



February 2015



# OAK Conference offers variety of workshops

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*From the Organic Association of Kentucky*

You don't have to be certified to love what's in store at the fifth annual Organic Association of Kentucky Conference, to be held March 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> at the Paroquet Springs Conference Centre in Shepherdsville, KY.

Learning tracks at the conference will include livestock, dairy and produce. You will also have a chance to:

- Learn sources of investment and grants for your farm
- Expand your farming knowledge
- Learn more about the business of farming
- Learn why organic food is better for you

Many workshops are taught by experienced farmers and include subjects such as managing forages across four seasons, managing calves and heifers organically, managing mixed herds, setting up electronic CSA sign-ups, low tunnels and high tunnels, farmers market technology, and how to know if your diversified vegetable sales are making money.

Speakers include: Jeff Moyer, Farm Director at the Rodale Institute, an expert in organic crop production systems including weed management, cover crops, crop rotations, equipment modification and use, and facilities design; Veggie Compass and Dairy Compass originator Jim Munsch, an organic, grass-fed beef producer and a frequent speaker at farm conferences on making data-driven decisions for managing profit; Organic Valley dairy farmer Kevin Kiehna; and Organic Valley veterinarian Guy Jodarski.

Registration for the two-day conference is \$50 for OAK members, \$75 for non-members. One-day passes are also available, including a one-day pass for a consumer-oriented education track on Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>. To register, go to [www.oak2015.splashthat.com](http://www.oak2015.splashthat.com).

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## Coming up

**Feb. 10** - Lake Cumberland Beekeepers Association bee school, 6-8:30 p.m. EST, Pulaski County Extension Office. Call 606-679-6361; email [Beth.Wilson@uky.edu](mailto:Beth.Wilson@uky.edu).

**Feb. 14-15** - Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association Conference, Granville, OH. [Click here](#) for information.

**Feb. 17** - High Tunnel Webinar Series: Season Extension Opportunities & EQIP Funding, 6:30 - 7:45 p.m. EST. [Click here](#) for details.

**Feb. 18** - MarketReady Training, Shelby County Extension Office, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. EST. To register, call 859-218-4383 or email [kevin.heidemann@uky.edu](mailto:kevin.heidemann@uky.edu).

**Feb. 19** - Third Thursday Thing, KY State University Farm, Frankfort. Topic: Organics. 502-597-6327, or [marion.simon@kysu.edu](mailto:marion.simon@kysu.edu)

## Season extension will be focus of three-day Illinois workshop

*From The Land Connection*

The Land Connection is hosting a three-day workshop on season extension that will be held at Prairie Fruits Farm and Creamery in Champaign, IL on March 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>. Participants will hear presentations from experienced farmers and other experts on the subject, go on tours of farms and a value-added food processing facility, and interact hands-on with a production high tunnel and its crops. When folks leave this workshop, they will be ready to go home and begin planning a season extension strategy for their farm business. They will even receive the first copies of a Season Extension Guide that we are developing, containing practical, approachable information on the subject, including case studies of farms that have successfully integrated these practices.

“Season extension can extend farmers’ cash flow and diversify their markets,” said Jeff Hake, the farmer training program manager for The Land Connection who will facilitate the training. “However, getting started can be tricky, particularly with the Midwest’s unique weather challenges. This training will leave you ready to grow your farm’s income streams.”

The cost of the workshop is \$375 before February



Photo by Jeff Hake, The Land Connection

The Land Connection’s season extension workshop in Champaign, IL, will offer presentations from farmers, tours, and a chance to gain hands-on experience with high tunnel production.

20<sup>th</sup>, and \$425 through February 27<sup>th</sup>, which includes all meals and materials. Attendees may also choose to attend just one or two days of the workshop. Please call for details. Space is limited and advance registration is required. You can register on The Land Connection’s website (<http://thelandconnection.org/farmers/farmer-training-intensives/season-extension>), or by calling 217-840-2128.

## Kentucky Strawberry Growers to hold spring meeting in Owensboro

*By Danny Van Meter*

The Kentucky Strawberry Growers’ (KSG) 3<sup>rd</sup> annual spring meeting will be held on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 10 a.m. CST at Reid’s Orchard, located at 4818 KY Highway 144 in Owensboro. Billy Reid will be giving a tour of his 4 acres of strawberries, plus much more.

KSG is a group of strawberry growers (matted and plasticulture) that meet on a regular basis, usually in March (pre-harvest) and/or August (pre-plant).

The membership is free and consists of more than 50 growers from Kentucky (with some traveling from Tennessee & Virginia) who raise amounts ranging from 10 acres on plastic to the high tunnel grower to the backyard gardener. This will be a great meeting for the beginner as well as for the veteran to learn, share experiences and growing techniques, and to network with other growers.

For more information, please contact Danny Van Meter at 615-887-6229 or 270-963-2320 or by email at [vanmeterfamilyfarm@gmail.com](mailto:vanmeterfamilyfarm@gmail.com). If you cannot attend the meeting and want to know more about growing strawberries, please call or better yet,

schedule a time to come and see the 3 acres of strawberries on Van Meter Family Farm, located at 164 Old Peonia Loop Road, Clarkson, KY. They currently grow Chandler, Sweet Charlie, Camarosa, and Albion, all on raised beds with plastic and drip irrigation.



