

January 26, 2012

Mr. Phil Hickman  
Program Director  
Virginia Soybean Board  
102 Governors Street, Room 319  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Phil,

We would like to thank you and the Virginia Soybean Board for being our partners in agriculture literacy. As you know, Agriculture in the Classroom's mission is *to educate Virginia's children about the importance of agriculture*. It is our program's goal for children, who are the future policy makers and voters of this state, to obtain a greater understanding of the vital role that agriculture plays to an environmentally and economically strong Virginia. In addition, we aim to teach children the processes that move food from farms to their dinner tables at home.

Unfortunately, most of our children's' connection to the land and to our food supply is through grocery stores and field trips. Therefore, our program brings agriculture directly into the classroom by providing support to classroom educators through teacher training workshops, a semi-annual educational newsletter, and a website with curriculum resources. The result is that Virginia's children gain an agricultural education in a fun, interactive way through lesson plans that are aligned with state Standards of Learning. In 2010-2011, the program provided workshops to 2,121 teachers and pre-service teachers while the website had more than 10,000 unique visitors. Thus far this fiscal year between the dates July 1, 2011 and January 26, 2012, Agriculture in the Classroom has reached 1,332 teachers and pre-service teachers, who in return have impacted approximately 55,027 Virginian students.

The Virginia Soybean Board's past support has allowed Agriculture in the Classroom to make a lasting impact on students and for that, we are truly grateful. We respectfully ask the Virginia Soybean Board to consider a gift of \$7,000 to the Foundation to help AITC continue to teach kids about agriculture. The funds would provide 1,000 elementary and pre-service educators with a copy of *Soybeans: an A to Z Book* and would help fund workshops where the books will be distributed.

Thank you very much for your consideration and review of the enclosed proposal. If you need to reach me, I can be contacted at 804-290-1142 or [karen.davis@vafb.com](mailto:karen.davis@vafb.com).

Sincerely,

Karen Davis  
Executive Director

## Introduction

The mission of the Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom program is *to educate Virginia's children about the importance of agriculture*. Agriculture in the Classroom accomplishes its mission by working with teachers and volunteers across Virginia and providing those groups with resources to use with children. Over the past 19 years, Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) has presented training workshops to over 15,000 Virginia educators. The program's primary goal is for children to obtain a greater understanding and appreciation for the agriculture industry and the many processes that are involved in carrying food and fiber from the farm to their families.



Agriculture in the Classroom is a nationwide program, founded in 1981 by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture John Block. The AITC program is present in all 50 states in some form, but each state has great autonomy in determining how the program will be implemented. In Virginia, Agriculture in the Classroom is a program of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. The Virginia Farm Bureau provides administrative support to the program and the Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom has a goal to raise approximately \$300,000 in outside support each year.

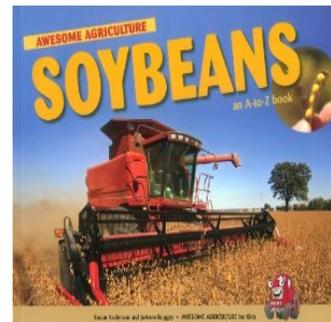
## Need Statement

Agriculture in the Classroom's primary goal is to promote agriculture awareness and considering that less than 2% of today's population is engaged in production farming, our work is needed now more than ever. Children are becoming more and more out of touch with the natural world and it is our belief that it is vital that we must proactively cultivate in our young people an appreciation for agriculture in a fun, interactive way directly in their classrooms. If we can foster this appreciation for agriculture in our young people now, we will be creating a future society of individuals that understand the ramifications on the industry of issues such as increased regulation, low commodity prices, and urban sprawl. Furthermore, they will understand the correlation between a healthy agriculture industry and an economically and environmentally strong Virginia.

Our education coordinators are former teachers with over 30 years of total teaching experience and are very adept at teaching educators how to effectively utilize AITC materials in their classrooms. In order to make it easy for teachers to integrate AITC materials into standard educational curriculum, our coordinators ensure that AITC materials are aligned with Virginia's Standards of Learning. AITC provides teachers tools to integrate information from multiple disciplines into their lessons, as well as practical information about the agriculture industry. Through AITC, agriculture becomes a medium to use in teaching science, math, social studies and language arts.

