



SOUTHEAST

TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



SE TOPP NEWS

SUCCESS STORY TEMPLATE

In May, Florida Organic Growers (FOG) expanded its outreach efforts by meeting with organizations dedicated to supporting Latino farmers across Florida. Angie Oliva, a FOG representative, visited the Future Farmers of America (FFA) office in Gainesville to introduce them to the SE TOPP program, and discuss opportunities for future collaboration that would expose FFA youth to sustainable and organic agriculture. Additionally, FOG invited other Florida based organizations to participate in FOG programs, including the Florida Local Food Project and the Southeast Transition to Organic Partnership Program (SE TOPP), which provide free technical assistance and event-based support.



Photo: Farmworker Association of Florida's Agroecology Community Garden, located in Apopka, FL.

FOG met with the Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF) in Apopka, a nonprofit organization that represents approximately 20,000 members, to explore shared interests in agroecology education, organic and sustainable farming methods, and food sovereignty. The meeting included discussions on utilizing FWAF's community gardens—located near their offices—to engage volunteers, provide hands-on agroecology training, and cultivate culturally appropriate foods for the local community. FOG shared information on SE TOPP, food safety programs, technical assistance support, and mentorship opportunities, reinforcing its commitment to fostering stronger partnerships.



Photo: Nicoya Farm, located in Gainesville, FL.

Rounding out its networking efforts, FOG connected with local farmers in Gainesville to discuss the development of a Latino Grower Network in Florida. Daniel Robleto and Aviva Asher, farmers and owners of Nicoya Farm, acknowledged the importance of increasing inclusivity for Latino farmers through their agricultural and educational outreach programs.

Through these engagements, FOG continues to seek collaboration with organizations dedicated to supporting organic and sustainable agriculture initiatives for all farmers.

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Questions?



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GROWING CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTIONS: A SOUTHEAST TOPP MENTORSHIP JOURNEY

The Southeast TOPP (Transition to Organic Partnership Program) mentorship program has proven transformative for one mentee, Trish Foster, whose experience with their mentor, Reggie Ramos, exemplifies the lasting impact of hands-on guidance, community connections, and educational support.

From the very beginning, working with Reggie opened doors for Trish to a wider network of organic farmers and local initiatives. Reggie's deep roots in the community and his willingness to share contacts made it possible for Trish to seek advice from experienced farmers nearby—people familiar with their unique situation and farm environment. This camaraderie fostered an environment where no question felt too small or too dumb to ask, encouraging Trish to embrace challenges and try new methods on her farm. While geographical distance occasionally made face-to-face meetings with Reggie difficult to arrange, both mentor and mentee remained committed to the process, adapting as needed to continue their dialogue and support.



Trish and Reggie's mentorship through the SE TOPP program flourished at the Lean Farming Workshop in Asheville, NC, where they explored new tools like the paper pot system and discussed adapting innovations to Georgia soils. Their shared curiosity and openness created a dynamic learning environment—Trish gained confidence, and Reggie became a more approachable mentor. Their collaboration was mutually enriching. When Trish introduced vacuuming as a pest control method, Reggie adopted it on his own farm, showing how both mentor and mentee benefited from the exchange.

For Trish, SE TOPP was a turning point in building Grow2B Farm. The program provided expert guidance, community support, and an education stipend that helped her fast-track her organic certification. By the end of the mentorship, she had submitted her Organic Systems Plan. SE TOPP empowers new organic farmers like Trish by fostering shared learning, offering financial support, and connecting them with experienced mentors—laying the foundation for a thriving, sustainable future in agriculture.

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