

Farm Beginnings helps farmers with sustainable, value-added enterprises

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LINCOLN—University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society will begin its fifth Farm Beginnings Program Dec. 8 at UNL's Agriculture Research and Development Center near Mead.

The Farm Beginnings Program is an educational training and support program designed to help people who want to evaluate and plan their farm enterprise.

Farm Beginnings participants engage in a mentorship experience and network with a variety of successful, innovative farmers and attend practical, high quality seminars, field days and conferences.

The program is unique in that several successful farmers participate in the program as presenters, explaining first-hand the nuts and bolts of their farming operation.

While any beginning farmer would benefit from attending these training sessions, most of the farmers that present come from small to medium sized farming operations that produce and market many different diversified and value-added products. Many of these farmers direct market their products.

The Farm Beginnings Program consists of a series of 10 sessions from December to April that cover a variety of topics including: building networks, goal setting, whole farm planning, building your business plan, marketing, business and farm management and financial management.

While the class participants will learn first-hand from the farmers, they also will work on developing their own business plan as they progress through the course.

As part of the class tuition, participants also will have the opportunity to attend the Healthy Farms Conference at Mahoney State Park near Ashland Feb. 15-16.

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This annual conference focuses on topics such as vegetable production, grass-fed beef, cover crops, organic farming, bee keeping, farm transitioning and agritourism.

There also will be a farm tour in December and several farm tours in the summer to see how the farmers are operating.

If interested, participants also have the opportunity to have a farmer mentor.

Cost of the total program is \$500, but you may qualify for a partial scholarship. For a brochure and an application for the Farm Beginnings Program or for more information about the program contact Gary Lesoing, Extension educator at glesoing2@unl.edu or at (402) 274-4755, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Nemaha County.

The Farm Beginnings Program is as part of a U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmer and Rancher Grant which was received by the Center for Rural Affairs with UNL Extension and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society as cooperators.