Farming in Arkansas is a family affair for many producers in the state and the VanCleve family of Western Arkansas is no exception. After many years in the trophy business, Bryson VanCleve convinced his father Garry to begin farming. The family established ‘Something to Eat Farms’ in northwest Arkansas, farming naturally grown produce for southern markets. The VanCleve family, like many produce farmers in Arkansas, struggle to market their crops, hindering the producer’s ability to sell their product.

In 2017, New South Produce Cooperative of Arkansas received a grant allowing them to invest in marketing that would support the production of Arkansas farmers. Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG) are aimed towards farmers who want to abandon the practice of growing their crops as commodities under contract to a wholesale distributor. By creating a differentiated product, farmers can command price premiums in the marketplace and sell directly to consumers to receive a higher portion of their earnings.

As a result of this grant, produce farmers can be more engaged in the selling of their product. New South Cooperative used the money from the grant to build an established brand by buying advertisements and clothing apparel to market their business. The grant also funded an event that allowed customers in a dozen different restaurants to try sample meals containing produce from local farms. Altogether, the grant allowed New South Co-Op to connect growers like the VanCleve family to the customers that buy their products.

“We sold our produce at a farmers market for two years after we got started. Then we joined New South and it’s been better”

- Bryson VanCleve, Farmer

The Southern Risk Management Education Center (SRMEC) seeks to empower producers to manage marketing and price risks which includes promoting the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program. The VAPG program helps farmers and ranchers understand, develop and implement diversification strategies to enhance their business’ products. In partnership with Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC), SRMEC promotes successful value added ventures across the Southern region. To learn more about farmer and rancher VAPG successful stories visit srmec.uaex.edu/News/vapg-success-stories.aspx.
Understanding “Value-Added”

The USDA defines “value-added” as any agricultural commodity or product whose value has been increased by:

- Undergoing a change in physical state (e.g., turning fruit into jam);
- Being produced, marketed, or segregated for its special character or identity (e.g., GMO-free, organic, grass-fed);
- Transforming natural resources into energy on the farmstead (e.g., biodiesel);
- Being aggregated and marketed as a locally-produced food (e.g., as part of a Buy Local campaign, state-produced branding or labeling effort); or
- Linking farmers with local and regional supply networks in which they are equal partners (e.g., farm to school or other mid-tier value chains)

Visit [srmec.uaex.edu/News/vapg-success-stories.aspx](http://srmec.uaex.edu/News/vapg-success-stories.aspx) to read value-added success stories!