

Terra Firma is an annual class for beginning farmers who sell directly to the local market to support their farming business and management skills. In August 2025, the Compact did a 3-hour assessment of the course with those farmers. These are the takeaways.



## 1. Project management was the most impactful curriculum topic.

Participants overwhelmingly cited Scrum, an agile project management framework, as the most valuable session, helping them with operational efficiency, crop planning, and goal-setting. One farmer reported a \$1,000 income increase in one month due to implementing Scrum.



## 2. Farmers value hands-on, applied learning over lecture.

Topics like spreadsheets, pivot tables, and marketing were useful, but farmers want hands-on training, such as for using Canva for marketing or on farm training for Scrum.



## 3. Peer learning and community are key.

Farmers deeply valued the ability to connect with peers during shared meals. Guided Q&A “mastermind sessions” and panels with seasoned farmers are preferred over lectures. The session with Harpeth Moon Farm, a Compact-certified River Friendly Farm, was a highlight due to relatable experiences.



## 4. There is a strong demand for on-farm technical assistance and mentorship.

Farmers requested help with implementing concepts (e.g., Scrum on their farms), mentorship from experienced farmers, and support through farm visits to identify growth opportunities. Continued support beyond Terra Firma is needed.



## 5. Financial management and grant support are pressing needs.

Farmers need help with bookkeeping, especially with spreadsheets and QuickBooks, and navigating grant opportunities. They specifically requested email updates for state and federal grant opportunities and grant-writing workshops to help them unlock the funding.



## 6. Operational efficiency is a central concern.

Across all feedback domains, efficiency was a recurring theme—from time management and coordinated crop planning to reducing waste and improving infrastructure. The need to "work smarter" is important and could be facilitated through future and ongoing Terra Firma classes.



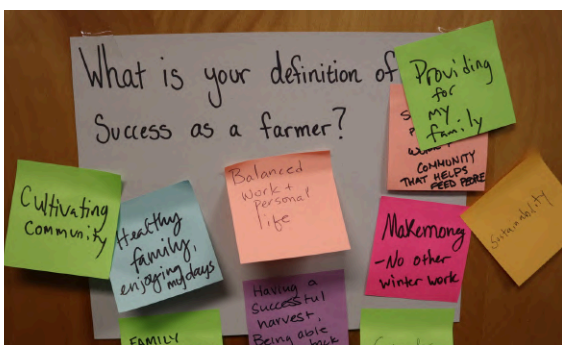
## 7. Marketing needs are practical, tangible, and visual.

Farmers want to build real-world marketing skills, including using tools like Canva, and need tangible items like business cards, signs, and labels. Hands-on marketing sessions were preferred over lectures.



## 8. Support for financial success must be tailored and holistic.

Farmers define "financial success" in different ways and need diverse tools to accomplish this goal, from marketing coaching, labor access, infrastructure, and breaking down big goals into manageable steps. They seek longterm partnerships for support.



## 9. Values drive motivation and anchor this farm community.

Participants emphasized that soil and water health, regenerative agriculture, and sustainability are their core motivators, not just profit. This aligns Terra Firma's mission with its participants' values.



## 10. Terra Firma is highly valuable but has several growth opportunity areas.

The program is impactful but must shift from introductory education to ongoing, applied support in business tools, resource access, and community building. Scaffolding knowledge and structured follow ups are critical for long-term farmer success.