The focus of this program series is on small-scale commercial production, especially for people interested in starting or improving their small farm success. Each of the sessions covers topics that are applicable to a variety of agricultural operations including fruits and vegetables using conventional, sustainable, and organic methods. The program series ends with a look at how livestock can enhance a small farming operation.

The series is open to all and the selection of the topics in the series has been proven over time to be key components for farm profitability. This program is the result of a collaboration among The Baltimore County office of the University of MD Extension, Future Harvest Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, Farm Alliance and Real Food Farm to offer a workshop series to learn about starting and operating a successful, intensive small farm.

The Baltimore County office of the University of MD Extension is partnering with Future Harvest Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, Farm Alliance and Real Food Farm to offer a workshop series to learn about starting and operating a successful, intensive small farm.

Location: the first 9 sessions (January through March) are held at the Baltimore County Center for Maryland agriculture at 1114 Shawan Rd, Cockeysville, MD 21030. The 3-part Urban series (April) will meet in Baltimore City.

Registration and Cost: Registration is required ... the cost for the 9-part series is $40 per person; the cost for the 3-part Urban series is $15 pp; the cost for both series is $50 pp. Registration: to register online go here http://ter.ps/sscfi or print a registration from our website at http://ter.ps/farmclass or contact the UM Extension office at 410-771-1761 for information, special needs or other registration options. Please register by January 27.
January 29 6:30 – 9:00 pm
Marketing Essentials a part of the Business Plan and MDA Resources
Ginger Myers and Mae Johnson
Marketing is critical to any farm operation. Topics discussed briefly will include: developing a marketing plan, determining the potential of sales opportunities, finding a niche, value-added products, starting a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) on your farm, and other opportunities in direct marketing and wholesale.

February 5 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Cover Crops, Planning and Rotations
Jack Gurley and Tom Paduano
Topics discussed include suitable cover crops and timing, determining what varieties to grow and when, succession and companion plantings, planting calendars and on-farm decision making. Discussion based on experiences on a long-term, organic, vegetable operation.

February 12 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Strategies and Examples for Pest Management Success
Jerry Brust and Christy Ottinger
Insects, disease, weeds and animals can hinder or devastate any type of crop production. Topics discussed will include Integrated Pest Management techniques to manage the production operations to minimize pest issues.

February 19 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Soil Fertility and Conservation on the Small Farm
Jon Traunfeld, Jim Ensor, Dave Martin and Gary Jellick
Topics will include: assessing, maintaining and enhancing soil fertility, innovative, low-cost methods for improving soil fertility, and an overviews of conservation programs and nutrient management requirements. Interpreting soil fertility test reports will be discussed.

February 26 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Methods and Management of Season Extension Using High Tunnel Production
Bryan Butler
Topics discussed will include management, location, crop selection and rotations within the high tunnel and other season extension techniques.

March 5 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Quality Assurance, Post-Harvest Handling and Other Certifications
Dave Martin, Donna Pahl and Jack Gurley
The processes from land preparation to transporting your products to market offer many opportunities for product contamination and spoilage. This session focuses on the basics of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), raw food product safety and handling techniques to maintain product quality. The requirement for organic certification will also be discussed.

March 12 6:30 – 8:45 pm
The Business Plan and Financial Management for Your Small Farm
Dale Johnson and Sarah Rider
Topics will include: Tools for determining profitability, using production/cost data to make good business decisions, and understanding your farm operation within the context of your family finances. Actual small farm income and expenses are used in the discussion.

March 19 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Small Farm Business and Marketing Experiences Panel
Beginner Farmer Training Program Graduates: David Pauk, Kristin Carbone and Elisa Lane
A panel of local small farm operators present critical decisions and experiences with establishing and marketing their operation.

March 26 6:30 – 8:45 pm
Integrating Livestock into a Small Farm
Susan Schoenian and Will Morrow
Small scale animal production fits well with crop production on a small farm. The discussion will include sheep, goats, chickens and beef. In addition, speakers will share experiences with bees and horses.