



**SOUTHERN PIEDMONT AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
VIRGINIA TECH.**

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2024



Photo by Suzanne M. Pruitt for Virginia Tech.

Greetings From Our Director

Welcome to the second edition of the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC) 2024 newsletter. As we conclude another season of growth and innovation, we are delighted to share our progress with you and provide updates on our team's research, educational, and outreach activities.

I also want to recognize the remarkable hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students. Their commitment to our land grant mission and service is the foundation of our success. We will continue to generate and deliver research-based knowledge that addresses the needs of our stakeholders and community, while also creating educational programs and opportunities to train future generations of professionals and educators.

Your role in this agricultural community is invaluable, and we look forward to your continued engagement and support.

-Arash

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www.arec.vaes.vt.edu/arec/southern-piedmont.html

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DR. ARASH RASHED
DIRECTOR AND ENTOMOLOGIST



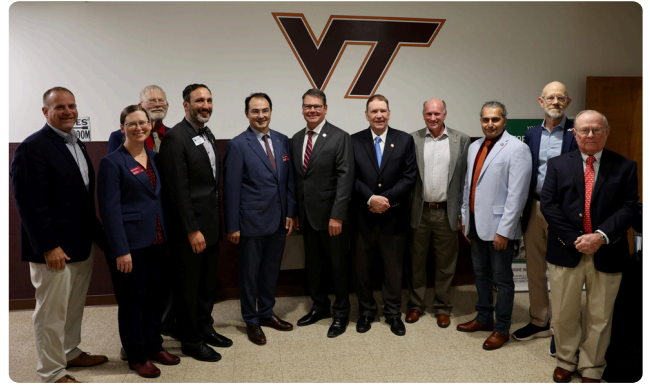
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE



VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
SOUTHERN PIEDMONT AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
VIRGINIA TECH.

On November 1st, the Southern Piedmont AREC celebrated a half-century of applied research and Extension education supporting the region's integrated and diverse production systems.

Many thanks to all who attended, including honorable guests: **Secretary Matthew Lohr**, Secretary of Virginia Agriculture & Forestry; **Commissioner Joseph Guthrie**, Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services; **Delegate Tommy Wright**, Virginia House of Delegates; **Dr. Mario Ferruzzi**, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS); **Dr. Mary Burrows**, Associate Dean for Research, Director of Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station; **Dr. Mike Gutter**, Associate Dean for Extension and Director of Virginia Cooperative Extension; **Dr. James Jones**, Former Southern Piedmont AREC Director; **Dr. Paul Semtner**, Professor Emeritus of Entomology; **Dr. Chuck Johnson**, Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology; **Dr. Chris Teutsch**, Professor of Forage Agronomy, University of Kentucky; and **Mrs. Jodie Clarke**, Vice President of Procurement at Altria Client Services.



House Resolution No. 794 was presented during the program to commend the Southern Piedmont AREC on its 50 years of service and achievements. We are grateful to everyone who joined us to celebrate this milestone of excellence!





2024 FIELD DAYS

The annual Row Crop Field Day was held on July 25th and attended by 53 participants. Presentations and field tours were given by Dr. Arash Rashed, Dr. T. David Reed, Dr. Carol A. Wilkinson, Dr. Carrie Ortel, Dr. Ayodeji Bello, Dr. Priyanka Gangwar, and Ph.D. student Kamal Chhetri.

The Forage & Livestock Field Day was held on September 19th, with 62 in attendance. Field presentations were given by speakers from Virginia Tech, North Carolina State University, and Virginia Cooperative Extension including Dr. Katie Payne, Dr. Gabe Pent, Mr. Taylor Clarke, Ms. Jennifer Ligon, Dr. John Fike, and Dr. Matt Poore.





FAMILY & FARM DAY

A total of 1,169 visitors from 15 counties, along with attendees from four other states (NC, PA, NH, and FL), participated in the 2024 Family & Farm Day on Saturday, September 14th, at the Southern Piedmont AREC. This non-profit event has been celebrated annually on the second Saturday of September since 2005.

We truly enjoy hosting this event, and it wouldn't be possible without the dedication of our faculty, staff, volunteers, and community partners. Thank you to everyone involved!



Photos by Suzanne Pruitt for Virginia Tech.

Welcome

MARIO FERRUZZI,
DEAN OF VIRGINIA TECH'S
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES



Photo by Marya Barlow.

Dr. Mario Ferruzzi became the 12th dean of Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences on October 15, bringing over twenty years of expertise in agriculture, food and nutrition science, leadership, and collaboration to the position.

Read more about Dean Ferruzzi's background in agriculture and his vision for the college's future in this recent article from VT News: <https://bit.ly/marioferruzzi>



NEW FACES AT SOUTHERN PIEDMONT AREC



DR. SHOURISH CHAKRAVARTY,
APPLIED AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMIST



JAIYU DONG,
PH.D. STUDENT
PLANT PATHOLOGY



LOGAN POWELL,
AGRICULTURAL
TECHNICIAN III



EMMA RAIMONDI,
PH.D. STUDENT
PLANT PATHOLOGY



SID SACHAN,
TOBACCO AGRONOMY
PROGRAM

Photos courtesy of Southern Piedmont AREC.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: USHA PANTA

Usha Panta is a Ph.D. student dedicated to advancing sustainable pest management strategies. Her work focuses on developing methods to effectively control soil-borne pests while safeguarding soil health and preserving ecosystem functionality.

Panta's research (using springtails and earthworms as biological model organisms) delves into the impact of various mustard species on soil-dwelling pests and beneficial organisms, as well as the recovery process of soil microbial and arthropod communities following biofumigation.

