Grown Culinary Showcase Spotlight on Arkansas Craft Beer Amanda McWhirt and Amanda Philyaw Perez <i>University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i> <i>University of Arkansas Pulaski Tech</i> <i>Culinary Institute and Hospitality Management Institute</i>
9:00	Board buses for return to hotel



SATURDAY MORNING

January 28, 2023

Breakfast for hotel guests is in the lobby starting at 7:00 a.m.

Time	MURRAY	TWO RIVERS	JUNCTION I	JUNCTION II
Focus	Tree Fruits	Blackberry	Beekeeping	Infrastructure Needs
9:00	Perspectives on Growing Peaches in Arkansas Mark Morgan <i>Peach Pickin' Paradise</i>	Intro to the Basics of Blackberry Production Amanda McWhirt <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	The Benefits of Beekeeping John Martin <i>Arkansas Bees and Arkansas Department of Agriculture</i> Jacob Bates <i>Arkansas Department of Agriculture</i>	Are You Interested in Selling Wholesale? Listening Session Elizabeth Young <i>Elizabeth Young Consulting</i>
	Perspectives on Growing Apples in Arkansas Dennis McGarrah Jr. <i>Rivercrest Orchard</i>	Blackberry Pruning Reminders and Tips Erika Henderson & Jesus Arredondo-Lopez <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>		
10:00	Orchard Floor Weed Management Hannah Smith <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>	Blackberry Disease Management and Research on Fusarium Bill Cline <i>North Carolina State University</i>		Are You Interested in Selling Wholesale? Listening Session Elizabeth Young <i>Elizabeth Young Consulting</i>
11:00	Considerations in Establishing a High Density Apple Orchard Patrick Byers <i>University of Missouri, Extension</i>	Blackberry Fertility Trials: Results from Year One Amanda Lay & Amanda McWhirt <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>		
		UA Breeding Program Updates Margaret Worthington <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i>		



SATURDAY AFTERNOON

January 28, 2023

Lunch will be served during this session.

12:00	<p>The History of Yaupon Tea, America's First Cup Byron White Co-founder and CEO of Yaupon Brothers American Tea Co., Yazoo Yaupon, and Ilex Organics</p>
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Time	MURRAY	TWO RIVERS
Focus	Tree Fruits	Blackberry
1:00	<p>Protecting Pollinators in Fruit and Vegetable Production Jon Zawislak <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i></p>	<p>Arkansas Blackberry Growers Association Meeting Matt Wilson Dan Smith <i>Arkansas Blackberry Growers Association</i></p> <hr/> <p>Broad Mite and Spotted Wing Drosophila: How to manage these pests and research updates from Arkansas Aaron Cato <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i></p>
2:00	<p>Have You Considered Chestnuts or Elderberries? Patrick Byers <i>University of Missouri, Extension</i></p>	<p>Blackberry Value Added Product Activities Amanda Perez and Renee Threlfall <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i></p> <hr/> <p>Blackberry Promotion Project Lizzy Herrera <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i></p>
3:00		<p>Rotating Cross Arm Trellising: Resources and Videos Amanda McWhirt <i>UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension</i></p> <hr/> <p>Experience using Tunnels for Blackberry Production Matt Wilson <i>Ritter Farms</i></p>

4:00	<p>CONFERENCE ADJOURNED</p>
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SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

WEDNESDAY

Opening Session

Welcome from Secretary Wes Ward, Arkansas Department of Agriculture

How the State Supports Our Local Food System

Arkansas Department of Agriculture

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture includes the Forestry Division, Livestock and Poultry Division, Natural Resources Division, and Plant Industries Division. The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for Arkansans and the nation.

- Mark Cutrer, *Forestry*
- Patrick Fisk, *Livestock & Poultry Division*
- Chris Colclasure, *Natural Resources*
- Scott Bray, *Plant Industries*
- Cynthia Edwards, *Shared Services*
- Russ Summers, *Laboratory Services*
- Billy Black, *Law Enforcement*

Welcome Dinner

“What I’ve Learned from 9,000 Years of Farming”

Randy Frazier

Humorist, Naturalist, Storyteller, and Native Arkansan

Randy Frazier delivers a perfect combination of humor and insight wrapped up and delivered by a true Southern storyteller. Frazier was raised on the family farm in Arkansas County, Arkansas. But his farming roots go much further back. According to anthropologists, it was around 7,000 B.C. when people began to cultivate crops. That means agriculture has been feeding the world, (and worrying farmers), for at least 9,000 years! This is a funny, inspirational tribute to some of the most resilient, tough-minded, and adaptable people on the face of the earth, saying “Thanks” to the people and the occupation that puts food on your plate every day.



THURSDAY

Business Trends from a Market Manager's Perspective

Roby Brock, Talk Business & Politics

8:00 a.m.

Ballroom

Roby Brock, host and executive producer of Talk Business & Politics, and host of KARK 4 Capitol View, discusses business trends from the perspective of his work as manager of the Market at Chenal in west Little Rock. The Market at Chenal is a monthly market and festival that hosts local farmers and makers as well as food trucks, musicians, rescue pet adoptions, movies, and events for the kids. Brock will present global trends and the impact these trends have had on our state.

Protect Yourself and Your Farm

Rusty Rumley, The National Agricultural Law Center

9:00 a.m.

Two Rivers

This session will address strategies to minimize legal risk while operating a farm. Topics will include landowner liability, agritourism & livestock activity statutes, and other simple steps that a farm operator can take to protect their farm.

Produce Safety Basics to be Market Ready (morning)

Amanda Philyaw Perez, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Iris Cole-Crosby, Food Safety Extension Specialist, UA at Pine Bluff, Extension

9:00 a.m.

Junction I

Learn about the basics of produce safety, regulatory and market access requirements for growing, harvesting, packing, and holding produce, and upcoming opportunities for training and technical assistance. This workshop will cover an overview of the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule, the USDA GAP Auditing Program, and how both programs apply to your produce operation. Designed for farm owners or operators that have not completed Produce Safety Rule training and/or GAP Auditing.

Practical Tips for Proper Produce Washing and Agricultural Water Regulations

Amanda Philyaw Perez, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Gaby Sanders, Food Systems & Safety Program Associate, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

10:00 a.m.

Junction I

This workshop will detail and demonstrate effective produce wash water activities. We will also provide a short update on Subpart E (Agriculture Water) of the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule.



Resources for Business Success

Angela Gardner, Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center

11:00 a.m.

Two Rivers

This session provides an overview of business services provided by the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center and resources to help your market grow. Unique among Arkansas economic development organizations, Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center serves businesses from any county in Arkansas, in any industry sector, at any stage of business development. As the state's premier business assistance provider, the ASBTDC is dedicated to helping small businesses achieve success and to promoting economic development throughout the state. We are your go-to resource for help starting or growing a business in Arkansas. In this session, learn how our regional centers assist all types of for-profit businesses, from home-based to high-tech. Expand your potential, check out how we can help your business today.

Growing Fodder When You Don't Have Pasture

Ruth Pepler, Dogwood Hills Guest Farm

Grace Pepler, Dew Line Dairy

11:00 a.m.

Rock Island VII

Raising cattle on a rocky hillside was thought to be impossible. Grace had other ideas. Fodder was a viable option for her dairy cows and/or farm. Follow our journey to provide healthy, year-round nutrition as our farm grew into a micro dairy.

Managing Wildlife on the Farm

Dr. Becky McPeake, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

11:00 a.m.

