

# This LSU-born startup wants to build the next big thing in agriculture

By Dillon Lowe



What began in an LSU classroom has evolved into one of Louisiana's most promising ag-tech startups.

Baton Rouge's [FarmMind](#), founded by LSU alumni and students Colin Raby, Grant Muslow, Aaron Beatty, Cole Lacombe and Julius Pallotta, is building what Raby describes as an "agricultural intelligence engine"—a platform powered by AI that's designed to help agricultural businesses, agricultural consultants and farmers themselves work both smarter and quicker.

"We're optimizing decision-making and automating back-office paperwork for agricultural professionals of all kinds," Raby, FarmMind's CEO, tells *Daily Report*.

The idea took root in 2023 when Raby and Muslow were enrolled in LSU's first-ever course on large language models, or LLMs.

Daniel Stephenson, an LSU AgCenter professor, visited the class and described a challenge facing agricultural professionals: Critical research and regulatory information rarely reaches those who need it most, and many farmers rely on a patchwork of disconnected and outdated software tools to function.

Conversations with Stephenson crystallized the opportunity to build an AI system tailored specifically to agriculture.

FarmMind debuted as a simple chatbot in early 2024, but the team soon realized that farmers needed more than a conversational AI helper. The founders envisioned a system that could integrate directly into daily workflows. Such a system would need access to field history, soil and weather data, input records and the like—information then scattered across other tools.

The team got to work building that more robust system, releasing a major update in August. Today, FarmMind offers modernized replacements for mapping tools like Farm Works and field-note apps like FieldX, all accessible through a single platform available on iPhone, iPad and desktop.

An example use case: If a farmer spots a pest in the field, that farmer can log the sighting and, with a tap of a button, ask FarmMind to consult the relevant research and regulations to identify the right pesticide for the job and calculate the correct rate of application.

"If we get this right," Raby says, "this could effectively become the platform for agricultural management that's used by farmers and agricultural professionals across the nation."

## **Traction, money and what comes next**

FarmMind now has 23 paying customers. While most of them are in Louisiana, Arkansas, Florida and Mississippi, additional interest is emerging outside the Gulf South.

Raby says the business intentionally launched with "penetrative pricing" at \$50 per month or \$500 per year, though it intends to raise prices soon. Even then, he says the

platform will remain cost-effective, as users switching from the tools FarmMind replaces will save “about \$4,000 a year in subscriptions.”

Going forward, the business plans to make its money not just through individual subscriptions but also through organizational accounts for large farm operations and white-label versions of the platform built for major ag companies.

FarmMind has gotten where it is today without raising any dilutive capital. Instead, the business has relied on more than \$100,000 in pitch competition winnings, plus early revenue. But now, the team is preparing for a formal pre-seed funding round as it works to accelerate growth and hiring.

“We have a mission, and we need funding to achieve that mission,” Raby says.

The urgency has amplified since learning a Middle Eastern competitor raised \$7.5 million to build a similar platform. While Raby believes FarmMind is for now technologically ahead of that competitor, staying there will require resources.

“If this system does catch on globally, we think it’s paramount that it’s built and run here in America, both for data privacy reasons and for overall American success reasons,” he says. “In many ways, people don’t realize how much national food security *is* national security.”

Just as paramount to the FarmMind team is proving that transformative tech can in fact be built right here in the Bayou State.

“Innovation doesn’t have to come out of Silicon Valley,” Raby says. “It can come out of Louisiana, and it can come out of LSU.”

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