



# Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings 2024-25 Program Application

In 2024-2025, Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings will offer a beginning farmer training program for the young, young-at-heart, and underrepresented farmers with the intent to teach holistic farm financial management and marketing, farming skills for specialty crops and humane animal husbandry, and navigation of land and resource access. Food Works encourages diverse applicants with varied backgrounds and experiences to apply for the program, including first generation and new generation farmers, women, BIPOC, veteran, LGBTQIA+, and low-income farmers. The program provides education, mentorship, and technical assistance to support new and beginning farmers' dreams of a sustainable farm business using an entrepreneurial model. Throughout the program, farmers lead in-person and virtual sessions, sharing their experiences with beginning farmers. The inclusion of farming skills training reduces trial-and-error approaches, saves financial and human resources, and improves success. All farmer trainees develop and present their farm plan, participate in a farmer mentorship, and one year of access to Southern Illinois Farming Alliance events.

**Application directions:** Please answer the questions on the following pages, attaching additional sheets if necessary. For timely consideration, email your application to [jenniferduensing@fwsoil.org](mailto:jenniferduensing@fwsoil.org) OR mail your application to: Food Works, PO Box 3855, Carbondale, Illinois, 62902.

## Contact Information

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\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gender

Veteran

Person of Color

LGBTQIA+

Low Income

Please note, your response to these four questions is optional. However, Farm Beginnings is an intentionally diverse program and these factors are considered when determining scholarship awards and demonstrating the impact of this program to funders.

If you are unsure of whether you meet the low-income classification, check the US poverty guidelines: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>. You may be asked to provide proof of income upon acceptance into the program (IRS form 1040 or comparable form. If you were not required to file taxes in 2024, you may provide a statement describing your income). Everyone is encouraged to apply; scholarship priority will be given to applicants that identify as beginning farmers, women, BIPOC, veteran, LGBTQIA+, and low-income farmers.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address Line 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

Best Time to Call You:      Mornings      Early Afternoon      Late Afternoon      Early Evening

Will a farm partner participate in SIFB with you?                      Yes            No

If Yes, please give us their contact info.

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gender

Veteran  
Person of Color  
LGBTQIA+  
Low Income

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address Line 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Partner's relationship to you:

**Biographical Information**

Please indicate your highest level of education:

Some High School

Bachelor's Degree

High School Diploma

Grad/Professional Degree

Some College

Describe any and all experience related to farming, or farm planning and management.

**Have you had any experience preparing of the following financial documents? For What Purposes?**

Cash Flow:            Yes        No

If Yes, for what purpose:

Budget:                Yes        No

If Yes, for what purpose:

Balance Sheets      Yes        No

If Yes, for what purpose:

Are you currently farming?      Yes        No

\*Please note that for the purposes of this application, “farming” can include:

1. Starting a farm
2. Transitioning an existing farm from conventional to sustainable production
3. Working as a manager, employee, or intern on someone else’s farm

Applicants are encouraged to have farming experience; however, it is not necessary to own land or currently be farming to be accepted to the program.

**Farm Information (Complete this section if you currently have your own farm)**

What is the name of your farm? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the location where you are currently farming if different from your contact information above:

City/State, County: \_\_\_\_\_

What arrangement best describes you in the 2024 growing season?

- |                        |                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Working on my own farm | Full-time internship/mentorship |
| Renting farmland       | Part-time internship/mentorship |
| Other: _____           |                                 |

How many acres are you currently farming? \_\_\_\_\_

How many total years have you farmed? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe how you marketed your farm products in 2024: (Check all that apply)

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| CSA                          | Home Delivery            |
| Farmers' Markets             | Internet Sales           |
| Farmer Cooperative           | Wholesale to restaurants |
| Roadside stand or farm store | Wholesale to stores      |
| Other: _____                 |                          |

What products did you produce in 2024? (Check all that apply)

- |             |                              |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| Vegetables  | Hogs                         |
| Small Fruit | Goats                        |
| Tree Fruit  | Sheep                        |
| Flowers     | Beef                         |
| Honey       | Dairy                        |
| Poultry     | Alternative/Specialty Grains |
| Eggs        | Other: _____                 |

Which best describes your farming methods practiced during the 2024 season?