## Project Description

The Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom respectfully requests a gift of \$7,000.00 from the Virginia Soybean Board. The money will be used to purchase 1,000 copies of *Soybeans: an A to Z Book* by Susan Anderson and Joanne Buggie to be distributed to pre-service teachers and teachers in grade levels PreK-5 throughout the 2012-2013 program year.



The book introduces young readers to agriculture by providing basic information on soybeans and their many uses. Young readers learn where soybeans originate, how they are used, and their relationship to the economy, environment and energy consumption. Simple sentences make the book appropriate as a read-aloud for young students, while older students will have the opportunity of learning about soybeans by reading the book themselves. For many students, this book will serve as their introduction to the soybean.

In addition, a portion of the gift that we are applying for would also support the cost of providing workshop training. Workshop support will contribute to the costs of travel, hiring workshop facilitators, developing new curriculum, as well as preparing and conducting workshops where valuable materials, such as the soybean book, will be distributed to teachers.

### Programs

The Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom program provides support to classroom educators across Virginia in the following ways:

1. Workshops – Workshops are and have been the program's foundation since its inception. Workshops provide educators with a basic overview of agriculture and serve to engage attendees in a series of hands-on activities that help them to reinforce concepts required by state and federal testing guidelines. Activities help bring to life a wide selection of concepts such as plant life cycle, seed germination, and conservation (science); area and perimeter (math); creative writing and figurative language (language arts); Virginia history, natural resources, geography, and regions of Virginia (social studies). Teachers leave a workshop with many educational and student-focused resources that are all agriculturally themed.

Workshops are provided all over the state in both school divisions and at regional locations so teachers have the opportunity to attend whether their school division sponsors a workshop or not. After having reached a record of over 2,000 teachers and impacted approximately 70,000 students this past fiscal year, we again have set a goal of reaching 2,000 teachers in 2011-2012. As of January 26, 2012 we are on pace to our goal, having reached 1,332 teachers and have already made an impact on 55,027 students.

2. Newsletter – A semi-annual newsletter is mailed to private schools, headstart programs, and each public elementary school in the state totaling more than 7600 educators across the state. Additionally the newsletter is sent in electronic form to over 8000 teachers who have attended AITC workshops and training events. Each issue of this educational newsletter contains an article about an agricultural topic as well as two related lesson plans. In addition to the lesson plans, the issue features related children's literature and web resources to further explore the topic. Recent issues of the newsletter are available for download from AITC's website, [www.agintheClass.org](http://www.agintheClass.org). Past newsletters have covered topics including soybeans, apples, beef cattle, bees, Christmas trees, school gardens, cooperatives, corn, cotton, grapes and vineyards, horses, and horticulture.

The fall 2011 newsletter highlighted various children literature titles with an emphasis on reading comprehension. These titles will be used to incorporate agriculture literacy into curriculum across the K-5 grade levels. The spring 2012 newsletter will feature Farmer's Markets and focus on the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, it will serve as a valuable asset to teachers because it will tie in economics and math lessons.

3. Website – Agriculture in the Classroom has a dynamic website, [www.agintheclass.org](http://www.agintheclass.org), which provides resources to educators across the state. Visitors to the site can download lesson plans, review past newsletters, view online film clips of lesson demonstrations, such as dissecting and identifying flower parts or making biodegradable plastic. The AITC staff continually strives to update and improve the resources available on the website. Currently, the website is undergoing an upgrade to make it even easier for teachers, students, and volunteers to navigate.
  
