

INCUBATOR

The UF/IFAS Small Farm Incubator Program supports the next generation of farmers by fostering agricultural innovation and promoting sustainability. Incubatees test growing methods, marketing approaches and new crops in a low-risk, low-cost environment packed with practical learning.



APPRENTICESHIP

The UF/IFAS Apprenticeship Program connects apprentices with active farmers and ranchers. We provide hands-on work experience and practical education, under the mentorship of successful entrepreneurs and producers. In partnership with Mote Marine Laboratory, participants will also train with Aquaculture experts at the Ron and Marla Wolf Aquaponics Center. Located 17-miles inland, Mote Aquaculture Research Park focuses on sustainable saltwater system technologies used in the production of high-value crops such as saltwater vegetables and fish. The program combines aquaculture, aquaponics and soil-based vegetable and fruit production on one integrated site.

MORE INFORMATION

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SMALL FARM INCUBATOR and APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

*Hands-on learning.
Expert mentorship.
Exciting opportunities.*

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Within the Small Farm Incubator Program, each participant (family/household) can start with an 8-foot by 10-foot plot within a Sarasota County Extension community garden or begin with an 1/8 acre at the Mote Aquaculture Research Park.

Participants can design, implement, and adjust plans for future farming operations, scaling them to larger areas over time and trial. In this way, the plot can eventually grow to become an operational farm with sustainable profit margins. Starting small allows for first-hand experience with and education about pest control, crop growth, marketing and business management.

Steps

STAGE	AREA	DURATION
Pilot (optional)	80 square feet in community garden	3-6 months
Small plot	Lease 1/8- to 1/4-acre plot	12-18 months
Large plot	Lease 2- to 3-acre plot	12-18 months
Operational business	Buy land	Launch

Incubatees will get business plan coaching and marketing support. Successful completion of the incubator program entails an operational farm running under a sustainably profitable business plan built from low-risk trial and error.



TESTIMONIALS

“This incubator program has helped me learn the realities of farming. There will always be an issue that you have to solve from insects, diseases, or infrastructure. I enrolled to learn from mistakes on a small scale and gradually grow before my livelihood depends on it, there’s no better program to learn to be a farmer.”

— Igor Pertile

“We joined the incubator because we wanted the opportunity to learn more about farming in a low-risk, high-learning and high-reward environment.”

— Kabrena and Jabari Williams



APPRENTICESHIP

The Apprenticeship Program matches partnering farmers and producers with apprentices to provide need-to-know information through direct involvement in daily operations. Participants gain practical skills in a range of areas, including crop cultivation, soil health, irrigation, pest and disease control, equipment operation, harvesting, marketing and management.



Apprentices and incubatees involved with the UF/IFAS Mote Aquaculture Research Park partnership will gain practical skills in and education about the commercialized production of crops and fish and much more. Applicants should first complete the UF/IFAS Small Farm Start-up School.



Credit: Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium