October 2026 Newsletter

Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability

Supporting Virginia's agricultural economic development by empowering farmers through grant assistance, business planning, and cooperative development.



VAFAIRS Updates

VAFAIRS Receives Over $1.4 Million in Grant Funding

VAFAIRS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to fostering sustainable agricultural economic development opportunities across Virginia. Our affordable, cost-shared technical assistance and grant writing services are made possible largely through grant funding. We are grateful to have secured more than **$1.4 million in funding** to support our mission.

USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant

VAFAIRS was awarded more than **$950,000 through the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) Program, funding** that will support our work over the next three years. VAFAIRS has successfully secured RCDG funding for more than 20 years, allowing us to provide ongoing technical assistance and support to farmers, agribusinesses, and rural communities across Virginia. To learn more about the program and this year's award recipients, please read the USDA Rural Development press release.

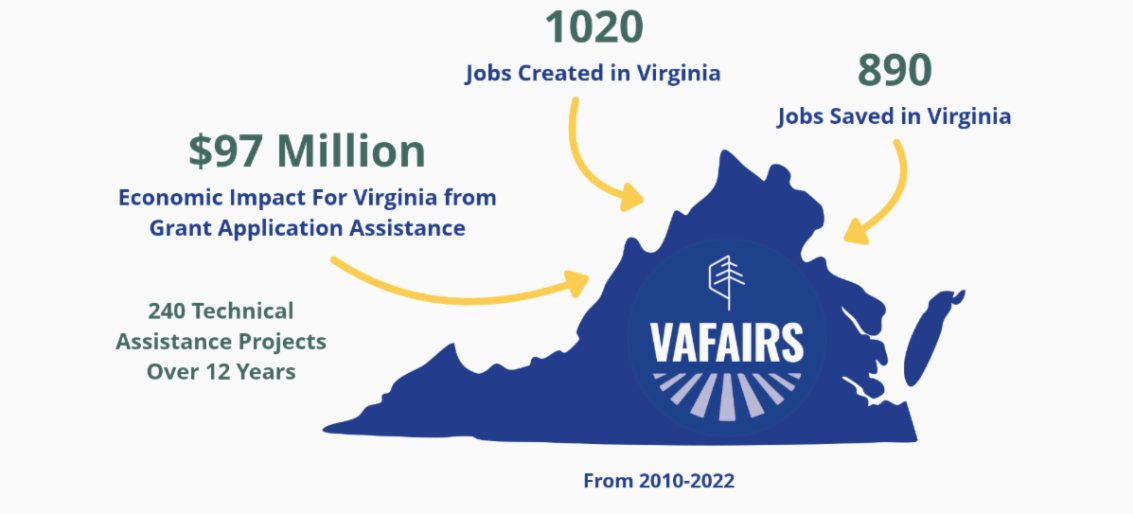
Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

Additionally, the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission awarded VAFAIRS **$440,259 through the Agribusiness Technical Assistance Consulting Services Program** to provide technical assistance services throughout **eligible localities in Southern and Southwest Virginia** over the next three years. We greatly appreciate the Commission's continued investment in our organization and the agricultural communities we serve.

CoBank's Co-op Start Grant Program

In collaboration with the Southside Virginia Fruit & Vegetable Producers Association, VAFAIRS was awarded a **$25,000 CoBank Co-Op Start Grant** as the sponsoring organization. Through this partnership, the Southside Virginia Fruit & Vegetable Producers Association also received $50,000 in grant funding to support its operations.

We are grateful for these investments that allow us to support agricultural producers across the Commonwealth.



VAFAIRS In the News



New VAFAIRS fund helps farmers overcome accessibility barriers

Virginia farmers facing physical challenges and accessibility needs now have a new source of financial support to help them keep working safely and independently. The Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability, or VAFAIRS, launched its Agri-Ability Fund Oct. 3 at the State Fair of Virginia.

Read More

Want to help support the work VAFAIRS does? Donate today!

Donate to VAFAIRS

Opportunities

Value-Added Producer Grant

- Applications are expected to open in November and close in February
- Maximum award: Planning Grants up to $50,000 and Working Capital Grants up to $200,000
- A 1:1 match is required
- Reimbursement-based

The **Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) helps agricultural producers start or expand value-added businesses.** The program provides funding to support labor, marketing, and processing costs over a three-year period. Value-added activities may include changing a product's physical state, producing it in a way that increases its value, or marketing and selling it locally (within the state or within 400 miles).

Farm to Stay Grant

- More details will be made available before applications open in late November 2026
- Maximum award: $10,000
- No match required

The **Farm to Stay Grant Program helps farmers and ranchers develop or expand farm stays and on-farm experiences** as an additional source of income. The program supports projects that connect visitors with working farms and ranches while creating new opportunities for agricultural businesses.

FASS AgVision Cost Share Program

- Pilot program available only in select participating counties
- Intent to Apply opens in October and is due November 30, 2026
- Maximum award: $10,000
- 25% cash match required

The **FASS AgVision Agriculture Business Development Cost Share Program is a pilot program that helps farmers explore new business opportunities**, diversify their operations, and adopt innovative practices. Participants receive business planning support and technical assistance,

- Applicant must live and farm in a participating county

along with cost-share funding for eligible projects. Applicants must live and farm in Grayson, Lee, Russell, Washington, Wythe, Appomattox, Bedford, Brunswick, Campbell, Charlotte, or Cumberland County.