Junction I

Wildlife contamination of food crops is of concern when considering produce safety. Using an integrated pest management strategy can reduce or prevent wildlife from consuming or spoiling such crops before and after harvest. Specific methods for identifying and controlling contamination by deer, rodents, birds, and other wildlife will be discussed.



The Next California Project

Julia Kurnik, World Wildlife Fund

12:00 p.m.

Ballroom

Can the Mid-Mississippi Delta be the future of fruit and vegetable farming? California dominates farming of specialty produce in the US today, growing half our vegetables and more than 2/3 of our fruits and nuts. Yet this is becoming increasingly unsustainable. Water is becoming scarcer, fires are common, and increasing temperatures are threatening some crops' ability to fruit properly. The critical task of growing our nation's food will need to adapt and shift, but without proper planning it might promote extensive land conversion, which is harmful to the environment, and ignore or worsen racial and social inequities. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has identified the Mid-Mississippi Delta and the Arkansas River Valley as a key region to help take some pressure off California while bringing to life a radically different agriculture system centered around farmers, workers, and communities.

DHS Programs: Purchasing Local Food from Arkansas Farmers

Jim Ponzini Arkansas Department of Human Services

1:00 p.m.

Rock Island VI

Overview of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program and Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program grants with updates on funding.

Balance Sheets, Credit Worthiness, and other Financial Topics

Emily Russell, Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas

1:00 p.m.

Rock Island VII

Understanding financials and financial planning for today and tomorrow in agriculture.

Introduction to Composting and Biological Soil Amendments of Animal Origin (BSAAO)

Eric Simon, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

1:00 P.M.

Junction I

A basic overview of composting: how to compost, the biology of compost, composting feedstocks and mixes, and how/why to reduce potential pathogens.



Managing Your Mental Health

Brittney Schrick, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

1:00 p.m.

Rock Island V

In this session, Dr. Brittney Schrick, assistant professor and family life specialist for the U of A System Division of Agriculture, will discuss the state of farm related stress in Arkansas, outline efforts by the Cooperative Extension system and the USDA to combat these stressors, and offer easy-to-use techniques for daily stress management.

Addressing Food Access in Arkansas: A Report & Recommendations from the 2022 Arkansas Governor's Food Deserts Working Group

Kathy Webb, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

2:00 p.m.

Rock Island VI

Kathy Webb will review recommendations, models, and highlights of what is already happening in terms of action steps.

American Farmland Trust's Farms Under Threat 2040

Billy Van Pelt, American Farmland Trust

2:00 p.m.

Rock Island V

American Farmland Trust's Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future Initiative that projects three alternative development scenarios from 2016 to 2040 — Business as Usual, Runaway Sprawl, and Better Built Cities. The report shows that development choices have a significant effect on the future of farmland and ranchland and urges Americans to embrace Better Built Cities to safeguard local farms and ranches, bolster the global food system, and improve people's daily lives. The presentation will focus on Arkansas.

Building a Sustainable Direct-to-Market Farm Business - Exceeding Buyer Expectations and Securing Recurring Cash Flow for your Farm

Natalie Ackerley, Sales Manager at Barn2Door

2:00 p.m.

Two Rivers

Barn2Door is delighted to work with 1000's of farmers in all 50 states. During this engaging conversation, you will hear from Natalie as she discusses the evolving expectations of buyers and outlines a step-by-step guide to help farmers address their needs. Attendees will learn how to grow and manage their farm businesses as Ackerley shares the tactics and tools top-performing farmers implement across the state of Arkansas. Based on real data aggregated across millions of pageviews across 1000's of farms, Ackerley will dive into tactics and insights to build and establish a resilient farm business.



Produce Safety Basics to be Market Ready (afternoon)

Amanda Philyaw Perez, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Iris Cole-Crosby, Food Safety Extension Specialist, UA at Pine Bluff, Extension

2:00 p.m.

Junction I

Learn about the basics of produce safety, regulatory and market access requirements for growing, harvesting, packing, and holding produce, and upcoming opportunities for training and technical assistance. This workshop will cover an overview of the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule, the USDA GAP Auditing Program, and how both programs apply to your produce operation. Designed for farm owners or operators that have not completed Produce Safety Rule training and/or GAP Auditing.

Growing Hope: Combating Stress in Agriculture

Levi Agee, Director of Production

Corey Womack, Producer of The Growing Season

Jennifer Gibson, Producer of Growing Hope: Combating Stress in Agriculture

Arkansas PBS

2:00 p.m.

Rock Island V

Working closely with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Arkansas PBS developed, produced, and broadcast three narrative projects throughout 2022 and 2023 addressing the growing issue of stress and mental health in agriculture. These projects include, the broadcast, panel show, *Growing Hope*, the ten-episode, yearlong podcast, *The Growing Season*, as well as three short documentaries for digital and broadcast distribution. Through this three-pronged approach, Arkansas PBS has worked hard to tell a wide variety of local, agricultural stories – and make these stories, and their lessons, available to a statewide audience. We will share just how we went about this project.

Arkansas PBS created special broadcast content focusing on mental health and stress awareness for farmers within Arkansas. In addition to a panel show discussing the topic, we also did a yearlong podcast interviewing six farmers and two short films about farmers and psychiatrists talking about the stigmas of battling stress.

The Potential for Food Systems Networks in Arkansas

Andrew Carberry, The Wallace Center

Aryn Blumenberg, The Wallace Center

3:00 p.m.

Rock Island VI

Food systems networks provide an opportunity to convene food systems personnel and those involved in agriculture processes to share resources, best practices, and technical assistance, and push forward the experiences and stories of those closest to the solutions in these areas. These networks allow participating organizations to share goals and leverage the impact for food systems throughout the state.

In addition to agriculture representing the largest industry within the state, Arkansas represents a wide variety of those involved in food and agriculture systems. The dynamic nature of these systems presents an opportunity for the creation of a state-wide food systems network in Arkansas. Many states and, specifically, our neighbors including Kentucky, Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, etc. have different models of a state-wide network such as policy-focused or value chain coordination focused.



The Wallace Center has been conducting research and interviews with several statewide networks including Georgia Organics and Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network to understand how they support food systems leaders, what they offer, and how they are managed. During this session, the Wallace team will share back findings on what they learned and host open dialogue about how these models could be applied in Arkansas. Discussion will include benefits and barriers to a statewide network, and how a food systems network could serve the state.

Food Safety for Home and Commercial Food Entrepreneurs

Amanda Philyaw Perez, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

David Hill, Food Systems & Safety Program Associate, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

3:00 p.m.

Junction I

Learn about the basics of turning a recipe into a food product, how to get training and technical assistance for food product development or recipe testing, and how a home-based food business can scale up or ensure you are producing your food safely. This workshop will cover how to get food safety testing for homemade food products or, for those interested in commercial production, how to enroll in our University of Arkansas Share Ground's Food Innovation Training, Technical Assistance, and Commercial Kitchen Program that offers support for recipe development, testing, food manufacturing permits, food liability insurance, scaling up production, and what's required to use a commercial kitchen to create a food product for local and regional markets.

Managing Farm Stress & Strain

Mandi Barham, Agri Health Network

3:00 p.m.

Rock Island V

Farming is ranked among the top 10 most stressful industries. In this session we'll talk about ways to deal with stress and strain in healthy ways. Led by Mandi Barham of Agri Health Network and editor of That Farm Life Podcast, topics will include stress management, ways to build support and community, and how to recognize signs of a mental health crisis.

FRIDAY

Selling at Farmers Markets: Tips for Success and Resources for Business Success

Jeff Jackson, R.S. Public Health Section Chief II-Standardization/Quality Assurance Officer-Retail Food Program, Arkansas Department of Health

Angela Gardner, Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center

9:00 a.m.

