
CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



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CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



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Center Represented at Extension Risk Management Conference

Extension specialists Kortni Blalock, Alaina Boyd, and Liz Mooneyham recently represented the Center in Salt Lake City, Utah at the 2026 Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) National Conference.

Blalock, Boyd, and Mooneyham were recipients of this year's travel scholarship offered by ERME's southern region center, the Southern Risk Management Education Center housed within the University of Arkansas.

Conference attendees were able to learn from and network with other Extension personnel while attending educational sessions related to risk management for farmers and value-added entrepreneurs. A concurrent session on assessing value-added opportunities for farms and ranches was presented by Extension personnel at Utah State University.



Above: Extension specialists (pictured L - R) Kortni Blalock, Liz Mooneyham, and Alaina Boyd pose for a photo at the 2026 ERME National Conference.



SDBII Pacific Coast Experiential Learning Course Held in April

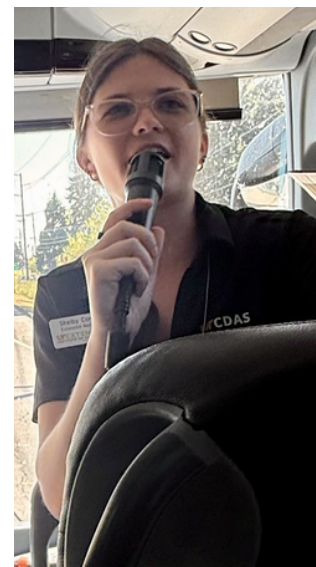
Various UT Extension personnel were involved in the planning and facilitation of the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative (SDBII)'s recent Pacific Northwest Experiential Learning Course held across Oregon in April 2026.

This unique educational opportunity featured a total of eleven site visits across five days of programming. SDBII staff from both the UT Department of Animal Science and the UT Center for Profitable Agriculture accompanied a total of thirty-three dairy producers, processors, and technical assistance providers from across the southeastern United States on the program.

This learning course provided participants with an opportunity to network and learn from fellow dairy producers and processors in the Southeast region who have received past grant funding from SDBII.

Approximately thirty-eight individuals were in attendance for the duration of the experiential learning course. Of the thirty-eight SDBII program participants, a total of thirteen were from Tennessee.

Extension personnel involved in the planning and facilitation of this program included UT Extension specialists Liz Eckelkamp, Shep Stearns, Ansley Roper, Alaina Boyd and Extension assistant Shelby Corwin.



Top Right: Extension assistant Shelby Corwin (UT Center for Profitable Agriculture) provides an educational session to more than thirty-five program participants related to farm-to-school sales while traveling on the bus across Oregon in April 2026.



Above: Participants in the SDBII Pacific Northwest Experiential Learning Course pose for a photo at the 2026 Oregon Cheese Festival.



Tennessee Valley Ag Club April Meeting in Lincoln County

More than sixty participants recently attended the Tennessee Valley Agriculture Club meeting held on April 7 in Lincoln County at Deer Valley Farm. The Tennessee Valley Agriculture Club targets individuals interested in agriculture from within a five-county area including Lincoln, Giles, Lawrence, Maury, and Marshall counties.

The April meeting of the Tennessee Valley Agriculture Club marked the fifth rotation within the club's five-county area within the last year. Previous meetings were held in Giles, Lawrence, Maury, and Marshall counties.

Heather Slayton, state forester with the Tennessee Division of Forestry, served as the luncheon speaker at the event co-hosted by UT Extension, Farm Credit Mid-America, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and the Tennessee Farm Bureau. Educational topics discussed during the meeting included the history and impact of Tennessee's forest industry.

UTIA personnel instrumental in hosting the event included Lincoln County UT-TSU Extension County Director Bruce Steelman; Lawrence County UT-TSU Extension County Director Calvin Bryant; and Center for Profitable Agriculture Director Rob Holland. Additional collaborators included leadership from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Farm Credit Mid-America, and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation.