Virginia Grown and Virginia's Finest

Virginia producers can benefit from two VDACS marketing programs. **Virginia Grown** **helps consumers find and support local farmers**, producers, and agribusinesses, while **Virginia's Finest** **recognizes Virginia-made products that meet or exceed established quality standards**. These programs help showcase the quality of Virginia agriculture and increase visibility in the marketplace.

Explore additional funding opportunities on our website:

Opportunities

For personalized guidance and grant assistance, connect with the VAFAIRS team:

Contact Us

Upcoming Events



Capitalize Your Co-op!

November 4th 2026 at 6:00 pm
Virtual

Common Shares is hosting a workshop to help cooperatives understand their capital needs and options for raising funds. Participants will learn about different sources of capital and how to develop a capital-raising plan that fits their cooperative. Materials will be available in English and Spanish.

Virginia Wine Expo

February 27th through March 7th, 2027
Richmond, VA

The Virginia Wine Expo is a nine-day celebration of fine wine, craft spirits, and culinary excellence, pairing Virginia and international producers with exceptional regional cuisine. The marquee tasting event takes place March 6-7 at Main Street Station and features hundreds of wines, artisan spirits, and specialty foods. Tickets or registration are required for all events.

Virginia Food and Beverage Expo

March 24th, 2027
Richmond, VA

The Virginia Food and Beverage Expo is a biennial trade show that connects buyers with Virginia's specialty food and beverage producers, offering opportunities to discover new products, meet suppliers, and place orders directly on the show floor.

VAFAIRS would like to showcase our clients at the Virginia Food & Beverage Expo and Virginia Wine Expo. If you are a current or past client interested in participating, please complete the survey linked below.

VAFAIRS Event Interest Survey

Producer Spotlight

Value-Added Producer Grant Awardees

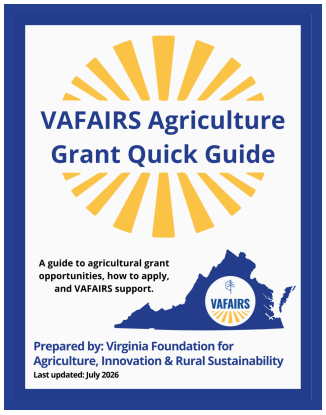
The USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Program awarded $26.5 million to 194 agricultural projects nationwide in FY 2026. We're proud to congratulate **11 VAFAIRS clients who secured a combined $1,749,996 in funding through this competitive program**. Click on each business name below to learn more about the producer!

- **15 Peaks Vineyards**
- **Edgewood Apiaries**
- **Fireside Farm**
- **Old Myrtle Cotton Company**
- **Smoke in Chimneys**
- **Williamson Farms**
- **Bates Family Farm**
- **Farmhouse Butchery**
- **Muse Vineyards**
- **Papa Weaver's Pork**
- **Sweethaven Lavender of Williamsburg**

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @vafairs for weekly highlights of our awarded clients!

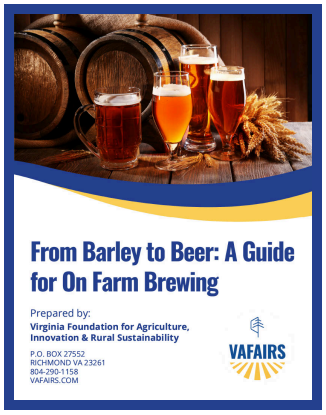
Want to be featured in the VAFAIRS newsletter? If you are a past VAFAIRS client and would like to be featured in a future newsletter, please contact Michele Mickelwait at michele.mickelwait@vafb.com.

Resources



VAFAIRS Agriculture Grant Quick Guide

A **comprehensive guide to agricultural grants**, including funding opportunities, application guidance, tips for submitting a strong proposal, and other resources to help support your business or project.



VAFAIRS White Papers

We have a variety of **free white papers available in our library on topics including:**

- On-farm distilling and brewing
- Small-volume poultry processing, red meat processing and retail meat sales
- Direct marketing of local foods
- Shared-use kitchen facilities
- Chestnut cooperatives
- Virginia business legal structures

VAFAIRS Resources

Ways to Support VAFAIRS

Know a producer who could benefit from our services? **Refer them to VAFAIRS!**

Contact Us

VAFAIRS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit helping Virginia farmers explore and expand value-added opportunities. **Every donation supports a stronger future for Virginia agriculture**.

Donate to VAFAIRS

Join Virginia Farm Bureau and become a Friend of the Farm. Show your support for Virginia agriculture while enjoying exclusive member benefits, valuable resources, and money-saving discounts.

Join VAFB

Celebrate Virginia Farm Bureau's 100th Anniversary by **joining the Centennial Club with a $1,000 gift to VAFAIRS by October 31**.

Centennial Club

Stay Connected!

VAFAIRS | 12580 West Creek Parkway | Richmond, VA 23238 US

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