Murray

This session is focused on what farm and homemade products are allowed to be sold at a farmers market, where to find guidance, and the do's and don't's of labeling and testing products.

Unique among Arkansas economic development organizations, Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center serves businesses from any county in Arkansas, in any industry sector, at any stage of business development. As the state's premier business assistance provider, the ASBTDC is dedicated to helping small businesses achieve success and to promoting economic development throughout the state. We are your go-to resource for help starting or growing a business in Arkansas. In this session, learn how our regional centers assist all types of for-profit businesses, from home-based to high-tech. Expand your potential, check out how we can help your business today.



“Why the Heck Would I Want People on My Farm?”

Ruthie Pepler, Dogwood Hills Guest Farm

9:00 a.m.

Junction I

The topic is “Why the heck would I want people on my farm?” This is a question I have been asked many times. how hospitality/teaching can fit into farm life and the benefits of having people on the farm. I will talk about the different types of agritourism, from farm-stays to agritainment and how we can help farms find their niche and equip them with resources for success. Danyelle with Arkansas Tourism will speak about trends nationally and in Arkansas. Katie Beck with the Arkansas Hospitality Association will talk about the resources available to help make agritourism a safe and sustainable environment (Serve Safe, etc.).

The Local Food Act – Selling to Institutions

Erica Benoit, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Team Lead

Ally Mrachek, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Melanie Berman, Arkansas Procurement Technical Assistance Center

9:00 a.m.

Rock Island VII

Did you know that institutions spent over \$53 million on local food in Arkansas last year? The Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act (Act) was enacted to create, strengthen, and expand local farm and food economies throughout the state of Arkansas. The Act requires institutions that offer a feeding program and receive over \$25,000 in state funding to set a goal to spend at least 20% of their food budget within the state of Arkansas. Learn about the Act and how to connect with these institutions for local procurement opportunities. Erica Benoit with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture will share highlights from the 2022 Local Food Act Report. Ally Mrachek, UAMS, will share her experience working with farmers to buy local products for schools and institutions. And Melanie Berman, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, will walk you through the process for selling to state institutions. Arkansas PTAC assists businesses to sell to the government. Melanie Berman, PTAC Program Director, will speak about what is needed for businesses to sell to the government and how PTAC Counselors may assist both government entities, large businesses, and small businesses in this process.

Everlasting Floral Design and Direct to Consumer Sales

Jill Forrester, Whitton Farms

9:00 a.m.

Rock Island V

Using locally grown everlasting flowers is a solid way to extend your growing season. Jill Forrester will provide a comprehensive list of everlasting flowers that are easily grown in Arkansas. She will demonstrate a variety of ways in which to use everlastings in floral arrangements and discuss strategies on how best to attract customers.



Selling to Distributors

Brad May, Ben E Keith

Dan Spatz, Healthy Flavors AR

10:00

Junction II

Becoming Wholesale Ready: Know Thyself, Know Thy Customer-- Dan Spatz will review key considerations for selling to different wholesale channels, along with his reflections and experiences in doing so at Healthy Flavors. Our food system is changing and is being stretched in multiple ways by a myriad of challenges. Spatz will discuss leaning into such challenges, and engaging with others who also operate with purpose, passion, and persistence. Finding scalable solutions that positively impact society through the communities we live in is at the basis of this "Wholesale Ready" session.

Culinary Lens of Agritourism: How 1+1=3

Margie Raimondo

10:00

Junction I

Food is the ultimate driver of how and why people travel. Moderated by Margie Raimondo, we hear stories of how we build businesses around the table.

Panelists Christy Scott, The Filling Station, describes the business transformation by adding food; Heather Kouns, North Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau, helps businesses grow with Culinary Programs; and Lana Stovall, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, on helping businesses understand what is needed to fund a new Agritourism venture.

Selling to Schools

Erica Benoit, Arkansas Department of Agriculture Farm to School Coordinator

Lindsey Cartwright, Arkansas Department of Agriculture State Local Procurement Manager

10:00 a.m.

Rock Island VII

The Arkansas Farm to School team at the Arkansas Department of Agriculture will provide an overview of the farm to school program and how farmers and producers can start the process of selling their locally grown products to schools! This session will cover the three pillars of Farm to School, resources and support available through the Arkansas Farm to School program, and next steps for those who are interested in getting started selling to schools.



What Flowers Will Work for Your Farm?

Jill Forrester, Whitton Farms

10:00 a.m.

Rock Island V

Flower farming is gaining in popularity across the U.S., but what flowers will be suitable for your farming operation? Jill will address key areas of planning prior to beginning your flower farming venture such as working within a budget, garden design, target market, flowers that have proven profitable for her farm, and sources for seed and plant materials.

NWA Local Food System Initiative-- Programs and Vision

Emily English

11:00 a.m.

Rock Island VII

The Walton Family Foundation has worked since 2017 to improve the local food system of Northwest Arkansas at every point. Broadly speaking, the initiative seeks to put more local food on local tables, providing healthy food access to all Northwest Arkansans. The two main strategies of the work are Growing Farmers and Growing Markets. Growing Farmers seeks to support and meet farmers where they are in their farming journey, addressed by grantee projects working to improve access to education, farmland, and capital. Growing Markets seeks to bridge the gap between small farmers and wholesale markets, addressed by grantee projects supporting aggregation, distribution, and processing of local food products. This session will highlight key grantee programs underway in Northwest Arkansas and share the story and vision of the overall initiative.

Grantees:

- Heather Friedrich: Assistant Director, Center for Arkansas Farms and Food, UA Division of Agriculture
- Susan Koehler, Farmland Preservation Manager, Northwest Arkansas Land Trust
- Healthy Soils: Matt Bertucci, Assistant Professor, Sustainable Fruit and Vegetable Production, Department of Horticulture
- Arkansas Grown Grants for Northwest Arkansas Farmers pilot program: Karen Reynolds
- Community Clinic: Jazmin Rivas, Special Programs Coordinator, Community Clinic
- NWA Food Hub: Kelly Dundon, Interim Project Manager, NWA Food Hub
- Market Center of the Ozarks: Emily English, Senior Program Officer, Walton Family Foundation

Selling to Restaurants

Jack Sundell, The Root Café

Brandon Gordon, Five Acre Farm

11:00

Junction II

In this discussion about selling to local restaurants, we'll address some key points of working with chefs such as seasonality, consistency, quality, price, and communication. Best practices for selling directly to restaurants

- How restaurants are different than retail customers
- What restaurants are looking for
- How to get your foot in the door
- How to make your products stand out



Jumpstart and Extending the Season with Flowers (Forcing Bulbs)

Jill Forrester, Whitton Farms

11:00 a.m.

Rock Island V

Jill Forrester of Whitton Farms will guide you through the process of forcing bulbs for early and late season market sales. One key way to set your flower farming operation a part, is to offer ample blooms as early as February, and as late as December. Forcing bulbs such as dahlias, iris, lilies, and tulips, is a wonderful way to generate blooms and sales during months people typically believe local flowers are at rest.

The Food Freedom Act—Operating a Home-Based Food Business in Arkansas

Jeff Jackson Public Health Section Chief II- Standardization Quality Assurance Officer-Retail Food Program
Arkansas Department of Health

12:00

Ballroom

This session will provide a brief history of home-based food production in Arkansas that led up to the Food Freedom Act, the types of foods that are now allowed to be sold, foods that are still prohibited, the minimum information that is to be provided on the label, and food safety considerations when operating a home-based food business.

