Looking for a new industry or a new way to make money on your farm?

Consider Agritourism!
According to the 2007 Ag Census, there are 2,204,790 total US farms with 160,000 of those farms participating in direct sales/Agritourism. 136,817 sell fresh products directly to individual consumers by roadside stands, farmers markets, PYO, etc. totaling $1.2 billion in sales. 23,350 Agritourism farms have recreation income from non-ag products such as tours, hunting and fishing with 602 of those in North Carolina alone. Since North Carolina is the 6th most visited state, and with our region housing one of the most visited National Parks in the county, the opportunity for a successful Agritourism industry already exists. Domestic visitors to North Carolina spent over $15 billion on Tourism and Agritourism alone because folks are looking for a tie to the land, experience, meaning, involvement and authenticity. Folks look at farms as a direct connection to culture, heritage and food and the ability to access fresh products.

Research has shown that the median number of years in business is 10, that the most common types of attractions are on-farm retail, on-farm tours, and/or pick-your-own operations with most farms offering 1 – 2 attractions. Spring, summer and fall are the seasons noted by the majority of operations as the peak months (May – November), which fits in nicely with the farming season here in Western North Carolina. Women were shown to visit more with the average age being in the 40’s with an income of $75,000+. The majority of visitors have been identified as being from the same state, county and/or neighboring counties as the Agritourism operations traveling distances of 22-129 miles. Word of mouth is the most used resource by visitors who plan their Agritourism trip and reaching the Agritourism destination was more often “by chance” while in route to other destinations (thus indicating the need for good signage which can be acquired through local cost share programs).

So…Why Agritourism?
Agritourism can offer diversification to your already existing operation as well as additional or replacement income. It can offer another means of maintaining the viability of your farm, therefore increasing the opportunity of keeping the farm in the family. It can create additional employment opportunities while fulfilling particular interests and hobbies. Public contact also allows the business owners to educate their clientele on the importance of maintaining a local economy and knowing where their food and other products come from. Although Agritourism may offer an opportunity for farmers to increase on-farm revenue, these activities are not well suited for every farm or farmer.

Before starting an Agritourism operation, it is recommended that farmers spend some time assessing the potential that these activities may bring to their operation. One must assess their personality to see if on-farm visitors are something you would want or can tolerate. One must also assess goals, resources and resource needs before deciding if an Agritourism Enterprise is right for the farm, farmer and the family.

If anyone has any questions concerning the start-up of an Agritourism business, please feel free to call. If I can’t answer your questions, I will find someone who can. Information for this article was taken from powerpoints and publications from the Recreation and Tourism Departments at NCSU and Rutgers University.

I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion.
~ Henry David Thoreau
Seven Reasons Why Extension is Needed Today

By Jim Langcuster, Auburn University
Published in Southeast Farm Press

1. We are sustainers
Sustainability is taking on new meaning. Many of the nation’s governors are using it to underscore in these lean fiscal times why Americans must become good stewards in all facets of their lives. One example: Tightening budgetary restraints on the U.S. healthcare system are prompting more Americans to adopt lifestyle practices that safeguard against chronic disease. Meanwhile, farmers are gearing up to feed a projected 9 billion people by mid-century with less cropland and water and in the midst of spiking fuel and fertilizer costs, even as they are being called upon to develop safer, greener production systems that emphasize organic- and locally-grown foods. Even with online sources literally available at their fingertips, people can’t solve these problems entirely on their own. Extension is uniquely equipped to help people adopt sustainable practices in all facets of their lives.

2. We are catalysts
One Alabama cattle producer underscored recently the invaluable role Cooperative Extension educators serve as catalysts — in this case, helping him install a GPS device to reap substantial costs savings. “It’s gotten me started a little sooner than I would have,” the farmer wryly observed, admitting that it likely would have been years before he had discovered and installed the device on his own. Through the Internet, farmers are as readily exposed to new ideas and ways of thinking as the rest of us, but they still need catalysts — trained experts who can see the larger picture and who can point to cost-effective solutions they otherwise would not have considered because of times constraints, professional pre-occupations or other factors. What applies to farmers applies to all of us.

3. We are an agency of empowerment
As New York Times columnist Roger Cohen soberly observed recently, the 2008 stock market downturn followed more recently by severe federal and state budgetary cutbacks have left all Americans in a “different mental place.”

4. We are human infrastructure
We all know that in the 21st century, there is a strong emphasis on building technological infrastructure. Small wonder why: It offers enhanced opportunities for intellectual exchange, which, in turn, creates enhanced opportunities for creativity and innovation. Let’s not forget that we are infrastructure — not the inanimate stuff like high-speed rail or Internet connections — but the flesh-and-bone variety — human infrastructure. Even in this wired age, there remains an enormous value in the dense network of face-to-face relationships that characterize the Cooperative Extension mission. They have enormous potential for enhancing the connections that emerge from this newer, technological infrastructure.

