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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

Organic Growers School Launches Farm Beginnings Farmer Training in WNC -- Open to Applicants



Asheville, NC: Organic Growers School is launching **Farm Beginnings®**, a yearlong farmer training course beginning on October 24th, 2015. The program is designed to offer beginning and expanding farmers the practical skills and knowledge needed to start and grow successful long-term farm businesses. Farm Beginnings® is focused on sustainable agriculture practices and is taught by established farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs. The course is open to aspiring, beginning and expanding farmers in Western North Carolina (WNC) and surrounding Southern Appalachian states – Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Farm Beginnings® is a 12-month training session that helps beginning farmers clarify their goals and strengths, establish a strong enterprise plan, and begin to build their operation. The course uses a mix of farmer-led classroom sessions, on-farm tours, and an extensive farmer network.

This curriculum taps into the knowledge of the most innovative & skilled farmers operating in WNC, helps build a strong peer-to-peer farmer network for skill sharing, problem solving, and mentoring for success, and teaches critical farm management skills such as creative financing and innovative marketing strategies. Through the on-farm portion of the program, students will be able to experience sustainable farm practices being used on real farms under a variety of conditions. Through the principles of AgroEcology and Holistic Farm Management participants will learn to view a farm as an interconnected system and discover how goals influence farming practices.



Organic Growers School recently conducted a survey of WNC farmers to ascertain their barriers to success. Overwhelmingly, farmers expressed a need for more farmer training. “I never got into farming to be a small business owner, but now I realize that’s what I am,” explained one farmer participant. Sixty-five percent of the farmers surveyed felt that a lack of financial planning and business training were significant barriers to farming in WNC. This reiterates that farmers need a whole tool set that includes production training, as well as comprehensive financial planning and business training in order to farm successfully.



Farm Beginnings® will directly address the needs of the regional farming community and offer a comprehensive farmer-led training course to better prepare the future generation of farming professionals in WNC. The one-year course consists of 120+ hours of training time including 49 hours of whole farm business planning sessions to take place October through March, 55 hours of production training through field days on sustainable farms around WNC and on the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Incubator Farm April through October, and 20+ hours of classes at Organic Growers School's Annual Spring Conference in March.

The application deadline is October 15th, 2015, and the pilot program fee for the one-year course is \$1500, a 50% discount from the ultimate cost of the program. Scholarships and payment plans are available. For more information and to apply for Farm Beginnings visit www.organicgrowersschool.org/farm-beginnings

The Organic Growers School is organized annually by the Organic Growers School INC, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

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