Arkansas Rural Broadband– Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going?

Glen Howie State Director, Arkansas Rural Connect, Arkansas Economic Development Commission

12:00

Ballroom

What is the state of broadband in Arkansas? What are the three pillars of broadband? What's next?



GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS



WES WARD

Secretary of Agriculture, State of Arkansas

Wes Ward is from the small rural town of Lake City in Northeast Arkansas and is a graduate of Riverside High School. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Business with an emphasis in Agricultural Finance from Arkansas State University. Wes has also earned a law degree (JD), a Master of Laws degree (LL.M.) in Agricultural and Food Law, and a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Arkansas.

Wes has been serving in the United States Marine Corps for over 22 years and has completed deployments and exercises in Afghanistan, Jordan, and Japan. He is currently serving in the Marine Corps Reserves as a Detachment Commander with the 1st Civil Affairs Group in Camp Pendleton, California.

Wes is serving as the 3rd Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Arkansas. Wes was appointed to the position in March 2015 by Governor Asa Hutchinson and re-appointed by Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders in January 2023. He also serves as the Second Vice President for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA).



RANDY FRAZIER

A native of Arkansas, Randy Frazier was raised on a family farm in Arkansas County. In 1974 he graduated from the State College of Arkansas with a bachelor's degree in Biology. That was followed by a 30- year Leadership / Management career in Conservation Education with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. In addition to his Park Superintendent duties, he served as a fully commissioned law enforcement officer; a Mountain Rescue Team Member; an EMT Instructor; a Hospitality Instructor; and a certified self-defense Instructor with a First-Degree Black Belt in Goju Karate. In 1988 he was a graduate of LeadAR Class 2 and in the 1990s he became a nationally recognized motivational speaker Leadership, Communication Skills, and dealing with Change.

He has been a professional member of the National Speaker's Association since 2006 and has been a featured speaker in over 40 states. As president of his own company, (Leadership Takes Courage / Frazier Communications, Inc.), he serves clients such as USDA, Farm Bureau, The National Association of Conservation Districts, Entergy, the Kellogg Foundation, Keep America Beautiful, and numerous Leadership development programs. He also works with a wide variety of professional associations and governmental agencies at both the state and federal level. In 2018 he moved part of his message "from the stage to the page" by publishing his first book: *What I've Learned from 9,000 Years of Farming*. It has been warmly received and is currently in its second printing. It is available at Amazon.com or through his website at either: www.randyfrazier.com or www.FarmersKnowHowToGrow.com.

Frazier has received recognition for his work as a leader and motivator. The Arkansas Wildlife Federation named him Conservation Educator of the Year and the Arkansas EMT Association honored him as Emergency Medical Technician of the Year. He was named Outstanding State Employee in 1993 by the Arkansas State Employee Association and in 2004 the Arkansas Division of Volunteerism honored him with their Paragon Award for leadership in helping to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Arkansas. In 2010 he became Arkansas' third native son, (following Carl Garner and Senator Dale Bumpers), to be awarded the Iron Eyes Cody Award for outstanding Leadership by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

As a professional speaker and trainer, he is often described as being an educator, motivator, author, storytelling humorist, and part-time country philosopher.





ROBY BROCK

Host and executive producer of Talk Business & Politics

Roby Brock is the CEO of Natural State Media, parent company for Talk Business & Politics and The Northwest Arkansas Business Journal. Brock also created and manages the Market at Chenal, a monthly farmers market and festival located in west Little Rock.

Brock is the host and executive producer of Talk Business & Politics, a media outlet that covers business and politics in Arkansas through TV, radio, online, newsprint, email, and social and digital platforms for the past two decades. Talk Business & Politics has bureaus in Little Rock, Fort Smith, Jonesboro, and Northwest Arkansas. Brock also moderates radio programs on NPR affiliates statewide and a daily digital newscast at TalkBusiness.net.

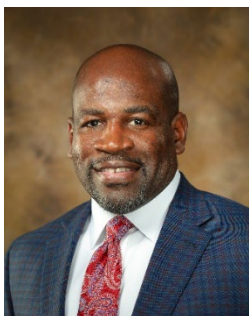


JULIA KURNIK

Director, Innovation Start-Ups at World Wildlife Fund

As the Director, Innovation Start-Ups at WWF, Julia works to identify and research emerging issues, trends, and tools with potential to disrupt food and agriculture systems for environmental sustainability and financial growth. This includes launching multi-stakeholder platforms, designing and piloting new business strategies and models, and facilitating their adoption. In her career, Julia has founded her own urban, soilless farming system and advised numerous young and growing companies on business strategy and growth plans.

For the past four years, Julia has worked as an adjunct professor at Rutgers Business School where she designed and now teaches in the Social Entrepreneurship program. Julia holds an SB from MIT, an MBA in entrepreneurial management from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and an MPA focused on sustainability from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.



DEACUE FIELDS

Vice President for Agriculture of the University of Arkansas System

Dr. Deacue Fields was appointed to the position of Vice President for Agriculture of the University of Arkansas System on July 1, 2022. As Vice President, he is responsible for leading the University System's coordinated agriculture program including the Cooperative Extension Service and the Agriculture Experiment Station. With almost 1,200 employees, the Division has faculty and facilities located across the state, including a presence in all 75 counties. The Division has a unique mission of serving the statewide agriculture community in Arkansas.

Prior to this role, Dr. Fields served as Dean and Senior Associate Vice President-Academics for the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences and Division of Agriculture at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He was a faculty member at Auburn University from 2002 to 2018 and served as Professor and Chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology from 2013 to 2018. He received his B.S. degree (1993) from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, his M.S. degree (1995) from University Missouri, Columbia, and a Ph.D. (2002) from Louisiana State University, all in Agricultural Economics.

In his spare time, he enjoys traveling with family, youth sports, fishing, and showing Quarter horses. He is married to Dana Fields, and they have three sons, Caleb (20), Cade (18), and Collin (15).





DEWAYNE L. GOLDMON

USDA Senior Advisor for Racial Justice and Equity

Dr. Dewayne L. Goldmon received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Arkansas and his Ph.D. from Iowa State University, all in agronomy. After four years as a field researcher with American Cyanamid (acquired by BASF), he joined Monsanto Company (acquired by Bayer Crop Sciences), working 25 years in the agricultural chemical and seed industry.

He held various positions in technology development, where he conducted research on all southern row crops and managed research and development trials in soybeans, rice, and cotton. Later in his career, he worked on Monsanto's government affairs team and in human resources, retiring as the Outreach Lead for Bayer Crop Sciences in 2019. In 2020, he served as the Executive Director of the National Black Growers Council, an organization that he was instrumental in creating and advised for over 10 years. Throughout his education and career, he has worked on diversity initiatives and maintained working relationships with several land-grant universities, non-profit entities, and community-based organizations.

Goldmon has served on numerous advisory boards, including the Dean's Executive Advisory Board at his alma mater, as well as on local and state boards for 4-H and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He has also served on regional and national advisory boards for organizations such as MANRRS, the Policy Center for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, the Southern Risk Management Education Center, and multiple terms on USDA's Advisory Committee for Minority Farmers and Ranchers. He also farms in southeast Arkansas where he produces corn, rice, and soybeans.

