



# CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we enter the new year and reflect on our activities and accomplishments of 2022, it is clear to me that our productivity during the past twelve months has contributed to growth and stability for many farm enterprises across the state. During 2022, the Center's staff provided leadership in the Dairy Business Innovation Initiative, specialty crop marketing, farmers market Boot Camp workshops, agritourism, Farm and Ferment, value-added producer grant workshops, and teamed up with colleagues from three other states in submitting a five-year USDA Food Business Center proposal. In addition, we continued collaborative outreach with UT Southern, developed additional programs and collaborations in the value-added beverage space, conducted a strategic planning retreat, and developed a plan for celebrating the Center's twenty-fifth anniversary in 2023. Rachel Painter joined our team as a marketing specialist, Hal Pepper retired, two Extension assistant positions were added, and several of us transitioned from interim roles. The Center also formally created an AgrAbility Team when Eileen Legault and Joetta White joined the Center in June. We also experienced changes with other colleagues and program partners as Justin Rhinehart became assistant dean for agriculture and natural resources Extension programs, Eric Mayberry became president of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, Andy Holt took on new responsibilities with Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) Business Development, and Jeff Aiken was named deputy commissioner of TDA. The programs we implemented and the partnerships we cultivated in 2022 will strengthen our work and success in 2023. Speaking of 2023, we are in full swing with workshops, consultations, and collaborations related to value-added dairy, meat marketing, cut flowers, Farm and Ferment, training sessions for Extension agents, AgrAbility, Sustainable Agriculture, and the Pick TN Conference. We are busy folks, and I hope our paths cross with you soon as we travel the state doing our work.



## Hal Pepper Retirement Celebration

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After devoting more than thirty-seven years to Extension work, the Center for Profitable Agriculture's Hal Pepper retired November 30, 2022. Hal worked for twenty-five years as an Extension economist with Auburn University conducting farm financial analysis for central Alabama farmers. He came to the Center in February 2010 as a value-added financial specialist. Hal developed expertise with sales tax issues, founded the value-added producer grant workshops, molded the Farmers Market Boot Camp and Farmers Market Manager Training programs, laid the groundwork for Tennessee's Dairy Business Innovation Initiative, and helped simplify tricky regulatory issues including poultry processing exemptions. Hal has been a trusted friend to many and has positively impacted Tennessee farm families and the agriculture industry. The Center's staff and some close family members of Hal's gathered for a celebratory breakfast in late November at Puckett's Restaurant in Downtown Columbia. The CPA staff wishes Hal all the best as he takes this next step in life.

## Kim Giorgio Celebrates 20 Years with the CPA

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November 18, 2022, marked the twenty-year anniversary with the University of Tennessee and the Center for Profitable Agriculture for Kim Giorgio. Kim joined the Center as principal secretary in 2003 and currently serves as administrative specialist II. She is a Certified Administrative Professional (CAP), earning this honor in 2005. Kim was part of the founding committee for the Tennessee Extension Association of Administrative Professionals (TEAAP); was the recipient of the "Charles and Patricia Goan Excellence in Customer Service" award in 2018; and was credited with the naming of DASH (Dynamic Administrative Systems for Higher Ed), replacing IRIS as the university systems applications and products platform. Kim's "calling card" is providing wonderful customer service to agents, specialists, and producers who call or come by the office. Congratulations to Kim for her twentieth anniversary of work and service to the University of Tennessee and the Center for Profitable Agriculture.



UT Extension Dean Emeritus Charlie Goan recently shared his congratulations to Kim on her twenty-year anniversary with Extension and the Center for Profitable Agriculture.

## Painter Recognized for Five Years of Service

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Rachel Painter was recently recognized for completing five years of service with University of Tennessee Extension. Rachel began her career as an Extension agent in Rutherford County, working in residential and consumer horticulture. In 2020, Rachel was presented with the National Master Gardener Distinguished Early Career Award. In May 2022, Rachel joined the Center for Profitable Agriculture staff as a statewide Extension Specialist for value-added marketing.

## Center Welcomes Extension Assistants

We are excited to welcome in January two new Extension assistants to our Value-Added Agriculture Team. Alaina Boyd and James Harlan will be working on value-added dairy projects for the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative and other value-added work. If you have a chance to welcome them, they will be attending several events for the Center for Profitable Agriculture in the near future, such as Tennessee Farm and Ferment, Sustainable Agriculture Inservice Training, and the Pick TN Conference.



## Tennessee Extension Professional Development Conference



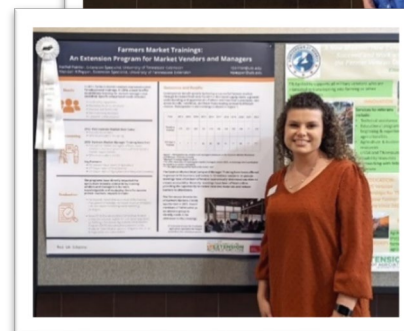
The staff members of the Center for Profitable Agriculture participated in the 2022 UT and TSU Extension Professional Development Conference held in Chattanooga in November. Over 700 Extension professionals were in attendance. The conference featured more than 100 professional development sessions, an educational poster session, and time to visit with co-workers to share ideas about programming. Representing the Center for Profitable Agriculture in the photo at left are (seated, L-R) Kim Giorgio, administrative specialist; Eileen Legault, Eastern Region specialist for TN AgrAbility; (standing L-R) Rob Holland, Center director; Troy Dugger, program coordinator; Joetta T. White, Western Region specialist for TN AgrAbility; and Megan Leffew, value-added agriculture marketing specialist.

