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# CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

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Content from October - December 2025



# CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



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## Center Represented at Tennessee Valley Ag Club Meeting

Center staff were in attendance for the October meeting of the Tennessee Valley Agriculture Club held at the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation in Columbia, TN. This was the third meeting of 2025 for the club.

Guest speakers for the event included Aaron Smith, interim assistant dean of UT Extension, as well as Kevin Hensley, director of public policy for Tennessee Farm Bureau.

UTIA personnel instrumental in steering the Tennessee Valley Ag Club include Giles County UT-TSU Extension County Director Wheeler McCulloch, Lawrence County UT-TSU Extension County Director Calvin Bryant, UTIA Director of Development Keith Harrison, and Center for Profitable Agriculture director Rob Holland. Additional collaborators include Dan Strasser and Lettie McCord of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation; Boyd Barker, business development consultant with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture; and Scott Lewis with Farm Credit.



**Above:** Center staff pose for a photo at the Tennessee Valley Agriculture Club meeting. Pictured (L - R) are program coordinator Troy Dugger, Extension specialist Megan Leffew, Center director and Extension specialist Rob Holland, Extension specialist Kortni Blalock, Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham, and program assistant Kim Giorgio.



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## **Mooneyham Represents at National Egg Day Cook-Off**

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Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham represented the Center at the 2025 Omelet Cook-Off held in Nashville in October.

Hosted by the Farm & Forest Families of Tennessee, this annual event celebrates National Egg Day each year. Approximately 100 individuals were in attendance for the 2025 event held at the Governor's residence.

## **Northeast Beef Expo Held in October in Greeneville**

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Extension specialist Kortni Blalock represented the Center at the 2025 Northeast Tennessee Beef Expo held at the Clyde Austin 4-H Center in Greeneville on October 16. Blalock shared about value-added resources and programming from the Center while staffing an exhibit on display to over 100 individuals in attendance.

## **Tennessee Farmer of the Year Program Revitalized**

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The Tennessee Farmer of the Year award program has been reimagined for 2026. An annual recognition developed collaboratively by UT Extension and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation that began in 1990, the Farmer of the Year program recognized one outstanding farmer each year until 2024. Serving as chair of the steering committee, Center director Rob Holland has been heavily involved in the rebranding and development of the revitalized state program.

Beginning in 2026, one finalist from each of the state's grand divisions will be chosen for consideration for the award. Of those three finalists, only one will be named farmer of the year.

Applications for Tennessee Farmer of the Year are now open and must be submitted no later than March 1, 2026. Forms and complete details are available online at [tnfarmbureau.org/tennessee-farmer-of-the-year](https://tnfarmbureau.org/tennessee-farmer-of-the-year).

The Tennessee Farmer of the Year is expected to make a number appearances at various agricultural events, including the Tennessee State Fair, UT Institute of Agriculture's annual Ag Day celebration, Tennessee Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, and more.





## Mooneyham Educates on Value-Added at Maple School

Extension Specialist Liz Mooneyham took part in the first annual Maple School held at the UT Extension Office in Sullivan County on November 14 and 15. The two-day educational event brought together maple syrup producers from across the region to learn about best practices in maple production, from tapping and sap collection to finishing and bottling.

Mooneyham gave a presentation on opportunities in value-added agriculture for maple syrup producers alongside Mark Morgan, professor and processing Extension specialist at the University of Tennessee. Their session explored value-added opportunities for maple syrup producers, including regulatory considerations and marketing strategies for small-scale producers looking to expand their product offerings.

The event drew forty attendees and featured hands-on demonstrations at Maple Grove Farm of Afton, as well as presentations from industry experts and university faculty. Other topics included equipment for small-scale production, sap collection and storage, alternative tree syrups, forest management, and cooking with maple products.



**Above:** Maple School participants learn from technical assistance providers at the event in Blountville. Photo by Melody Rose.



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## Corwin Joins CPA Staff as Extension Assistant

Shelby Corwin joined CPA as the Center's new Extension assistant in Value-Added Agriculture in November 2025.

Prior to her new role with UT Extension, Corwin served in a variety of customer and public service roles. Originally from West Tennessee, Corwin earned a Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness from Middle Tennessee State University.

