
CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



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Content from January - March 2026



CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



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2026 Farm and Ferment Held in January

The 2026 Tennessee Farm and Ferment event was held on January 5 at the Rutherford County Extension office in Murfreesboro with a total of 105 people in attendance.

Led by Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham, the event aimed to connect farmers, distillers, winemakers, and brewers with other local beverage producers seeking sourcing opportunities.



Top: Crowd of onlookers at Farm and Ferment listening to speakers from various industry organizations.

The event brought together alcoholic beverage industry leaders together for a daylong educational event. Participants heard updates from the Center for Profitable Agriculture and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, legal considerations presented by attorneys Will Cheek and Rob Pinson, and panels on non-alcoholic and low-alcoholic beverages, along with best practices in beverage production. The event also featured a Lunch and Learn program with presentations from AgResearch scientist and assistant professor Pierre Davadant and Extension specialist Stephan Sommer.

TN Dairy Producers Association Met in February

The Tennessee Dairy Producers Association annual meeting was held in Lebanon at the James E. Ward Agricultural Center on February 27.

Governor Bill Lee was in attendance and addressed the crowd at the beginning of the program. Extension specialist Ansley Roper of the UT Center for Dairy Advancement and Sustainability (CDAS) discussed Southeastern Dairy Business Innovation Initiative (SDBII) resources available to Tennessee dairy producers.

Extension specialist Alaina Boyd and Extension assistant Shelby Corwin represented the Center and networked with industry leaders at this event.



Bottom: Governor Bill Lee addresses crowd at the annual dairy producers' meeting in Lebanon.



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Webinars for Direct-to-Consumer Beef Sales Launch in Spring

The Farm to Fork: Considerations for Direct-to-Consumer Beef Sales Webinar Series included six sessions in February and March 2026. A total of 229 people registered for the series that was coordinated by the Center's Megan Leffew and Livestock Marketing Area Specialist Anthony Shelton. Live attendance ranged from 60 to 103 participants with recordings being shared for later viewing for those who could not join live. The teaching team included Leffew, Shelton, and the following:

- Valerie Bass, Tennessee Beef Industry Council
- Kortni Blalock, Center for Profitable Agriculture
- Charley Martinez, UT Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
- Katie Mason, UT Department of Animal Science
- Troy Rowan, UT Department of Animal Science
- Jacob Tipton, Tennessee Department of Agriculture
- Kelly Vierck, UT Department of Animal Science
- Ty Wolaver, UT Center of Farm Management

The series culminated with a producer/processor panel including Chad Grubbs from Potts Meats, Ben Neale from Light Hill Meats, and Mike Southerland from the Appalachian Producer's Cooperative.

Exploring Agritourism for Your Farm Webinar Series

The new year started early with a five-session webinar series called Exploring Agritourism for Your Farm coordinated by Extension Specialist Megan Leffew. The series included topics such as an introduction to agritourism, business planning, key concepts for marketing and branding, risk management, regulatory considerations, and resources for agritourism operations. Speakers included Curtis Mahnkin from the University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management, Kacey Troup from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and Kortni Blalock and Megan Leffew from the Center for Profitable Agriculture. The final session featured Amy Ladd from Lucky Ladd Farms and Carl Chaney from Chaney's Dairy Barn sharing their experiences and lessons learned.

A total of 145 people registered for the series. Between 40 and 64 people attended each live session, and session records have received a total of 192 views as of the end of March.

The series was conducted as part of the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative.



NAFDMA Professional Development Opportunity

Nine value-added dairy producers from Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Virginia were provided scholarships to participate in the 2026 NAFDMA Convention and Expo in Orlando, Florida. This yearly conference, with a focus on direct farm marketing and agritourism, provides a variety of educational sessions, farm tours, networking opportunities, and a trade show with themes related to marketing, business management, leadership, and industry innovation.

The Center's Troy Dugger, Shelby Corwin, and Aaron Buckley coordinated the scholarship opportunity. Corwin, along with Extension Specialists Kortni Blalock, Alaina Boyd and Megan Leffew, joined in learning beside the producers at the conference and facilitated a networking discussion with the scholarship recipients during the event. Business Development Consultant with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Kacey Troup, also participated in the conference and joined the group discussion.

Funding for participation in this educational program was made possible, in part, by the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service through the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative.



Above: Center staff and NAFDMA Professional Development Scholarship recipients pose for a photo at the 2026 NAFDMA Convention and Expo in Orlando, Florida in February 2026.



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Summary of Sustainable Ag In-Service Evaluations

During the winter of 2026, thirty-nine County Extension Agents with programming responsibility in Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) participated in training focused on sustainable and value-added agriculture. The in-service training sessions were conducted regionally in three different locations across the state, with ten agents trained in the Western Region, seventeen in the Central Region, and twelve in the Eastern Region. The teaching agenda consisted of nine topics, including Business License and Sales Tax Considerations and Pricing Products with a Purpose. Those involved in conducting the training and providing presentations included Rob Holland, Troy Dugger, and Kim Giorgio representing Tennessee Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), and Megan Leffew, Alaina Boyd, Liz Mooneyham, and Kortni Blalock with the Center for Profitable Agriculture, and Les Humpal, Kim Morgan, Catherine Rubin, Sam Bohn, Mark Morgan, and Damla Dag representing collaborating agencies and industry partners. At the conclusion of each session, participants were asked to evaluate the program.

When asked to use a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is limited and 5 is excellent, to consider the entirety of the training session and rate the overall confidence, knowledge, and/or ability in the overall subject matter before and after the training, responses from participants averaged 3.13 before and 4.27 after, representing an increase of 1.14 as a result of the training. When asked whether the time allocated to cover the subject matter in the in-service training was sufficient, 97.6 percent of the responses indicated that the allocation was about right. When asked to use a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is 'never,' and 5 is 'frequently,' to rate how often/likely they are to utilize the information provided in the training in their County educational programming, responses averaged 4.31.

When asked to indicate some of the most valuable parts/presentations/topics of the in-service training, the following responses were provided:

- Information to pass on to producers.
- All topics were helpful, especially sales tax and TN Food Freedom Act details and E-commerce.
- Labeling, marketing, meat sales and meat regulations, business license and printed materials.
- E-commerce and raw milk.
- Going over the various exemptions was some much-needed knowledge.



Spring '26 Sustainable Agriculture In-Service Photos



Above: Pictured (L - R) are Tennessee Department of Agriculture Consumer and Industry Services Sam Bohn and Cathy Rubin, Extension Assistant Professor Damla Dag, and Professor Mark Morgan.



Below: Pictured (L - R) are Extension specialist and Center director Rob Holland, Extension specialist Megan Leffew, Program Coordinator Troy Dugger, Extension specialist Alaina Boyd, Extension specialist Kortni Blalock, Extension assistant Shelby Corwin, and Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham.



Exploring Agritourism for Your Farm: On-farm Insights

Extension Assistant Shelby Corwin and Specialists Megan Leffew and Alaina Boyd coordinated and facilitated the Exploring Agritourism for Your Farm: On-Farm Insights Tour. Held on March 25, this day-long event took forty participants from Tennessee, Mississippi and Kentucky to three agritourism operations in middle Tennessee.

The purpose of this program was to enable value-added entrepreneurs interested in implementing agritourism as part of their farm businesses to learn from established agritourism operators about their experience offerings, factors for success, lessons learned, and more.

Tour stops included Hatcher Family Dairy in College Grove, Nash Family Creamery in Chapel Hill, and Lucky Ladd Farms in Eagleville. Industry partners and Extension personnel from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the University of Kentucky Department of Agricultural Economics' MarketReady Producer Training Program shared information about their programs and available resources.

Funding for this program was made possible, in part, through the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative.



Above: On-farm Insights program participants view the Lely milking robots at Hatcher Family Dairy in College Grove, Tennessee as part of the tour.



SARE Provides Professional Development Opportunities

In the first quarter of 2026, Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) provided professional development opportunities for nineteen Extension agents, specialists and agriculture professionals, to attend trainings in the Southeast. Sixteen counties from Tennessee were represented.