Photo by  
Danny Van Meter

The Kentucky Strawberry Growers' spring meeting, set for March 21<sup>st</sup> in Owensboro, will be useful to both beginning and veteran strawberry growers.

## Illinois Extension offering diverse Small Farm Webinar Series

*From University of Illinois Extension*

The University of Illinois Extension's Small Farm Webinar Series is a weekly educational series for the small farm community and provides practical knowledge on emerging topics that advance local food production in Illinois. This series of online events is aimed at providing small farm producers with a look at how leading practices in production, management, and marketing enable operations to improve profitability and sustainability. Webinars are free, air live each Thursday from 1 – 2:30 p.m. (Central time), and include a question and answer session. If you cannot attend, a link to the recorded webinars will be available to view at your convenience for all those who register.

- Feb. 12 Perennial Crops for Small Farms
- Feb. 19 Understanding Insecticides
- Feb. 26 Blueberry Production
- March 5 Hydroponics
- March 12 Effective Farmers Market Displays
- March 19 Veggie Compass Record-Keeping Software
- March 26 Variety Selection & Rootstocks for Establishing Apple Orchards

Go to <http://go.illinois.edu/2015winterwebinars>

to register. For more information, contact Miki White, University of Illinois Extension, Small Farms/Local Foods Program Coordinator, at 309-342-5108 or [miki7047@illinois.edu](mailto:miki7047@illinois.edu).

## CFA offering Farmers Market Support Program Workshops

*From Community Farm Alliance*

Community Farm Alliance is offering a series of workshops to provide useful training to farmers market organizers. All markets are welcome to attend. The cost of workshops for non-FMSP member markets is \$10/\$25, depending on location. Workshops are being held at Natural Bridge State Resort Park and the Louisville Public Library Bon Air Branch.

- Feb. 21 Organizational Development and Planning - Louisville
- Feb. 26 Food Access, Community Outreach & Marketing - Natural Bridge
- Feb. 28 Food Access, Community Outreach & Marketing - Louisville
- March 14 Vendor Support - Louisville
- March 26 Vendor Support - Natural Bridge

For details, go to <http://cfaky.org/events/>. To register, visit <http://cfaky.org/farmers-market-workshops-registration-page/>.

## Space available for MarketReady training, Meet the Buyer Forum

There is still space available in the February 18<sup>th</sup> MarketReady training at the Shelby County Extension Office. The registration deadline is February 11<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. The MarketReady Producer Training Program is for those interested in selling products to restaurants, grocers/wholesalers/retailers, and schools/institutions.

Also coming up is a MarketReady Graduate Meet the Buyer Forum (for MarketReady graduates only) on March 9<sup>th</sup> at the Shelby County Extension Office. Last year, hundreds of business relationships were made in a single day at the first ever MarketReady Graduate Meet the Buyer Forum in Lexington. The Meet the Buyer Forum in Shelbyville will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. [Click here](#) to see the agenda. Many buyers and producers will interact and network with each other to create business relationships. However, farmers and producers MUST graduate from MarketReady Training before being eligible to attend the Meet the Buyer Forum.

Registration is \$20, payable via cash or check. To register (deadline is March 2<sup>nd</sup>), please contact UK Extension Associate Kevin Heidemann at [kevin.heidemann@uky.edu](mailto:kevin.heidemann@uky.edu) or (859) 218-4383.

## KY Fruit and Vegetable Conference a learning experience for many

The 2015 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference was held January 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> at Embassy Suites in Lexington. The conference drew 546 attendees, who had the opportunity to learn from researchers and growers from Kentucky and beyond. The conference also featured a 52-vendor trade show.

“This was a particularly educational conference for growers,” said University of Kentucky Extension Fruit Specialist John Strang. “They learned about the intricacies of high and low tunnel production, Asian pear varieties, high density apple tree spacing, new vegetable varieties, signing up for the USDA MarketLink SNAP program, and much more. Hopefully we can develop a program for 2016 that is even better.”

## High Tunnel Webinar Schedule

The Center for Crop Diversification’s high tunnel webinar series starts this month. For more details and registration information, [click here](#).

- **February 17** — Season Extension Opportunities & EQIP Funding
- **February 24** — Structure Options, Construction, Ventilation & Temperature Control
- **March 3** — Organic Certification & Marketing High Tunnel Crops
- **March 10** — Crop, Irrigation & Equipment Options
- **March 17** — Insect, Weed & Disease Control
- **March 24** — Producer Views & Series Wrap-up

Dr. Strang, who organizes the annual conference, received the inaugural Dr. John Strang Award from the Kentucky State Horticultural Society at the conference. The award was established to recognize outstanding service to the fruit growers of Kentucky and the horticulture industry. The award parallels the C.R. Roberts Award that was established in 1990 by the Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association.

## SSAWG coming to Lexington

The Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference, held January 14<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> in Mobile, AL, will be coming to Lexington in 2016. The 2015 conference drew nearly 1,000 attendees. Next year’s conference, to be held January 27<sup>th</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup>, will mark the event’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Be sure to save the date for this event. Steve Muntz, Executive Director of Southern SAWG, said he expects the 2016 conference to draw an even larger crowd.

SSAWG operates in 13 states in the South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

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Thanks for reading, and please contact Miranda at [miranda.hileman@uky.edu](mailto:miranda.hileman@uky.edu) if you are interested in subscribing to our online newsletter.