On March 1, 2021, he was announced as the inaugural Senior Advisor for Racial Justice and Equity at USDA where he serves as a key advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture. In this Presidential appointment, he provides counsel on a broad range of matters, as mandated by the Biden-Harris administration. He routinely liaises with relevant White House personnel on designing, planning, and executing key initiatives and priorities while also representing the Secretary and USDA on high level inter- and intra-agency working groups and public facing forums. He provides leadership on the implementation of congressional initiatives and on cross-departmental racial equity work. Goldmon works closely with the Secretary and the department to address the cumulative impacts of prior discrimination, working with his colleagues to transform USDA into a racially equitable department.





DORIS WASHINGTON

State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Doris Washington was appointed by the Biden Administration to serve as the State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Arkansas in December 2021.

Washington joins FSA with 33 years of experience managing governmental and public affairs initiatives designed to impact environmental protection, education, economic development, and agriculture.

Most recently, Washington was the Director of the National Water Management Center at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. In that role, she directed operations, served as an advisor, and oversaw a \$2.2 million budget. Under her guidance, the National Water Management Center successfully planned and implemented an analysis of watershed environmental projects including emergency and disaster programs. Washington is a two-time graduate of the University of Arkansas where she received a Bachelor of Science in agriculture and a Master of Public Administration in public policy.

Washington lives in Little Rock where she served over 10 years as an Officer in the Arkansas Army National Guard.



EUGENE YOUNG

Regional Director, USDA-NASS, Delta Regional Field Office

Eugene Young is the Regional Director at United States Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA-NASS) Delta Regional Office located in Little Rock, Arkansas which services the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. He is a native Arkansan, raised on a cow-calf and poultry farm in Black Springs, Arkansas in the heart of the Ouachita mountains. He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville with degrees in Agricultural Business and Agricultural Economics. Mr. Young has over 32 years of experience with USDA-NASS; having worked in the Arkansas and North Carolina field offices along with working in NASS HQ in Washington, D.C. prior to being named Delta

Regional Office director in 2017. He and his wife, Shannon, have one daughter, Madison. His regional office's mission at USDA-NASS is to provide the agricultural sector with timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to agriculture for the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.





MICHAEL E. SULLIVAN

State Conservationist

Mike Sullivan was named Arkansas State Conservationist of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on December 7, 2009. He began his 42-year career with NRCS as a student trainee in Lincoln, Neb. Subsequently, he served the agency in Arkansas, Mississippi and Arizona. As State Conservationist, he has been leading NRCS activities throughout Arkansas for 10 years now!

From 2004 to 2009, Sullivan served as leader of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative, an \$80 million per year initiative to improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and maintain agricultural productivity in selected watersheds in the Mississippi River Basin. He promoted improvements in water quality and quantity in the 31-state basin through delivery of NRCS programs and technologies. He provided national leadership for partnering efforts with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and served as lead staff support to the USDA Deputy Undersecretary providing input into the Mississippi River/Gulf Hypoxia Task Force.

Mike spent two years (2002-2004) as the NRCS National Science and Technology Coordinator. Prior to that, he worked for seven years (1995 - 2002) in Little Rock, Arkansas, establishing and leading the NRCS National Water Management Center. He has also served as: Assistant State Conservationist (Water Resources), State Conservation Engineer, and Water Resources Planning Staff Leader in Phoenix, Arizona; Planning Engineer in Jackson, Mississippi; and Planning Engineer and Field Engineer in Little Rock.

Mike has a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Arkansas (1982) and a Master of Business Administration degree from Arizona State University (1993). He is a Registered Professional Engineer and is married with three children. He is an Arkansas native from North Little Rock.

NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources.



DANIELLE COCO

Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA)

Danielle Coco is the Marketing & Communications Director at the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA). Since 2013, Danielle has been responsible for creating awareness of SUSTA and reaching out to new companies that can take advantage of SUSTA's export assistance. The mission of the regional non-profit trade association is to help southern companies promote their agricultural products internationally. SUSTA works closely with the Departments of Agriculture in 15 southern states to administer the Market Access Program (MAP) funded by the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.





STEVEN M. MOSHER

Program Coordinator for the USDA Innovation Center Partnership Team for the Southern states

Steve Mosher is the Program Coordinator for the USDA Innovation Center Partnership Team for the Southern states. He was previously the Area Director for West Central Arkansas and the Community Economic Development Lead for the USDA – Rural Development. Steve has a 39-year career with USDA – Rural Development. He was raised on a Dairy Farm in Bentonville, AR.

Steve is a graduate of Bentonville High School. He is an Honor Graduate of the University of Arkansas with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Business. Steve is an Arkansas Certified General Appraiser.

Steve, and his wife, Natalie, have four sons –Derek, Jared, Wyatt and Colte, two daughters in laws Christy, Jenna, and Lauren, three granddaughters Madison Kate, Mallory Faith, and Josie Paige which all reside in London, Arkansas. The Mosher's have a purebred Limousin Cattle Ranch on Lake Dardanelle. Steve is well known for his community involvement in the Arkansas River Valley.

Steve is best known for his aggressive, positive, and hard-working attitude. Steve wants to be remembered for making a positive difference in the world in which we live.



JEFF JACKSON

Public Health Section Chief II-Standardization/Quality Assurance Officer-Retail Food Program
Arkansas Department of Health

Jeff has been employed by the Arkansas Department of Health since 2006 where he currently serves as the Standardization/Quality Assurance Officer for the Retail Food Program. In this position, he is responsible for the training and standardization of all retail food staff in the state, ensuring consistency within the Retail Food Program, as well as

working to ensure conformance with the National Voluntary Retail Food Program Standards. He received his Bachelor of Science in Education (biology emphasis) from Arkansas State University in 2005 and a Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Public Health from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in 2013. He was selected to Cohort 5 of the National Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute and was the 2017 recipient of the Mid-Continental Association of Food and Drug Officials Achievement Award.



GLEN HOWIE

State Director, Arkansas Rural Connect
Arkansas Economic Development Commission

Glen Howie is the Director of the Arkansas State Broadband Office, where he serves as the chief broadband advisor to Governor Sanders. He is guiding the state's BEAD and Digital Equity planning and implementation, an effort expected to exceed \$1 billion. Starting in his role last August, he came to Arkansas from the nationally recognized Louisiana Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity.



WORKSHOP SPEAKERS



NATALIE ACKERLEY

Sales Manager at Barn2Door

Natalie Ackerley is a Sales Team Manager at Barn2Door --- the industry leading solution designed to help farmers grow and manage their direct sales. She is excited to share how farmers can build a more resilient business, increase sales, access more customers, and save time. Ackerley has spent the past three years working with farmers across the country, helping them grow their businesses, develop their brands, and strengthen relationships with their customers. Ackerley values the opportunity to support farmers in their pursuit to provide local farm products to their communities.



MELANIE BERMAN

Program Director, Arkansas Procurement Technical Assistance Center
University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture - Cooperative Extension Service

Melanie Berman joined the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) staff as Program Director in January 2017.

She holds a Bachelor of Art degree in Communications and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Berman served as both an AmeriCorps volunteer and a Peace Corps volunteer. She managed multiple federally funded grants and served as an Awards Officer for an international non-profit before coming to the Arkansas Procurement Technical Assistance Center. Berman served as Regional Director for the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Center (APTAC). She also served in a volunteer role as Vice Chairperson for the Little Rock Sister Cities Commission, promoting cultural and economic development opportunities within the state of Arkansas.



