Bumper Crop
A newsletter providing information for Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers in Henderson, Buncombe and Haywood Counties

Buncombe County Center September/October 2009

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The 2010 Grant Application Cycle for the WNC AgOptions Program has Just Been Announced!

The WNC AgOptions Program was developed with the ultimate goal of enhancing the sustainability of WNC agriculture by assisting farmers in establishing themselves economically, environmentally and socially through the diversification of their farm business. The WNC AgOptions program provides “mini grants” to growers in WNC counties and the Cherokee Reservation to minimize the inherent financial risk associated with trying new enterprises. Diversification includes growing new crops, season extension and value-added products, agribusiness ventures, etc.

The NC Cooperative Extension Centers in the West District have led WNC AgOptions since 2004. The WNC AgOptions was developed in a partnership with RAIFI-USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund and support is provided by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission. The WNC Ag Options steering committee includes representatives from NC Cooperative Extension Service, HandMade in America, NC Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, agribusiness leaders and former AgOptions recipients. Cooperative Extension will continue to partner with RAIFI-USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund to provide awards to farmers through 2011.

From 2004-2008, 168 farmers were awarded grants ranging from $2,500 to $5,000 totaling $527,500. In 2009, 20 farmers received $3,000, 23 farmers received $6,000 and 3 farmers were awarded $9,000. These are competitive grants, however with some research into markets, assistance from your local extension agent and other cooperators you will be on the right track to obtaining a grant. Below is a list of FAQs with some brief answers.

Who should apply? Farmers who demonstrate economic viability of farms in WNC. Support is provided to farmers diversifying or expanding their operations. Awards go to a variety of operations including, fruits and vegetables, livestock, nurseries, agri-tourism, beekeeping and value-added processing, etc.

Priority will be given to applicants who currently or previously grew tobacco, are diversifying their operations so they remain sustainable for this and future generations, have sufficiently researched their markets, exhibit a working relationship with their local Cooperative Extension Agents, have not received funding from the WNC AgOptions from 2004-2009.

Farmers who do not meet all of the above stated criteria are still encouraged to apply.

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How can the award be spent? Suitable expenses are those related to the production and marketing of diversified farm enterprises and agri-tourism endeavors. Examples include: seed, fertilizer, plants, amendments, packaging, fencing, tools, signage, specialized equipments, etc. Items that cannot be funded include: farmer labor, farm debt and expenses dated outside of the grant period.

How much is awarded? Amount of award can be $3,000, $6,000 or $9,000. Project budgets for $9,000 must be at least $27,000, not including farmer labor. Applicants who apply for $9,000 who are not awarded will be eligible for a $6,000 award.

Awards will be granted throughout an 18-county/unit area of WNC. Each county/unit will host at least one recipient in 2009 if one or more quality applications are submitted from each county/unit. Use of funds must be used as stated in the applicant’s proposal.

When are applications due? Proposals must be postmarked by January 8, 2010. Only one application per farm, please.

November 23, 2009 is the “Intent to Apply Deadline”. This is the date by which all applicants should contact their county Cooperative Extension agents to set up an appointment to discuss their projects. If this deadline is not met, the applicants will miss the opportunity of scoring additional points.

More detailed responses to these questions and others can be found on-line at wncagoptions.org or by calling the WNC AgOptions Project Manager at (828) 649-2411 x305

Applications can be downloaded at wncagoptions.org or visit your local county Extension Office for assistance.

USDA Implements Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

WASHINGTON, Aug. 17, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that changes to the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program have been implemented in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill, which will allow producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers FSFL on behalf of the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is $500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records. An FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin.

The following commodities are eligible for farm storage facility loans:

Fruits (including nuts) and vegetables - cold storage facilities
Corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley or minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain
Pulse crops - lentils, small chickpeas and dry peas
Hay and Renewable biomass

For more information about FSFL or other FSA price support program, please visit your FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.
Southern SARE Producer Grants Available

The calls have been released for the 2010 Southern Region SARE Producer Grants and 2010 Southern Region SARE On-Farm Research Grants. Proposals for the program are due by November 15, 2009. Obtain the calls at: http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/callpage.htm

Southern SARE PRODUCER GRANTS are only open to farmers and/or ranchers or producer organizations. Any farmer/rancher or producer organization in the US SOUTHERN REGION is eligible to apply for the grants which have maximums of $10,000 for individual producers and $15,000 for producer organizations to be used within two years. Proposals are invited that address: soil health, beneficial insect habitat, alternative crops/livestock, organic agriculture, marketing, sustainable grazing systems, improving the sustainability of existing farming practices, appropriate technology, and agroforestry.

The Southern Region is comprised of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Puerto Rico and the U.S.Virgin Islands.

Full information and instructions can be found in the calls for proposals. A copy of the calls for proposals can be obtained on the web at: http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/callpage.htm or by sending an email request to info@southernsare.org or by calling (770) 412-4787.

