

# OAK CONFERENCE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



### DEEANN BAUERLE

*Bauerle Family Farms*

DeeAnn Bauerle operates Bauerle Family Farms near Gravel Switch, Kentucky, with her husband, Tom, and their children, Ryan and Marissa.

The Bauerles' farm is 224 acres with 170 acres in hay and pasture. They milk 50 organic dairy cows and market their milk through Organic Valley. Their fall calving herd consists of Jerseys and crosses of Jersey, Holstein and Normande. They have 20 years of grazing experience in three states and direct-market about six steers per year as freezer beef. [@bauerlefarmfamilyfarms](https://bauerlefarmfamilyfarms.com)



### RIC BESSIN

*University of Kentucky*

Ric Bessin is a Cooperative Extension Professor at the University of Kentucky focusing on pest management for field and specialty

crops. He develops sustainable pest management strategies and provides extension education. His research includes the management of the oriental fruit moth, codling moth, cucumber beetle, harlequin bug, squash bug and pollinators as natural enemies of pests. Ric serves as Kentucky's Integrated Pest Management Coordinator and the liaison for pesticide registration for minor crops. [entomology.ca.uky.edu/directory/ric-bessin](https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/directory/ric-bessin)



### JESSE BUIE

*Ole Brook Organics*

Jesse Buie has farmed for over 30 years and is President/Farmer of Ole Brook Organics, Inc., a certified organic farm for

over ten years. Currently his farm produces mixed vegetables, melons, ginger and turmeric, and produces a private-label certified organic tea for sale to local groceries and directly to consumers. Jesse serves as a certified mentor for the Southeast Region of the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). Jesse served on the National Organic Standards Board from January 2016 to January 2021. During his tenure, he was twice elected to the Executive Board and served as Chair of the Crops Committee and Vice Chair of the Livestock Committee. [olebrookorganics.com](https://olebrookorganics.com)



### JACQUELINE BERRY

*Flourishing Herbs Farm*

Moving to Kentucky farm country, Jacqueline found herself drawn to the local food movement bringing high-quality produce to local

communities. Flourishing Herbs grows herbs, flowers and produce on a certified organic market garden farm in Allen County for markets and local feeding programs year-round. They are committed to ecological farm practices that enrich soil fertility while protecting creeks and wildlife and can be found at Bounty on the Barrens and Allen County Scottsville farmers markets. [@flourishingherbs](https://flourishingherbs.com)



### LARRY BRANDENBURG

*Harmony Fields Farm*

Larry and Beth Brandenburg own and operate Harmony Fields Farm in Shelbyville, Kentucky. Harmony Fields Farm has been certified organic for

18 years and produces mixed vegetables, herbs, fruit, cut flowers and hay on 34 acres. Larry was involved in the founding of OAK and was the President and Board Chair for the first five years. Larry and Beth enjoy sharing their experiences with other farmers and, as they both approach 70, are keenly aware of the challenges that come with aging and the desire to continue farming. [harmonyfieldsfarm.com](https://harmonyfieldsfarm.com)



### BRETT CHEDZOY

*Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County*

Brett Chedzoy is a Regional Extension Forester with Cornell University and the Forest Manager for Cornell's Arnot

Teaching and Research Forest, where his interest in regional silvopasturing grew out of their "Goats in the Woods" project in the early 2000s. Brett and his family own and operate large grazing operations in Central Argentina and Upstate New York (Angus Glen Farms LLC) that extensively utilize silvopasture practices and natural farm woodlands.

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### MAGGIE DUNGAN

*Salad Days Farm*

Maggie owns and operates Salad Days Farm, a certified organic diversified vegetable farm in Woodford County. The first seeds were planted in

2015 and since then the operation has grown from half an acre to three acres using intensive sustainable market gardening practices. With year-round sales through farmers markets, restaurants, an on-farm store and wholesale accounts, it has been Maggie's goal to exemplify the sustainability of local organic food from small farms. [@saladdaysfarmky](#)



### KRISTI DURBIN

*University of Kentucky  
Organic Farming Unit*

Kristi Durbin created and co-authored the HO-127: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Production Manual of the Organic

Farming Unit at the University of Kentucky (UK). She has farmed at UK since 2012, managed the CSA project since 2016, and now teaches within UK's Department of Horticulture at the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. [@ukcsa](#)



### CINDY FINNESETH

*University of Kentucky*

Cindy Finneseth is the Community Horticulture Extension Specialist in the University of Kentucky's Department of Horticulture. At

UK, she is focused on increasing academic and entrepreneur knowledge of urban and small-scale specialty crop production systems that generate farm revenue. Her program also focuses on beginning growers and strategies to improve public knowledge of local food systems to expand access to fresh produce and improve health and wellness in local communities.