JILL FORRESTER

Co- owner of Whitton Farms

Jill Forrester, co- owner of Whitton Farms, in Northeast, Arkansas, is a former public school mathematics teacher turned farmer-florist, who stumbled into specialty crop farming 19 years ago. Forrester and husband Keith, grow an assortment of vegetables, herbs, garden transplants, pecans, and cut flowers on 55 acres. Over the past decade, Jill has owned and operated the farm to table restaurant, Trolley Stop Market, WF Cannery, and co-founded Memphis's first local food aggregator, Bring It Food Hub. Forrester has volunteered her time and expertise to the following organizations: Memphis Farmers Market, Bring It Food Hub, ASU Regional Farmers Market, Mississippi County Historical Society, Victorian Village Memphis, Health Wellness and Environmental Studies School in Jonesboro, and currently serves on the Arkansas Agritourism Association Board of Directors. Jill and Keith have hosted Outstanding in the Field, Endless Feast, and State Plate with Taylor Hicks at their farm. In 2014, The Forresters were named Mississippi County Farm Family of the year, and Northeast Arkansas Farm Family of the year. Whitton Farms goods can be found at two regional farmers markets in Memphis, and the Forresters welcome guests to shop at their farmstand in Whitton, AR.





DAN BREMER

AgWorks H2, LLC

Dan Bremer served as the District Director of the United States Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division for six years in Atlanta, Georgia and for two years in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was the Assistant District Director in Montgomery, Alabama and served as a Senior Investigator for the Wage and Hour Division in Miami, Florida and in Gainesville, Florida. He was an instructor at numerous Compliance Officer Training Classes.

Since retirement from the United States Department of Labor, Bremer has been a consultant to many business entities who wish to bring workers to the United States on short-term visas. He has advised many business entities on issues of compliance with various state and federal labor laws and maintenance of proper records and procedures. Bremer has testified as an expert witness on numerous Fair Labor Standards Act lawsuits.

Bremer formed AgWorks 25 years ago to help farmers, foresters, and other seasonal employers to find legal workers and to comply with complex labor laws.

Bremer served on the Lake Park, Georgia City Council and served two terms as the Chairman of the Lake Park Area Chamber of Commerce. Bremer has a BS degree in Business Management from Missouri State University and attended the Master of Public Administration Program at Florida International University in Miami, Florida. He served in the United States Marine Corps in 1968, 1969, and 1970.

LINDSEY CARTWRIGHT

State Local Procurement Manager, Arkansas Department of Agriculture

Lindsey Cartwright is the State Local Procurement Manager for the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Team. She provides technical assistance to school food service programs and farms, develops farm to school resources, hosts local procurement webinars and trainings, and leads the Arkansas Taste Test Grant Program and Harvest of the Season Promotional Program. She is passionate about agricultural advocacy and education, vegetable production, and local foods. Lindsey loves sharing her knowledge and helping Arkansas producers and schools.

JOHN MARTIN

Arkansas Bees / Arkansas Department of Agriculture

John Martin is the owner/operator of Arkansas Bees and has been in business for eight years helping manage about 150 beehives. Arkansas Bees bees gather nectar from the wildflowers found in Central Arkansas. Martin also works for the Arkansas Department of Agriculture as an Apiary Inspector, assisting beekeepers across the state with the laws of operating an apiary and best practices.





MARK MORGAN

Owner, Peach Pickin' Paradise

Mark Morgan grows peaches and nectarines in Johnson County, AR. Peach Pickin' Paradise is a family farm consisting of 32 varieties on 28 acres and is the first Horticulture Discovery Farm in Arkansas. Mark received his B.S. in Ag business in 2007 and his M.S. in Animal Science in 2010, both from the University of Arkansas. Mark was named the 2016 Arkansas Farm Family of the Year, 2019 Young Farmer and Rancher Achievement award winner, and 2022 Stanley Reed

Leadership award winner. In his spare time Mark enjoys playing with his three kids and watching the Razorbacks.



RUSTY RUMLEY

Senior Staff Attorney with the National Agricultural Law Center

Rusty Rumley is a Senior Staff Attorney with the National Agricultural Law Center and is licensed to practice law in the states of Oklahoma and Michigan. He has written on landowner liability, estate planning, leasing, wind leases, carbon leases, and other land use topics in his work at the Center. Further, Rumley presents around the country to producer, consumer, extension, industry, and legal groups on an array of topics.

DAN SPATZ

Healthy Flavors

Dan Spatz and his wife, Nadia, are business partners infusing Healthy Flavors with passion and persistence. Healthy Flavors is an agricultural enterprise, driven by a social entrepreneurial mission. In Tennessee, they operate a culinary herb farm supplying Walmart, McCartney Produce, Sysco, Performance Food Group, and other wholesale customers with fresh, cleaned, and packed culinary herbs. In Arkansas, Dan is aiming to transition his family's farm from "conventional" row crops to locally marketed specialty crops.

Together, Dan and Nadia have a combined 57 years of experience in food and agricultural endeavors, ranging from hands-on start-ups to global, corporate food experience with the Mars Corporation.



JACK SUNDELL

Owner, The Root Café

Jack Sundell owns and operates the Root Cafe with his wife, Corri Bristow-Sundell. The Root opened in June of 2011 and is located in the SoMa neighborhood of downtown Little Rock. Jack grew up in Monticello, graduated from Hendrix College in 2000, and served in the Peace Corps in Morocco. He eventually settled down in Little Rock to pursue his passion for local food, sustainability, and building community. Jack has a 25-year-old stepson and 9-year-old twin boys. His favorite hobbies are singing and playing guitar and Irish concertina, cooking, and playing chess and pickleball.





IRIS COLE-CROSBY

Food Safety Extension Specialist, UA at Pine Bluff, Extension

Produce Safety Alliance trainer, who works with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in their Extension Program. She has provided technical assistance to growers on Good Agriculture Practices (GAP).



SHAUN FRANCIS

Extension Specialist – Horticulture, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Shaun Francis has actively worked in the field of Agriculture for the past 36 years. He was appointed research horticulturist for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in February 2015. In this position, Mr. Francis works with small and limited resource farmers, gardeners and youths on a variety of vegetable and small fruit projects. His emphasis is conducting research on sweet potato crop, and he currently coordinates the UAPB Sweet potato Foundation Seed Program, which provides virus-indexed sweet potato slips and first generation sweet potato roots for farmers within the state.

Prior to this position, Mr. Francis was a graduate research assistant at the horticulture department at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where he evaluated conservation tillage as a climate change adaption strategy in vegetable production. Prior to that he conducted graduate research on insect control in sweet potato production at UAPB.

Mr. Francis has a master's degree in agricultural regulations from UAPB and a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Guyana.



DAVID HILL

Food Systems & Safety Program Associate, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Share Grounds Manager and contact person for value added products technical assistance.





BECKY McPEAKE

Professor and Wildlife Extension Specialist, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Professor and Wildlife Specialist at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service and the Arkansas Forest Resources Center where she has worked for almost 25 years. She has degrees from University of Missouri, Michigan State University, and Texas A&M University in wildlife biology and management. Her areas of Extension education and outreach include wildlife damage management, bobwhite habitat, youth education, and advancing new technologies for feral hog control.



AMANDA PHILYAW PEREZ

Associate Professor and Food Systems & Safety Extension Specialist
UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Lead the Local, Regional, and Safe Foods Team at the UADA, Extension and State Lead for Outreach, Education, and Technical Assistance for FSMA Produce Safety Rule



SATHISH PONNIAH

Associate Professor, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Department of Agriculture

Dr. Sathish Ponniah is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agriculture with eleven years of experience in sweet potato research and leading the sweet potato foundation seed program. He is using the shoot-tip meristem culture approach in developing virus-free clean sweet potato plants. He has gained around 2 million dollars of grant money for research and extension programs. Dr. Ponniah has published in several peer-reviewed journals and is a review editor of Frontiers in Plant Science. He is currently teaching Plant Science, Genetics, and Plant Physiology.