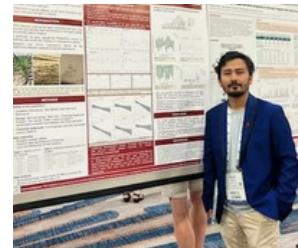
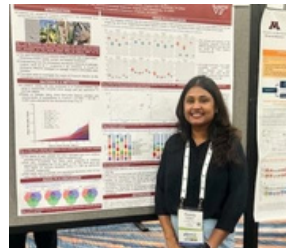
She recently received a first place award for her oral presentation in the contest for Sustainable Agriculture at the 2024 Entomological Society of America annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. <https://bit.ly/ushapanta>



Photo by
Dr. Arash Rashed.

JULY

- Leadership Council Meeting (Southern Piedmont AREC)
- 2024 APS Plant Health Conference (Memphis, TN)



AUGUST

- Virginia Ag Expo (Champlain, VA)
- International Congress of Entomology 24 (Kyoto, Japan)
- Optimizing Your Hay Feeding Program (Southern Piedmont AREC)

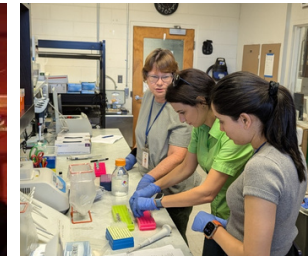
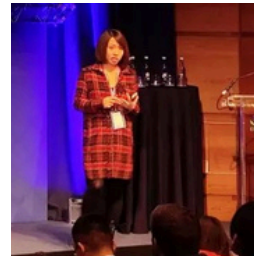
SEPTEMBER

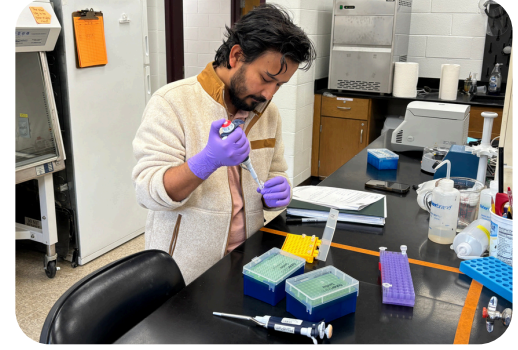
- 2024 International Soil and Tillage Research Organization Conference (Va Beach, VA)



OCTOBER

- Bull Breeding Soundness Exams & Heifer Artificial Insemination Training Course (Southern Piedmont AREC)
- Cooperation Centre for Scientific Research Relative to Tobacco Conference (Edinburgh, Scotland)
- Citrus Research & Education Center, University of Florida for HPLC GC-MS training (Lake Alfred, FL)





Top row, L to R: Rooster Watson and Winfield Harrison load tobacco into barns at the Cox Road Laboratory; Jimmy Morris and Laura DeBusk harvest soybean trials; Kamal Chhetri sampling in the lab at Southern Piedmont · Bottom row, L to R: Danny Bottoms during Family & Farm Day; Dr. Yuan Zeng, Dr. Laura Sands, Virginia Tech President Tim Sands and Dr. Ayodeji Bello at the Presidential Postdoctoral Fellows, Mentors, & Sponsors Reception; Chris Elke, Laura DeBusk, and Shirin Parizad planting wheat trials in Warsaw, Virginia. Photos courtesy of Southern Piedmont AREC.

FARM & FACILITY UPDATES



Upgrades & Repairs Completed:

- New LED lighting
- New Granville Equipment
Four Row Hand Primer



Upcoming:

- 30' gooseneck trailer and F350 truck ordered
- Portable grain bin ordered
- Pond repairs
- Timber sale is complete and harvest will begin this winter

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: NED JONES, FARM MANAGER

Ned began working at Southern Piedmont AREC in the summer of 1990 with Dr. Chuck Johnson and the pathology program. He worked four summers and later joined the field crew full-time in 1997. He was promoted to farm manager in May of 2004.

Ned enjoys watching crops grow and has a passion for irrigation. He looks forward to the pond repairs and being able to irrigate next summer.



**Virginia
Cooperative
Extension**

Virginia Tech,
Virginia State University





Dr. Arash Rashed was recently awarded a three-year, \$290,000 USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant for a project that aims to provide research-based support to growers for the effective management of barley yellow dwarf virus and cereal aphids in winter wheat. The project will also develop much-needed, up-to-date educational materials to prevent the unnecessary application of insecticides and promote the implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/USDA-BYDV-GRANT>



Entomology Ph.D. student Shirin Parizad was recently awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Invasive Species Collaborative at Virginia Tech (ISC). The funding will be used toward her research, which focuses on filling critical knowledge gaps in the epidemiology of barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) - the most significant viral disease of small grains globally.

Parizad is investigating the impact of two key factors, the invasive aphid species *Metopolophium festucae cerealium* and alternative host plants like tall fescue, on the transmission of BYDV.

Top photo by Shirin Parizad and bottom photo by Suzanne M. Pruitt for Virginia Tech.

PUBLICATIONS

Randall, J., Nikoukar, A., **Rashed, A.**, & I. Popova. 2024. The use of Brassicaceae derived pesticide for control of wireworms (Coleoptera: Elateridae). Sustainable Chemistry for the Environment, 7: 100122.

Zeng, Y. & Samtaani, J. 2024. Neopestalotopsis disease in strawberry starter material. Virginia Cooperation Extension. SPES.-627NP.



Virginia Tech has 11 Agricultural Research and Extension Centers (ARECs) across Virginia which play a pivotal role in connecting the university to local communities around the state. Have you wondered what research and outreach is happening at ARECs across the state?

The AREC Seminar Series is a place to find out more about the research and Extension programs happening at ARECs across Virginia. The series aims to promote collaborations between the ARECs, with each seminar being recorded and shared.

<https://bit.ly/arecseries>



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