

# Extension Improves Producer Performance

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

 University of  
**Kentucky**  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment



## Extension Develops Farming, Marketing and Business Practices through 3-Year Beginning Farmer Incubator Program

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*It starts with us*



In 2017, 948 refugees were resettled in Louisville, Kentucky. Jefferson County Extension collaborates with Catholic Charities-Migration and Refugee Services and Kentucky Refugee Ministries as well as the Kentucky Office for Refugees (KOR), the federally designated State Refugee Coordinator's Office and a department of Catholic Charities of Louisville. Extension provides educational programs and resources for refugee families acculturating into the community. Programs include accessing food and establishing businesses.

The Incubator Farm Program is a three-year farm business development program. In Louisville, the program is co-facilitated by the Jefferson County Extension Agent for Horticulture and Program Manager from Common Earth Gardens, a division of Catholic Charities. Additional support is provided by Navigate Enterprise Services, a Louisville organization specializing in limited resource business development for new Americans, and Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (KCARD).

The residents applied to participate in a one year growing experience in Kentucky and were required to have three persons agree to be farm business partners. In January of 2018, seven farm business teams were formed, representing

a total of 30 people from the Somali-Bantu community who are pursuing a small farm business.

Participants attended bi-weekly classes from February through April on the topics of food safety, crop planning, farm rules, markets, and financial literacy. After successfully completing classes, participants rented one to three plots per farm business team at the Millers Lane Incubator Farm Site. The number of plots rented was decided by the farm business group and approved by the program facilitators based on their business goals for 2018.

During the growing season, farmers received on-farm support from program facilitators, Extension specialists, and community volunteers. Farmers also received one-on-one business consulting services from Navigate Enterprise Services or KCARD. Each farm business group met with their consultant once in the spring, during market season, and at the end of the growing season to review records of their sales and expenses.

At the end of the growing season, five of the seven business teams sold produce at 10 different farmers markets from April to September. Two groups sold produce wholesale to Common Table, a culinary training program in Louisville. Farm business teams kept sales records, and tracked business income and expenses using a balance sheet. Farmers reported an increased confidence in speaking English and demonstrated safe handling and storage of produce. The business teams that completed their program requirements in 2018 are invited to re-apply for the second year of the Incubator Farm Program. The teams that did not access markets will be invited to re-apply to repeat the first year of the Incubator Farm Program.

The program received national recognition when the Jefferson County Extension Agent for Horticulture and the Program Manager for Common Earth Gardens presented to the National Incubator Farm Field School in November 2018.

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