GABY SANDERS

Food Systems & Safety Program Associate, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Coordinator and Educator for FSMA Produce Safety Grower Trainings. Outreach, education, and technical assistance provider for FSMA Produce Safety Rule.



ERIC SIMON

Bio & Agricultural Engineering Program Associate, UA System Division of Agriculture, Extension

Program Associate with Bio and Ag Engineering and Crop Soils and Environmental Science. Focused on nutrient/manure management, composting, and Discovery Farm research/education projects.



BRITTNEY SCHRICK

Assistant Professor and Family Life Specialist for the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Dr. Brittney Schrick is Assistant Professor and Family Life Specialist for the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service where she curates, composes, and coordinates marriage, parenting, family life, and mental health programming for distribution through Arkansas' 75 county extension offices by family and consumer sciences extension agents. She is a partner in the Southern Ag Exchange Network (SAGE) where she works within the southern region to support farmers, ranchers, and

other agriculture workers' mental health through community education, resourcing, and referral.

Dr. Schrick taught human development at the university level for 10 years before beginning community education work through extension. Her current research focuses primarily on engaging farmers and ranchers in improving mental health as well as women's and girls' experiences related to health, wellness, and embodiment.

She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and her master's and PhD in Human Development and Family Studies from Texas Tech University. Dr. Schrick lives in Conway, Arkansas, with her husband, Zach, and their three daughters.





ANGELA GARDNER

Business Consultant, Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center

Angela Gardner is a business consultant with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center. A supporter and advocate for all things "local", Angela started a seasonal packaged food business in 2014 to turn surplus produce from local farms into shelf stable treats. She marketed and sold her products through an online farmer's market in Little Rock but had to close the business due to a lack of commercially available kitchen space. The bulk of her work experience is grounded in providing adult education programs, technical help, and business best practices for farms and food producers. Angela earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental, Soil, and Water Science and an MBA from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Woo Pig Sooi!



JEFF JACKSON

Public Health Section Chief II-Standardization/Quality Assurance Officer-Retail Food Program
Arkansas Department of Health

Jeff has been employed by the Arkansas Department of Health since 2006 where he currently serves as the Standardization/Quality Assurance Officer for the Retail Food Program. In this position, he is responsible for the training and standardization of all retail food staff in the state, ensuring consistency within the Retail Food Program, as well as working to ensure conformance with the National Voluntary Retail Food Program Standards. He received his Bachelor of Science in Education (biology emphasis) from Arkansas State University in 2005 and a Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Public Health from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in 2013. He was selected to Cohort 5 of the National Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute and was the 2017 recipient of the Mid-Continental Association of Food and Drug Officials Achievement Award.





LISA ROACH

MarketLink, a non-profit that provides SNAP/ebt equipment grant and technical assistance on SNAP application.

Lisa's interest in food and agriculture stemmed from visiting her grandparent's farm in rural Germany during the summer, helping her parents garden, and cooking with her family. This upbringing led her to pursue an education in food systems at San Francisco State University where she majored in Family and Consumer Sciences with an emphasis in Nutrition.

After graduating, Lisa continued to volunteer for farmers' markets and gained valuable hands-on experience while working as an info booth volunteer, vendor, and eventually as assistant manager of one of San Francisco's busiest SNAP/EBT markets. This valuable experience motivated Lisa to pursue a career in food access that supports SNAP at farmers markets and local farms.

Lisa is currently delighted to be part of the MarketLink team as a Regional Representative. Her favorite part of the job is her phone calls with individuals who reach out for technical assistance. She loves being able to connect to farmers and market managers throughout the country and hear from their perspectives. Outside of MarketLink, Lisa supports local food by shopping at the Alemany Farmers Market in San Francisco; California's first official farmers' market. In her free time, she's usually biking, hiking through local parks, cooking at home, visiting friends, or working on many art projects.



ANDREW SCHWERIN

Sycamore Bend Farm

Schwerin will discuss markets for farmers: How farmers' market fits into our farm situation, mission, and bottom line.

While working the back acreage of an Ozark vegetable farm, Andrew met his wife, Madeleine. They found a bottomland hay field for lease and began Sycamore Bend Farm in 2012. As the farm grew, so did their family. Employees help with the year-round production, and Katahdin sheep manage the outlying acreage. The farm has grown a diversity of vegetables, fruits, and herbs; selling through multiple market channels including farmers markets, CSA, wholesale, grocery, and restaurant.





Arkansas Association of Grape Growers Session Thursday, January 26, 2023

This session will cover topics related to grape growing and winemaking.

- 9:00 Gill Giese, Arkansas State University, Considerations in Establishing or Expanding Vineyards (1 hr)
10:00 Dennis Rak, Double A Vineyards, Using Quality Grapevine Plants for Vineyards (1 hr)
11:00 Michael Cook, Texas A&M, Managing Vineyard Floors: Soils, Cover Crops, and Weeds (1 hr)

LUNCH

- 1:00 Justin Scheiner, Texas A&M, Mechanization Options for Small to Medium Vineyards (1 hr)
2:00 Renee Threlfall, UA System, Grape Cultivars and Winemaking (1 hr)
3:00 Alicen Rouse, Scott Laboratories, Avoiding Faults in Wine Quality (1 hr)



Michael Cook is the Viticulture Program Specialist for North Texas with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. His primary function is to provide research-based educational support for the nearly 100 commercial vineyards in the region by providing workshops, programs, hands-on demonstrations, educational materials, and one on one site visits with growers. Conducting and collaborating on applied research trials, including Earth-Kind vineyard trials is also a focus of his. His secondary function includes providing training for county agents and master gardeners across the 55 counties of North Texas. Michael is a Dallas native and studied Horticulture at Texas A&M. While there he was an active Aggie

Master Gardener. He was then awarded a fellowship to California State University – Fresno where he earned a Master of Science in Viticulture & Enology.



Gill Giese is an Assistant Professor of Plant and Soil Science at Arkansas State University. He grew up farming in Arkansas and has been working in viticulture for 27 years. Gill worked as a University of Arkansas research technician from 1989 to 2001 in small grains breeding, vegetable entomology, vineyard mechanization, and hybrid grape juice and winemaking. After earning a PhD from Virginia Tech 2014, he developed curriculum and taught viticulture and enology at Surry Community College, Dobson, NC, from 2001 to 2013. He was winemaker and viticulturalist at Shelton Vineyards in Dobson, NC, from 2013 to 2017, growing grapes and bottling ~30,000 cases annually. Gill previously worked as a Viticulture Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor in the Department of Plant and Environmental

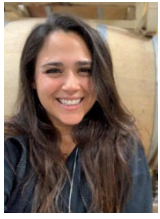
Sciences at New Mexico State University where his areas of interest included vineyard cover crop impact on soil health, native pollinator habitat enhancement, grapevine water use, rootstock, wine and table grape variety trials, nematode modelling and nematicide efficacy, and investigation of the heritage wine grape, 'Mission', as a rosé varietal.



Dennis Rak is the Owner of Double A Vineyards in New York. Dennis Rak owns and operates a 1,000-acre farm with his wife Sue and sons Adam and Abram. Of the 1,000 acres, 242 acres are Concord and 7 acres are Niagara contracted to the National Grape-Welches. Double A Vineyards runs 210 acres of wine and table grapes as well as growing grapevine and other nursery stock that is marketed across the United States. Dennis presently serves as President of National Grape Board to which he was elected in 2020 and has served as a National Director since 2010. Dennis is a graduate of Cornell University (1980) with a BS and Alfred State College with Associate Applied Science. Prior to starting Double A Vineyards in 1990, Dennis worked in a variety of jobs in the agricultural industry. In addition to his business background,

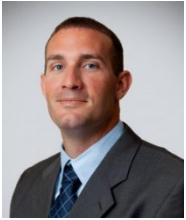
Dennis has been active in the local community serving on a number of Boards as well as nationally with the National Clean Plant Network where he chairs the research funding committee.