Above: Attendees at the Tennessee Valley Agriculture Club's April meeting, photographed at Deer Valley Farm in Fayetteville.



2026 Farmers Market Vendor Boot Camp Webinars

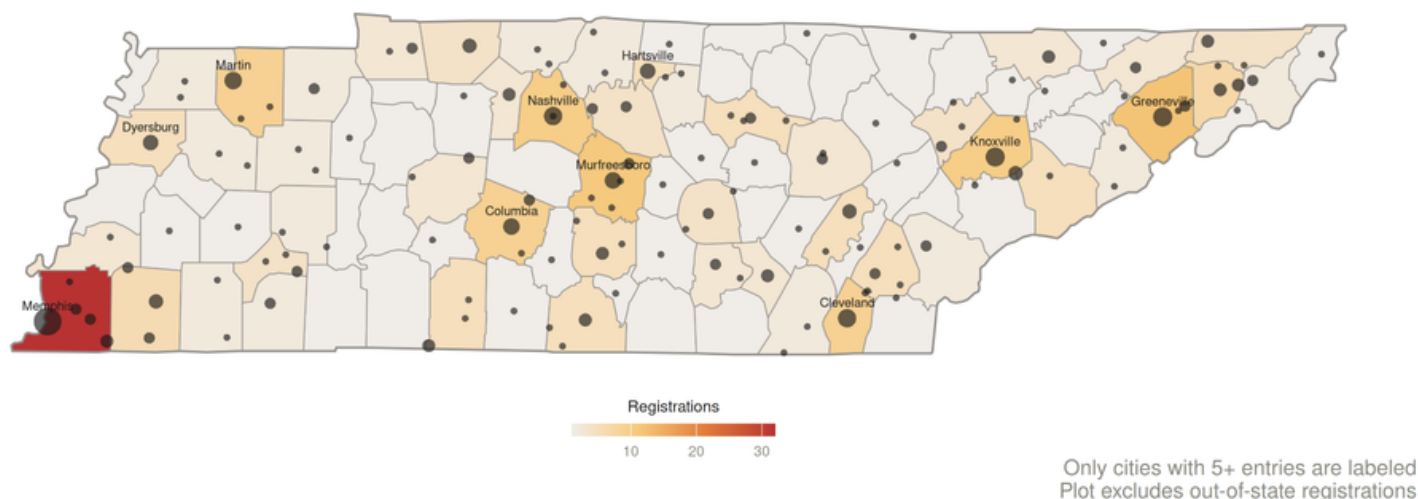
The Center for Profitable Agriculture hosted a six-session Tennessee Farmers Market Vendor Boot Camp webinar series from March to May 2026. With a total of 375 participants, topics included marketing, regulations, and resources for farmers market vendors. A total of seventy-four Tennessee counties were represented among registrants for this year's webinar series.

Participation during the live sessions averaged a total of sixty-three attendees with more than 685 total YouTube views across all sessions at the time of publication. The teaching team included Extension Specialists Liz Mooneyham, Kortni Blalock, and Alaina Boyd (UT Center for Profitable Agriculture); Associate Professors Mark Morgan and Damla Dag Ertop (UT Department of Food Science); Melvin Haas (Tennessee Department of Health); Extension Specialist Eryn Bell (UT Center of Farm Management); and Associate Professor Margarita Velandia (UT Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics).

Session recordings may now be accessed on the Center's YouTube Channel at tiny.utk.edu/FMBC26.

2026 Farmers Market Vendor Bootcamp Webinar Series

265 TN registrations across 74 counties



Above: A heatmap developed by Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham showcasing statewide program participation for the 2026 Farmers Market Vendor Bootcamp webinar series.



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2026 Bradley County Farmers Market Annual Kickoff

Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham spoke on creating an irresistible booth presence for farmers market vendors at the Bradley County Farmers Market Annual Kickoff Meeting held on June 3, 2026.

Twenty-six program participants learned about how to leverage knowing your customer, brand identity, social media marketing, and product presentation in their farmers market vendor strategies.

