Small Farms News

Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man. ~Benjamin Franklin

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Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative Updates

To All:
The following is an article that appeared in the October 2010 issue of the Vegetable Growers News, a publication based in Sparta, Michigan. It is written by Mr. Jerry Mills of Mills Apple Farm in Marine, Illinois.

The following question was posed by the editor, in which Jerry was listed as one of three respondents. The question was, "How will ag college consolidations affect your livelihood?" Jerry's answer was as follows:

"One hundred and fifty years ago this country was populated by millions of farmers with diverse backgrounds and educations. Most of them were immigrants. Many did not speak English. Knowledge of agriculture ranged from somewhat sophisticated to nonexistent, often the latter. The land was there to be exploited, with little thought of conservation. If it wore out, move on, similar to the slash and burn systems still used in primitive areas of the world today.

In Illinois, smart people soon figured out that more knowledge needed to be shared and, in the 1840's and 1850's, agricultural and horticultural societies were formed. People came together at regular meetings and exchanged ideas and hypotheses on everything from animal health to the best horticultural methods. They also looked to Europe for information and ideas.

Unfortunately, some of the ideas were faulty, and probably accepted more on the strength of the personality of the speaker than the scientific validity of his information.

Enter the universities and, later, the Extension systems. They taught agriculture based on science and, over time, displaced many of the old ideas that were based on tradition, superstition, or ignorance. The presence of one or more educated ag advisers in each county gradually turned American agriculture around.

It wasn't long before home economic advisers were added to help improve the domestic side of farming. Their programs, also based on science, eventually extended to the cities. Home life was dramatically improved through their efforts.

Then came the 4-H programs to nurture rural young people. It turned many of them into confident, effective adults.

We have reached the point where an argument could be made that we do not need Extension folks anymore. Books, magazines, and the Internet can provide it all. Anyone with a computer can find out anything. We are living in an age where the amount of information is overwhelming. It is almost a throwback to the days of the old societies, where a stranger is confronted with 20 different theories. How will he tell which one is right and which is bogus?

We cannot let the ag colleges disappear entirely. We need their honesty to balance the outside forces that are not always working for our benefit. Science must always be represented, and we need arbitrators to help us understand what is valid. We also need them to keep looking for better ways to do things.

Do we need a representative in every county? Economics dictate that this may no longer be feasible; however, there will always be those who will need hands-on instruction. This may be especially true of the new breed of "agriculturists" who are purchasing small plots of land with thoughts of "going back to their roots." Their land and the environment around them needs to be protected through education, as was the case for our ancestors. Imagine the consequences of a novice farmer turned loose with 2, 4-D ester, applying it at the wrong time and place. The surrounding community could be devastated.

Larger farmers may not require personal guidance, yet they are the ones who may feel the strongest need. With literally millions of dollars invested in a crop, they cannot afford to make mistakes. Many of them farm rented land, and the welfare of their property owners is at stake as well as their own.

The powers that be will reshape our agriculture research and education systems according to the limitations imposed upon them by forces not always appreciative of agriculture's value or needs. Let us hope that they have the wisdom and foresight to keep a valid system. We cannot fritter away 150 years of progress."

Article received from Carl Cantaluppi, CES

January 2011

Published in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments.
Calling Farmers for ASAP’s Family Farm Tour

Dear Buncombe County Farmers,

Each year, ASAP organizes a Family Farm Tour showcasing a selection of the area’s most outstanding farms. Over one summer weekend, community members can learn how food grows, celebrate agricultural heritage, and enjoy our rural landscape. A limited number of farms will be selected for the tour based on factors such as offerings and accessibility. The tour will focus on farms located in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Transylvania, and Yancey counties in North Carolina.

We are excited to invite you to apply for the the tour which will happen on June 25-26, 2011. To apply, please complete online application and email or mail it to me by January 15th. If you mail the application, please send it to: 306 West Haywood Street, Suite 200, Asheville, NC 28801. Although the deadline is January 15th, we ask that you return your application as soon as possible. This helps us tremendously with the planning process.

Both the farmers and the participants of the Family Farm Tour have provided invaluable feedback in surveys over the past several years; and thanks to those insights and suggestions, we are working to make this tour the best yet.

Here's what farmers said about the tour last year:
"The tour helps get the word out about our farm!"

"We sold as much product each day of the farm tour as we do on our best market days!"

"The exposure our farm gets from the tour is great and leads to future business for the farm!"

"We find that the contacts made on our tours, whether with the FFT or just individual tours, result in longer term customer relationships."

"The tour lets people in the area know what we produce and gives them a chance to see the way we operate our farm."

We hope to receive your application for the 2011 tour in coming weeks. If you know other farms in Buncombe County or beyond who may want to participate in the tour, please forward along the application and information. Contact me anytime with questions.

