



Sponsored by First South Farm Credit

The AFVGA Grow Forward Award honors Alabama fruit and vegetable growers who are shaping the future of specialty crop production through bold ideas, strategic thinking and strong leadership. This award highlights both established producers introducing fresh innovations on their farms and emerging growers with clear, actionable visions for long-term success.

Applicants will be evaluated on how they address key challenges in production, marketing, labor, technology or sustainability. For beginner farmers, a well-defined growth plan and potential for lasting impact are essential. Across all applicants, leadership, creativity and a drive to improve Alabama's specialty crop industry are at the heart of this recognition.

Finalists will be invited to pitch their ideas live in a dynamic, Shark Tank-style session at the AFVGA Annual Conference in February. A panel of industry judges will select the recipient based on the strength of their vision, execution and potential for positive change.

About the Award

During the contest, participants will be judged on:

- Leadership in and vision for the specialty crop industry
- Innovation in the specialty crop industry
- Participation/involvement in AFVGA and other organizations (i.e. civic, church and professional development)

Eligibility

Applicants must be

- An individual or a farming couple that is married
- Member of AFVGA/Alabama Farmers Federation
- At least 18 years of age; there is no maximum age.
- Alabama producer of fruits, vegetables, nuts, cut flowers, etc.

Current employees of the Alabama Farmers Federation and First South Farm Credit are not eligible.

Awards

- Finalists will be selected to compete at the AFVGA Conference to give their live presentation to the judges. The finalists will receive free registration and lodging at the conference.

- The overall winner will receive a \$5,000 grand prize.
 - o A 1099 form will be issued from AFVGA. The winner must provide a W-9 before receiving the award.
 - o Participation in follow-up interactions with AFVGA, First South Farm Credit and the Alabama Farmers Federation's communications staff is mandatory in order to publicize the winner and their plans with the award.

Application (100 Points Max)

Category	Points	Notes
Innovation or Vision	45	Innovation implemented (seasoned farmers) or vision/plan for growth (newer farmers)
Leadership & Community Engagement	25	Involvement in AFVGA, local ag leadership, mentorship, civic contributions
Industry Impact & Scalability	20	Potential for broader influence, replication or contribution to Alabama ag
Quality & Clarity	10	Quality of writing, thoughtfulness and adherence to application guidelines

Total: 100 points

Presentation (100 Points Max)

Delivered live during the AFVGA Annual Conference.

Category	Points	Notes
Presentation Delivery	45	Confidence, clarity, engagement and professionalism
Content & Storytelling	35	Clear communication of innovation/vision, purpose and outcomes
Response to Judge Questions	20	Thoughtfulness, depth of knowledge and adaptability

Total: 100 points

Bonus (10 Points)

Finalists will have access to the Ag Business Basics course through Farm Credit University. Upon proof of completing the course, 10 points will be awarded to their Presentation score.

AFVGA Grow Forward Awards Application Form

Applicant Information

1. Full Name(s):

2. Farm/Business Name:

3. Address:

4. Phone Number:

5. Email Address:

6. Website (if applicable):

7. Social Media (if applicable):

8. References (Name, Phone, Email – References would include local Extension agents, industry representatives, etc.):

Round 1: Application Questions

1. Farm/Business Overview

Provide a brief description of your farm/business, including the types of crops grown, your primary market outlets, farm revenue and any other relevant information that helps judges understand the scope of your operation.

Max: 300 words

Answer:

2. Innovation or Vision (45 Points)

Describe the innovative practices or business model you have implemented on your farm, or, if you are a newer farmer, outline your vision and plan for growing your farm in the coming years. Include details on how your innovation or vision addresses challenges in production, sustainability, marketing or labor.

Max: 500 words

Answer:

3. Leadership & Community Engagement (25 Points)

Explain your involvement in the agricultural community, including your leadership roles in AFVGA, other farming organizations or local/community activities. How have you mentored or influenced others in your community or industry?

Max: 300 words

Answer:

4. Industry Impact & Scalability (20 Points)

What impact do you believe your innovation or growth vision will have on the broader Alabama fruit and vegetable industry? How do you plan to expand or scale your efforts in the future? If applicable, describe how your practices could be replicated by others in the industry.

Max: 300 words

Answer:

Round 2: Presentation (To be completed by finalists)

If selected as a finalist, you will be asked to present a live, Shark Tank-style pitch at the AFVGA Annual Conference. The presentation should focus on your innovation, growth vision or impact on the industry. Presentations will be scored based on delivery, content, and responses to judge questions.

By submitting this application, I agree to present at the AFVGA Annual Conference if selected as a finalist.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Notes for Submission

- Applications are due Nov. 1
- Applications should be submitted in PDF to bthaxton@alfafarmers.org
- Finalists will be notified by Dec.15