

Enhancing Rural Economies through Agroforestry: Assessing Emerging Opportunities Speakers & Committee Members

Speaker Biographies



Sarah Campbell, USDA Farm Service Agency

Sarah is a part of the Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency Outreach Office. She supports the Farm Service Agency’s strategic outreach and stakeholder engagement around organic farming, local and regional foods, urban agriculture and women in agriculture. Her work includes developing tools and resources that help field employees engage new audiences, and building partnerships across Federal, State, and community partners to ensure equal access to USDA programs. She also works on several cross agency initiatives including the Local and Regional Foods Working Group, the Urban Agriculture Working Group, Farmers.gov and the USDA Women in Ag Initiative. She is a graduate of Guilford College and has an MS in Community Development from UC Davis. She resides in Maryland where she operates a diversified livestock operation and sells pasture based meats and hay.



Chris Chmiel, Integration Acres Ltd.

Chris Chmiel graduated from Ohio University in “Wholistic Transition to Sustainability”. After graduation in 1992 he started Integration Acres Ltd., a specialty food company, which is now the world’s largest pawpaw processor. He also started the Ohio Pawpaw Festival in 1999 and helped make the pawpaw the official state native fruit of Ohio, signed into law in 2009. Chris is now in his second term as a county commissioner and lives with his wife and two children in Athens Ohio.



Kevin Egolf, Iroquois Valley Farms LLC

Mr. Egolf is an impact investing professional focused on socially responsible farmland investing. His passion for sustainable agriculture and extensive finance background naturally led him towards impact investing. As the Chief Financial Officer of Iroquois Valley Farms, Mr. Egolf focuses his efforts on raising money and managing the money spent. He leads the Company’s private offerings, keeps the books and records and administers the investor registers. Additionally, given his East Coast location, he is often the Company representative for East Coast farm activity.

Prior to his work with Iroquois Valley Farms, Mr. Egolf spent several years in investment banking and private equity developing extensive experience in corporate valuation, transaction management and fundraising. Mr. Egolf is a graduate of Wesleyan University with a Bachelor of Arts in both Economics and Computer Science. Outside of farmland finance, he coaches wrestling at Nathan Bishop, a local public middle school. Mr. Egolf lives in Providence, Rhode Island with his wife, Amy, and daughter, Aurora.



Jonas Epstein, USDA Forest Service

A recent graduate of the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources & Environment with an M.S. in Environmental Policy, Jonas Epstein is an ORISE Economic Research Fellow with the U.S. Forest Service serving as the National Forest System Office of Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air & Rare Plants ecosystem services point of contact. He also works on a cross-deputy strategy team tasked with providing national direction in integrating ecosystem services into agency decision-making, performance metrics, communications, and partnership engagement. He is primarily interested in helping connect people to healthy landscapes through environmental stewardship and making the economic justification for land conservation. His past research has delved into assessing the economic impacts resulting from federal- and state- agricultural conservation programs, making the business case for investing in natural infrastructure, and the nexus of natural resource valuation and land planning.



Larry Godsey, Missouri Valley College

Dr. Larry Godsey earned his Ph.D. in Forestry and his Master of Science in Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Missouri Valley College. He served as the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry’s economist for more than thirteen years and is a Certified General Real Estate Appraiser, providing consulting and appraisal services to the University of Missouri Forestry Department, Missouri Consulting Foresters Association, United States Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency, and numerous private institutions. Currently, Dr. Godsey is an Assistant Professor at Missouri Valley College and leads the Agri-Business program. He has also served in the Army National Guard for thirty years, just recently returning from a year-long deployment to the Middle East. Dr. Godsey and his wife, Lori, own several business ventures and enjoy the challenges of entrepreneurship.



Kelley Hamrick, Forest Trends

Kelley is a Senior Associate at Forest Trends’ Ecosystem Marketplace initiative. She has authored flagship annual reports on voluntary and forest carbon markets, clean cookstove markets and, most recently, on conservation impact investing.



Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, Main Street Project/Regeneration International

Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, a native Guatemalan, began working on economic development projects with indigenous communities in 1988. He served as a consultant for the UNDP’s Bureau for Latin America and as an advisor to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. He migrated to the US in 1992, a founding member of the Fair Trade Federation in 1994, Director of the Fair Trade Program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy from 1995 to 1998, led the creation and launch of Peace Coffee, a fair-trade coffee company and a multitude of inner-city new immigrant enterprise efforts in Minnesota and woodland owner cooperatives.