### TOM "FITZ" FITZGERALD

*Kentucky Resources Council*

Tom "Fitz" FitzGerald is the former Director of and current counsel to the Kentucky Resources Council (KRC). KRC is a nonprofit environmental

advocacy organization providing free legal, strategic and policy assistance to individuals, organizations and communities concerning environmental quality, resource extraction, energy and utility issues. Fitz is also an adjunct professor of energy and environmental law at the Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville. [@kyresources](#)



### NICOLE GAUTHIER

*University of Kentucky*

Dr. Nicole Gauthier is a Professor and Extension Specialist at the University of Kentucky. Her program focuses on disease

management of specialty crops including fruits, vegetables and hemp. In her extension role, she develops educational and outreach programs to help growers manage disease through identification, understanding of pathosystems and integration of management strategies. Her research program focuses on a range of specialty crop diseases, including the management of soilborne diseases using solarization. [@KYPlantDisease](#)  
[plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/extension/publications](http://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/extension/publications)



### BRIAN GEIER

*Organic Farming Research  
Foundation (OFRF)*

Brian Geier designs grower resources for the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), including the Farmer's

Guide to On-Farm Research. He previously worked on a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) funded project assessing organic control of soil-borne diseases with Dr. Michael Bomford at Kentucky State University and farmer Paul Wiediger at Au Natural Farm in Smith's Grove, Kentucky. He lives and farms at Bundle Sticks Farm in Lanesville, Indiana. [ofrf.org](http://ofrf.org)

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### SARAH GEURKINK

*OAK*

Sarah Geurkink is OAK's Organic Production Specialist. She has 13 years of experience managing organic, diversified farms—most recently at

Michigan State University's Student Organic Farm, where she trained students and beginning farmers in organic production. Before moving to Kentucky, she and her husband owned a small farm in Michigan where they raised sheep, hogs, chickens, turkeys and bees. Sarah especially enjoys learning from farmers, sharing ideas and solving production challenges.

[oak-ky.org/production-consultation](http://oak-ky.org/production-consultation)



### DUSTY GOSSETT

*Gossett Farms*

Dusty Gossett is a third-generation farmer in Barren County, Kentucky, focusing on soil health and a biological approach to growing organic

row crops. He farms 200 acres of organic row crops and direct markets all natural, grass-finished beef.

[@dusty.gossett86](https://www.instagram.com/dusty.gossett86) [gossettfamilyfarms.com](http://gossettfamilyfarms.com)



### AMANDA GUMBERT

*University of Kentucky*

Amanda Gumbert is an Extension Water Quality Specialist in the UK Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. She provides

environmental education on agricultural water quality issues, conservation practices and backyard stream stewardship with linkages to the Mississippi River Basin. She is a Kentucky native, chicken enthusiast and woodland owner in northeastern Kentucky.

[soilandwater.ca.uky.edu](http://soilandwater.ca.uky.edu)



### GREG HALICH

*University of Kentucky Extension / Grass-finished Cattle Farmer*

Greg Halich is an agricultural economist at University of Kentucky, where he works with

farmers to improve profitability on livestock and grain farms. His production focus areas include biological farming techniques that reduce or eliminate the need for commercial fertilizer inputs, grass-finished beef production, bale grazing and extended-season grazing systems. Greg lives and farms in southern Woodford County where he produces grass-finished beef.



### KIMMIE ISHMAEL

*Community Farm Alliance*

Kimmie Ishmael serves as the policy campaign coordinator for Community Farm Alliance. At CFA, Kimmie strives to ensure farmers have a voice.

From working on poultry processing to fighting legislative bills that would cut safety-net programs, she has been at the forefront of making sure farmers are represented in policy-making. In addition to working with state legislators, she has extensive experience in community organizing and political campaigns.

[cfaky.org](http://cfaky.org)



### NIMA KULKARNI

*Kentucky State Representative (House District 40)*

Representative Nima Kulkarni represents Kentucky's 40th House District, which includes the University of Louisville and

Churchill Downs. As a legislator, Nima is focused on issues of economic, social, racial and environmental justice, and has dedicated her time to helping the most vulnerable Kentuckians.

