**Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program: A Comprehensive Training Program for Beginning Farmers**

Across the United States and in Georgia, the number of small- and medium–sized farms is declining and the average age of farmers is on the rise. Although we need new farmers, the barriers would-be farmers face when trying to grow new agricultural businesses from the ground up can be formidable. UGA Extension and partners have developed a new ***Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program*** to provide a comprehensive training program for beginning farmers that includes three steps.

Agents have the option of running Step 1 and/or 2. It is not required to include Step 3, which is the Hands-On Production Training. However, if you want to offer the Hands-On Production Training, you must offer Steps 1 and 2 first. Agents must work to coordinate the Hands-On Production Training by finding locations for internships and/or mentorships for participants and must also administer knowledge matrices.

Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program Steps:

1. Small Farm Business Planning Training or AgAware,
2. Small Fruit & Vegetable Production or Small Ruminants Production, and
3. Hands-on Production Training

**Who Should Attend?**

Who is a beginning farmer? USDA defines a beginning farmer as anyone who has been farming less than ten continuous years. The Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program is focused on those who are interested in ***starting a farm business*** or those who have ***recently begun farming*** and want to improve their operation.

**What Kind of Training Does the Program Provide?**

There are two different Small Farm Business Planning trainings: ***Small Farm Business Planning Training*** or ***AgAware*** program run by AgCredit. You can choose which training to offer. If you are interested in offering the Small Farm Business Planning Training, please contact your local Small Business Development Center office to help with this. You should have an SBDC agent come to each of the sessions and help run learning activities. *Having someone with financial expertise at these sessions is essential for success.*

***Small Farm Business Planning*** is four two-hour sessions developed in partnership with the UGA Small Business Development Center and the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Topics include lessons learned from successful small farms, market feasibility, balance sheets, income statements, risk management, marketing and technology, as well as preparing a business plan. This training will enable a farmer to develop a basic farm business plan.

***Ag Aware*** is a one-day workshop aimed at young, beginning, small and minority farmers. The workshop covers farm business topics including: lessons learned from successful small farms, balance sheets, income statements, family finance and budgeting, applying for financing, risk management, marketing and technology, as well as preparing a business plan. Successful participants will have the foundation to prepare their own farm business plan. If they take and pass a brief test, they also receive FSA borrower certificate and a certificate of completion. AgAware schedules their own classes throughout the state, you are welcome to use a nearby class as part of the Journeyman Program. If AgAware isn’t being offered nearby, you can schedule Van McCall, LLC to teach the content. He can be reached at Vanmccall1@gmail.com. AgSouth/AgGeorgia sponsored AgAware classes will be free. Van McCall’s classes will need to have a registration fee to cover costs, please speak to Van directly to determine prices.

The second step, if you choose to offer it, is one of the following production trainings.

***Small Fruit & Vegetable Production*** is a seven week training developed in partnership with Georgia Organics and the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. Topics include: soil health and fertility, soil amendments and fertilizers, cover crops, crop rotations, pest management, crop selection, crop propagation, equipment, post-harvest handling, food safety, and marketing. Ideally, this training includes a farm tour of a small and mid-scale farm.

or

***Small Ruminant Production*** is a six week training developed by Fort Valley State University in partnership with UGA Extension and other land grants. Topics include: goat and sheep breeds and selection, nutrition and body scoring, pasture management, predator control, health and diseases, reproduction and kidding/lambing, integrated parasite management, as well as meats and marketing. This training includes a session with live animals to practice body condition scoring, hoof trimming and evaluating internal parasites. If a certified FAMACHA trainer is available, the participants can complete FAMACHA training and receive their card. All training materials can be found at the Center for Urban Agriculture website, under Agents, Programs. The password is “bulldawg”.

The third step is a Hands-On Training.

***Hands-On Training***

If you choose to offer the Hands-On Training, you will need to offer Steps 1 and 2 first.

You will need to work to find intern sites and/or farm mentors. Internships are for participants with little or some agricultural experience who want to get experience learning from a farmer. We recommend that the internship involve 120 working hours as we have found this to be an adequate amount of time for participants to learn about agriculture in a hands-on setting. Mentorships are for participants with their own farm site who are a bit more experienced. This mentorship allows them to connect and learn from a farmer mentor. You will need to administer some sort of knowledge matrix to determine knowledge gained during the Hands-On program. We also recommend you have some sort of Hands-On Handbook with forms for participants and farmers to sign (grievance policy, agreement forms, application, etc). Please look over the resources we have included on the Urban Ag site with the curriculum.

At your first class, let participants know what portions of the program you are offering. If you are offering a Hands-On program, tell them what sites you have available, requirements for applying, whether a stipend will be available, etc etc. Please communicate well with your participants about the program and your expectations.

Participants that complete all three steps of the program are official graduates of the Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program. It would be great to celebrate with some sort of party or have them be acknowledged in a local newspaper article. Participants will receive certificates after Steps 1 and 2 after they pass an online knowledge evaluation.

**What is the Role of County Agents or other leaders in the Program?**

Agents or other leaders that want to run the Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program will be committing to running one or more of the steps of the program. The Small Farm Business Planning Training, Small Fruit & Vegetable Production Training, and Small Ruminant Production Training are ready-to-go programs designed to be facilitated recorded webinars. Each session has both recorded webinar presentations and learning activities to help reinforce the learning on a particular topic. County agents are critical to success of the program because they run the program and the learning activities. In some cases they may coordinate bringing in other subject experts to help answer question and run the learning activities. The trainings are best run as multi-county programs and work best if run by a group of agents.

All materials for the trainings are available on the Center for Urban Agriculture website, under Agents, Programs. Enter the password – bulldawg. Click on Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program. Please review the Facilitators Notebooks that give you step by step instruction on how a session should be run.

If you are interested in running the Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program in your area, please contact the Sustainable Agriculture Program Assistant at UGA, sustainag@uga.edu.

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