



Farming and farming research

with E'licia L. Chaverest and the Alabama A&M University's Small Farms Research Center

Talking points

Knowledge

1. What are underserved communities?
2. What is farmer-to-farmer mentoring?

Comprehension

3. Why do modern-day farmers need to have entrepreneurial and leadership skills?
4. How does the Alabama A&M University's Small Farms Research Center (AAMU-SFRC) help farmers to develop legal and financial literacy?

Application

5. What questions would you ask to learn more about the history of Alabama's Black Belt, how this history has affected the challenges the region faces, and how they might be overcome?
6. Imagine you are considering a career in farming. What would be the first things that you would want to learn?

Analysis

7. Why do you think new farmers might benefit more from farmer-to-farmer mentoring rather than 'classroom' style lessons?
8. Technology can be very beneficial for farmers. What new or emerging technologies can you think of that would bring benefits to small farms?

Evaluation

9. Bearing in mind modern-day issues such as biodiversity loss, population growth and climate change, do you think the future is likely to see a greater or lower proportion of small farms compared to industrial-scale farms? Explain your answer.
10. E'licia says that "data and analytics, food safety, natural resources, environmental sciences and public policy" are all growing areas of farming research. Why do you think each area is becoming increasingly relevant in the modern world?

Activity

E'licia explains that the beginning farmers programme includes courses on "business structure, financial literacy, risk management strategies, diversification, food safety and marketing".

Choose one of these topics and design a workshop for new and beginning farmers to introduce them to some key concepts within this topic and how they apply to a farming business. Thoroughly research your chosen topic before designing your workshop.

Think about the following:

- How can you make your workshop inclusive, interactive and engaging?
- How could you include real-life scenarios to make your content as relevant as possible?
- How can you break away from the traditional 'classroom' style of teaching?
- What sorts of activities can help engagement and learning? This might include making collaborative mind maps, verbal sharing of ideas, or even playing games.
- What sort of follow-on activities might you suggest that beginning farmers do in their own time?
- What are the most important points for farmers to remember?
- How can you test whether participants have taken on board the most important points?

Run your workshop with your classmates taking the roles of new and beginning farmers. Did they find the workshop enjoyable and engaging? Did they remember the most important points? What did they learn from your workshop? How would you change your workshop if you were to run it again?

More resources

- You can find out more about the AAMU-SFRC's activities from another Futurum article, which describes how E'licia and her team help socially disadvantaged farmers: [futurumcareers.com/supporting-small-farms-how-protecting-local-farms-can-protect-local-communities](https://www.futurumcareers.com/supporting-small-farms-how-protecting-local-farms-can-protect-local-communities)
- This article from *Time* describes the challenges faced by small farms in the US as industrial farming continues to grow: www.time.com/5736789/small-american-farmers-debt-crisis-extinction/
- The US Department of Agriculture offers advice and support for new farmers. Find it here: www.farmers.gov/your-business/beginning-farmers