Currently a member of the Rotary Club of Northfield, board member with Conservation Core of Minnesota and Iowa, founding and steering committee member of Regeneration International and Regeneration Midwest, a 12-state alliance. Advisory Board member for the Savanna Institute and Chief Strategy Officer at Main Street Project. Regi has broken new ground in the field of regenerative food and agriculture engineering through an innovative Poultry Centered Regenerative Agriculture System he has pioneered. He has an agronomy degree from the Central National School of Agriculture, studied at the Universidad de San Carlos in Guatemala, graduated in Business Administration from Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Currently lives and farms in Minnesota with his wife Amy and three kids.



Keefe Keeley, Savanna Institute

Keefe Keeley is co-Executive Director of the Savanna Institute, a nonprofit organization chartered to catalyze the development and adoption of resilient and scalable agroforestry systems. Recent research emphases at the institute have included tree crop variety trials, silvopasture establishment techniques, pollinator habitat, carbon sequestration, and long-term land access for agroforestry. Educational offerings include farmer training; landowner outreach; farm planning tools and guides; and community development through events and PerennialMap.org. Keefe recently co-edited a bioregional anthology called The Driftless Reader about the unglaciated area just to the west of his home in Madison, WI.



Emily Lachniet, Appalachian Sustainable Development

Emily Lachniet serves as the agroforestry program manager for Appalachian Sustainable Development, assisting landowners in growing native fruit and nut trees, such as pawpaws, persimmons, and elderberries and forest farming native medicinal herbs such as ginseng, goldenseal and black cohosh. Along with her colleagues, she has developed the Appalachian Harvest herb hub, a processing and aggregation center located in the Appalachian Harvest Food Hub in Duffield, VA. She loves getting to work with these special plants at work and at home on a small farm in Glade Spring, VA where she lives with her husband and daughters. A graduate of Michigan State University with a Bachelor's in Professional Forestry, Emily has made southwest Virginia her home since 2001.



Jacob Marty, Green Fire Farm LLC

Jacob Marty is a Sixth (re)Generation farmer that focuses on combining conservation and agricultural practices for truly sustainable lands and communities. Jacob has a degree in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and extensive understanding of ecological concepts. Along with his father, Jim, and influenced by Aldo Leopold, Green Fire Farm has transitioned 250 acres of conventional grain production into rational grazing for beef cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry since 2015. In 2016, a pilot silvopasture planting of 1,000 redbuds, apple, pear, chestnut and other fruit and nut trees was established on 8 acres. Hogs and sheep are raised in the alleys of the planting while the trees mature to provide future shade, windbreak, aesthetics, and supplemental forage.



John Munsell, Virginia Tech

John is an associate Professor in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation at Virginia Tech. He received his Ph.D. and M.S. from the State University of New York and his Bachelors from Tulane University. John is Past-President of the Association for Temperate Agroforestry and Associate Editor for the journal Agroforestry Systems. He is a social scientist and extension specialist who studies private forest and farm stewardship, agroforestry and whole farm planning, and collaborative conservation. He is co-author of a forthcoming book on community food forests and resides in Blacksburg, Virginia with his family where he enjoys playing string bass and making venison jerky.



Nate Olive, Ridge to Reef Farm (R2R)

Nate Olive, PhD, is a farmer/director at Ridge to Reef Farm (R2R) on the island of St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands. He and his wife Shelli Brin manage 180 hilly acres of sub-tropical forest with varied stocks of tropical fruits trees, bamboo, vegetable fields, and wild forest areas. R2R produces USDA certified organic fruits & vegetables as well as pastured-raised livestock in an ecological farming strategy. Primary produce markets include a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, a Farm to School hub, and an herbal supplement company that specializes in *Moringa oleifera* leaf products. The farm also offers agritourism activities such as tours, volunteer vacations, and off-grid farm to table dinners. In recent months, Hurricane Maria (Cat -5) ravaged the lands of R2R and the town of Frederiksted, St. Croix. The resiliency of their diverse agroforestry strategy is now put to the test.



