

Your Guide to **TAKING THE PLUNGE INTO FARMING**



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Farming is hard work but it seems to keep calling your name. The pull to work the soil or grow a fine crop of calves is only getting stronger as time goes by. No wonder, farming is one of the most honorable livelihoods. After all, it feeds the world.

Getting into the farming business requires looking long and hard before you leap, says Mitchel Pridmore, Regional Lending Manager in the Foothills region of AgSouth Farm Credit.

Farming is a business and most people who have launched their own businesses will tell you that all

of a sudden not only are you having to deliver when it comes to the focus of your business, you also must continually plan, identify customers, market, keep the books, and stay abreast of developments in your specialty. And with farming, you're dealing with something you have to keep alive, whether it's plants or animals. It sometimes seems like a 24-7 job. Sometimes it is.

A passion to farm with a healthy dose of determination to do the required work will help set you on the path to success.

Mitchel Pridmore
Regional Lending Manager





HOMework: EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

Pridmore says that while a degree in agriculture may be helpful, it's not an absolute must. What seems to be most valuable is being open to new ideas and learning from others, both what works and what doesn't. He says that among the most successful small farmers in the state today are those who apprenticed with other farmers to learn important lessons before taking the leap to their own operations.

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE:

- North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia Cooperative Extensions have offices in every county of each state and links farmers with the latest research at several universities with agricultural programs. Extension offices offer workshops, field trips and other trainings.
- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) is all about helping local farms thrive. ASAP covers a large region in the western part of North Carolina and hosts workshops and an annual Business of Farming Conference.
- Team Agriculture Georgia (TAG) is a coalition of USDA agencies, state departments, and community organizations working together to provide educational resources to enhance the resilience of the state's beginning, small, and underserved farmers.
- Lowcountry Local First advances economic prosperity and local ownership of South Carolina farms through innovative and inclusive initiatives that build our community's wealth and wellbeing.
- N.C., S.C. and G.A. Departments of Agriculture & Consumer Services hosts field days at research stations across the state, often in cooperation with local universities. Most are free and open to the public. They provide a wealth of research-based information for farmers.

A plentiful harvest of resources and networking opportunities are available to you! Other resources are available to you on how to build a network and the types of expertise you'll need in your corner as you embark on your farming business.





PROFESSIONALS TO HAVE ON CALL

Whether seeking expertise or simply having a sounding board to discuss ideas, it's really great to have a network of people to rely on, says Mitchel Pridmore, Regional Lending Manager in the Foothills region of AgSouth Farm Credit. "If you don't know the answer, you know who you can ask."

Pridmore shares his list of six professionals to have on your side:

- **Loan Officer** – Consider your loan officer as someone who is there for you. "We serve agriculture at AgSouth Farm Credit," says Pridmore. "We're here for our customers. Be open and honest. Be willing to bounce things off your loan officer or others in your network."
- **Attorney** – Unless you already own farm land – often new farmers don't – an attorney can be helpful in navigating various options such as leasing land, renting to own, owner financing or other ways to purchase. "An attorney that looks out for you is important," says Pridmore.
- **Certified Public Accountant (CPA)** – CPAs can be a huge asset when you have tax questions or when making purchasing decisions, such as whether it might be most beneficial to purchase or lease land or equipment.
- **Appraiser** – Often farm-related purchases come with a big price tag. Pridmore says an appraiser can help you evaluate whether you're getting a fair-market deal. "You don't want to buy something that's not worth the price."
- **Insurance Agent** – If you're a young family you need to look at life insurance. Crop insurance or other farm policies are other considerations. "You want to make sure they've got your back."
- **Cooperative Extension Agents** – Extension offices in every county have agricultural agents that provide expertise and serve as gateways to university research, farm trials and field days that are geared to helping farmers learn about growing practices for their region.





GET INVOLVED

Building a network helps you find resources that can help your business. “A network can help you learn about these people who may be willing to let you farm their land. There may be creative ways to set up arrangements. We have some 100-year leases and people may plant an apple orchard, for example. They can’t afford to buy it but it may be possible to lease long-term.”

AG BIZ BASICS

Designed for young, beginning, small, and/or veteran farmers and their families, Ag Biz Basics is a fast-paced online program designed not only to prepare you for meetings with your lender, but also to position your agricultural business for success. This hands-on program allows you to establish written goals and get your financial business documentation in order including a projected cash flow statement, updated balance sheet, and a cash income statement. Along the way, you will be introduced to a few key financial ratios that can provide guidance concerning financial performance.

AG BIZ PLANNER

Also designed for young, beginning, small, and/or veteran farmers and their families, Ag Biz Planner helps farmers and those living a rural lifestyle create a successful business plan and strengthen communication with their lender. This hands on program helps prepare farmers for a more successful and fulfilling business, family, and personal life by improving their management and business planning skills. In addition to the business plan, the program helps participants establish written goals, projected cash flow statements, a balance sheet, a cash income statement, and key financial ratios for their farms.

AGAWARE

The AGAWARE Workshops are a one-day, in-person introduction to farmers on a variety of financial related topics critical to running an operation. These topics include Balance Sheets, Income Statements, Family Finance & Family Budgeting, Risk Management, Accrual Income, Applying for Financing, Preparing a Business Plan, Technology & Record Keeping, FSA/SBA and Other Programs. AGAWARE is also certified for FSA Direct Borrower Training Credit. The training is open to anyone who wishes to develop a better understanding of how to run a successful farming operation, of any type and size.