As we enter a new year, I trust each of us will take the opportunity to think about what is ahead and seize the time to plan for an exciting year. What have you wanted to accomplish? What have you wished to try, but have put it off, due to the unknown outcomes? What fear are you willing to face and overcome? What has been successful in your life that you wish to continue, and will you pass this successful idea on to others?

An online 'Forbes article titled 22 Ways to Ensure 2022 is The Year You Supercharge Your Career provides ideas to help us improve ourselves in this new year. My top ten ideas are:

1. Listen more than you talk. There is great benefit in listening to others and practicing the art of being an active listener.
2. Learn to say no. This never happens with Extension workers, and it is difficult to do. But there may be areas where we must do so, and if we do, maybe we learn to…
3. …Say yes to growth opportunities. This opens us up to new challenges and opportunities, where we learn to be more innovative.
4. Don’t be afraid to fail. We hate to think that we failed at a project. But learning how to deal with failure may just help to spark us to success in another area of our career.
5. Master time management to be productive (and not just busy). This is a huge challenge for some of us. But once we improve in this area, we can become more productive and focused.
6. Smile more. Research shows that smiling puts others at ease, makes you magnetic, inspires confidence and trust, is good for you, makes you more creative, and is contagious.

7. Practice empathy. This helps us understand clients, colleagues, and partners and then be able to use those insights to better serve and communicate with them.

8. Acknowledge four magic words to communicate and connect better. These words are, “It’s not about me.” The finest of leaders understand this and develop a service-minded attitude.

9. Move past your fear and take action. Fear is a powerful emotion. Acting will combat this fear and help to remove doubt and anxiety.

10. Invest in yourself. Doing this will help you adapt and learn more, and then put the things learned into practice.

Let us strive to make 2022 the best for us in every way.

Grow Your Direct-to-Consumer Farm Sales with Pick Tennessee Products Workshops

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture’s Business Development Division, the Center for Profitable Agriculture, and UT Extension teamed up to offer six seminars to help farmers marketing products and experiences directly to consumers grow their farm sales. The seminars were developed especially for farmers who are not yet taking full advantage of the marketing opportunities available at no cost from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture through the Pick Tennessee Products Program. Topics for the seminars included:

- Pick Tennessee Products resources and other related programs including the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Cost-Share Program taught by TDA’s Debbie Ball
- Key concepts and resources for direct farm marketing taught by the Center’s Megan Bruch Leffew

Hosted in economically distressed counties, the workshops reached nearly seventy participants. Local hosts were instrumental in organizing the events and included the following UT Extension agriculture agents:

- Creig Kimbro, UT Extension Grundy County
- Sean Tormoehlen, UT Extension Scott County
- Jacob Boone, UT Extension Hancock County
- Sarah Orrin, UT Extension Cocke County
- Lee Sammons, UT Extension Hardeman County
- Amanda Mathenia, UT Extension Perry County

Marketing Workshops Conducted in October

Four Evaluating Market Outlets for Dairy Products workshops were conducted October 6, 7, and 8 in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee. A total of twenty-seven creamery operators, Extension agents, specialists, and graduate students heard presentations by the Center’s Hal Pepper and Penn State University’s Sarah Cornelisse. Topics were analyzing costs and returns to know if you’re making money and considerations when assessing different market outlets. Collaborators included North Carolina Extension and Kentucky Dairy Development Council. Workshops were conducted at county Extension offices and Middle Tennessee State University.

Steve Dixon and Matthew Wade gave workshop participants a tour of the MTSU Creamery after the workshop on October 8.
The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) Eastern Regional Stakeholders meeting took place in Knoxville, TN, on November 17–19, 2022. Participants were able to meet and network with 180 attendees representing seven states. Conference highlights included presentations designed to inform and assist FVC members ranging from: servicemembers in the transition process, veterans looking to start or develop their farm business, and established farmers looking to improve the way they get their products to market. The group heard from several Homegrown by Heroes (HBH) representatives. The Homegrown by Heroes is the official farmer veteran branding program of America, administered nationally by FVC. This program certifies ranchers, farmers, and fisherman of all military eras to sell their products as veteran owned and produced. Participants also learned more about the Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund. This fund is a small grant program that provides direct assistance to veterans who are in their beginning years of farming or ranching. Awards for this program range in value from $1,000 to $5,000. On the final day of the conference, the Tennessee FVC hosted over seventy participants on three diverse farm tours in the Knoxville and East Tennessee area. The AgrAbility Program is the leader in technology-based assistance for veterans who need help dealing with disabilities while farming. The next FVC conference will be held in November of 2022 in Tacoma, Washington.