Center Represented at Nineteenth Annual Fruits of the Backyard

The Center was recently represented at the nineteenth annual Fruits of the Backyard Field Day held at the Middle Tennessee Research and Education Center on June 9. Extension specialist Liz Mooneyham showcased the Center's exhibit and networked with attendees who enjoyed a day of hands-on activity and educational sessions related to specialty crops.

Holland and Leffew Attend Global Agritourism Conference

In June, Extension specialists Megan Leffew and Rob Holland represented the Center at the Global Agritourism Conference in Scotland. Over 550 delegates representing more than fifty countries took part in the international event.

As part of the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative, Leffew and Holland visited the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh where Scottish farm and value-added products were highlighted via livestock and equine shows, demonstrations, educational activities for children, informational exhibits and product sampling.

Leffew and Holland participated in farm visits and learned from agritourism operators at nine Scottish farms who shared about their agricultural production, direct farm marketing, and agritourism offerings. This included innovative dairy product marketing strategies including milk and milkshake vending machines.

The experience concluded with two days of additional networking and educational sessions in Aberdeen. Sessions explored various country benchmarking, policy discussions, and opportunities and challenges for agritourism operations across the world. Work by Leffew and Tennessee Farm Bureau's Kevin Hensley, "Applying Tennessee's Definition of Agriculture to Questions of Land Use Regarding Agritourism," was highlighted for delegates in the conference app.



Global Agritourism Conference Photos - June 2026



Left: Extension specialists Rob Holland and Megan Leffew pictured at the Global Agritourism Conference in Scotland in June 2026.



Right: A milk vending machine at Forest Farm, Scotland's longest established organic dairy farm.



Bottom: A farm sign welcoming guests to Forest Farm, an organic dairy farm, in Scotland.



Jepson Named Tennessee Farmer of the Year for 2026

The 2026 Tennessee Farmer of the Year was recently announced in June 2026. The prestigious award was presented to a Tennessee farmer at the inaugural Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation's Harvest Hope Gala held on June 13 in Franklin.

Seventh-generation farmer Willis Jepson of Robertson County was named the 2026 Farmer of the Year. Jepson farms land alongside his father and two sons that has been a part of their family since the early 1800s.

Jepson Family Farms is a diversified crop operation that touches both Robertson and Sumner counties in Tennessee, as well as Simpson County, Kentucky. The farm raises a variety of crops and specialty crops including corn, soybeans, watermelons, and pumpkins.

The Tennessee Farmer of the Year program was recently revitalized as a joint effort between the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation and the UT Institute of Agriculture. Center director and Extension specialist Rob Holland was involved in the effort to bring the Farmer of the Year program back to life.



Left: Willis Jepson poses for a photo on his family farm. Photo courtesy UTIA.

Top Right: Tennessee Farmer of the Year promotional image. Photo courtesy TFBF.



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Update on Center's Collaboration with UT Southern

In recent months, the Center for Profitable Agriculture has had the unique experience of collaborating with colleagues at the University of Tennessee Southern as UT Southern pursues various activities in the agriculture space.

From the development of an Agriculture Advisory Committee to the evaluation of farm property that they were recently gifted, we in the Center are pleased with the opportunities to spend time on the UTS campus, build relations with faculty, and provide input for future programs.

Center Provides Annual Report To TFBF Board of Directors

Extension specialist and Center director Rob Holland recently met with the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation's Board of Directors on May 21 to provide an annual report on the Center's activities.

Holland provided an update on personnel, outreach, and initiatives. He also discussed collaborations and priority programs as well as the makeup of Tennessee's \$142 million value-added agriculture industry.

The report also reflected on the details of the Center's work in 2025, including its nine hundred educational consultations, twelve publications and fifty-nine workshops with 2,187 attendees.



Tennessee Landowner Education Program Unveils Logo

The Tennessee Landowner Education Program, a state-funded effort led by the Center, recently unveiled its official logo for the program.

