

Program Components and Schedule

Stateline Farm Beginnings® Year 13: 2017-2018

A. Winter Course Sessions – October 2017 to March 2018

Please see WINTER COURSE SESSION DETAILS on each session below.

2017 Dates

1. Saturday, October 7 – 10:00am-4:00pm
2. Saturday, October 21 – 10:00am-4:00pm
3. Saturday, November 4 – 10:00am-4:00pm
4. Saturday, November 18 – 10:00am-4:00pm
5. Saturday, December 2 – 10:00am-4:00pm
6. Saturday, December 16 – 10:00am-4:00pm*

2018 Dates

7. Saturday, January 13 – 10:00am-3:00pm
 8. Saturday, January 27 – 10:00am-3:00pm
 9. Saturday, February 10 – 10:00am-4:00pm*
 10. Saturday, March 3 – 10:00am-3:00pm
- September, 2018 – TBD Last Session and Graduation

* Note these sessions have MORE than two weeks in between them and the next session.

LOCATION: All sessions are held at Angelic Organics, 1547 Rockton Road, Caledonia, IL 61011

SNOW DATE: Saturday, March 10, 2018 – 10:00am-3:00pm.

Please keep this date open. The snow date is often used when we need to reschedule a class due to weather.

B. CRAFT Field Day Workshops - April to October 2018

Stateline Farm Beginnings® participants take part in multiple field day workshops of their choice. There are usually 10 field days which take place from April to October, with a few winter field days sprinkled in. The workshops are hosted and led by member farms in the Upper Midwest CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) and are included in the course fee.

C. One-on-One Mentoring - April to October 2018

Stateline Farm Beginnings® participants are paired with a farmer-mentor on a case-by-case basis. The Stateline Farm Beginnings® facilitator helps each participant assess his or her learning goals for the growing season and matches the participant with a mentor. A \$200 honorarium from AOLC is paid to the mentor of their choice.

D. Last Session and Graduation Event - September 2018

Participants meet to share and reflect on their summer-time experiences at field days and with their farmer-mentor. This event celebrates the completion of Stateline Farm Beginnings® with a graduation potluck at the Angelic Organics Learning Center picnic shelter.

WINTER COURSE SESSION DETAILS 2017-2018 (From item “A” above)

Session #1 Saturday, October 7, 10am-4pm—Starting on Solid Ground with Whole Farm Planning

Presenters: AOLC Farmer Training Program Director Peg Sheaffer; Panel of 3 Beginning Farmers.

Understand the framework and course objectives of Stateline Farm Beginnings® and hear about recent farm start-ups from Stateline Farm Beginnings graduates. Get to know your fellow participants... this is your first farmer-network! Brainstorm all products and services you've been considering so that your ideas are on paper. Begin assessing your resources.

Session #2 Saturday, October 21, 10am-4pm—Whole Farm Planning Part 2

Presenter: Farmer John Peterson, Angelic Organics

Having a successful farm business depends on creating goals that consider long-term sustainability. Learn how clear and specific personal goals relate to a strong, viable farm business. Assess your skills and connect them to enterprise ideas. Tour Angelic Organics CSA farm with Farmer John Peterson and see a farm as an integrated system.

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Session #3 Saturday, November 4, 10am-4pm— Right-sizing your Farm: Benchmarks and Scale

Presenter: John Hendrickson, CIAS University of Madison and Stone Circle Farm (To be confirmed)

Write your farm's Mission Statement. Learn how to categorize expenses. Hear about research on what is possible on various size farms, in terms of income potential, land use, and labor hours. Learn about the "front end" and "back end" of a direct market farm operation, specialized equipment, and spending priorities.

Session #4 Saturday, November 18, 10am-4pm - Land and Soils

Presenters: Nathan Aaberg, Liberty Prairie Foundation and Grant McCarty, UofI Extension (To be confirmed)

Learn about the pros and cons of various land access options that go beyond ownership and renting. Considering a farm as an ecological system will help you plan your business. Most farms depend on rich soil biology for successful production, and in this session you'll learn how to take a soil sample, read test results, and brush up on soil-health facts.

Session #5 Saturday, December 2, 10am-4pm - Planning for Market and Distribution

Presenters: Erin Cummisford, Duck Tail Farm, and Beth Osmund, Cedar Valley Sustainable Farm (To be confirmed)

Hear successful strategies of 3 farmers marketing different products through a variety of channels. Understand the difference between advertising, marketing, and public relations, and identify what's best for your enterprise. Consider your farm enterprise more specifically now and identify your own marketing strategies.

Session #6 Saturday, December 16, 10am-4pm—Assembling Financial Data

Presenter: Sheri Doyel, AOLC Farmer Training Facilitator

Learn how holistic financial planning will help you make better decisions on your farm. All aspects of preliminary planning, categorizing income and expense, developing annual cash flow, and identifying "wealth generating expenses" will be covered. Practice using specific charts to plan everything from cover crop schedules to equipment pay off.

Session #7 Saturday, January 13, 10am-3pm—Analyzing the Situation: Financial Tools

Presenter: Paul Dietmann, Badgerland Financial (To be confirmed)

Hear an in-depth presentation of farm financials from one of the best advisors in the region. Traditional tools such as balance sheets, profit and loss, and cash flow will be discussed with real-world examples. Understand the power in budgeting and creating solvency. Analyze your own production skills and identify immediate goals for the upcoming Growing Season.

Session #8 Saturday, January 27, 10am-3pm—Realities from the Market

Buyer Panel: Irv Cernauskus, Irv and Shelly's Fresh Picks; Rich Horbaczewski, Grass Is Greener/Bushel & Peck; Charis Rose, Dill Pickle; Yescenia Mota, City of Chicago, all to be confirmed.

Learn about the buying practices of retailers, what farmers markets might expect from you as a vendor, and what strategies to use to enter markets. Hear from buyers and farmers alike about "the other side" of the equation. Participants are encouraged to prepare questions ahead of time.

Session #9 Saturday, February 10, 10am-4pm—Connecting with Resources and Building a Mentoring Plan

Presenters: Phil Lehman, Harvard State Bank; Insurance specialist TBA, Andrew Larson, University of Illinois Extension; David Peterson, USDA Farm Service Agency and more. All speakers yet to be confirmed.

Local and regional resource people will present on financing options, legal issues, insurance, trademarks, taxes, and business names. Regional continuing-education resources available to new farmers will also be presented. Mentorship guidelines for the upcoming growing season will be discussed.

Session #10 Saturday, March 3, 10am-3pm—Class Presentations

Synthesize the work you've done throughout the course thus far into a presentation or final project. Hear strategic business plans, challenges, and changes to the "farm dream" from fellow participants, and identify "next steps" for yourself.