Tennessee AgrAbility has teamed with the Tennessee Corn Growers Association, the Tennessee Soybean Promotion Board, and the Tennessee Association of Rescue Squads (TARS) to have a fully equipped grain bin training and response trailer. This trailer is equipped with all the necessary equipment to conduct the Tennessee Grain Bin Safety/Rescue Awareness trainings that have been conducted in Tennessee since March of 2020. Other trainings are being planned for 2022. Tennessee AgrAbility works with TARS to conduct these trainings for rescue squad members and producers that are interested in learning what to do in case of an entrapment situation. Tennessee AgrAbility appreciates the support of these groups. The trailer and equipment was recently used for training purposes in Dyer County.

The National AgrAbility Project celebrated its 30th anniversary this past October. The vision of AgrAbility is to enhance the quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, so that they, their families, and their communities continue to succeed in rural America. The Tennessee AgrAbility Project along with program partners joined in the celebration with other states in a virtual state fair via Twitter to celebrate and promote the National AgrAbility Project. You can visit the virtual state fair at #agrability30years.

Specialty Crop Profiles

The fifth of six proposed specialty crop profiles have been completed as a joint effort between the University of Kentucky’s Center for Crop Diversification and the University of Tennessee’s Center for Profitable Agriculture. This fifth profile, *Cider Apples in Tennessee: Basic Considerations*, covers market channels, economic considerations for costs and pricing, and production, including variety, site selection, and pest management. Special thanks to David Lockwood, professor and UT Extension fruit and nut crops specialist, and Les Humpal, UT Extension area farm management specialist, for serving as reviewers of this publication. The development of these profiles is the result of a Specialty Crops Block Grant received by the Center for Profitable Agriculture in 2018. The final crop profile is on mushrooms and will be ready soon.

The purpose in developing these profiles is to give specialty crop producers more information on specialty crops and to introduce producers to the range of profiles available through the Center for Crop Diversification. For more information on specialty crops in Tennessee, visit the Center for Profitable Agriculture’s website at [cpa.tennessee.edu](http://cpa.tennessee.edu) and click on program areas, then note the specialty crop profiles section.
Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (DBII) Update

Second Round of Funding

In August the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (SDBII) program awarded $61,966 to three dairy businesses in Tennessee as part of its second round of funding. The first and second rounds of funding provided a total of $270,000 and were only available to dairy businesses in Tennessee. Brief descriptions of the projects awarded in the second round are as follows:

- Purchase a vat pasteurizer, digital indicating thermometers, bottling machine, industrial chiller and packing supplies to begin producing bottled goat milk.
- Purchase cheese block molds for a cow dairy creamery and hire a consultant to train staff on an open-book financial approach. The training will help the company create awareness of the financial realities of the business among employees and empower them to come forward with innovative ideas to save on costs.
- Hire a consultant to conduct a marketing and feasibility study to explore adding the capacity to produce value-added dairy products on a cow dairy farm.

Third Round of Funding

The SDBII program is set to award $3,067,048.10 to dairy businesses in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky that applied for grants in the third round of funding from the program in October. After a rigorous review process twenty-four applications were determined to be of outstanding quality and were selected to receive funding from a pool of forty-six. The funded applications were submitted for projects involving the processing of cow, goat, and sheep’s milk into products including bottled milk, yogurt, ice cream, cheese, and soap. Applicants were allowed to apply for funding to support business planning, product innovation, and processing capacity expansion.

This third round of funding is the first grant funding opportunity where producers from North Carolina and Kentucky had the chance to apply. In 2022 the program will expand its reach to make grant funding opportunities available to all twelve southeastern states. SDBII is funded through an ongoing grant from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

In addition to the grant funding opportunities made available through the program, SDBII provides dairy businesses in the Southeast with a variety of free and low-cost instructional resources. These include an annual value-added dairy conference, a variety of workshops offering advice and insights on topics such as marketing, business plan development, regulations, and more. The program helps ensure that dairy industry professionals have the tools and information that they need to make informed decisions as they plan for growth.

