

2026 EASTERN SHORE AG CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW AGENDA

Exmore Moose Lodge, 15315 Merry Cat Ln, Belle Haven, VA 23306

JANUARY 14TH AND 15TH 2026

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14TH 2026

GENERAL SESSION 8AM

8:00am – 8:15am. Registration and Breakfast

8:15am – 8:25am. Opening Comments. Bruce Richardson, Association of Virginia Eastern Producers

8:25am – 8:40am. Updates from the Eastern Shore AREC, Dr. Mark Reiter, Director, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

8:40am – 8:55am. Updates from Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Dr. Mario Ferruzzi, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech

8:55am – 9:10am. Updates from Virginia Cooperative Extension. Dr. Mike Gutter, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension.

9:10am – 9:55am. Pesticide Legal Updates – Nikita Higgins, VDACS Pesticide Services. **You must attend the Pesticide Legal Updates presentation to receive recertification credits.**

9:55am – 10:10am. BMP Survey Update, Bay Model and Why it Matters – Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community and Food, Virginia Cooperative Extension

10:10am – 10:30am. Break and visit with exhibitors

10:30am – 11:00am. Keynote Speaker: Grains & Oilseeds Markets: Past, Present, & Future: A discussion of what has driven global commodity prices over the last few years, how things may play out in the next few, and how this is impacting conditions on the farm. Dr. Robert Thompson, Economist, Office of Corporate Economics at John Deere

11:00am – 11:30am. Contract Types & Writing a Marketing Plan– Robert Harper, Virginia Farm Bureau

11:30am – 11:45am. VDACS Updates

11:45am – 12:00pm. Awards Ceremony. Association of Eastern Virginia Agricultural Producers

12:00pm – 1:00pm. Lunch by Exmore Diner

AGRONOMY SESSION - 1PM

1:00pm -1:30pm. Small Grain Production in a Rapidly Changing Market. Dr. Nicholas Santantonio, Assistant Professor, Small Grains Breeding and Genetics, Virginia Tech School of Plant and Environmental Sciences

1:30pm - 1:55pm. Fusarium Head Blight Management: Evaluating Fungicide Timing and Performance in 2025 Field Trials. Dr. Doug Higgins, Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Fusarium head blight (FHB), caused by *Fusarium graminearum*, continues to pose a major threat to wheat production in Virginia. The most effective fungicide application timing is at early flowering (Feekes 10.5.1), yet weather conditions and logistical constraints often prevent growers from spraying at this precise stage. To address these challenges, 2025 field trials evaluated the efficacy of several fungicide products applied at suboptimal timings—specifically, when 50% of heads had emerged (Feekes 10.3) and up to seven days after early flowering (Feekes 10.5.4). The study aimed to identify which products maintained disease suppression when applications were delayed or advanced. Results will provide updated guidance on the flexibility of application windows and product performance, helping growers make informed decisions that balance disease control, time management, and input costs.

1:55pm – 2:20pm. Herbicide resistance and weed management in row-crops. Dr. Vijay Singh, Associate Professor Weed Science, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

2:20 pm – 2:35pm. Break and visit with exhibitors

2:40pm – 3:25pm. Pesticide Safety Updates. H el ene Doughty, ANR Extension Agent, Northampton VCE. **You must attend the Pesticide Safety Update presentation to receive recertification credits.**

3:35pm - 4:05pm. Annual Meeting of the Association of Eastern Virginia Agricultural Producers Meeting

6:00pm – 8:00pm. Oyster Roast, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore AREC (33446 Research Drive, Painter)

POTATO SESSION - 1PM

1:00pm -1:30pm. Potato Market Outlook for 2025. Brett Richardson, Farm Bureau

1:30pm – 2:00pm. Updates from Potatoes USA. Blair Richardson, Potatoes USA

2:00pm – 2:25pm Potato Pest Management Update. Dr. Kemper Sutton, Associate Professor of Entomology, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

This year’s potato pest management research focused on evaluating in-furrow and foliar insecticide treatments for wireworm and Colorado potato beetle control and exploring precision agriculture tools to enhance wireworm scouting efficiency. Together, these trials aim to refine integrated pest management strategies and boost decision-making accuracy for potato growers.

2:25pm – 2:40pm. Break and Visit with Exhibitors

2:40pm – 3:05pm. 2025 Potato Disease Campaign and Management Update. Dr. Doug Higgins, Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

This session will summarize which foliar and tuber diseases were most prevalent in 2025, highlight emerging issues, and review the management strategies that proved most effective. We will also discuss disease trends to watch for in 2026 and provide updated recommendations on fungicide rotation, resistant varieties, and cultural practices to support a proactive, integrated disease management approach for the upcoming season.

3:05pm – 3:35pm. 2025 Potato Season in North Carolina, up and coming potato lines and tools to find them. Dr. Mark

Clough, Research Scholar, North Carolina State University, Bonny Olok, and Craig Yencho. 2025 was a very challenging season. We learned a few things and confirmed some others. We'll discuss what's working and what is changing in the program to move us forward. Finally, we'll talk about lines in our program and others that look good.

