**Agricultural Energy Efficiency Initiative (AEEI):**

***A Farm Energy Program for Southside and Southwest Virginia***

Funded by a 2014 grant from the

Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Revitalization Commission

*and is supported by*

VCE Community Viability and the

Virginia Tech Biological Systems Engineering Department.

*Southside and Southwest Virginia farmers interested in energy efficiency improvements are invited to apply to the Agricultural Energy Efficiency Initiative (AEEI). At least 60 farmers in the Tobacco Region who are accepted into the AEEI will be allocated a $5,000 energy account that will provide 1) access to and funding for energy audits and renewable feasibility studies and 2) a cost-share program for retrofit and/or renewable systems. In addition, participants will have opportunities to participate in educational programs on energy efficiency practices and technologies.*

**PROGRAM GOALS**

The goal of *AEEI* is to first find these energy-cost saving opportunities and then support the implementation of appropriate on-farm solutions to reduce operating expenses. Together the outcome will increase the competitive advantage of each participating farm and the region’s production systems.

* Raise awareness of opportunities to improve energy efficiency resulting in reduced production costs.
* Assist farmers in conducting an on-farm energy assessment to identify energy savings opportunities specific to their operation.
* Provide financial incentives to upgrade to energy efficient equipment and systems identified by the energy assessment.
* Provide energy efficiency resources required to pursue renewable energy and energy efficiency grants and subsidized loans through the USDA Rural Energy for America Program.

***INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING? . . . Here’s how the program works.***

Decide that you need an energy assessment of your agricultural operation in order to create a more energy efficient process. Or, if a farm energy audit (ASABE S612 Farm Energy Audit Criteria or ASHRAE Level II) has been completed within the past two years, decide that you are ready to implement the audit’s energy efficiency recommendations.

If needed, an energy audit will be scheduled for your farm. Once you receive the report, you will have the opportunity to meet with your Extension agent and discuss the recommendations.

Energy-cost saving opportunities identified in the audit report or in the renewable energy feasibility study are eligible for the 25% cost –share program. Participants may increase the cost-share to 50% (up to the balance remaining in the energy account) by participating at least one (1) educational program.

**For more information**

Contact Dr. Martha Walker, Community Viability Specialist at **walker53@vt.edu** **or 434.766.6761** *or* **John Ignosh** **jignosh@vt.edu**to discuss your specific needs and complete the program application.

**Partners include:**

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

The NRCS works with landowners through conservation planning to provide technical and financial assistance.  The conservation plans are designed to improve on-farm operations in ways that also improve the natural resource base and associated environmental performance.  NRCS assistance now includes on-farm energy audits to identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency.

**Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF)**

The Natural Capital Investment Fund is a nonprofit, specialized lender for small natural resource-based businesses in central Appalachia. NCIF promotes environmentally sustainable development in economically distressed areas by providing affordable, flexible capital and key management assistance to small and emerging businesses. NCIF is certified as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and Community Development Entity (CDE) by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

**Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC)**

ODEC is a not-for-profit, member-owned wholesale power supplier to 11 member electric distribution cooperatives that provide reliable, affordable electricity to 1.2 million people in 70 counties in Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware.

**USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)**

The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) offers grants and loans to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for energy efficiency or renewable energy projects.  Energy Assessments are required for ALL energy efficiency projects.  For those efficiency projects with total eligible project costs exceeding $50,000, an Energy Audit is required.  Feasibility studies are required for renewable energy projects with total eligible project costs exceeding $200,000.  Scoring consideration is given for smaller projects that opt to do an energy audit.

**Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME)**

DMME provides state government, the business community, and citizens with a focal point for the development of innovative policies, and for the implementation of comprehensive programs for energy and mineral resources consistent with modern safety and conservation practices. These programs include incentives for improving energy efficiency.

**Virginia FAIRS**

The Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability (FAIRS) assists rural Virginians in developing and advancing their agricultural, economic and social interests to enhance their quality of life. Virginia FAIRS is a strong partner in providing workshops on grant writing and grant opportunities.

### Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Cooperative Extension helps lead the engagement mission of Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, the commonwealth’s land-grant universities. Building local relationships and collaborative partnerships, we help people put scientific knowledge to work through learning experiences that improve economic, environmental, and social well-being. Extension programs are delivered through a network of faculty at two universities, 107 county and city offices, 11 agricultural research and Extension centers, and six 4-H educational centers.  Our system incorporates the expertise of faculty in the Virginia Tech [College of Agriculture and Life Sciences](http://www.cals.vt.edu/), [College of Natural Resources and Environment](http://www.cnr.vt.edu/), [Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine](http://www.vetmed.vt.edu/), and the [Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station](http://www.vaes.vt.edu/); as well as the [College of Agriculture](http://www.agriculture.vsu.edu/) at [Virginia State University](http://www.vsu.edu/).