

The Stalk



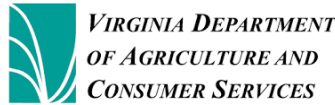
Accomack & Northampton County Cooperative Extension
Eastern Shore Agricultural Research & Extension Center



Welcome to Our New VDACS Pesticide Investigator

Welcome to our New VDACS Pesticide Inspector: Nikita Higgins! Born and raised in the upper Midwest, Nikita earned a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. After college, Nikita was an Agroforestry Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, where she met her husband, Doug, whom you may know as Dr. Higgins, our own Eastern Shore AREC Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology.

Before working for VDACS, Nikita was in the world of greenhouse production of native plants, tree seedlings and ornamentals.



She also controlled invasive plant species and worked as a forest consultant, developing forest stewardship management plans for landowners. Coming from Michigan, Nikita (and Doug) have made a home here on the Eastern Shore with family, enjoying canoeing, hiking and eating seafood. Nikita is looking forward to working with our producers and pesticide applicators on the Eastern Shore as well as Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

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Office of Pesticide Services
Pesticide Investigator Territories

Investigator	Phone	Territories
NIKITA HIGGINS	757.969.4389	Accomack, Norfolk, Northampton, Virginia Beach
CHRISTINE HASLAM	757.495.2522	Chesapeake, Colonial Heights, Dinwiddie, Franklin (City), Greenwell, Hopewell, Isle of Wight, Petersburg, Prince George, Southampton, Suffolk, Sussex
GLENN CHAPPELL	404.913.3517	Amelia, Appomattox, Botetourt, Buckingham, Campbell, Charlotte, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Henrico, Henning, James (City), Loudoun, Loudun, Madison, Nelson, Powhatan, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Surry, Warren
RYAN RUTHERFORD	540.236.8513	Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, Giles, Harrisonburg, Highland, Loudoun, Madison, Nelson, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Staunton, Waynesboro, Winchester
DEBBIE BROWN	540.530.5147	Alabama, Augusta, Charlottesville, Bedford (City), Botetourt, Brunswick, Buchanan, Campbell, Giles, Grayson, Henry, Lee, Loudoun, Madison, Nelson, Shenandoah, Staunton, Winchester
KATE HREZO	540.580.3406	Alleghany, Amherst, Bath, Bedford (City), Botetourt, Brunswick, Buchanan, Campbell, Giles, Grayson, Henry, Lee, Loudoun, Madison, Nelson, Shenandoah, Staunton, Winchester
JACOB ODUM	376.222.2424	Blair, Bristol, Buchanan, Campbell, Giles, Grayson, Henry, Lee, Loudoun, Madison, Nelson, Shenandoah, Staunton, Winchester
ROBERT CHRISTIAN	757.334.3966	Charles (City), Essex, Gloucester, Henrico, James (City), King and Queen, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Newport News, Northumberland, Page, Richmond, Westmoreland, Williamsburg, York
ROBERT CHRISTIAN	757.334.3966	Charles (City), Essex, Gloucester, Henrico, James (City), King and Queen, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Newport News, Northumberland, Page, Richmond, Westmoreland, Williamsburg, York
KASEY CHAMBERS	571.271.4554	Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford, Stafford
MANNAN BONTAK	804.381.4302	Caroline, Falmouth, Goodland, Hanover, Henrico, Louisa, Orange, Richmond (City), Spotsylvania



The Stalk Team: - Helene, Theresa and Mark



Accomack and Northampton County ANR agents, Theresa and Helene, recently met to discuss programmatic needs for both counties, laying out a tentative calendar for 2024. Tentative project areas will include

- Small Farm workshop series
- Specialist Days
- Pesticide Recertification Classes
- Ag Economics workshop
- Marketing/Social Media workshops
- Pesticide and WPS Trainings
- Household Water Testing
- Pesticide container recycling
- Food safety classes.

**What are your needs?
Let us know!**

Agents' Statistics to Date:

Pesticide License Recertifications:

84

Pesticide License Exams Proctoring:

8

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ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Northampton

@vce_northampton

Accomack

Agents' Calendar:

"Working for the Wellbeing of Our Communities!"