Vickie Roberts-Ratliff, Shelton Roberts Properties LLC

During the past eighteen years Vickie has been immersed in managing Shelton Roberts Properties, her family's fourth generation farm, which includes planting a plantation of trees, developing management plans, and understanding the importance of forestry to Mississippi's economic development. Vickie's uncanny knack to grasp this industry led her to be selected to serve in leadership roles on numerous committees, as well as president, within the local forestry association in 2011. Currently, Vickie is District Program Assistant for Fulton and Cobb County Soil and Water Conservation Districts with the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts. She is married to Whitfield Ratliff, a fellow landowner. They reside in the Atlanta area.



Mark Shepard, Forest Agriculture Enterprises LLC

Mark Shepard is the CEO of Restoration Agriculture Development Inc. and Forest Agriculture Enterprises, and he runs New Forest Farms, a 110 acre perennial agricultural savanna, one of the first of its kind in the USA. Trained in both mechanical engineering and ecology, Mark has developed and patented equipment and processes for the cultivation, harvesting and processing of forest derived agricultural products for human foods and bio fuels production. Mark was certified as a Permaculture designer in 1993 and received his Diploma of Permaculture design from Bill Mollison, the founder of the international Permaculture movement. He is a 20-year farmer member of the Organic Valley cooperative, the world’s largest Organic Farmer’s marketing co-op. Mark also serves on the board of directors of the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council and The Stewardship Network. As lead designer for the Valley Foundation of the Reed Jules Oppenheimer



Jay Variyam, USDA Economic Research Service

Jay Variyam is the Director of ERS’s Food Economics Division. He leads ERS’s food policy research focused on food and nutrition assistance programs, food security, food markets, food safety, and consumer food choices. A major emphasis is the development and analysis of consumer and food market data, including data on food prices, household food purchases, consumer dietary behaviors, and time use. Jay is a steering committee member of the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) and a member of the Interagency Council on Human Nutrition Research. Jay holds a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from the University of Georgia.

Committee Member Biographies



Gary Bentrup, USDA National Agroforestry Center

Gary Bentrup is a U.S. Forest Service research landscape planner at the USDA National Agroforestry Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. He received a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Kansas State University and a Master of Landscape Architecture from Utah State University. His work focuses on developing resources for designing multi-functional agroforestry practices that address landowner and public goals. Some of his products include the CanVis Visual Simulation Kit, Non-timber Forest Product Calculator, and Conservation Buffers: Design Guidelines for Buffers, Corridors, and Greenways which has been translated into Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, and Mongolian. Mr. Bentrup grew up on a farm near Deerfield, Kansas which he and his sisters currently manage as absentee landowners.



Dean Current, University of Minnesota

Dr. Current has a PhD in Natural Resource Economics and Master’s degrees in Forest Economics and Anthropology. He is Program Director for the Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM) at the University of Minnesota. He has over 40 years of experience in Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, and the USA working on issues related to the sustainable management of agriculture, agroforestry, and natural resources and associated livelihood impacts. For the last 17 years, he has been working on markets and value chain analysis to identify sustainable agriculture and natural resource management opportunities that provide livelihood improvements for local communities while preserving and enhancing the ecosystem services provided by agricultural and forested landscapes.



Christopher Hartley, USDA Office of Environmental Markets

Christopher Hartley is the Deputy Director and Senior Environmental Markets Analyst with the United States Department of Agriculture Office of Environmental Markets. He is responsible for the development of policy, tools, and metrics to support landowner participation in markets for ecosystem services. He previously worked for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington, DC and in California and served with the U.S. Peace Corps as an agricultural extension agent in Senegal, West Africa. He holds a Doctorate in Agricultural Ecology and masters' degrees in Agronomy and International Agricultural Development from the University of California – Davis. He is a Certified Crop Advisor, and a licensed Pest Control Advisor with active farming interests in California and Oregon.



Marlen Eve, USDA Agricultural Research Service

At the USDA Agricultural Research Service, Dr. Marlen Eve serves as Acting Deputy Administrator within the Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems program area and as a National Program Leader. As NPL, Marlen oversees ARS research on all aspects of soil and air management and pasture and rangeland resources. Dr. Eve joined ARS from a detail position as Senior Advisor for Climate Change in the USDA Office of the Chief Scientist, and prior to that he directed the development of new tools for farm-scale estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and reductions within USDA's Climate Change Program Office within the Office of the Chief Economist. Marlen has also been responsible for coordinating national level greenhouse gas inventories for agriculture and forestry. Earlier in his career, Marlen was an ARS soil scientist in Fort Collins, where he generated the first national GHG inventory for agricultural soils using the IPCC methodology.