The Tennessee Landowner Education Program (TLEP) was established with recurring funding provided within the 2025–2026 Tennessee State Budget. The goal of the program is to educate Tennessee landowners about opportunities to preserve existing farmland, identify value-added opportunities for landowners not currently engaged in agriculture, and to help them achieve landowner objectives. The program aims to develop educational resources, conduct educational sessions, generate and analyze enterprise ideas, and provide technical assistance to farmland owners in Tennessee.

A Landowner Education Visioning Team, coordinated by the UT Center for Profitable Agriculture, was established earlier this year to help guide the future of this new program. The visioning team consists of local county Extension agents and statewide specialists from the three regions of Tennessee.



Above: Logo for the Tennessee Landowner Education Program.



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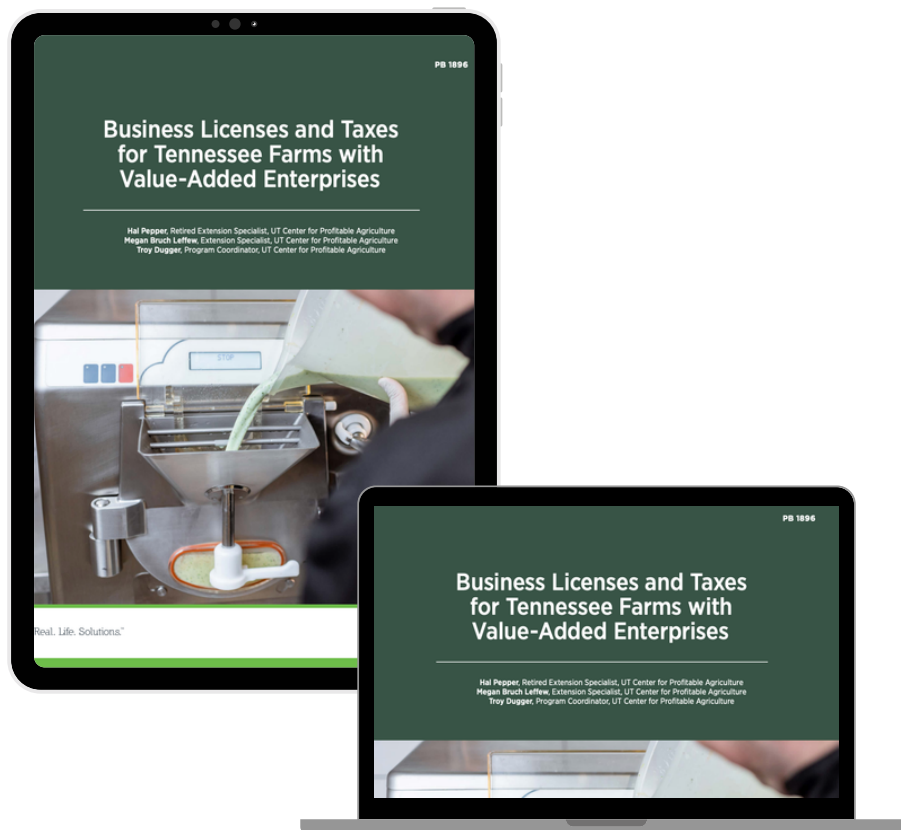
New Extension Publication Available from Center

A new educational publication is now available from the Center.

PB 1896 "Business Licenses and Taxes for Tennessee Farms with Value-Added Enterprises" was developed by Extension specialists Hal Pepper and Megan Leffew, and Program Coordinator Troy Dugger of the UT Center for Profitable Agriculture.

This publication is an update to a 2021 Extension publication on business licenses and taxes from Pepper and Leffew. PB 1896 reflects changes in Tennessee business law through the Tennessee Works Tax Act, Public Chapter 377 (2023). This updated publication will give guidance to farmers involved in direct marketing, value-added processing and agritourism to help producers determine if a business license is needed, if business tax must be paid and how to comply with obtaining a license and paying business tax. This Extension publication is currently available online.

Access this publication online at tiny.utk.edu/PB1896.



Above: Graphic showcasing cover of new Extension publication.



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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.