- March 5th: Eastern Shore Master Gardener Executive Board Meeting
- March 6th/7th: Produce Safety Alliance Agent Training
- March 12th: VCE SE District Unit Coordinator Meeting
- March 13th: ES Master Gardener Entomology Training
- **March 14th: Dicamba (8am), Parqat/Gramoxone (10am) Training**
- March 18th-24th: Ag in the Classroom with Farm Bureau
- March 19th: Judging entries for the Eastern Shore Envirothon
- **March 20th/21st: SMALL FARM WORKSHOP**
- March 25th and 26th: Food Safety Agent Training
- March 26th: Touring a commercial kitchen in Farmville, VA

On-Going VCE Efforts in March

- Slug Trapping Research to evaluate slug population density.
- Potato on-farm trial evaluating the efficacy of current insecticides for the control of wireworms.
- Selection of corn varieties for field corn variety trial to be planted in early April at the ESAREC.
- Planning of "Raising Quality and Large Sized Vegetables for Fair Competition" Workshop
- Connecting sweet corn growers with ESAREC plant pathology graduate student for on-farm spring trials
- Abstract submission for 2024 International Soil Tillage Organisation Conference ("Eastern Shore ANR Programs: working for Virginia's #1 agricultural communities")
- Hiring Committee Interviews for ESAREC Assistant Farm Manager

CONTACT US IN PERSON, PHONE OR BY EMAIL:

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tpittman@vt.edu - 757-787-1361

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County
16392 Courthouse Road, Eastville
hdoughty@vt.edu - 757-678-7946 ext. 25



Agent Question of the Month

How do I start a farm if I have some land?

Answer: First step is to reach out to your local FSA and get registered for a farm number, fill out a CCC-860 to determine eligibility for beginner farmer programs and get connected to the USDA by signing up for emails. Next: Reach out to VCE Extension agents for resources on production!



SAVE THE DATE

COMMERCIAL PESTICIDE LICENSE RECERTIFICATION COURSE

Categories: 1A, 3A, 3B, 6, 10, 60

Northampton / Accomack Counties

Wednesday, May 1st 2024

Eastern Shore AREC, Painter, VA



VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

GRAMOXONE/PARAQUAT IN-PERSON TRAINING

Anyone using Gramoxone, Firestorm, Helmuquat, Parazone, and other paraquat products must complete an EPA-mandated training before application.

- A certificate will be delivered by the end of the training after successful completion of the exam.
- Applicators must repeat training every three years.

Time
10 am - until

Location
ESAREC
33446 Research Dr
Painter, VA 23420

Date
March 14, 2024

RSVP

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County - 757-787-1361 - tpittman@vt.edu
Helene Doughty - Northampton County - 757-678-7946 - hdoughty@vt.edu



Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. All programs and resources are open to all, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, or any other basis prohibited by law.

If you are a person with a disability and desire assistance or accommodation, please notify Rachel Barnes, Accomack County at 757-787-1361 during business hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

ACCOMACK & NORTHAMPTON PRODUCERS

DON'T MISS THE DEADLINE FOR NATURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Drought conditions affected many of Virginia's agricultural producers in numerous localities and all parts of the state during the 2023 growing season. This natural disaster assistance includes FSA emergency loans. Provided eligibility requirements are met, the FSA will assess each emergency loan application individually and will consider specific circumstances and needs.

Farmers in Accomack and Northampton counties have eight months from the date of the disaster declaration to apply for emergency loans.

Producers should contact their county's FSA Service Center for more information on this designation, services available, date of declaration and application deadline.

THE AGENT'S CORNER

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County ANR Agent

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County ANR Agent



Please join us for an Eastern Shore Small Farm Workshop on Wednesday, March 20th & Thursday, March 21st.

Features speakers from the Virginia Tech ESAREC, Virginia Tech Food Science and Technology department, VDACS Marketing department, Beekeeping Guild, and Virginia State University Small Farm & Animal Production programs.

The workshop is FREE but requires registration (as space is limited)

VISIT THIS LINK
TO REGISTER

Lunch is provided and sponsored by the Association of Eastern Virginia Agricultural Producers, Inc, Farm Credit and Northampton Farm Bureau.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the workshop and engaging in conversations to improve, diversify and support your farms!

SMALL FARM WORKSHOP MARCH 20-21



Northampton County
Parks & Rec
Community Center
7247 Young Street
Machipongo, VA 23405

Wednesday, March 20th
8:00am - 3:00pm

Thursday, March 21st
8:00am - 2:00pm

FREE, open to the public
Refreshments and lunch provided



SPACE IS LIMITED, PLEASE REGISTER HERE BY
MARCH 10: [HTTP://TINYURL.COM/ESSMALLFARMWORKS](http://tinyurl.com/essmallfarmworks)

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Insect, Disease, Weed Control
- Soils, Cover Crops & Nutrient Management
- Marketing Techniques
- High Tunnels & Irrigation
- Beekeeping & Honey Production
- Food Safety
- Animal Production

Questions? 757-678-7946 (Northampton) 757-787-1361 (Accomack)

hdoughty@vt.edu tpittman@vt.edu



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If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Hélène Doughty at (757) 678-7946 during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



Director's Update

It's potato planting time! We look forward to starting the Spring 2024 field season and expanding our portfolio of applied research to help Virginia growers prosper. We are also busy writing grants to fund our research, so let us know if you would like to participate in on-farm trials or have an interesting research idea to solve a problem that you are encountering.