5. We are contextualizers
The bad news: As flesh-and-bone knowledge providers, we cannot hold a candle to virtual knowledge sources, especially search engines — no doubt about that. The good news is that we still possess something that search engines and other online applications lack: the ability to provide our audiences knowledge within deep, enriched learning contexts. We help our diverse audiences not only understand knowledge within a wider learning context but, even more important, how to use it to enhance their lives in lasting, meaningful ways.

6. We are synergists
Our longstanding experience with forging and cultivating partnerships among diverse groups has often enabled us to succeed where others have failed. As our work in community resource development has underscored time and again, Extension educators have provided the crucial impetus that moves ideas from the drawing board to the assembly floor and, ultimately, to the end user.

7. We are collaborators
To an increasing degree, wikinomics, which emphasizes the power of collaborative wisdom and learning, is being adopted by everyone from global companies to educational institutions. Extension pioneers Seaman Knapp and Booker T. Washington anticipated this 21st century mindset more than a century ago: They didn’t view their clients as passive subjects; they considered them equals — more than that, they regarded them as active collaborators in their outreach efforts. Simply put, they viewed them as equals. Wikinomics is written into our organizational DNA — a trait that gives us an enormous competitive advantage over other public and private entities that are just now coming to terms with new demands of the 21st century knowledge economy.

WE ARE EXTENSION

**“Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,” wrote Benjamin Franklin more than two centuries ago.**
Join the Tri-County Young Farmer and Rancher Group

The Tri-County Young Farmers and Ranchers Program is a group of young farmers (both men and women between the ages of 18-35) in Buncombe, Henderson and Transylvania Counties. This is a program of the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers and Ranchers program, as well as the NC Farm Bureau. The objective of the Young Farmers and Ranchers program is to provide leadership in building a more effective Farm Bureau and farming community to preserve our individual freedoms and expand our opportunities in agriculture.

The Tri-County group meets for a dinner meeting once every two months and does service projects and tours throughout the year. Recent events include apple gleaning for MANNA Food Bank with FFA students from North Buncombe Middle School, participation in Farm City Day in Hendersonville and a tour of farming operations in and around Robbinsville. There are also annual discussion meets and other exciting personal development opportunities.

To learn more about the American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers and Ranchers Program visit: www.fb.org and search under ‘Programs’ in the left-hand column. If you are interested in participating, contact Sue Colucci at sue_colucci@ncsu.edu or 828.697.4891.

Current Grant and Money Opportunities are available on the Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative Website at: http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu.

Goats and Sheep workshop series hosted by Madison and Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Offices

Small Ruminant Integrated Gastrointestinal Parasite Control
Dr. J-M. Luginbuhl – NCSU Extension Meat Goat Specialist
This workshop will expose the audience to the problems facing producers with respect to small ruminant gastrointestinal parasite control, the biology of the barber pole worm (H. contortus), the concept of smart drenching, the FAMACHA concept and the hands-on use of the FAMACHA card on goats and sheep, an integrated approach to gastrointestinal parasite management, understanding parasite drug resistance versus animal resistance, susceptibility or resilience to gastrointestinal parasites, and non-chemical approaches to treating small ruminant with anthelmintics such as alternative forages.

Where: Madison County Extension Office
Date: May 5, 2011
Time: 1:00pm - 4:30pm
Cost: $10.00
Contact for registration and/or questions: 828-649-2411

A “different” approach to pasture management for goats
Dr. Jim Turner - NCSU Western Area Livestock Extension Specialists
This workshop will focus on Pasture Management for Goats and Sheep. The discussion will be on how we need to manage pastures differently than we do sheep or cattle pastures. The discussion will focus on what are desirable forages and how to manage grazing through management and stocking rates.

Where: Buncombe County Extension Office
Date: May 18, 2011
Time: 1:00pm - 4:30pm
Cost: $10.00
Contact for registration and/or question: 828-255-5522

An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. ~Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)
"Preparing Our Local Bounty: Cooking Demonstrations Highlighting our abundance of seasonal foods"

Join Cooperative Extension and the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project to learn from local chefs ways to prepare meals highlighting different foods and food products that are available from area producers. Laurey Masterron will highlight local honey, greens and meats. Each class will include the health benefits and ways of preserving selected foods. So, bring your appetite for tasty local good and your questions for the experts. Pre-registration is required and confirmed with receipt of $5. Send your check or register in person at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension office located at 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville NC 28801. For more information call (828) 255-5522.

May peace be with those who have suffered tragedy!

