

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

First Annual AITC Teacher Tours

2022 will begin a new chapter in the Tennessee Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom's efforts to improve the Agricultural Literacy of students. For the past thirty plus years we have provided professional development through workshops, conferences and online experiences. We will continue to offer these, as every year there are new teachers and new students to reach.

The Foundation has assisted with County Farm Days through the Joan Fussell Farm Tour Grant program for over thirty years as well. Around seventy counties offer a countywide farm tour for students each year. We hope to expand these offerings as well, but the new tours I am talking about will be for teachers only?

We know that when you are "with" your students on a farm tour, your attention is on the students. And that is understandable! We want to offer tours for you to attend that are designed to help you experience the many careers that exist in the field of modern AGRICULTURE!

Each tour will have a slightly different theme, but all will include careers in agriculture. Whether that involves production jobs, management jobs, research jobs or marketing jobs... they all exist in agriculture.

For 2022 we have selected three tours for you to consider. One focuses on Protein Production; another on Dairy Production; and the final one on Farm Diversification.



Tour 1: Protein Production

Monday, May 23 - Weakley & Henry Counties
We will begin at Dresden High School in Weakley County at 9 a.m. to see how the FFA Chapter is incorporating livestock into their classroom. From there we will travel by charter bus to Tosh Farms where we will see modern pork production (feed, health, marketing, etc.) and learn how our lunch is grown.



Next on our protein tour is a stop at Yoder Brother Processing to see the final destination of "This Little Piggy". We will return to Dresden High School by 4 p.m. for dismissal.



Tour 2: Dairy Production

Wednesday, May 25 -

Loudon & Monroe Counties

Our Dairy Production tour will begin at Philadelphia Elementary School (PES) at 9 a.m. to see how they use a mini-farm to educate their students. PES has produced two national winning Ag in the Classroom teachers (so far!) and has the support of the local community to thank. They have utilized the Outdoor Classroom Garden Grant to slowly grow to their present state.



Our second stop will be at Sweetwater Valley Farms for a tour. The farm has an educational center where schools can book fieldtrips. We will be learning about their robot milkers, milk processing and cheese production facilities. We will eat lunch in their cafeteria and spend some time looking at all of the wonderful dairy products. You will also have a chance to purchase some award winning cheese. Pepper Jack is my favorite

After lunch we will travel just down the road to experience a real live auction at the East Tennessee Livestock Center. The Houston family has operated this facility since 1962. With the auction going on we will see how they keep up with who is selling, who bought them, and then see the cattle loaded on trailers. Price discovery is the purpose of a livestock auction. Sellers are not "price makers", they are "price takers". It is up to the competition among the buyers to "set" the sale price.



Then it is on to East Tennessee Feed & Seed to see what it takes to provide feeds for all of those cattle. Creating, storing, bagging and selling feed for livestock and pets takes lots of different skills. From selecting the best inputs, to balancing a ration for the particular stage of the animal's life, to meeting the needs of the customer, all of these skills are needed to be successful.

We will return to Philadelphia Elementary School by 4 p.m. for dismissal.

Tour 3:

Thursday, June 16 - Sumner & Robertson Counties
Not everything growing on a Tennessee farm turns into food. Some farms specialize in fiber production, ornamental plants or even dyes. We will begin at 9 a.m. at Portland High School to see how the FFA chapter partners with 1st graders to "catch'em while they're young" with the agriculture bug. Good things get growing in the greenhouse for little minds.



J.B. Donoho's Nursery will be our next stop to see how trees are propagated. Nursery crops play a huge role in Tennessee's two billion dollar agricultural impact on the economy. Because Tennessee is in Zone 7 we can grow plants that can be shipped north and south, making us a great state for the nursery industry. We currently rank 2nd in the nation for nursery crop production.

South Central Growers produces nursery and flowering crops under glass... greenhouses, that is. Prepare yourself to see more flowers under one roof than you ever could have dreamed possible. These are not crops that we eat, but they are crops just the same. It takes the skills of a plant scientist, an agronomist and a mechanical engineer to keep the plants growing all year long. Logistics is involved in making sure the plants are ready for sale at the right time, and not a minute too late!



Our final stop on the tour will be at the Highland Rim AgResearch & Education Center to see how the Land Grant System has made Tennessee Agriculture as productive as possible. Research is conducted locally to determine which varieties of crops and livestock is best suited to be produced in the area.

We will board the bus and return to Portland High School for dismissal by 4 p.m. that evening.