Potato planting on Yaros Farms February 21st

Cutting and dusting potato seedpieces at the ESAREC



ESAREC Hiring Plans

Hiring is also in full swing as we are currently interviewing for two positions at the Eastern Shore AREC. We are currently conducting online interviews for both our Assistant Farm Manager and Applied Entomologist position.

The Assistant Farm Manager position was promoted to Farm Manager. The entomology position will aim to fill the void left when Helene Doughty moved to serve Northampton County as Virginia Cooperative Extension's Agriculture and Natural Resources agent.

Stay tuned for ways to interact with our Entomologist search as candidates visit the Eastern Shore and Virginia Tech's main campus over the coming months. We will also make the candidate's seminar available remotely for those of you not local to the Eastern Shore of Virginia.



James Warren Retires after 51 Years of Service

MMr. James Warren, Mechanic and Master of many trades, has retired from the Eastern Shore AREC after 51 years of dedicated service. James has driven, repaired, patched, introduced, retired, and had his hands on every piece of equipment the station has seen in those many years, often being the only person knowing the obscure or hard to find parts that were needed for repairs or where every tool, bolt or implement was located. James has mentored a many students and summer interns in the ways of the Eastern Shore AREC, not just guiding them and teaching them in the ways of field work, but making sure they minded their manners by “speaking” every morning and bringing them in the conversation. He loved to teach interns how to drive the oldest tractor on the station, a 1952 Ford 8N, to help with laying irrigation pipes. James’ teaching was always done with a good dose of laughter and patience. Mr. Warren was always patient and meticulous, he wanted to get it done right and always communicated well with everyone to ensure great field conditions existed and for optimal trial results. James had a many stories and anecdotes over the years that he retold faithfully during break time over a soda and a pack of nab, or pulling sweet potato slips out of the sand boxes, or while riding on the 2-person transplanter. He was always willing to lend a hand to anyone, even after work hours, helping to fix summer interns’ cars or changing the oil for them. James never missed an Eastern Shore AREC event, was the quintessential employee, and no get together was ever complete without his mirthful laugh. If you see James around, congratulate him on his well-deserved retirement!



[Do you want to leave James a well wish for his retirement? Click HERE!](#)



Dr. Reiter Awarded Outstanding Alumni in the Global Community



Study Abroad South Africa installing a high tunnel in an elementary school's garden in January 2024.



Dr. Mark Reiter was awarded the 2023-2024 Alumni Award winner as Outstanding Alumni in the Global Community by the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences (SPES) at Virginia Tech. Mark was nominated by Dr. Ozzie Abaye for his work around the globe to promote agricultural education and applied research regarding best management practices for soils and nutrient management. Mark currently serves as President of the International Soil Tillage Research Organization, whose main mission is to promote contacts among scientists undertaking research in soil tillage and field traffic and their relationship with the soil environment, land use and crop production; to stimulate scientific research in the domain of soil tillage and related fields; and to further the application of the results of such research into agricultural practice. Mark also co-leads study abroad programs and promotes agronomic concepts related to food security throughout several countries in Africa. Mark graduated with his B.S. in Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences from Virginia Tech in May 2001. Dr. Reiter will be recognized as the SPES award winner at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Alumni Organization's (CALSAO) celebration of Ut Prosim in April.

ISTRO 2024 SPONSORSHIP & PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



I personally invite you to attend and sponsor the 22nd International Soil Tillage Research Organisation (ISTRO) Conference. Your sponsorship will showcase your company's dedication to service the agricultural industry around the world.

This event will cover many topic areas and unite up to 300 attendees from over 25 countries, resulting in extensive international visibility, engagement and collaborations.

Our event will serve as a venue for researchers, graduate students, industry, government, and farmers to present and discuss soil health, cover crop and residue systems, crop protection, regenerative agriculture, and many other topics, around the theme "Living Roots, Living Soil", as well as build collaborations and networking efforts.

ISTRO 2024 SPONSORSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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Join Us!