Recently, she has focused on legislation aimed to address "forever chemicals" in the air, water and soil through the lens of health outcomes, a unique approach to this issue.

[legislature.ky.gov](http://legislature.ky.gov)

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### **KIM LEONBERGER**

*University of Kentucky,  
Plant Pathology  
Extension*

Kim Leonberger is an Agriculture Extension Associate Senior at the University of

Kentucky's Department of Plant Pathology. Kim specializes in extension programs related to fruit, vegetables and hemp. Her work involves the formation of plant disease identification and management resources for home producers and commercial growers. Kim also collaborates with other extension specialists to provide holistic educational programs.

@KYPlantDisease [plantpathology.ca.uky.edu](http://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu)



### **KEN MARKS**

*Floyds View Farm*

Ken Marks is in his second career as a full-time certified organic farmer at Floyd's View Farm in Jefferson County after retiring from a 40-year engineering

career. Floyd's View Farm is a half-acre diversified vegetable operation selling at local farmers markets.



### **DANIEL MAYS**

*Frith Farm*

Daniel Mays runs Frith Farm in southern Maine, where he has grown vegetables using no-till methods since 2010. He is the author of the book,

*The No-Till Organic Vegetable Farm*, and loves to share and exchange experiences with other growers. Daniel has a Master of Science in environmental engineering, and his approach to farming is holistic, asking the deep questions of how the ways we farm shape who we are and how we live.

@frithfarm



### **CHRIS MCKENZIE**

*Grow Appalachia*

Chris McKenzie is a Farmer Development Coordinator at Grow Appalachia, a strategic initiative of Berea College. He provides on-farm production

support to farmers in eastern Kentucky. Chris's goal is to help farmers increase their profitability and efficiency by implementing scale-appropriate techniques and methods.

@growappalachia

*Note: Chris McKenzie is a backup speaker Friday.*



### **KEITH MCKENZIE**

*Knob Hill Farm*

Keith McKenzie owns USDA-certified organic Knob Hill Farm, a 70-acre family farm in Breckinridge County. He has renovated pastures,

expanded his crop production and educated himself on organic farming practices and certification. In 2022, Keith formalized his learning by working with OAK's Transition Trainer Program and transitioning Knob Hill Farm's crops to organic production.

@knobhillfarmky



### **RON MCMAINE**

*McMaine's Riverhaven Farm*

The McMaine family has been involved with horticulture for more than 110 years, beginning when Ron McMaine's grandfather started raising

raising and direct selling vegetables. Ron's own involvement intensified when he moved to a farm in 1997. McMaine's Riverhaven Farm have sold at four different farmer's markets with a wide range of products. Although they have never been organic, they have tried to minimize the use of pesticides. For that reason, we were very interested in the UK research on nematode mitigation with solarization.

@RLMcMaine

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### PAUL MERRYWEATHER

*Ashbourne Farms*

Paul grew up in Louisville, where a passion for farming took root early on, inspired by his grandparents' legacy. After a career in food industry

management, he embraced a new path post-COVID, joining Ashbourne as a garden hand. His dedication led him to oversee mushroom production for several years, and he now proudly leads all organic production. With a deep commitment to sustainable practices, Paul feels blessed to fulfill his lifelong dream of being a farmer and to be here with you.

[@Organic\\_Paul](#)



### CORTNEY MOSES

*GoodThymes Organic Farm*

Cortney Moses operates a certified organic farm in Whitley County with her husband, Paul Dengel, and their two children. Cortney also works for the University of Kentucky as an Extension Agent for Community Arts Education. With over 15 years of farming experience, Cortney has spent the last decade committed to maintaining certified organic standards. Her farm produces high-quality, sustainably grown vegetables and pastured poultry, prioritizing exceptional flavor and environmental stewardship.

management, he embraced a new path post-COVID, joining Ashbourne as a garden hand. His dedication led him to oversee mushroom production for several years, and he now proudly leads all organic production. With a deep commitment to sustainable practices, Paul feels blessed to fulfill his lifelong dream of being a farmer and to be here with you.



