Sustainable Agriculture
Kentucky chapter develops new strategy

The Nature Conservancy’s Shared Conservation Agenda prioritizes the sustainable production of food. In Kentucky, TNC is delving deeper into the agricultural arena, building new partnerships and expanding work in sustainable agriculture.

“Conservation science has been focusing on soil health at a national level,” says Kim Barton, agriculture program specialist for the Kentucky chapter. “While there is a wealth of knowledge at a national level, we wanted to engage with local producers to share knowledge and develop research around soil health in Kentucky.”

To capitalize upon the promising science of soil health and potential opportunities to collaborate with key industry partners, the Kentucky chapter developed a sustainable agriculture strategy with colleagues in the Tennessee chapter. “We all realized that, looking at Kentucky and Tennessee, we’ve got a lot of agricultural country,” says Mike Hensley, Green River project director for the Kentucky chapter. “By working with our farmers and the industries they supply, there are ways we can help accelerate education and adoption of promising new approaches to sustainable agriculture, at a scale we’ve never worked before.”

The chapters came up with a simple plan that focused on the science behind soil health and the agriculture supply chain. In both areas, Hensley says, the chapters felt they could make a real difference.

“Everybody realizes that if sustainable practices can be implemented and result in better yield, lower production costs, and healthy, resilient soils, it’s a win-win,” he says. “Having healthy soil is good for our farmers, for reasons of productivity and profitability. Taking proactive steps to protect and build healthy farm soils is also good for water quality and wildlife. Healthy soil practices prevent soil erosion and keep nutrients where they belong.”

Sustainable agricultural practices (Continued on next page)
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Mike Hensley, Green River Project Director

and fertilizer in the state of Kentucky and where their final products are going.”

Through both parts of the strategy, TNC is going deeper into a new area of work that is critical for people and nature. Working with new partners, the Kentucky and Tennessee chapters aim to improve farm profitability while improving key environmental outcomes like clean water.

“We’re excited to listen and learn from our agricultural community,” says Hensley. “Working with farmers and other partners will help us better understand current processes and how we can contribute to a better future for all.”