Current Partners and Sponsors



ESAREC DR. MARK REITER SPEARHEADS PLANNING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WITH VCE COLLABORATION

The International Soil Tillage Research Organisation (ISTRO) biennial conference, with recent former renowned locations around the globe such as Paris and Dublin, is taking place in September 2024 in Virginia Beach, VA! Eastern Shore AREC Director, Mark Reiter, is currently serving as President of ISTRO and has taken on the challenge to host an internationally recognized event in the world of soil and tillage research.

The ISTRO 2024 committee comprises 13 members from Virginia Tech, ISTRO, VDACS and Virginia Cooperative Extension with ESAREC Dr. Mark Reiter as Conference Leader, VCE Helene Doughty as Event Project Manager and ESAREC Belinda Sterling as Fiscal Manager.

Planning began in April 2023 to secure the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront Resort as ISTRO 2024's venue. Currently, abstract submissions and reviews are underway until the March 15th deadline, early bird registration until April 1st, and sponsorship requests. The conference is to take place over 5 days from September 23rd to 27th with features and events including a general session with a renowned keynote speaker, concurrent daily sessions covering 7 submission topics, poster sessions, multiple networking events, a tour of agriculture of the Eastern Shore and Virginia Beach and a dinner banquet on the Spirit of Norfolk.



For more information on ISTRO 2024, including abstract submission, registration and sponsorship, click [HERE](#)



VCE Agents ISTRO Collaboration



Helene Doughty
Northampton ANR



Theresa Pittman
Accomack ANR



Roy Flanagan
Virginia Beach ANR

VCE AGENTS AND ISTRO COLLABORATION AREAS:

- **ISTRO 2024 Event Project Manager:** Helene Doughty
- **ISTRO Farm Tour Coordinator:** Roy Flanagan (lead), Helene Doughty, Theresa Pittman
- **Abstract Submission in "On-Farm Applied Research and Extension" topic area:** Helene Doughty, Theresa Pittman

US Court Bans Dicamba Products but Growers can use Existing Stocks in 2024

Dr. Vijay Singh, Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, Weed Science



Recently, a U.S. court banned three herbicides (with dicamba active ingredient) widely used in soybean and cotton systems, considering that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) violated the law by not following guidelines and allowing them to be on the market. The court has taken a stance where it emphasized that comments and concerns of state agriculture agencies, specialty farmers, and stakeholders were not considered by EPA while allowing the use of dicamba.

The ruling impacts Bayer’s dicamba-based XtendiMax herbicide, Syngenta’s Tavium and BASF’s Engenia herbicide. The affected companies are assessing legal options to respond. Meanwhile, EPA has allowed the use of existing stock orders of dicamba products as explained below.

Farmers and conservation groups against dicamba commercialization highlighted that dicamba can cause massive and unprecedented harm to farms as well as endangering plants and pollinators. These herbicides can volatilize and move long distances when temperatures climb. Dicamba is prone to drift and it can move into drainage water as runoff after rain.

Farmers have few other options in place of affected dicamba products, example, the Enlist soybean system that uses 2,4-D for weed control. Other options are either Roundup Ready or Liberty-Link Soybeans. Growers are suggested to use Liberty-Link soybeans if they have significant issues of glyphosate/ Roundup – resistant weeds. Growers can use cultivars that allow use of both Roundup and Liberty. We do not have any reported case of glufosinate (Liberty)-resistant weeds in Virginia.

However, growers can still use existing dicamba products which include dicamba product already in the possession of distributors, co-ops, and other parties for sales and shipped before February 6, 2024 or listed within set guidelines outlined in the order. The end users of existing stocks in Virginia must use the formerly-registered products consistent with the previously approved labeling for the products, and must cease use of these products by June 30 for dicamba tolerant soybean, and July 30 for dicamba tolerant Cotton. Those who are planning to use existing dicamba products in 2024, must fulfill dicamba training requirements in Virginia. In this regard, a training session will be offered on: Thursday, March 14th, 2024, at the Eastern Shore AREC in Painter, Va.

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

DICAMBA TRAINING

In February, the EPA issued an Existing Stocks Order "to allow for limited sale and distribution of dicamba over-the-top products that were already in the possession of growers or in the channels of trade and outside the control of pesticide companies."

This training satisfies the dicamba training requirement in Virginia.