### LISA MUNNIKSMA

*Freelance Writer and Food Systems Advocate*

Since 2011, Lisa Munniksma has worked on farms in Kentucky and around the world. As a writer and communications

project manager, most of her work centers farming and food systems. She's received two Kentucky Foundation for Women grants for writing on these topics from a feminist perspective. Last year, Lisa was a US Fellow for the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative to develop a farmers market in Thailand. She is the former editor of *Hobby Farms* magazine and former host of its *Growing Good* podcast. [lisa-writes.com](http://lisa-writes.com)  
[linkedin.com/in/lisamunniksma](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisamunniksma)



### ELLEN POLISHUK

*Plant to Profit*

Ellen Polishuk is a farm consultant and workshop leader. She leverages her 35 years of biological vegetable farming experience to help

growers around the country to achieve more satisfaction and better profitability from their farm businesses. Her client work touches on all aspects of production, quality of life and farm finances and bookkeeping. Her superpowers are puzzle-solving, listening and asking powerful questions. Ellen is also a co-author of the book, *Start Your Farm*.

[planttoprofit.com](http://planttoprofit.com)



### KIRK POMPER

*Kentucky State University*

Dr. Kirk W. Pomper is a Professor of Horticulture in the College of Agriculture, Community and the Sciences at Kentucky State University in

Frankfort, Kentucky. As Horticulture Research Leader, his program is focused on research and Extension efforts toward developing pawpaw as a new commercial crop.

[ksu.edu/academics/college-ahnr/school-of-anr/pawpaw/index.php](http://ksu.edu/academics/college-ahnr/school-of-anr/pawpaw/index.php)



### CODY RAKES

*Loretto Motherhouse Farm*

Cody Rakes is the Farm and Land Director for the Loretto Motherhouse Farm, a regeneratively farmed 800 acre row crop, beef, and

pumpkin operation. Cody and his wife, Angela, own a 65-acre pasture-based farm raising cattle, goats, sheep, chickens and kids. They are avid adaptive grazers. Cody is known for his knowledge of forages, as well as his innovation to make grazing work in any scenario.

[@motherhousefarm](#)

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### JACKSON ROLETT

*Apostles Garden*

Jackson and Jordan Rolett started their Think Little CSA in 2014, transitioned to Stonehouse Market Farm in 2018, and now manage

Apostles Garden, a two-acre community market garden in Bowling Green, KY. In 2018 Jackson launched No-Till Growers with Jesse Frost, and in 2021 he created the Collaborative Farming Podcast, spotlighting cooperative and collective farming endeavors within the No-Till community. [apostlesgarden.com](http://apostlesgarden.com)



### RACHEL RUDOLPH

*University of Kentucky*

Rachel Rudolph is the Extension Vegetable Specialist at the University of Kentucky. She has been working in horticulture for more than 15

years and in high tunnels for nearly that long. Much of Rachel's work deals with high tunnel systems, abiotic disorders, crop nutrition and soil fertility.

[veg crops.ca.uky.edu](http://veg crops.ca.uky.edu)



### JASON UNRINE

*University of Kentucky*

Jason M. Unrine, an environmental toxicologist, is professor and University Research Professor in the Department of Plant and Soil

Sciences in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment and director of the Kentucky Water Research Institute at the University of Kentucky. For over 25 years, he has conducted research on the environmental chemistry and toxicology of emerging and legacy contaminants including engineered nanomaterials, trace elements and disinfection byproducts.

[pss.ca.uky.edu/person/jason-unrine](http://pss.ca.uky.edu/person/jason-unrine)



### LAURIE WHITE

*Community Farm Alliance*

Laurie White is an advocate for farms and local food. After majoring in Agriculture and Natural Resources at Berea College, Laurie worked at Lazy

Eight Stock Farm for four years, selling organic produce at the Berea Farmers Market. Laurie joined the staff at Community Farm Alliance in November 2018 and now serves as Network Coordinator for the Kentucky Farm to School Network.

[kyf2snetwork.com](http://kyf2snetwork.com)



### JAMIE WISE

*University of Louisville,  
Department of  
Pharmacology & Toxicology*

Dr. Wise is an assistant professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the

University of Louisville. Using a One Environmental Health approach, Dr. Wise's research integrates human, animal and ecosystem health to gain insight into how environmental contaminants such as heavy metals and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances contribute to disease. Studies include investigating how sex and age modulate toxicant-related diseases while promoting advances in risk assessment and management.

*Note: Jamie Wise will join the session virtually.*

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