Topics ranged from production strategies, regulatory compliance, pest management, soil health, fruit pruning methods, and technology improvements.

Participants responded that they gained excellent educational training, resources and ideas to take back and apply to their county programming. The following training events were attended:

- Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference - Savannah, Georgia
- Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference - Bowling Green, Kentucky
- Pick Tennessee Conference - Lebanon, Tennessee
- Southern Small Fruit Pruning Training - Castle Hayne, North Carolina
- Southern Cover Crops Conference - Gainesville, Florida



Left: Attendees at the Southern Small Fruit Pruning Training witness a pruning demonstration. Photo by Seth Whitehouse.



Right: Attendees participating in an educational session at the Southern Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference. Photo by Evangelon James.



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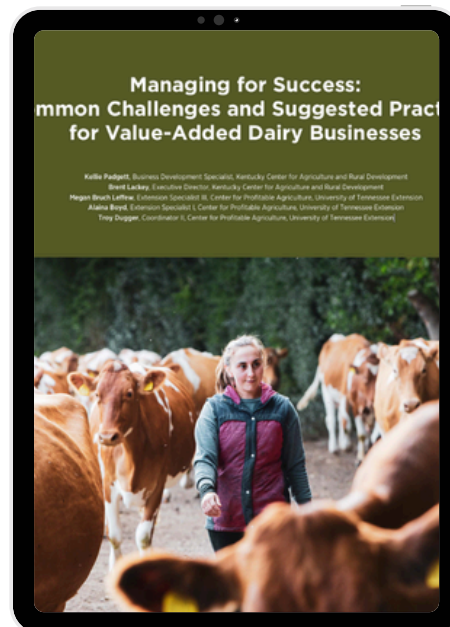
New Extension Publication Available from Center

A new educational publication is now available from the Center.

PB 1934 "Managing for Success: Common Challenges and Suggested Practices for Value-Added Dairy Businesses" was developed by Kellie Padgett and Brent Lackey of the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (KCARD), along with Extension specialists Megan Leffew and Alaina Boyd, and Coordinator Troy Dugger of the UT Center for Profitable Agriculture.

This publication provides guidance to value-added dairy producers seeking information on how to navigate common management challenges and implement best practices for their businesses. This Extension publication is currently available online.

Access this publication online at tiny.utk.edu/ManagingForSuccess.



Top: Graphic showcasing cover of new Extension publication.

Tennessee Extension Month - March 2026

March was Extension Month in Tennessee. The Center staff are proud to be a part of UT Extension, and look forward to providing Real. Life. Solutions. for the producers and value-added entrepreneurs that they serve throughout the entire year.

A variety of social media posts were shared to the Center's social media channels throughout March in honor of Extension Month. To view these posts, visit or subscribe to our Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube channels.



Top: Social media image used by CPA for Extension Month.



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New Staff Highlighted in “Get to Know CPA” Videos

To celebrate Extension Month in 2026, the Center created two new “Get to Know CPA” videos highlighting staff members who joined CPA in the last year. Originally created in March 2024, the purpose of these “Get to Know CPA” videos was to introduce Center staff and raise awareness about the work that the Center does to support farm families across Tennessee.

Two new videos were released to the Center’s YouTube channel and posted as reels to social media in March.

To view the recent additions to the “Get to Know CPA” playlist on YouTube, visit the following link: tiny.utk.edu/GetToKnowCPA





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Positions Open at the Center

The Center is currently hiring for two full-time positions:

- Extension Specialist, Tennessee Landowner Education
- Extension Specialist, New Farm Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

To learn more about these positions and view the job announcements, please visit tiny.utk.edu/JoinCPA.

APPLY NOW

Extension Specialist
Tennessee Landowner Education

Extension Specialist
New Farm Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

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Farm Bureau
Tennessee

Visit cpa.tennessee.edu for more information.

Middle: Flyer advertising two open job positions at the Center for Profitable Agriculture.



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Questions?

Contact Alaina Boyd at
acboyd@utk.edu or visit
us at tiny.utk.edu/cpa!



Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.