3:35pm-4:05pm. Annual Meeting of the Association of Eastern Virginia Agricultural Producers Meeting

6:00pm – 8:00pm. Oyster Roast, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore AREC (33446 Research Drive, Painter)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15TH 2026

SOYBEAN SESSION - 8:15am

8:00 am – 8:15 am. Registration and Breakfast

8:15am -8:45am. Efficient Soybean Production: Investing Wisely for Maximum Yield and Profit. Dr. Carrie Ortel, Soybean Agronomist, Virginia Tech.

Every input in soybean production should be evaluated for its return on investment, with the goal of maximizing both yield and profitability. This presentation will highlight recent research on soybean seeding rates, planting dates, foliar fertilizer, and fungicide applications. The findings provide farmers with data-driven insights to guide smart, cost-effective management decisions for the 2026 soybean crop.

8:45am - 9:15am. Corn and Soybean Insect Pest Management Updates 2025. Dr. Tim Bryant, Assistant Professor of Entomology, and Sean Malone, Research Specialist, Virginia Tech Tidewater Agricultural Research and Extension Center. This talk will cover insecticide efficacy and resistance updates for major pests of corn and soybeans. We will also discuss the value of using IPM in soybean systems across a range of pest pressures and production systems.

9:15am – 9:45am. Designing herbicide programs with multiple effective sites of action. Dr. Michael Flessner, Associate Professor Weed Science, Virginia Tech

Herbicide resistance is a widespread problem that can in part be addressed by mixing and rotating herbicide modes of action. However, all herbicides applied must be effective against the target weed. Learn how to determine which herbicides and their mode of action are effective against your most problematic weeds.

9:45am – 10:00am. Break and visit with exhibitors

10:00am - 10:20am – Update on geese and deer populations and kill permits. Brian Benton, Conservation Police Officer, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

10:20am-10:50am – How Cover Crop Termination Timing Affects Slugs and Fertility in Soybeans. Dr. Joey Haymaker, Post-Doctoral Candidate, Dr. Mark Reiter, Professor Soils and Nutrient Management, Dr. Kemper Sutton, Assistant Professor of Entomology, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center, H  l  ne Doughty, ANR Extension Agent, Northampton Virginia Cooperative Extension, Dr. Carrie Ortel, Soybean Agronomist, Virginia Tech Tidewater Agricultural Research and Extension Center

This presentation shares results from our study evaluating how cover crop termination timing and species selection affect slug pressure, nutrient cycling, and soybean yield. We tested cereal rye, black oats, and wheat at four termination timings to find the best balance between the soil benefits of cover crops and minimizing slug pressure.

10:50am-11:25am. Pesticide Safety Updates. Theresa Pittman, ANR Extension Agent, Accomack VCE. **You must attend the Pesticide Safety Update presentation to receive recertification credits.**

11:30am – 12:30pm. Lunch by Exmore Diner

VEGETABLE - 8:15am

8:00 am – 8:15 am. Registration and Breakfast

8:15am -8:45am. Heat Tolerant Snap and Lima Beans to Maintain Quality and Yield All Season; Shelly Beans as an Alternative Crop. Dr. Emmalea Ernest, Extension Fruit and Vegetable Specialist, University of Delaware

8:45am – 9:15am. Pitfalls and New Issues in GAP Certification. Theresa Pittman, ANR Extension Agent, Accomac County Virginia Cooperative Extension and Tresica Colvin, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

9:15am – 9:45am. Understanding Pod Spotting and Russeting in Snap Beans: 2025 Research Highlights. Dr. Doug Higgins, Assistant Professor Plant Pathology, Virginia Tech Eastern Agricultural and Research Center

Pod spotting and russeting have emerged as significant quality issues in fresh-market snap beans on Virginia's Eastern Shore, leading to notable economic losses during the 2025 season. This session will summarize recent research investigating the fungal pathogens associated with these symptoms and report results from ongoing diagnostic surveys and laboratory isolations. We will also review findings from a 2025 fungicide field trial designed to evaluate management strategies and identify products that improve disease suppression and maintain pod quality. The discussion will highlight progress toward developing practical, integrated approaches to reduce pod damage and improve marketable yield snap regional snap bean production.

9:45am – 10:00am. Break and visit with exhibitors

10:00am – 10:30am. Effective Herbicides and Smart Machinery for Weed Control in Vegetables. Dr. Vijay Singh, Associate Professor Weed Science, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

10:30am-10:50 am. Presentation by The Society of St. Andrew

10:50am – 11:10am. Presentation by The Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore

11:10am-11:40am. Efficacy in Action: The Latest on Insecticides on the Eastern Shore. Dr. Kemper Sutton, Assistant Professor of Entomology, Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center

This season's vegetable insecticide trials at the ESAREC delivered insights into product performance across a range of vegetables and row crops, highlighting standout treatments and trends in efficacy. These results provide growers with actionable data to fine-tune pest management strategies and stay ahead of evolving insect pressures.

11:40am – 12:30pm. Lunch by Exmore Diner