4. Curriculum – Each year, Agriculture in the Classroom strives to continue to provide teachers with new, valuable curriculum. AITC has two full time Education Coordinators and also contracts with program facilitators across the state to present workshops when full time coordinators are previously booked at workshops. These two coordinators as well as contract facilitators continually write and revise our curriculum. In the past three years, Agriculture in the Classroom has created several original curriculum pieces, including:
  - *Ready, Set, Grow!* - a book about Virginia farms, as well as accompanying coloring and activity book.
  - Mathematics Ag-tivities - a comprehensive K-5 mathematics resource featuring lessons for each grade that uses agriculture as the medium to teach mathematics concepts.
  - "What's Really Happening on the Farm" - a poster unit with environmentally themed lessons on soil, water quality, erosion, and animal care.
  - Two volumes of Sprout and Sprout, Jr. - mini-activity books for students, topics included Careers, Funky Foods, Gardening, Nutrition, and Jamestown.
  - The Garden Chef Cookbook - a unique teacher resource containing nutrition lessons and recipes that can be prepared with students in the classroom.
  - Farmer Ben Bulletins- a handout that features facts on topics such as soybeans, careers, beef, and pizza.
  - "Barnyard Banter Literacy Connections," - a booklet that teachers use as a guide to link popular children's books with Virginia agriculture facts, discussion questions, and classroom activities.
  
5. Agricultural Literacy Week – Virginia's second annual Agriculture Literacy Week will take place in 2012 from March 4<sup>th</sup> through March 10<sup>th</sup> and it is our goal to have the Farmer Ben Book of the Year, *From Our Fields...To You*, read to 1,700 classes again this year. We welcome and encourage anyone who would like to participate in the heart-warming experience of reading to a classroom. More information on agriculture literacy week can be found under the Volunteers tab on the AITC website, [www.agintheclass.org](http://www.agintheclass.org).

### Outcomes

With funding from the Virginia Soybean Board, Agriculture in the Classroom plans to distribute *Soybeans: an A to Z Book* to 1,000 pre-service and elementary teachers who attend AITC workshops. As a result, it is our goal to reach approximately 50,000 Virginia students and introduce them to the soybean and its many uses. Further, these books will remain a part of classroom libraries for years to come, thus educating future students.

### Request

We are extremely grateful for past support from the Virginia Soybean Board. Because of your support, we have been able to reach more educators with excellent agricultural resources. As a result, we have impacted additional students in Virginia, some of whom otherwise may have never had a chance to be exposed to the wonders of agriculture.

Please consider a gift of \$7,000.00 to provide funding for the purchase of 1,000 copies of *Soybeans: an A to Z Book* as well as provide support for workshop costs. Your support will help us to provide extremely valuable resource to teachers.

### Conclusion

Advocating for agriculture in our communities is an important step towards ensuring a strong future for the industry. Unfortunately, programs emphasizing agriculture are not available across the state. Virginia's children must understand how the choices they make as consumers and future voting citizens directly affect the agriculture industry. The Virginia Soybean Board has a long history of supporting worthy educational outreaches and Agriculture in the Classroom is honored to be counted among those organizations. Our staff looks forward to meeting with the Soybean Board on March 8, 2012 to further discuss our programs and this request. We genuinely appreciate your consideration.

**Attachments:**

- 2012 Project Budget
- 2011-2012 Foundation Budget
- 2011-2012 Foundation Board Members

Project Budget  
Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom  
January 27, 2012

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<i>Soybeans: an A to Z</i>	
1000 copies x \$5.47	\$5,470
Tax and Shipping	\$523
Support for Workshops	\$1,007
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>



<b>Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom</b>	
<b>Budget 2011-2012</b>	
<b>Educational Programs</b>	
Workshops and Curriculum	\$78,300
Educational Staff Salary	\$147,003
Newsletter	\$7,900
Special Project	\$4,200
<b>Education Programs Total</b>	<b>\$237,403</b>
<b>Development and Management</b>	
Development Office Expenses	\$29,079
Golf Tournament Expenses	\$20,000
Management & General Expenses	\$8,300
Rent and Utilities	\$17,035
<b>Development and Management Total</b>	<b>\$74,414</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$311,817</b>

### Budget Notes

- Workshops and Curriculum is the costs of providing Prek-8 teachers with training, materials, and services including travel, marketing, printing and purchase of educational resources.
- Special Projects are new curriculum/resource projects that require extensive development and design and are usually funded by a grant.
- Golf Tournament Expenses are completely covered by the revenue generated by the event. Last year the Foundation cleared over \$34,000 from the event.
- If you would like additional information or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Executive Director Karen Davis at 804-290-1142 or Karen.davis@vafb.com.



## Agriculture in the Classroom

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Term 2011-2014\*