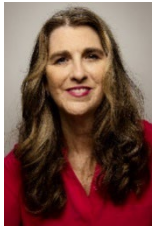
Alicen Rouse is the Field Sales Representative for the Southwest Territory for Scott Laboratories. Alicen is a graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's Wine & Viticulture program with most of her winemaking career in Southern California under the tutelage of Jon McPherson at South Coast Winery in Temecula. She spent over 8 years as an intern at this winery, then a lab tech, and an enologist from 2016-2019. During this time, she also served as a wine-centric restaurant and helped develop their wine program and training protocols, earned a Certified Sommelier certificate, and taught college courses at a community college in Northern San

Diego. In 2019, she moved to Texas to work in a cellar position with Grape Creek Vineyards, followed by an assistant winemaker position at Hilmy Cellars before starting with Scott Laboratories in 2021.



Dr. Justin Scheiner is an Assistant Professor and Extension Viticulture Specialist in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University. He received a B.S. in Horticulture and Crop Science from Sam Houston State University in 2005. In 2007, he received his M.S. in Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences from Texas A&M University and earned a Ph.D. in Horticulture from Cornell University in 2010. From 2010 to 2013, he served as the Director of the Viticulture and Enology Program at Grayson College. Dr. Scheiner joined the faculty of the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M in 2013.

Dr. Scheiner's extension activities include developing educational programming for prospective and current grape growers in the state of Texas and conducting applied research on best management practices for vineyards in areas of Texas affected by Pierce's Disease. Dr. Scheiner also teaches HORT 416 Understanding Wine: From Vines to Wines and Beyond.



Renee Threlfall is a Research Scientist at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture (UA System), Fayetteville. She has worked in the Food Science Department at the UA System for over 30 years. She currently has a split position of 47% research, 35% Extension and 18% teaching. At the University of Arkansas, she completed her B.S. in Microbiology and M.S. and Ph.D. in Food Science with an emphasis in enology and viticulture. Dr. Threlfall's research and extension at the UA System is focused on processing and postharvest storage of specialty crops (wine grapes, muscadine grapes, table grapes, blackberries, strawberries, peaches, hops, etc.) and value-added processing of horticultural crops. She has over 40

refereed journal publications. She teaches an introduction enology and viticulture class, Uncorked: Vines to Wines, at the University of Arkansas each fall and teaches enology, viticulture and sensory topics for grape and wine production in other Food Science classes. Dr. Threlfall is a member of the American Society of Enology and Viticulture (ASEV), ASEV-Eastern Section, American Wine Society, American Society for Horticultural Science, North American Raspberry and Blackberry Association, and American Society of Brewing Chemists. Dr. Threlfall is on the Extension and Outreach Committee for the National Grape Research Alliance and is also a member of the Arkansas Association of Grape Growers and serves on the Arkansas Wine Producers Council. She is also the director of the Arkansas Quality Wine Program.





MARGIE RAIMONDO

Urbana Farmstead

Farmer, Chef, Teacher at Urbana Farmstead Farm where she offers cooking classes and High Tea on the Farm. When not in the kitchen or the garden, she writes about the intersection of food, agriculture, and farming. Her genre is heritage food and farm storytelling through film and cookbooks. She recently published *Mangiamo*, a Mediterranean Cookbook and her first award-winning documentary, *The Soul of Sicily*.

Serves as Vice-President of Arkansas Agritourism Association, Farm Bureau Board Member, Little Rock Sister City Commissioner, and Member of Women in Ag and Soil Conservation Commission.



GRACE PEPLER

Dew Line Dairy

Farmer, micro dairy owner, hydroponics manager, agritourism host
Grace lives and works at Dogwood Hills Guest Farm, managing the production of hydroponic barley fodder and her micro dairy, Dew Line Dairy. In her free time, Grace plays viola in her local symphony and enjoys photography, hiking and contra dancing.



RUTHIE PEPLER

Dogwood Hills Guest Farm

Ruthie Pepler is the owner of Dogwood Hills Guest Farm and an international agritourism development expert.

She served as the founding president of the Arkansas Agritourism Association from 2018-2021. She now serves on the board of the Arkansas Agritourism Association, the advisory panel for the Share Grounds Kitchen Project, and during Covid, she worked with the University of Arkansas and the Dept of Health to develop resources for safe agritourism activities. Ruthie has spoken to numerous groups about agritourism in Arkansas, including Arkansas Women in Ag, Arkansas Tourism, Farm Bureau, Good Morning Arkansas on KATV and The Place on KY3. She is involved on a national level with FarmStayUS, NAFDMA and Agritourism Life, watching what is trending and bringing it back to Arkansas.

In December of 2022, Ruthie shared her expertise at an international level, traveling to Guyana to serve as the Agritourism Development Expert for Farmer to Farmer. She helped the community build their tourism experiences and will return in March of 2023 to continue to assist with facilitation, business planning, and youth engagement in the project.

Ruthie's passion for farm and table has served to bring families to the farm from all over the world as she continues to nurture the growth of Agritourism in Arkansas and beyond.





BYRON WHITE

Co-founder and CEO of Yaupon Brothers American Tea Co., Yazoo Yaupon, and Ilex Organics

Bryon White is a serial founder in the Consumer-Packaged Goods (CPG) and Agricultural spaces and a pioneering leader in building and growing the Yaupon tea industry, including in the commercial farming of Yaupon.

Bryon co-founded Yaupon Brothers American Tea Co. in 2015 in his hometown of New Smyrna Beach, Florida alongside his brother, Kyle White. In 2018, he co-founded the American Yaupon Association and serves as its Vice Chair. In 2020, Bryon launched a second Yaupon tea brand - Yazoo Yaupon in Clarksdale, Mississippi and co-founded Ilex Organics, which houses both tea brands and Ilex Agriculture, which oversees the company's growing agricultural footprint.

In addition to more than a decade of experience in CPG and manufacturing, Bryon has also worked extensively in the agricultural space, including developing novel cultivars of Yaupon Holly for tea production through a partnership with Agristarts, Inc. in Apopka, Florida, which is an exclusive partner of the University of Arkansas' blackberry program.

Bryon received the 2021 Industry Leadership Award from the Specialty Food Association where he served on the Digital Strategy and Regulatory & Legislative committees. In 2022, he was named a Volusia-Flagler 40 Under Forty by the Daytona News-Journal. Also in 2022, Yaupon Brothers American Tea Co. was named an Honoree for the 12th Annual GrowFL Florida Companies to Watch Award and the Orlando Business Journal named Yaupon Brothers a 2022 Fire Award Honoree.

In October 2022, Whole Foods Markets released their annual trend report recognizing Yaupon as the #1 Top Ten Food Trend for 2023 and featured Yaupon Brothers products.

Bryon earned a BS in Law from the University of Central Florida and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Loyola University New Orleans. Bryon serves as an advisor to tech companies and nonprofits, and recently became a Venture Builder with the Washington, DC-based venture accelerator Builders and Backers.



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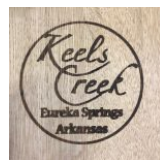
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