2021 Sustainable Agriculture Summit

Eight UT Extension agents and specialists participated in the 2021 Sustainable Agriculture Summit, held in a virtual setting in November. This summit is the premier sustainability event for agriculture, convening the collective food and agriculture value chain to learn, develop, and advance a shared vision for a sustainable US food system. This summit brought together producers, suppliers, processors, university personnel, and the public sector among others so that each sector learn what will drive a sustainable future for the agriculture industry.

One UT Extension agent commented after participating in the summit, “The panels featuring farmers, agricultural policy groups, and food system experts were very beneficial. The most obvious takeaways applicable for my programming are how important it is for farmers to be involved in transforming our food system. Farmer concerns and issues need to be center stage. Collaboration among farmers, research institutions, and industry is crucial, as are logistics, traceability, and crop specific agro-ecological management practices. Education on environmental and sustainability practices, including social and economic sustainability must be a part of the evolving conversation. There is a need for both top-down and bottom-up research and no one size fits all solutions.”
Southern SARE funding was used to purchase forage kits for UT Extension agents to use in training producers about rotational grazing and the use of electric fencing. Calvin Bryant, county director for UT Extension Lawrence County, instructs an audience of producers from Giles and Lawrence Counties on types of wire, different posts, and chargers that can be used to construct this portable fencing. This past fall agents in five counties used these materials in their educational programming efforts. These counties included: Giles, Lawrence, Rutherford, Trousdale, and White counties. A total of 164 producers participated in these trainings. One producer attending in Rutherford County commented about the training, “It was great. Everyone seemed to really enjoy it. All it took was one person looking at something and the next thing we knew producers were talking to each other and asking questions. It was great.”

SRMEC Grant Project Summary

The Helping Tennessee Farmers Evaluate and Implement New Enterprises and Marketing Strategies project provided educational opportunities to help farmers assess and manage marketing risk by evaluating new product, enterprise, and market opportunities and implementing new or improved marketing strategies. Tennessee farmers interested in value-added food products, direct marketing, and agritourism enterprises were targeted for three types of workshops including:

1. Starting a Food Manufacturing Business in Tennessee workshops, helping farmers learn how to analyze, develop and market new value-added food products
2. MarketReady workshops, helping farmers learn what it takes to market products directly to restaurants, grocery stores, and other wholesale markets
3. Exploring Agritourism for Your Farm workshops, helping farmers learn how to analyze, develop, and market new agritourism enterprises

The project was originally designed to provide in-person, day-long workshops. Due to COVID-19, workshops were pivoted to online delivery through a series of shorter webinars. A total of 522 people participated with the following impacts:

- 208 reported an increased understanding of new enterprise or market opportunities and challenges
- 187 developed goals for implementing new or improved marketing strategies
- 118 used information learned to evaluate whether to pursue the development of a new product, enterprise, or marketing channel
- 44 implemented new or improved marketing strategies

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2018-70027-28585. Additional funding and support was provided by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.
The intent of this publication is to provide information to assist Tennessee farmers engaged in direct marketing, value-added agriculture enterprises, and agritourism with questions about business licenses and business tax. The authors have attempted to review and interpret the available information regarding business licenses and business tax from the Tennessee Department of Revenue and apply it to general farm situations.

Starting a food manufacturing business can seem like an overwhelming venture and people interested in developing a product often do not know where to start. This publication includes descriptions of technical assistance available to analyze and develop a food manufacturing business. It also includes a checklist to help farmers interested in manufacturing value-added farm products and other entrepreneurs interested in starting a food manufacturing business identify and track many of the steps involved in starting a business.

This fact sheet provides a decision tree to help producers and food manufacturers identify whether their plans are considered food service or food manufacturing and whether a food manufacturing permit and commercial kitchen are required. A basic summary of the major food manufacturing regulations by category and additional resources are provided to help Tennessee producers, industry partners, and other potential food manufacturers identify the regulations and regulating agencies involved in the process.

An increasing number of consumers are interested in purchasing local, farm-fresh eggs, creating opportunities for producers with small flocks to help meet this demand. Important aspects of business planning and risk management for small flock producers include understanding and complying with applicable regulations as well as providing safe products to consumers. This publication describes regulatory requirements for Tennessee producers raising, packing, and selling eggs from their own flocks of fewer than 3,000 laying hens.

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