Tricia Kovacs, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Tricia Kovacs coordinates efforts across USDA to support the local and regional food sector, with additional focus on market access and food safety. Prior to joining USDA, Tricia managed Regional Markets programs at Washington State Department of Agriculture, where she was founding Program Manager for their Farm to School Program and also led the Small Farm Direct Marketing Program. Tricia was lead author on publications that help farmers and buyers understand complex market requirements, including Bridging the GAPs Farm Guide: Good Agricultural Practices and On-Farm Food Safety for Small, Mid-Sized and Diversified Fruit and Vegetable Farms, and A School's Guide to Buying Washington-Grown Food. Tricia holds a M.Sc. in Sustainability, Planning, and Environmental Policy from Cardiff University in Wales and a BA from University of Virginia. Originally from rural Appalachian Virginia, she lives with her husband and two children in Washington D.C.



Kate MacFarland, USDA National Agroforestry Center

Kate MacFarland is the Assistant Agroforester for the USDA National Agroforestry Center (NAC) located in Lincoln, Nebraska. She is part of the technology transfer team at NAC. Her work focuses on providing leadership for national and regional workshops and trainings, developing outreach materials for science delivery for a range of technical and general audiences, and supporting the integration of agroforestry into USDA programs. Kate is also involved with NAC's human dimensions work. Kate has a Master's Degree in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Oregon, where her research focused on ecosystem services, natural resource management, and economic development. She also has a BS in Natural Resources from Cornell University.



Eric Norland, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Dr. Eric Norland, CF, is the National Program Leader, Forest Resource Management and National Extension Forester at USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. He provides leadership for the Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA), co-leads the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Program, and advises and coordinates agroforestry research and extension programs. He has worked in Extension for 36 years at Ohio State University Extension where he began his career as a County Extension Agent, and has been at USDA since 2002. He received his degrees in forestry and environmental biology at The Ohio State University. Dr. Norland is a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters and is a Certified Forester.



David Smith, USDA Economic Research Service

David Smith is an Agricultural Economist at the Economic Research Service (ERS), USDA. David interned with ERS in 2011 & 2012 and has been an Agricultural Economist at ERS since 2015. Between 2010 and 2015 he was a researcher at the Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management working on perennial bioenergy production and agroforestry. With a focus on conservation on working agricultural land, David’s current research includes work on conservation practices, federal conservation programs, pollinators, pests and pest management. David has a Ph.D. in Applied Economics and a B.S. in Environmental Studies and Political Science both from the University of Minnesota.



Susan Stein, USDA National Agroforestry Center

Susan Stein is Director of USDA’s National Agroforestry Center. Based in Lincoln, Nebraska, the Center advances the health, diversity, and productivity of working lands, waters, and communities through agroforestry – the integration of trees and agriculture. Research and outreach efforts are conducted with a network of natural resource and agriculture professionals and scientists. The Center is located in the USDA Forest Service, Research and Development Deputy Area and managed as a partnership with the Forest Service State and Private Forestry Deputy Area, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Susan’s prior experience includes managing the National Forest Stewardship Program, advising Forest Service Field units on compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and serving as the Forest Service International Agroforestry Coordinator. She has also led efforts to integrate open space conservation tools and practices into Forest Service programs, and produced the “Forests on the Edge” publication series, widely used to inform local and regional planning efforts. International work before joining the Forest Service includes leading an agroforestry outreach project in Somalia and managing a forest policy review for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Susan has a Masters in Forestry from the Yale School of Forestry and an undergraduate degree in Psychobiology from Mount Holyoke College.



Richard Straight, USDA National Agroforestry Center

Richard Straight is the US Forest Service Lead Agroforester with the USDA National Agroforestry Center, NAC, in Lincoln, NE. The NAC is a partnership of the US Forest Service Research & Development, State & Private Forestry, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Rich was born and raised in Iowa and was granted a degree in Forest Management from Iowa State University. His first professional forestry position was as the City Forester in north central Iowa. From community forestry Rich then moved to Central Nebraska with the state forest service to practice ‘flatland forestry’ or conservation forestry. There he worked seven years with farmers and ranchers designing windbreaks, riparian buffers, and wildlife habitat plantings, and assisting communities with their tree programs, all the while wading through local, state, and federal conservation programs. The final two years prior to coming to the National Agroforestry Center in 2000 he was the NRCS state staff forester for Nebraska.