



## Agricultural Systems

PHOTO: USDA

# Helping farmers improve the bottom line

*Land-grant educators help producers improve production and profitability to grow food, fiber and their businesses*

### Successful examples include:

- **Minnesota** Extension educators assisted producers by providing financial assistance programs through video and webinars for farmers to identify and implement best practices to avoid the spread of COVID-19 among essential workers and the community. This helped to keep the supply chain safe for fresh and locally produced fruit, vegetables and meat. The resources were made available in English, Hmong and Spanish to reach a broader range of producers.
- One-third of **Virginia's** 44,800 family farms are considered small farm operations with less than 10 acres. Niche crops such as ginger and turmeric have potential to offer significant farm income through direct sales. As a result of Virginia State University research and Extension efforts, 50 small-market farmers grew 750 to 1,050 pounds of fresh ginger and 300 to 450 pounds of fresh turmeric, which translated to \$70,000 gross sales or \$1,400 per farm.
- Growing fruits and vegetables on beds of plastic mulch has been proven to increase yields for small-scale farmers by doubling or tripling production and extending the growing season. However, the equipment to lay the plastic is expensive. **North Carolina** Extension created the Plasticulture Rental/Cash Back Program to make this practice affordable to small-scale farmers. The total savings to farmers using this equipment was \$67,580.
- **West Virginia** hatched new farms with “agincubator” to reduce poverty and unemployment by training new farmers. The program trained 156 farmers in the region. Equipped with the skills and resources needed to launch and sustain their agricultural careers, the new farmers will provide their community with fresh, locally grown produce. Half of the new farmers indicated that they worked with local markets, and 42% worked with local restaurants to sell their produce.

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A banner image at the top of the page. On the left, there is a field of purple flowers. On the right, there is a red barn with a white roof and a silo, set against a green field and a blue sky. The text 'Agricultural Systems' is overlaid in white on a dark purple background.

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- Many small ruminant producers are new to this industry and are in need of education in animal production, management and economic opportunities available for lamb and goat meat. **Delaware** Extension educators conducted an evening session for small ruminant producers. The participants represented 592 acres and 492 head of sheep and goats from around Delaware. All participants rated the overall program as somewhat or very informative, 88% indicated they had learned new information and 71% responded that they would implement a new practice on their operations as a result of what they had learned.
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