Time - Registration
8:00 am

Location
ESAREC
333446 Research Dr
Painter, VA 23420

Date
March 14th, 2024

Please RSVP to your local county agent

Helene Doughty- Northampton County - 757.678.7946 - hdoughty@vt.edu
Theresa Pittman - Accomack County - 757.787.1361 - tpittman@vt.edu



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Cover Crop Seeding Using Unmanned Aerial Systems or Aerial Drone

Dr. Vijay Singh, Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, Weed Science

Unmanned Aerial Systems or aerial drones are changing our agricultural practices and becoming a part of smart farming systems. Several growers and drone manufacturers in Mid-Atlantic region are evaluating drone-based cover crop and wheat seeding options.



Operations conducted in 2023 at growers' farms provided exciting observations and showed potential of these technologies. However, there were few unanswered questions regarding uniform germination, appropriate altitude for seeding, and many factors which can affect seed placement. A collaborative project of Dr. Singh (Weed Scientist) and Dr. Reiter (Soil Scientist) at Eastern Shore AREC, attempted to provide more information on drone-based cover crop seeding, especially while using same drone for spray and seeding operations. The project will evaluate seeding rates, swath, altitude, germination and cover crop health. Results of these studies will be showcased during the field day in Summer 2024. The pictures show the team standardizing and optimizing the seeding rates using LeadingEdge Precision Vision drone system.



Use of Ground Robots for Weed Management

Dr. Vijay Singh, Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, Weed Science

The use of robotics for weed control in conventional systems is a topic of worldwide research interest. However, robots differ substantially in different cropping systems and based on targeted pest. Weed Science team at Eastern Shore AREC is developing a versatile ground robotic system that can be used for weeds, insect and disease management including sensing and recognition capability. To begin with, team has started working on Amiga-ng platform (Farm-ng) which is an all-electric micro-tractor that is easy to adapt to any farm's cropping systems.



The team will customize the platform and install smart sprayer which will use in-house developed algorithms and weed imagery digital datasets for weed identification purposes. This will reduce dependency on commercial programs and subscriptions, which will further reduce the operating cost.

St. Patrick's
Day





JOIN OUR TEAM

Associate Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development - Accomack County

The 4-H Youth Development Agent is a professional educator who provides leadership to the local 4-H program and manages its day-to-day operation. 4-H is a community of young people learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. The mission of 4-H is to develop youth, and adults working with those youth, to realize their full potential and become effective, contributing citizens. Must have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree (BA or BS) in a relevant discipline from an accredited college or university. A master's degree and promotion to Extension Agent are required no later than the sixth year of employment. Shortlisting of candidates will start after February 16th, 2024 and continue until the position is filled. For questions, contact Janet Spencer - jaashle2@vt.edu

Careers at Virginia Tech - (Job no. 528372)

please visit this link and apply online: <http://tinyurl.com/papr98ek>



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Northampton 4H is Eggs-pecting!



Eggs have arrived at Franktown Montessori, Cape Charles Christian and Kiptopeake Elementary. Also, Eggs are slated to arrive after spring break at Broadwater Academy and Shore Christian Academy.

Baby Chicks/Ducks Hatching in March and May

WHAT'S THAT BUG?

Hélène Doughty, Northampton ANR agent, invites you to test your entomology knowledge. Take a guess on the pest and email her your answer! hdoughty@vt.edu



Our previous "What's That Bug" was a Harlequin bug. Harlequin bugs are in the same family as stink bugs. Unlike stink bugs that feed on a variety of host plants, harlequin bugs are monophagous and feed only on cole crops and brassicas. They lay black and white egg cylindrical egg masses on the underside of leaves. Nymphs are also black and red in appearance. Nymphs and adults feed on the leaves inserting their stylet into the tissue and removing fluids. The damage appears as white halo marks or blotches on the leaves and, if heavy enough, can lead to necrosis of the leaves, plant wilting and death.

VCE & ESAREC Contact Information

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	Faculty/Staff	Title	Email	Work/Cell Phone
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	VACANT	4-H Agent		
	Rachel Barnes	Unit Support Staff	mrbarnes@vt.edu	757/787-1361
	Faculty/Staff	Title	Email	Work/Cell Phone
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	VACANT	Assistant Professor, Horticulture		
	VACANT	Assistant Professor, Entomology		
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	VACANT	Assistant Farm Manager		
	VACANT	Mechanic		
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Alana Kirsch	Communications Associate	alanak@vt.edu	W 757/807-6586	



VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
 VIRGINIA TECH.

Virginia Cooperative Extension brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth. VCE provides education through programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Viability.

The Virginia Tech, Eastern Shore AREC is committed to supporting commercial vegetable, grain, oilseed, and fiber production throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Centrally located on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the center conducts basic and applied research on more than 25 agricultural crops.

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