Corwin currently resides in Columbia with her family.

Please join us in welcoming Shelby to the UT Extension family!



**Above:** Extension assistant Shelby Corwin poses for a photo.



## Jared Receives Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award

Center director, Rob Holland, recently presented the 2025 Gamma Sigma Delta Distinguished Service Award to John Jared.

Jared was an early supporter and advocate of the Center for Profitable Agriculture and continues as a strong advocate today. Jared is a native of Baxter in Putnam County. After earning his bachelor's from Tennessee Tech University, he earned his master's and PhD from the University of Tennessee.

Jared served for many years in the UT Department of Plant Sciences as the Extension soils specialist. He also served as Extension agriculture and natural resources (ANR) program leader in the Eastern Region and later as Extension regional director in the Cumberland Region. After providing distinguished service to UT Extension for more than thirty years, in retirement, Jared is an active leader in the Tennessee Farm Bureau, currently serving as president of the Knox County Farm Bureau. In addition, he has provided distinguished service as a volunteer at the TN Valley A&I Fair for more than fifty years.

Jared had a successful and impactful career with UT Extension. He developed meaningful collaborations and cultivated strong relationships with those he served and those he led. He has positively contributed to Tennessee agriculture, and he has represented the University of Tennessee extremely well as an employee, retiree, and alumnus.



**Above:** Center director Rob Holland presented Dr. John Jared the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award in November 2025.





## Value-Added Producer Grant Workshop Held in December

Thirty value-added producers (in-person or online) attended the Insight to Developing a Strong Application for the USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) workshop held in Rutherford County on December 11. This workshop was designed to help producers with value-added enterprises develop their application for this grant. A total of fifty-one participants joined the program, attending either the live session in Murfreesboro or virtually via Zoom.

Producers received an overview of the grant program, received tips for developing a strong application, heard from recent recipients of the grant, went through the new on-line application portal and were informed of the scoring criteria used with each application.

Sreedhar Upendram, associate professor in agricultural and resource economics; Les Humpal, Extension specialist in the UT Center of Farm Management; Troy Dugger, program coordinator in the Center for Profitable Agriculture; Chuck Morris, rural development state business specialist for USDA; and Alaina Boyd, Extension Specialist with CPA were involved in conducting this workshop



**Above:** Program coordinator Troy Dugger addresses attendees at the Value-Added Producer Grant Workshop held at the Rutherford County Extension office.





## CPA Team Spirit Day

As part of a recent teambuilding exercise in December, Center staff took part in a unique opportunity dubbed “CPA Team Spirit Day.”

Center staff dressed in their favorite team attire and posed for a group photo to commemorate the occasion.



**Top:** Center staff pose for a photo during CPA Team Spirit Day. Pictured L - R (Top Row) are Extension specialist Alaina Boyd, Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham, Extension assistant Shelby Corwin, Extension specialist Kortni Blalock, program assistant Kim Giorgio. Pictured L - R (Bottom Row) are center director and Extension specialist Rob Holland, program coordinator Troy Dugger, and business manager Aaron Buckley.

## TN Agritourism Association Holds Quarterly Meeting in AL

CPA was well represented in December at the Tennessee Agritourism Association’s Quarterly Meeting held in Cullman, AL.

Extension specialist Megan Leffew and Extension assistant Shelby Corwin participated in this educational opportunity alongside TAA members. Approximately twenty-five individuals were in attendance.

Attendees visited the Cullman Christkindlmarkt to learn more about seasonal agritourism opportunities.



**Bottom:** Extension specialist Megan Leffew and Extension assistant Shelby Corwin pose in Cullman, AL, at the TAA quarterly meeting..



## Dugger Retires After Decades-Long Extension Career

Troy Dugger served as program coordinator within the Center since 2018.

Dugger retired from his career with the Center and UT Extension on December 31 after serving both UT Extension and Tennessee's producers for more than four decades. Prior to his time at the Center, Dugger served as both a 4-H and adult agriculture agent in Hickman County before being appointed as director of UT-TSU Hickman County Extension.

