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## Cultivating Local Farmers

*Farm Dreams? An Exploratory Workshop for Farm Dreamers...*

### PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

## Farm Dreams?

*An Exploratory Workshop for Farm Dreamers*

**What:** Farm Dreams? An exploratory workshop for farm dreamers.

**Date:** Saturday, May 17 **Time:** 10am-3:30pm **Location:** Buncombe County Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC 28801

**Bring:** Brown bag lunch **Cost:** \$55

**Register:** [Online here.](#)

**Follow:** [Facebook Event.](#)

## Overview of Local Farming:

In order to increase the availability and accessibility of local foods, we need local growers. There is far more demand for local organic foods in Western NC, than there is supply. Yet NC is losing farmers and farmland at a faster rate than any other state in the nation.

- The average age of farmers in WNC is 57, nearing retirement.
- Between 2002-2007 NC lost more than 6,000 farms and 600,000 acres of farmland - leading the nation in farmland loss.
- Between 2007-2012 NC lost 2,703 farms. 60% of farm losses are farms of 50 acres or less (smaller farms characterize WNC ag).
- Traditional methods of farm training and transfer have been lost over many generations as the children of farm families move away.

At the same time, thousands of modern young people are drawn to a land-based life. Who are these new farmers? According to John Ikerd's analysis of the USDA's census of agriculture in his article [Who are the new farmers?](#) which

appeared in 2009 in Small Farm Today Magazine, along with his observation of them at conferences across the country, he interprets them this way:

- The new farmers are likely to be **sustainable** farmers.
- The new farmers are more likely to be **women**.
- The new farmers are likely to be more **racially diverse**.
- The new farmers are likely to be **younger**.
- The new farmers are different and they have a **different vision** for the future of American agriculture.
- The new farmers are often young people who have **no experience or previous connection to farming**, but still willing to work hard for little pay in on-farm internship programs to learn the art, science, and practice of real farming. What they lack in experience they more than offset in energy, enthusiasm, and commitment.
- Others are **retired couples**, many still in their 50s, who may or may not have grown up on a farm. They have decided to spend their "retirement" doing something they have always wanted to do.
- A few new farmers even have conventional farming backgrounds, but have decided that **farming must change** and they are going to help change it.



In order to rebuild a path towards agriculture in our region, we need to invest in the next generation of farmers. We not only need to invest in education for organic production, but in business training, micro-lending endeavors, support networks, and skill development for the complex practicalities of running a farm. The influx of aspiring commercial farmers is strong in Asheville. They offer the promise of enlivening our economy, advancing sustainable agriculture and forestry, and bolstering access to healthy local food.

Organic Growers School (OGS) is proud to be an ally in cultivating our local growers. OGS provides practical, technical education for farmers through our Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) program, which is a coordinated effort to bring established farmers, farm apprentices, and students of agriculture together for a comprehensive training program in sustainable agriculture. Further, OGS, along with local partners, has offered farmer-centered business planning training, marketing consulting, and access to capital.

Farm Dreams? is a continuation of that effort. We are pleased to offer this introductory session for farmer wanna-bees to explore whether or not a farming life is right for them. And if it is, answering the basic questions of how, where, why, and when.

## Workshop Description:

Are you dreaming of starting your own farm? Farm Dreams? is an entry level, five-hour, exploratory workshop designed to help people who are seeking practical, common sense information on whether sustainable farming is the next step for them, and how to move forward. This is a great workshop to attend if you are in the exploratory stages of getting started farming.

Join us to explore the practicalities of your farm dreams. We'll cover common sense, relevant information to discover if sustainable farming is the next step for you.

- Learn about sustainable farming careers in Western North Carolina.
- Discover and assess your resources, skills and farming intentions.
- Begin to develop an educational plan toward farming.
- Connect with regional training opportunities and support networks.
- Prioritize your next steps toward your farming goals.
- Hear from experienced farmers running successful farms in WNC.

## Instructors:



**Cameron Farlow** is the Farmer Programs Coordinator for Organic Growers School and the Land Access Coordinator for WNC Farm Link. She's been involved in the food system in Western North Carolina for several years through farmland preservation with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, developing a farm to university program at ASU, completing research projects for WNC Ag Options and the Lord's Acre Garden, and even making cheese at Looking Glass Creamery.

**Meghan Baker** is the Small Farms Extension Agent working for the NC Cooperative Extension Service in Buncombe County. Prior to her position in Buncombe County, Meghan worked for 7 years at the Watauga County Extension Service with both commercial and backyard growers. She is a graduate of Appalachian State University, and holds an M.S. in Plant & Environmental Science from Clemson University. A native of Western North Carolina, Meghan is deeply committed to sustaining the agricultural heritage and farmscapes in the region.



**Jenn Beck** is an Agriculture Extension Agent for Madison County. She has worked for NC Cooperative Extension for over 3 years specializing in alternative agriculture commodities. She graduated from NCSU with a Bachelors of Science in Natural Resource Management and The College of Charleston with a Master's of Science in Environmental Studies.

Workshop will showcase a panel of farmers including Tom Elmore of Thatchmore Farms, Lee Warren of Imani Farm & others. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

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