## Tennessee Extension Professional Development Conference Poster Session



The Tennessee Extension Professional Development Conference held November 2022 in Chattanooga featured an educational poster session for agents/specialists to highlight an area of work that has had an impact on program participants. The four categories for posters were Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences, Extension 4-H and Community Economic Development. Placing first

in the Community Economic Development division was Megan Leffew, Center for Profitable Agriculture Extension specialist III and Mark Morgan, Department of Food Science, with their poster “Helping Tennessee Farmers Evaluate and Implement New Enterprises and Marketing Strategies.” Receiving second place in the Agriculture and Natural Resources division was Joetta T. White, AgrAbility area specialist with the Center, with her poster featuring results from the Tennessee Grain Bin Safety and Rescue Awareness Training held across Tennessee. The Center’s Rachel Painter, Extension Specialist I, and Hal Pepper, Extension Specialist II, received third place in the Agriculture and Natural Resources division with their poster on the series of Farmers Market Trainings for Market Vendors and Managers.





## Vines to Wines In-Service Training Sponsored by Tennessee Farm Winegrowers Alliance

Through a partnership with the Tennessee Farm Winegrowers Alliance, Center for Profitable Agriculture marketing specialist Rachel Painter facilitated an in-service training Friday, September 23. UT Extension Monroe County agent Jonathan Rhea and the Extension Fruit and Vegetable Workgroup assisted with hosting the day-long training in Madisonville, Tennessee. At the event, twenty-one Extension agents and specialists learned about producing and marketing muscadines. The training



included presentations by Extension specialist and professor Dave Lockwood on production and harvest decisions, Rachel Painter on marketing grapes and wine in Tennessee, and a demonstration of grape harvest equipment on-site at Tsali Notch Vineyard. Vineyard owner Cary Cox and the Alliance's Executive Director Laura Swanson shared information about the new [Tennessee Wine Trail](#) and [Wineries of Tennessee Startup Guide](#). A second In-service training will take place on February 9 and 10 in West Tennessee to continue these efforts to provide Extension agents with opportunities to learn and connect with the grape and wine industry in Tennessee.



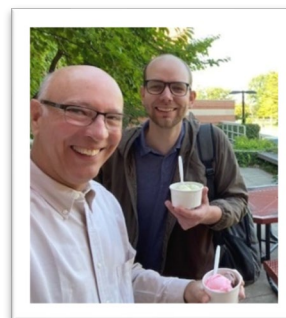
## Farmers Market Manager Training Webinar



Forty-six participants from thirty-two counties took part in the UT Extension Farmers Market Manager Training webinar on December 2. The program included information about best practices for market managers, funding opportunities, and the produce safety program. The program concluded with a panel discussion featuring the Tennessee Association of Farmers Markets, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and UT Extension. Speakers included Rachel Painter, Megan Bruch-Leffew, and Kyla Adkins. A recording of the training is available on the [Center for Profitable Agriculture YouTube channel](#).

## Visit to World Dairy Expo

Hal Pepper and Shep Stearns, value-added dairy Extension specialist, attended the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin, on October 5-6. They connected with University of Wisconsin colleagues and toured the Babcock Dairy Plant and Center for Dairy Research. They also toured several dairy farms and creameries in the surrounding area as part of a scouting trip for a 2023 bus tour next fall.



## Value-Added Foods Presentation at Tennessee Local Food Summit

Megan Leffew teamed up with Patricia Szappanos-Hart from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Consumer and Industry Services to teach a session at the [Tennessee Local Food Summit](#) on December 2 in Lebanon, Tennessee. The session called Creating Value-Added Products covered an introduction to value-added agriculture, steps to analyzing and developing a value-added enterprise, and information about the new Tennessee Food Freedom Act and food manufacturing regulations. Nineteen people attended the session.



October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month! TN AgrAbility, in collaboration with the TN Department of Human Services, celebrated by hosting the Resource Ability Assistive Technology Access Fair in Lebanon, Tennessee. This annual event showcases the importance of assistive technology in the lives of people with different abilities. The Fair helps promote partnerships between TN AgrAbility, TN Technology Access Program, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Farmer Veteran Coalition of TN, who all help farmers to continue to make a living doing what they love, and that love is farming.

Charley Jordan of Jordan Farms in Montgomery County and Carol McDonald, assistant commissioner for Policy and Legislation with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, look at the assortment of hand tools available to producers that suffer with hand, back, and knee problems. These tools can assist them in continuing to work around their farm while causing less stress to bones and joints.

[Veteran Services at UTIA | UTIA \(tennessee.edu\)](http://UTIA.tennessee.edu)



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