Troy has been a vital part of the Center's ongoing educational programs and value-added projects. He assisted in many of the outreach programs, seminars, and workshops conducted across the state through the years. Most notably, he served as state coordinator for the Tennessee Sustainable Agriculture and Research Education program. In addition, Troy served as the state coordinator for the Tennessee AgrAbility program formerly housed within the Center until 2025.

We wish Troy all the best in his future endeavors and are very appreciative of all the hard work he put in during his time with the Center.



**Left:** Dugger poses with 4-H students during his time as UT-TSU Extension Hickman County agent.



**Right:** Dugger addresses the crowd at the Center's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary held at the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation in 2023.





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## Interactive Map - Center Quarterly Activity by County

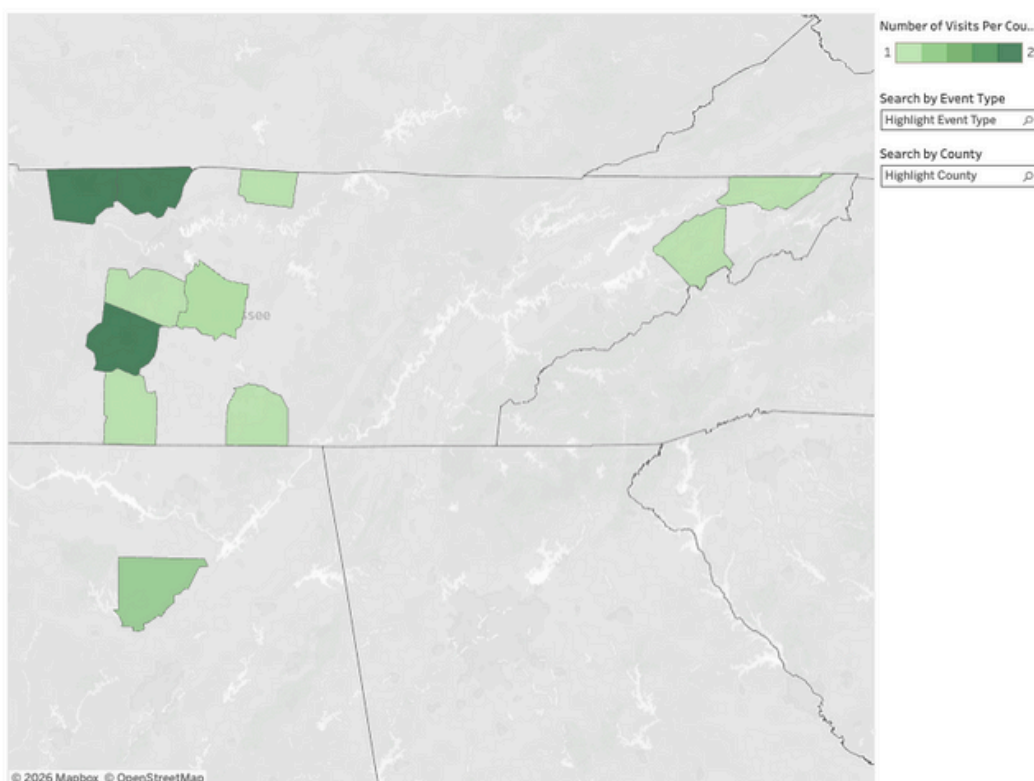
An interactive map highlighting the Center for Profitable Agriculture's activity (including all exhibits, farm visits, and in-person presentations or teachings) by county visited from October to December 2025 is now available.

A total of ten farm visits were conducted during the quarter across seven counties. A total of nine in-person teachings or presentations were held across seven counties with two Zoom teachings offered by Center staff during the quarter. The Center's exhibit was featured at four trade shows or industry events during the quarter.

Click here to [access the interactive Tableau visualization shown below](#) (if viewing in PDF format). A new browser window will open after you follow the link. You may hover over each shaded county to learn more information about Center activities for this quarter once the link opens in a new window.

### Summary of Center for Profitable Agriculture Activity from October - December 2025 by Tennessee County

(includes exhibits, farm visits, and in-person teachings or presentations)





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## Questions?

Contact Alaina Boyd at  
[acboyd@utk.edu](mailto:acboyd@utk.edu) or visit  
us at [tiny.utk.edu/cpa](http://tiny.utk.edu/cpa)!



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