Warmly,
Anna Littman
(828)896-1282, ext. 110

Under the Covers: Nursing Clovers to Maturity

Clover can be wonderful cover crops, growing more than 100 lbs of nitrogen/acre and improving soil tilth with their large root systems, but they get off to a slow, weak start after seeding. Farmers have dealt with this problem by using nursery crops for their clover thus providing shelter for the baby legumes during their early development when the seedlings are subject to heat, drought and weeds. During a Cover Crop Project funded by Cornell Cooperative Extension, two different clover/nurse crop systems were tried with success. Clovers seeded by themselves, without herbicide applications, are quickly swamped by fast-growing annual weeds, particularly when planted in late summer. The weed cover doesn’t harm the clover, which tolerates and actually appreciates the cooler, moister environment created by the shade of the weeds. But, don’t let this benefit stop you from trying to control both annual and perennial weeds which can make thousands of seeds before being terminated by frost or controlled by mowing. Instead of using weeds to nurse the clover, some New England farmers tried two different crop/nurse scenarios.

The first nursery crop combination used was the classic oats and white clover planted in late summer. Using 1-2 bushels (35-70lbs)/A oats in combination with 4-6lbs/A white clover (each species pure seeding rate is decreased to allow the other species space to germinate and grow). The oats grew and provided shelter into late fall, died over winter, and the next spring the field was swamped by a lush stand of white clover. The second combination used was 50lbs of buckwheat and 10lb of medium red clover seeded together in late summer. One advantage of using buckwheat is that it gives more thorough weed control in warm summer growing conditions than oats. In this combination, the soil was warm and the buckwheat took off with the red clover hanging out in the shade. When fall weather arrived, the buckwheat was mowed and the clover took over. Then, in spring when the growing season started, the clover grew really fast, making its peak nitrogen content available just before flowering. If mowed at this stage, the clover should die. If mowed earlier, it will not have “finished” and will persist in fields.

The biggest challenge the farmers had was with the seeding equipment. They did not have a tractor-mounted seed spreader or appropriate tools for incorporating seed into the soil. They also found that sometimes sowing two different seeds at the same time could be tricky because of different seed depth requirements. In the case of red clover and buckwheat, they are both ok at 1/2 inch deep. One can broadcast the clover and then drill the buckwheat or, if broadcasting both seeds, spread them in different passes and then press lightly into the soil with a drag rather than a disk. (These particular farmers used an old set of bedsprings drug behind their tractor and it worked!). The key to a nice even stand is to firm the soil rather than to fluff it for better seed-to-soil-contact.

This information was taken from an article written by Molly Shaw, a Fruit and Vegetable Specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension office in Tioga County, NY and was published in the Small Farms Quarterly in the spring of 2010.

"Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," wrote Benjamin Franklin more than two centuries ago.
"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 chef's ways to prepare meals highlighting different foods and food products that are available from area producers. There will be one class per quarter with the Kick-Off being at the Cooperative Extension Center on Monday, February 21st, at 5:30 pm where we will highlight local honey and meats. Each class will include the health benefits and ways of preserving selected foods. So, bring your appetite for tasty local food and your questions for the experts. Preregistration is required and confirmed with receipt of $5. Send your check or register in person at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center located at 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville NC 28801. For more information call (828) 255-5522.

Come join us for the first ever Friends of Ag Breakfast here in Buncombe County

Maria Wise from Buncombe County Soil and Water and myself have joined together in organizing the first, of what we hope to be a very successful, Buncombe County Friends of Ag Breakfast, that will take place at WNC Ag Center in the Virginia Boone Building bright and early on the morning of February 15 (7:00 am - until). A free breakfast will be served featuring as many local products as possible (donations welcome). A guest speaker will entertain for 30 minutes or so, and then you will be free to socialize with folks that come from all walks of life in their level of involvement with agriculture. This will be an opportunity for new and seasoned farmers to sit side by side and share their stories and experiences. It will be an opportunity for farmers, government agencies, members of ag organizations, and researcher and the like to be at the same table, eating the same biscuits 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 Center at (828)255-5522 or by emailing me at melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu.

Congratulations 2011 Ag Options Grant Recipients

We look forward to seeing you at the January 19th recipient orientation

Current Grant and Money Opportunities are available on the Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative Website at: http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu.
HERITAGE POULTRY HUSBANDRY 101
Workshops for Small, Sustainable Poultry Farmers!
(4) Tuesday nights in March of 2011

Location:
North Carolina Cooperative Extension
Buncombe County Center
94 Coxe Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801

“Raising Heritage Turkeys for Holiday Market” – Tuesday, March 1 & 8
(6:00PM – 9:00PM)
Every year during the holiday season, more and more families are looking for a historical, heritage, locally
grown turkey to purchase and cook for their Thanksgiving and Christmas meals! A turkey that is true to the
breed, can naturally reproduce and is treated humanely on the farm where it is raised! The demand for these
birds is increasing all the time. In this workshop you will learn about the history of commercial/industrialized
turkeys verses heritage turkeys. You will also learn of the opportunities and the necessities as you consider
raising these birds on your local farm. We’ll discuss how to choose your breed, prepare your pasture and look
at facility options for your flock. You’ll learn the basics to brooding poults – dealing with heat, feeding, water-
ing, pastures, proper fencing and even how to deal with predators. The workshop will end with some wonder-
ful secrets of marketing your products, planning for profit and building a sustainable farming program with
your flock.
Cost: $50.00 Turkeys Only. (Includes training materials) Spouse fee: $25.00

