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**Accelerating Forest Farming in Central Appalachia:
Strengthening Market Connections and Collaboration for Long-Term Sector Impact and Sustainability**

Franklin, West Virginia: Future Generations University announced today their participation in a new partnership, led by Virginia Tech, with nine other organizations across the Appalachian region. This partnership project will expand and accelerate value-added, agricultural clusters of Appalachian communities that implement sustainable forest farming practices with the support of an ARISE award from the Appalachian Regional Commission.

“I strongly believe that the key to transforming Appalachia’s economic vitality can be found in vision and collaboration across state lines,” said ARC Federal Co-Chair Gayle Manchin. “I’m encouraged by the way our newest ARISE grantees have come together to forge plans that will greatly increase workforce development and business ventures in ways that will positively affect the entire region.”

“Accelerating Forest Farming in Central Appalachia” focuses on improving the economic viability, social well-being, and the resource sustainability of individual and collective forest farming business ventures across Central Appalachia. This project additionally increases the long-term viability of the value-added and sustainable Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) supply chains.

“Appalachia is a global icon in understory woodland product trade. From tree barks and gourmet food to the world’s largest spectrum of salable medicinal botanicals, the region is rich in marketable raw material derived from its biodiverse forests,” says John Munsell, Project Director for the planning grant, Virginia Tech Associate Professor and Forest Management Extension Specialist. “However, these products and associated producer communities have long been undervalued and underserved. Forest farming is an agroforestry practice involving the intentional production and stewardship of understory woodland crops such as mushrooms, plants, and sap that ensures product quality, reduces market volatility, enhances local enterprise, and increases sustainable commerce, all of which can improve the recognition and reward that Appalachian producers and their communities deserve.”

This award presents an opportunity to formalize relationships between institutions of higher learning, community development, research advancement, and sustainable farming and agroforestry in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Kentucky, and North Carolina in an effort

to grow an emerging forest farming industry for the Appalachian region. Entities in each location have been partnering and implementing practices to bolster the forest farming economy and will now have the opportunity to expand upon this existing work.

“The Yew Mountain Center is excited to be collaborating with partners across the region to expand opportunities related to cultivating Non-Timber Forest Products in Appalachian forests,” Erica Marks, Director of The Yew Mountain Center stated. “Our sought-after native botanicals thrive in healthy forests just as our communities are enriched when we manage this resource for sustainable income potential and for conservation.”

The benefits of this new partnership include:

- 1) Development of a 5-year Implementation Project focused on valued-added marketing and technological innovations along with enterprise-based community development
- 2) Producer, land and business owner education related to best practice findings
- 3) Programs and services to deliver a broad spectrum of market-centered opportunities for Appalachians, their communities, and the region’s natural woodland bounty

About Future Generations University

Together with the University’s partner organization, the Future Generations Global Network, our Global Team gathers practitioners, students, academics, and community leaders in a universe of learning to advance the well-being of people and planet. We are headquartered in the heart of Appalachia where we reach other marginalized communities all over the world with our method to advance community-based sustainable development.

About The Yew Mountain Center

The Yew Mountain Center is on a 500-acre nature preserve among the forests and farms of West Virginia. It is created and run by the local community to be a place for learning about the rich natural and cultural heritage of this Appalachian region and to be a part of the way forward to a prosperous and sustainable future in these mountains and beyond.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development entity of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC’s mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

Read more at:

https://newcropsorganics.ces.ncsu.edu/2023/06/new-grant-to-support-forest-farming-efforts/?fbclid=IwAR0sluexWGxnBHpMFBTNSSwiXv8YFVQgduX_OqbLWVYDQpZx05Csmx0jsf4

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