

Summary & Resources - 4Js Family Farm August 2025 OAK Farmer Field Day



Year-Round Earnings, Creative Diversification and Organic Certification

Event Summary

“There’s nothing more satisfying than growing healthy food and sharing it with our children.” These were among the thoughts Jennifer and Jan Maynard shared in describing their life’s work at [4Js Family Farm](#), a true family effort of the Mercer County couple and their two children, Jayden and Juliet. All four Maynards are actively involved in the production, harvesting, marketing and sales of their certified organic vegetables, cut flowers and herbs and the value-added products they provide to the community. This satisfaction is deeply rooted in the Maynards, not only in nurturing their family’s health, but also in supporting a healthy ecosystem, food system and community – principles that were evident at their Field Day farm tour for dozens of farmers, partners and supporters in late August.

“Farming 4 the Future”

The 4Js Family Farm motto, “Farming 4 the Future,” illustrates the vision the Maynards have for their farming and its impact, rooted in “doing no harm” through their production practices, to instill community values in their children’s lives and to extend that health into the community they serve. From Jennifer’s homestead childhood in Alaska and Jan’s Illinois upbringing, the Maynards share an interest in environmental stewardship and living close to the land.

Living in Europe, Jennifer and Jan were inspired by food systems that centered fresh food and minimized processed packaged foods. As a young family farming in New Jersey for seven years, they learned crop production systems that worked with natural cycles, pollinators and healthy soil. The more they learned about the food system and the healthcare system, the more convinced they became that the two systems should work together. So they started a whole-food, medically tailored prepared meal business to unite the two systems in support of human health.

Building Farm and Community

Four years into their family life in Mercer County, the Maynards have intentionally built their farm and community with these healthy systems in mind. Interested in organic certification, they attended the January 2025 OAK Conference and learned about [OAK's Organic Transition Program](#). By March, they had connected with Kenya Abraham, OAK's Organic Transition Specialist, for guidance and assistance in finalizing their organic application and were paired with Robin Verson, a [Farmer Mentor](#) with over 30 years of organic farming experience at [Hill and Hollow Farm](#). Jennifer and Jan met weekly with Robin as they honed their organic application materials and production plans, and Robin visited 4Js Family Farm to learn more and better support the Maynards' organic transition. In May 2025, 4Js Family Farm received verification of organic certification from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). "It was an incredible journey for us," Jennifer explained. "Working with Kenya and Robin offered us reassurance and a second set of eyes as we moved through that process."

In their local community, the Maynards have also built relationships as they've learned of resources available to Kentucky farms. The Mercer County Cooperative Extension office provided help with soil tests, assistance with food safety and home-processing certifications and regulations, farmers market membership and support for value-added product development. The Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (KCARD) offered free business planning and shared grant opportunities. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) supported the Maynards' on-farm conservation practices with technical assistance and may extend financial cost-sharing support as the farm grows. Through these connections with statewide and local agriculture professionals, the Maynards learned of additional opportunities to support their farm, including the County Ag Investment Program (CAIP) grants, Kentucky State University's (KSU) Small-Scale Farm Grant and KDA's Kentucky Proud Promotional marketing grants. (Learn more about these resources via the links below.)

As 4Js Family Farm production has grown, the Maynards have expanded their sales from their initial on-farm produce and egg stand and online market to two farmers markets in Boyle and Mercer counties, multiple local restaurants, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares and local markets carrying their value-added products.

No-Waste and Adding Value

The Maynards strive to spread the farm's earnings throughout all four seasons of the year, allowing more reliable year-round income and providing a "sanity month" in January to rest and restore themselves for the year ahead. Their practice of "level loading" farm offerings and year-round income is built around the ideas of maximizing each crop for as many products as possible and diversifying the products and markets available throughout the year. Jennifer shared examples of multiple farm diversification enterprises and expanded product offerings for three crops with Field Day participants.

No-waste crops at 4Js Family Farm include basil, cucumbers and garlic. Basil provides fresh culinary herbs for chef customers, dried herb ingredients for seasoning mixes and dried teas and textural foliage for cut-flower bouquets. Cucumbers are supplied fresh to restaurants and CSA customers, and pickling varieties become home-processed, shelf-stable jarred pickles. Garlic produces fresh garlic scapes as the fresh bulbs develop, and the bulbils of the unharvested scapes are cured, dried and crushed for bottled garlic salts. All three crops allow easy seed-saving to support the farm's next year of crop production. The Maynards plan to apply for seed-distribution permits and licensing in future years, allowing them to sell seeds for home and/or farm use.

Adding to their fresh and value-added crop markets, the Maynards offer on-farm workshops in their event barn, including bouquet-crafting and natural dyeing, and host overnight guests in an on-farm rental cottage. These agritourism opportunities introduce potential new customers to their farm while expanding their farm revenue. With chickens already producing eggs for their markets and the Maynards expanding their livestock infrastructure, 4Js will eventually provide additional protein offerings to their markets. They're developing their livestock systems for future organic certification and continue to work with Farmer Mentor Robin and OAK as they build their forward-looking family farm.

Gratitude

OAK is grateful to Jennifer and Jan and their family at 4Js Family Farm for their time and efforts for this Field Day, to the USDA's [Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program \(Midwest-TOPP\)](#) and [Grow Appalachia](#) for providing support and transition guidance, and to all the farmers and ag professionals who took time out of their busy schedules to share in the learning and conversation.

The USDA's [Midwest TOPP](#) provided support for this event, as did Grow Appalachia and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. OAK's Farmer Education program is supported by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF).

Related Resource Links:

OAK Resources:

- [Upcoming OAK Farmer Field Days](#) - Hosted on working farms, these events highlight organic practices used in crop and livestock systems and best practices in production, marketing, business and resilience on Kentucky farms. Register today to learn from and with other farmers!
- [Annual Organic Farming Conference](#) - Save the date for OAK's 15th Annual Organic Farming Conference, Cultivating Connections: Growing Organic Together for 15 Years, January 30-31, 2026, at Kentucky State University's Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort.
- [Organic Production Assistance Program](#) - The organic production consultation services provide dedicated organic technical assistance to Kentucky farmers who are currently using or interested in adopting or expanding organic practices.
- [OAK Transition Program](#) - Organic Transition specialists assist farmers who are interested in transitioning to USDA-certified organic production. Organic Specialists are available for one-on-one consultations, providing a personal level of service and technical assistance on-site, at the farmer's convenience.
 - The [Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program \(TOPP\)](#) is a coalition of partners across 11 states providing mentorship, technical assistance, and wrap-around support for transitioning and existing organic producers. With TOPP support, OAK connects farmers transitioning to organic with local, experienced organic mentors in the [Organic Farmer Mentorship](#) program.

- [OAK Conservation Program](#): Conservation Outreach Coordinator provides one-on-one assistance for Kentuckians interested in adding conservation practices to their land or farm management on owned or leased land. Eligible participants are Kentucky farmers and landowners with production or subsistence farms, urban or rural growing spaces, community-run projects or privately managed lands.
- [Join OAK today!](#) The sustainable food and farming network in Kentucky is growing, and together, we can create a thriving local food system. Your support and participation helps OAK deliver educational programming, provide community outreach and enhance market opportunities for growers across Kentucky! Receive discounts on OAK events and other member benefits!
- [Sign up for OAK newsletters](#) - For farmers and consumers, OAK offers a variety of regular communications to stay connected to Kentucky food and farming news, research and events.
- [OAK YouTube](#) - View recordings, snapshots and lessons learned from host farmers in past conference and field day playlists.
- [Suppliers and Farm Resources](#) on OAK's Find-A-Farm Directory

Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) Resources

- [Recordkeeping for Organic Crop Certification](#) - 4Js Family Farm Field Day Participant Packet
- [How to Choose a Certifier in Kentucky](#) - Many organic certifiers operate in the state of Kentucky. Each will require record-keeping, farm maps and common requirements of the [USDA's National Organic Program](#), yet they all have different timelines, processes, paperwork requirements and certification fees.
- [OAK Organic Record-Keeping Template](#) is one of the [OAK Farming Resources](#) developed to help farmers keep the required records for organic certification and production.
- Organic Transition Videos:
 - [Organic Record Keeping - with a Farmer and Inspector](#)
 - [Mock Organic Inspection - Introduction and Preparation](#)
- [Organic Material Review Institute \(OMRI\)](#) supports organic integrity by developing clear information and guidance about materials so that producers know which products are appropriate for organic operations.

Grow Appalachia Resources

- Grow Appalachia addresses food insecurity throughout central Appalachia through home and community garden initiatives, foodways, farming and hunger relief programming. A [Strategic Initiative of Berea College](#), Grow Appalachia partners with organizations, communities and families in Appalachia to create healthy, resilient and economically viable food systems.
- [Beginning Farmer Series](#) and [Garden Grants](#)
- [High Tunnels and Growing Supplies](#) - [Social Enterprise](#) - [Kayla Preston](#)

Soil Health Resources:

- Soul Fire Farm's [How Alive Is My Soil?](#)
- [Cover Crops for Sustainable Crop Production](#) - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)
- [Managing Cover Crops Profitably](#) and [Building Soils for Better Crops](#) - SARE
- [Cornell Soil Health Manual](#) - Cornell University's College of Ag and Life Sciences
- [Building Soil Health in the South](#) - Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)

Crop Production Resources:

- [General Production Resources | Center for Crop Diversification](#)
- [Organic Agriculture | Center for Crop Diversification](#)
- [Crop Rotation on Organic Farms | SARE](#)
- [Community Supported Agriculture \(CSA\) Production Manual](#) of the Organic Farming Unit at the University of Kentucky - **The Maynards recommended this!**
- [High Tunnel Production Resources](#) - University of Kentucky Extension
- [Crops Under Cover](#) - the most recent research-backed and farmer-advised row cover innovations; University of Kentucky
- Organic Commercial Spray Schedule for Field Production (University of Kentucky series)
 - [Beans, Broccoli, Cauliflower & Other Cole Crops, Cucumber, Melons](#)
 - [Peppers, Pumpkin, Summer Squash & Zucchini](#)
 - [Tomatoes, Winter Squash](#)
- Disease and Insect Control Program for Home-Grown Fruit in Kentucky, including Organic Alternatives [ID-21](#)
- Suppliers:
 - [High Tunnels and Growing Supplies](#) - Grow Appalachia, Berea KY
 - [Walk-Behind Tractors and Hand Tools](#) - Earth Tools, Owenton KY
 - [Farm/Garden Supplies](#) - Martin's Produce, Liberty KY
 - [Farm/Garden Supplies](#) - Shrock's Garden/Farm Supplies, Crab Orchard, KY
 - [Farm/Garden Supplies](#) - Deerfield Supplies, LLC, Elkton, KY
 - [Organic Farm And Garden Supplies](#) - Fresh Start Growers Supply, Louisville, KY
- [OMRI Materials Lists](#) - database of products approved for organic certified operations
- Organic Compost - compost itself cannot be "certified organic" (only food and fiber crops can be certified under the USDA's [National Organic Program](#)); farmers should look for OMRI-listed products and verify use of compost and amendments with current or potential organic certifiers.
 - [Suppliers and Farm Resources – OAK Find a Farm Directory](#)
 - [Soil Building - Manures & Composts | Agricultural Marketing Service](#)
- Johnson-Su Compost Bioreactor - **The Maynards recommended this!**
 - [OAK Virtual Conference 2022 session by Dr David Johnson](#), explaining the importance of Biologically-Enhanced Agricultural Management, including use of the Bioreactor
 - [Bioreactor - Regeneration International](#) - includes description of, and manual for building the Bioreactor

Value-added Product Resources

- KDA's [Kentucky Farmers' Market Manual and Resource Guide](#)
- Kentucky [Homebased Processing and Microprocessing | UK Family & Consumer Sciences Extension](#)
- [Commercial Food and Cosmetic Manufacturing in Kentucky: A Starter Guide](#)

Funding /Technical Assistance Resources and Service Providers

- Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development ([KCARD](#))
 - Free [business planning](#) for Kentucky farms and agribusinesses
 - [Funding assistance and grant information](#) (Kentucky and beyond)
 - Sign up under “GET UPDATES” on [KCARD website](#) to receive e-newsletters
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Read this first! [A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers](#)
 - USDA [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)-Kentucky](#)
 - [How to Start a Farm: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
 - Find your county’s office in [West Kentucky](#) or [East Kentucky](#)
 - [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)-Kentucky](#)
- Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA)
 - [Organic Marketing Program](#)
 - [Grants and Funding Opportunities](#) - includes Kentucky Proud Promotional Grant
- Grants:
 - [SOAR loan](#) - southern and eastern KY
 - [KSU Small-Scale Farm Grant](#)
 - [County Ag Investment Program \(CAIP\)](#) grant: county-specific! Ask your County Cooperative Extension Agent