I would be more than happy to work with anyone interested in applying for this grant. Give me a call at 828.697.4891

NCDA & CS Cost-Share Program for GAPs Still Available

The NCDA & CS is offering two cost-share programs for Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Certification Audits and Water Analysis. The GAPs cost-share program will pay a 3rd party auditor who conducts a grower’s GAPs audit up to $600. The NCDA & CS will also pay up to $200 of the total cost for analysis of irrigation and packing line wash water for generic E. coli within the state of NC.

If you would like a copy of the application forms for either the programs mentioned above please contact your local extension office.
Ecologically Based Weed Management for Sustainable/Organic Vegetable Production

This full day course will cover the key principles and concepts that can be used to effectively manage weeds in small-scale, diversified vegetable production without the use of herbicides. The weed management approach that will be presented is based on preventive cultural practices such as cover cropping, rotation of crops and tillage practices, and "feeding the crop but not the weeds," supplemented with timely cultivation and other weed control tactics. Examples of innovative and successful strategies and tactics from working farms will be used to illustrate principles. The morning session will be spent in the classroom followed by lunch (provided). The afternoon session will be spent in the field at the Clemson Student Organic Farm where the group will see examples of real-life weed problems followed by open discussion on best strategies for management.

The course will take place at Madren Conference Center Auditorium, Clemson University, Clemson, SC

Registration: Registration for the course is $25 which includes lunch (fee waived for Clemson and SCSU Extension agents). Registration deadline is September 14. To register, complete a registration form and send along with a check for $25 payable to Clemson University to: Dr. Geoff Zehnder, Sustainable Agriculture Program, 114 Long Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634. For registration forms and additional information contact Geoff Zehnder at zehnder@clemson.edu.

Keeping on Track—Business Planning for Farms

The NC Cooperative Extension Service is excited to announce the course “Keeping on Track — Business Planning for Farms”. This four week short course is designed to assist farmers, both beginning and seasoned, to develop a better understanding of the business planning process and the ultimate purpose of a solid business plan. Space is limited so reserve a space early. There is a $100 fee for this class to cover books and hand-out materials.

The short course will take place on Monday afternoons from 2 pm—5 pm starting on 19 October and running through 9 November. The course will take place at the Mountain Horticulture Crops Research and Extension Center, 745 Research Drive in Mills River, NC 28749

Contact Cliff Ruth at 828.697.4891 or cliff_ruth@ncsu.edu for more details.
There’s Still Room! Learn About Organic Farming

NC Cooperative Extension is excited to offer a new course entitled **Transitioning to Commercial Organic Production**. Distinguished guests including Dr. Jeanine Davis, organic specialist at NCSU, Tony Kleese of Eastern Carolina Organics and Megan Ray of ASAP will provide their expertise. The course is designed for growers throughout WNC that are already set-up for commercial (1+ acres) organic production. Conventional growers looking to expand their markets and who wish to certify acreage as organic are encouraged to take part in the program, as well as organic growers that want a refresher on the principles of organic production.

**When?:** Tuesdays from 22 September – 17 November from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
**Where?:** Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville, NC 28801
**Registration fee:** $25 is the fee for the entire 9-week series and includes informational notebook

**Topics Include:**
- Introduction to Organics and Certification and Transitioning to Organic Production
- Soils and fertility
- Cover crops and rotation design
- Weed management
- Insect management
- Disease management
- Post-harvest and food safety
- Marketing options
- Certification paperwork questions and answers

**To register please fill out and return the following form.**

*Person with disability and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate in programs mentioned in this newsletter, by contacting Sue Colucci or designated contact at 828 697-4891 or in person at the Extension Office at least 4 days prior to the event.*

Name: _____________________________

Farm/Business Name: _____________________________

Phone Number: ___________ Email Address: _____________________________

What additional/specific topics would you like to learn about?: __________________________________________

Please make checks ($25) payable to **NCCES**

Mail completed form and payment to:
Susan Colucci
Henderson County Cooperative Extension Service
740 Glover St. Hendersonville, NC 28792
Blue Ridge Food Ventures Announces the Third Annual Marketplace

The specialties of some of the region’s finest food entrepreneurs are on the menu at this free event, to be held **Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2009**. The event showcases a diverse array of locally-made artisan food products – from pickled bamboo shoots and organic, hand-crafted chocolates to gourmet jams and sauces, flavored mustards, herb and spice mixtures, baked goods and more. All of the products are made by small businesses that started or expanded at Blue Ridge Food Ventures.

The MARKETPLACE will take place at BRFV on the Enka campus of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. It will be open to media and members of the specialty food and grocery trade from 3 to 5 p.m., and open to the general public from 5 to 7 p.m. Attendees can meet the entrepreneurs, sample their foods, and purchase or place orders for products in time for the holiday shopping season.

To register...please go to www.blueridgefoodventures.org or call 828-348-0128

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**New High Tunnels Resource**

Are you interested in extending your season, reducing the rainfall and wetness on your vegetables and/or small fruit or possibly reducing the disease pressure on your valuable tomatoes? Then a high tunnel might be the answer for you. High tunnels are a hybrid between open field production and greenhouse production. High tunnels are free-standing covered structures without heating or electrical power. High tunnels use passive ventilation for air exchange and cooling, and an irrigation system for crop production.

