Training Small, Limited–Resource, Veteran, and Socially Disadvantaged Producers (54 VIRGINIA COUNTIES)

According to respondents of a 2016 survey of 1,000 small farmers who participated in VSU’s Small Farm Outreach Program:

• 79% indicated the program gave them a better understanding of operating and maintaining a small farm
• 62% indicated the program has helped them improve profits in their farm business.
• 42% reported an increase in farm incomes by at least 10% from the previous three years.

Growing Profitability For Urban Agriculture Businesses

VSU’s Extension faculty developed an Urban Agriculture Certificate Program. Through two courses last year, 60 participants were trained in creating their personal urban farm business plan to serve as the foundation for a profitable urban farm business in Virginia. Additionally, the curriculum was developed to serve as a model for other 1890 institutions hoping to start urban agriculture certification programs in their states.

Increasing Food Safety Through Antimicrobial Food Packaging Using Grape Processing Waste

VSU’s Agricultural Research Station conducted research that demonstrated that extracts from grape pomace, commonly found as a by-product at wineries, contains a naturally-occurring antimicrobial agent and biodegradable nanocrystals that can improve packaged food safety. Continued research is being conducted this year to further explore:

• Benefits to local grape producers and the wine industry
  —Value-added utilization could increase profits to grape and wine producers
• Reduction in disposal costs and volume of waste stream
  —Benefits to food, meat, and other industries
  —Use natural compounds in their products
  —Reduce consumer risk and concerns about synthetic compounds

—continued on reverse
Increasing Profitability of Sheep and Goat Producers

Wormer-resistant internal parasites are the leading cause of health problems in small ruminants. Through VSU Extension programming:
- 250 small ruminant producers and Extension agents increased their knowledge of internal parasite management
- 60 producers received FAMACHA® certification
- 60 producers developed skills in conducting fecal egg counts

Additionally, VSU’s Agricultural Research Station evaluated the effect of crossbreeding and agro-byproduct supplementation in a pasture-based lamb production system on growth rate, lamb fitness and carcass quality and composition. It has identified a number of methods for improving growth rates, parasite resistance, and meat quality that, after further studies are conducted this year, will be shared with the public.

Increasing Access To Fresh, Nutritional Food Through VSU’s Harding Street Urban Agriculture Center, Petersburg
- Made fresh food more accessible by establishing a farmer’s market within walking distance to food desert neighborhoods.
- Distributed 3,200 lbs. of local fresh produce to members in the community with a retail value of $8,000 ($2.50/lb).
- Educated 1,000 visitors on the science and business of indoor food production.

Equipping Small Farmers To Compete For Lucrative Berry Markets in the Mid-Atlantic, Virginia Tobacco Region

VSU’s Extension Faculty:
- Assisted 18 former tobacco growers to convert to berry production in Southside Virginia.
- Helped create 37 seasonal jobs (picker/packer) in the tobacco region of Southside Virginia with minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, 29 hours per week for 12 weeks per year totaling $93,351 in gross income for seasonal farm workers.
- Provided production assistance to producers that resulted in their berries having a total wholesale value of $456,000 at Virginia farmer’s markets.