“Raising Heritage Chickens for Profit” – Tuesday, March 15 & 22
(6:00PM – 9:00PM)
Have you ever tasted a farm-fresh egg, or freshly-harvested chicken? Many people are now raising their own
poultry, for personal use or for sale, making this an exciting time in the poultry industry. The marketplace for
historical, heritage breeds of poultry is growing rapidly. Would you like to learn about standard bred poultry?
Learn how to breed and reproduce heritage poultry for eggs and for meat purposes! Learn about sustainable
breeding and how to market poultry products in stores and restaurants, and in your community! Learn what
breeds are on the verge of extinction and how you can be a part of their preservation! During this workshop,
you will learn how to identify breeds, how to select and breed them legally and safely, how to create an envi-
ronment for maximum, natural production, and finally, how to strategically market your poultry for a small
farm profit.
Cost: $50.00 Chickens Only. (Includes training materials) Spouse fee: $25.00

We must have a minimum of (10) preregistered attendees for each workshop.
Below is the registration form. Please mail this NO later than Friday, February 4, 2011 so that we can confirm all
the workshop details.

Registration form – Heritage Poultry Husbandry 101 Workshops

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Email: ____________________________

I will be attending the following:
____ “Raising Heritage Turkeys for Holiday Market” – Tuesday, March 1 & 8 ($50.00)
____ “Raising Heritage Chickens for Profit” – Tuesday, March 15 & 22 ($50.00)
____ I will be attending all FOUR WEEKS for the discount price of $80.00!

Make checks payable to: Center for Poultry
Send to: 642 Moffitt Hill Road, Old Fort, NC 28762
January 27 The Business Side of Agritourism 8:30 – 4:00 pm at Cataloochee Ranch in Maggie Valley, NC. If you have or wish to incorporate Agritourism activities into your farm, then this conference is for you. Come spend the day with us and learn what you need to know about legal regulations and new ideas that will benefit your farm and Agritourism business. For more information, visit our website at http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu or call (828) 255-5522.

February 15 Buncombe County Friends of Ag Breakfast 7:00 am—until at the WNC Ag Center, Virginia Boone Building. Come join us for a FREE breakfast and socializing while listening to an informational talk. RSVP Preferred. For more information, contact Melinda Roberts at (828) 255-5522 or melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu.

February 16-17 Winter Vegetable Conference & Trade Show with registration and trade show opening at 9:30 am on the Wednesday, February 16, with program beginning at 12:30 pm at the Crowne Plaza in Asheville, NC. For more information, please call (828) 685-3989 or visit http://www.ncmarketready.org/93-winter-vegetable-conference-and-trade-show

February 23 Nursery Management Workshop 9:00 – 3:30 pm at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center, Mills River, NC. This educational program is a collaboration between NC Cooperative Extension and the Green Industry. Attendees will increase their knowledge about IPM practices. For more information contact Cliff Ruth in Henderson County, at (828) 697-4891 or at cliff_ruth@ncsu.edu. Pesticide credits will be available.

February 26 Marketing Opportunities for Farmers (MOFF). 8:00 – 5:00pm at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, NC. This is a conference designed for farmers and those seriously considering farming as a profession. Event includes sessions led by farming and agricultural leaders, locally sourced food for meals, a resource notebook, plus networking opportunities. For more information, visit www.asapconnections.org/MOFF2011.html or call (828)236-1282, ext 110.

March 3 Landscape Management Workshop 8:30 – 4:00 pm at Givens Estates off Sweeten Creek Road in Asheville, NC. For more information contact Cliff Ruth in Henderson County (828) 697-4891 or at cliff_ruth@ncsu.edu. Pesticide credits will be available.

March 5 – 6 Organic Growers School at UNC-Asheville Campus. EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION NOW OPEN UNTIL JANUARY 17. For more information Visit: http://www.organicgrowersschool.org

March 9 & 16 NCDA Legal for Trade Scale Calibration 9:00 – 12:00 noon at Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center on the corner of Coxe and Hilliard Ave. For more information, contact Melinda Roberts (828)255-5522 or melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu.

March 16 IPM Workshop Series – Calibration of Pesticide Sprayer & Spreader Equipment 2:00 – 5:00pm at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center in Mills River, NC. 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. Pesticide credits available.

March 21 WNC Stock Yard Grand Opening Check our website for start time which has yet to be determined.

Event to watch for: Fresh Produce Safety—Field to Family Good Agricultural Practices (GAP’s) Training.
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 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