Michigan State University has a new high tunnel website. The website has been set up to provide relevant information on high tunnel production and can be found at the following site [http://msucares.com/crops/hightunnels/index.html](http://msucares.com/crops/hightunnels/index.html).

An email list for high tunnel discussion has been generated for informative discussion. To be added to the high tunnel information email list, send a message in one of these two ways:

- **address:** hightunnel-request@Lists.MsState.Edu
- **message:** subscribe

OR

- **address:** majordomo@Lists.MsState.Edu
- **message:** subscribe hightunnel

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**Appalachian Grown™ Matching Funds Still Available**

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), through support from the North Carolina Trust Fund Commission, has funds available for farmers, farmer groups, and farmers’ tailgate markets to use in the promotion of locally-grown food products.

Examples include:

- graphic design of logos, advertising, or packaging;
- printing of packaging or on-product labeling such as PLU stickers;
- farm or market signage; there is $250 match limit for all signage
- point-of-sale signage identifying locally-grown foods in retail stores;
- print or other advertising; not for items to be re-sold such as t-shirts, bags, hats, etc.
- rack card, flyer, or other printing;

Contact Megan Ray 828.236.1282 or [megan@asapconnections.org](mailto:megan@asapconnections.org) for more information about this program or to become Appalachian Grown certified.

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**Blue Ridge Food Ventures Announces the Third Annual Marketplace**
Bramble (Caneberry) Fall Checklist–
From Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium “Small Fruit News” authored by Dr. Gina Fernandez

Plant growth and development
• Primocanes continue to grow but slow down.
• Flower buds start to form.
• Primocane leaves senesce late fall.
• Spent floricanes should be removed.
• Optimal time to prune is after the coldest part of the season is over. However, pruning can start in late fall if plantings are large (late winter for smaller plantings).
• Start trellis repairs after plants have defoliated.

Weed Management
• Many summer weed problems can be best managed in the fall and winter using pre-emergent herbicides. Determine what weeds have been or could be a problem in your area.

Insect and disease scouting
• Continue scouting for insects and diseases.
• Remove damaged canes as soon as possible.

Planting
• Prepare list of cultivars for next year’s new plantings.

Fertilizer
• Take soil tests to determine fertility needs for spring plantings.

Strawberry Grower Fall Checklist–
From Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium “Small Fruit News” authored by Dr. Gina Fernandez

• Fumigate in early September, and put down plastic. Know your plant back times for fumigant used.
• Plant ryegrass in aisles (1 bu/acre) before you punch holes in plastic
• Set up overhead irrigation system if it will be used for frost protection. Check pumps, pipes and nozzles.
• Plant in mid-to-late September for high elevation and western NC, early-to-mid October for the piedmont regions, and late October for the Coastal Plain.
• Use overhead irrigation as needed for plugs or fresh dug plants. Fresh dugs need water from 9 am -5 pm for 7-12 days, plug plants need water five hours the first day, three hours the second day and two hours the third day. More may be needed if weather is hot and sunny.
• Check for dead plants and reset asap.
• Watch for pests: insects and diseases, and deer.
• Fall irrigate if soil is dry.
• Hand weed emerging winter weeds.
• Consider placing row covers on plants the first 10 days of Nov. for additional flower development this fall and higher yields next spring (optional).
• Inspect plants late fall and winter for crown development, you should see 2-3 crowns by December in a normal year.
• Protect plants and plastic from deer, set up deer fence before ryegrass germinates.

To subscribe to the Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium’s Small Fruit News visit: http://www.smallfruits.org/
Upcoming Events

September 17—Pesticide Safety, 10 am–noon and 6-8 pm. 2 “V” credits. Haywood County Coop. Ext. Office. Contact Bill Skelton, 828.456.3575

September 17—Pesticide Safety, 7-9 pm. Henderson County Cooperative Ext. Office. Contact Ivy Olson, 828.697.4891

September 20-22—Sunbelt Ag Expo. Moultrie, GA. www.sunbeltexpo.com for more details


September 22—November 12—Transitioning to Commercial Organic Production Course. Buncombe County Coop. Ext., Tues. evenings, 5:30-8 pm (see p. 5 for details)

September 23—Blue Ridge Food Ventures 3rd Annual Marketplace at AB Tech (see p. 6 for details)

September 24—Ecologically Based Weed Management for Sustainable/Organic Vegetable Production. Clemson University, Clemson, SC (see p. 4 for details)

September 24—November 9—Keeping Track: Business Planning for Farmers (see p. 4 for details)

November 23—Intent to apply for WNC AgOptions deadline to meet with your county agent (see p. 1-2 for details)

December 1-2, 2009 - Southeast Vegetable Expo. Myrtle Beach, SC. http://www.ncvga.com/ for more details

December 4-6 — Carolina Farm Stewardship—Sustainable Agriculture Conference. Black Mountain, NC. http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/ for more details.


Please contact us if you have event additions!