- |                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Organic practices-not certified    | Certified Naturally Grown         |
| Certified organic                  | Certified Animal Welfare Approved |
| Transitioning to certified organic | IPM (integrated pest management)  |
| Other: _____                       |                                   |

In what geographic area did you market your products in 2024? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage of your household income in 2024 has come from farming?

1 - 20%

61 - 80%

21 - 40%

81 - 100%

41 - 60%

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you expect to be your total income from farming in 2024?

Less than \$1,000

\$15,000 - \$19,999

\$1,000 - \$2,999

\$20,000 - \$29,999

\$3,000 - \$4,999

\$30,000 - \$39,999

\$5,000 - \$9,999

\$40,000 or more

\$10,000 - \$14,999

## Goals and Expectations

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What farming enterprise(s) are you considering? (Please check all that apply)

Vegetables

Hogs

Small Fruit

Goats

Tree Fruit

Sheep

Flowers

Beef

Honey

Dairy

Poultry

Alternative/Specialty Grains

Eggs

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your farming goals and how do you think this program can help you?

What do you see as your biggest obstacle in starting your own farm operation or achieving your farming goals?

What do you see as your most important personal asset in starting your own farm operation?

After completing the SOUTHERN ILLINOIS FARM BEGINNINGS® program, when do you expect to be farming

Already Farming

Within 4-5 years

Within 1 year

After 5 years

Within 2-3 years

Note: To be eligible for ESFSI scholarship, farmer trainees must begin actively farming by August of 2025. See Program Cost Section.

The 2024-2025 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS FARM BEGINNINGS® program will include a series of 4-7 mandatory Field Days Visits throughout the program timeline (October 2024-2025), as well as an invitation to the optional SOUTHERN ILLINOIS FARMING ALLIANCE field day events that will run April-September 2025. These events will be primarily in-person, outdoors on farms in the 23 Southern counties of Illinois that Food Works serves, and generally last 2-4 hours.

Please describe any conflicts or barriers that would prevent you from participating in field days. (Note: ESFSI scholarship recipients may also qualify to receive support for travel costs.)

Please choose which day and time of the week best suits your foreseen schedule throughout the program timeline and growing season to attend field days.

Weekdays (Monday-Friday) During the day within the hours of 8am - 5pm

Weeknights (Monday-Friday) During the evening 5pm - 8:30pm

Weekend Day (Saturday-Sunday) During the day within the hours of 8am - 5pm

Weekend Evenings (Saturday-Sunday) During the evening 5pm - 8:30pm

The SOUTHERN ILLINOIS FARM BEGINNINGS® program also includes a one-on-one mentorship with an experienced farmer, for those who desire it. This will take place during the 2025 growing season. Experienced farmers share their insights, helping beginning farmers build competency in farming skills. Farmer trainees work with Food Works staff to identify a mentor who will help them grow toward their farming goals. Each mentorship relationship is unique, but this 10-hour commitment usually includes 1 visit to the mentor's farm, 1 visit to the farmer trainee's farm, and an additional communications including phone calls or emails.

Please describe any conflicts that would prevent your from participating in farmer mentorship.

## References

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How did you hear about SOUTHERN ILLINOIS FARM BEGINNINGS®?

Please provide one personal reference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to you:

## **Program Cost**

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Through a gracious grant from the USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, we are able to offer the Southern Illinois Farm Beginning Programs at the discounted cost of \$450 (Normally \$975). This includes mentorship, all virtual classroom sessions and on-farm instruction, books, and one year of access to Southern Illinois Farming Alliance events.

I will pay the discounted program cost of \$450 in full prior to the beginning of the program.

I am interested in a payment plan for the discounted program cost of \$450

I would like to be considered for the one-time Entrepreneurial Small Farmers of Southern Illinois (ESFSI) program scholarship that covers the entire cost of the program.

Entrepreneurial Small Farmers of Southern Illinois (ESFSI) provides education, mentorship, and technical assistance to support new and beginning farmers' dreams of a sustainable farm business using an entrepreneurial model. ESFSI seeks to increase diversity among farmers in Southern Illinois. Today's new farmers may not have grown up on the farm where the knowledge, skills, tools, and land for farming were transferred within the family. If you've been planning a farming venture or if you've been farming less than 10 years, then you are who we are looking for.