Join us for the Buncombe County Friends of Ag Breakfast

Maria Wise with the Buncombe County Soil and Water and I successfully hosted the first Friends of Ag Breakfast and are planning the 2nd in hopes of drawing an even broader group of people. We want all folks interested in connecting with others in agriculture to come and eat some good – FREE – food. I know that May is a busy time for farmers, but hope that time allows you to participate. The breakfast will take place at WNC Ag Center in the Virginia Boone Building bright and early on the morning of May 10 (7:00 am – until) and will feature as many local products as possible (donations welcome). John Queen from the WNC Livestock Center will entertain for 30 minutes or so discussing current markets and trends within the livestock industry and then you will be free to socialize. The breakfast is for new and seasoned farmers to sit side by side and share their stories and experiences. It is an opportunity for farmers, government, insurance salesman, members of ag organizations, and researcher in the like to be at the same table, eating the same biscuits (and yes they are homemade) and drinking the same coffee.

We would prefer an RSVP so we can get a general idea of the number of folks we can expect. You can do that by calling the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Office at (828)255-5522 or by emailing me at melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu.
May 3 – 4 Food Safety for Small Producers of Rabbit Meat will be held at the Mountain Horticulture Crop Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC. Course topics include rabbit processing, the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point, small business management, good manufacturing practices and sanitation standard operating procedures. Attendees will also participate in practical exercises as part of the course. Cost for the workshop is $50 and includes lunch and printed materials. Registration information is available online at www.ncagr.gov/markets/agribiz. To register by mail, make checks payable to N.C. Ag Promotions and mail to NCDA&CS, 1020 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1020, Attn. Ron Fish. For more information, contact Janna Spruill at (919) 733-7366 or janna.spruill@ncagr.gov, or Doug Smith at (919) 513-7157 or doug_smith@ncsu.edu.

May 7 ASAP’s Local Food Guide 2011 Release Party 4:00 – 8:00 pm at the Highlands Brewing Company in Asheville, NC. It’s your opportunity to pick up the 2011 guide hot off the press, enjoy fantastic giveaways and music by local act Uncle Mountain, and kick off the growing season with other local food enthusiasts. For more information, visit ASAP’s website www.asapconnections.org

May 18 – 19 Pesticide School and Exam will be held at the Mountain Horticulture Crop Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC. For more information contact the NCDA Pesticide Section at (919) 733-3556.

May 25, June 22, July 27, August 24 IPM Workshop Series – Identification of diseases, insects and weeds 2:00 – 4:30 pm at the Mountain Horticulture Crops Research & Extension Center in Mills River, NC. Pesticide credits available. For more information visit our website at http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/ or contact Buncombe County Office at (828) 255-5522 or melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu. Classes $5.00 each.

May 18 2011 Landscape Professional Field Day will be held at JC Raulston Arboretum and Horticulture Field Laboratory in Raleigh, NC. For more information contact NCNL A at (919) 816-9119.

June 2 Let’s Start with Jams 9:00 am – 1:00 pm at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Office. With an abundance of berries in season, now is the time to preserve some of those local strawberries and other berries as jam. Come to this hands-on class and learn how to make berry jam. We will cover making jams with and without added pectin. We will also discuss ways to make sugar free freezer and other refrigerated jams. You will be able to take home a sample of what we make. Contact Debbie Sparks at (828) 255-5522.

June 16 – July 14 Certified Plant Professional Short Course will be held at the NC Arboretum. For more information or to register contact Cliff Ruth at the Henderson County Extension Office at (828) 697-4891 or online at cliff_ruth@ncsu.edu.

July 19 & 21 Certified Plant Professional Review and Exam will be held at the NC Arboretum Visitor’s Education Center. For more information or to register contact Cliff Ruth at the Henderson County Extension Office at (828) 697-4891 or online at cliff_ruth@ncsu.edu.

August 29 Pesticide Safety Training 3:00 – 5:00 pm will be held in Brevard. This class is for individuals holding a private pesticide applicators license. If your recertification expires September 30 of this year, then you need two credits in categories V and X. This class provides two credits in category V. To pre-register, please contact the Extension office 838-884-3109.

September 8 Pesticide Specialty/Safety Training will take place at the Buncombe County Extension Office. Categories that will be covered at one of the two classes offered that day are V, AKBCWGMDHNOX. For more information or to register contact the Buncombe County Extension office at (828)255-5522.

Events to watch out for:
Hay Field Day
Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative

More and more farmers have been sharing with our agents their desire to continue farming, as well as the challenges they are facing in doing so. Farmers are desperately looking for ways to increase their income so they can keep their operation viable and their land preserved. Support given by our Buncombe County Commissioners and County Management has allowed the Cooperative Extension to develop a Small Farms Initiative program to aggressively work towards helping both seasoned and new farmers.

Melinda Roberts
Extension Agent
Agriculture-Small Farms

http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu

You can get this newsletter via email. Contact us either by phone at 828-255-5522 or email: Melinda_Roberts@ncsu.edu