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Small Farms News

“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant.”
~Anne Bradstreet

Raising Chickens for Profit

We are right in the middle of a huge local food movement here in western North Carolina with people concerned about where their food comes from and willing to pay premium prices for the satisfaction of knowing. One product that has become very popular, as well as one of the easier commodities to produce, is locally raised poultry which does not require a lot of space, facility or investment. Local tailgate markets, restaurants, and grocery stores have created a demand that has yet to be met, thus simplifying the need for intensive marketing tactics.

Poultry can be raised in a variety of ways. First you must decide if you want to raise the birds for the meat, eggs, or both. One production method to consider is pasture raised poultry. It is one of the least expensive but most labor intensive methods where the birds are kept in a portable pen, often referred to as a chicken tractor, on pasture, and moved once or twice a day. This model allows the birds to scratch their manure, helping improve soil fertility while eliminating the need for waste removal.

Another production method is referred to as day-range or net-range, where the birds are allowed to access a pastoral setting during daylight hours. The pasture is fenced in by temporary, movable electric poultry netting. In this production system, the birds range for food during the day, with supplemental feedings, and return to portable housing at night. One can also produce free range birds where they are allowed to move about freely during the day and return to portable housing at night, providing less protection from predation than the two methods previously mentioned. The value of each of these systems, or methods, depends on what goals you have for your operation as well as your available resources.

More extensive information on production and breeds will be presented at an upcoming Poultry Production Workshop hosted by myself and Jeff Bradley, Area Livestock Agent, on May 10, 2010 at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River. Topics of discussion include:

- Introduction to raising poultry on a small farm
- Understanding commercial, standard breed (heritage) and dual purpose breeds of poultry
- Brooding your baby chicks
- Biosecurity and small flock health
- Poultry housing and necessities
- Marketing, processing and integrating with other on-farm enterprises

The fee is $25 in advance and participants must pre-register with attendance limited to 80 people. Lunch will be provided. To register, contact Erin Bonito with the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension at 828-255-5522.

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“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant.”
~Anne Bradstreet
Featured Farmer

TEN MILE FARM
www.tenmilefarm-nc.com

Owners: Kevin Toomey & Christina Carter
Established: 2005
Location: Candler, NC
Contact info: keepinitrural@gmail.com

The owners of Ten Mile are two dreamers with big aspirations. Because of their strong desire to farm, Kevin and Christina started and continue farming on leased bottom land in the Hominy Creek area. Ten Mile Farm is a small scale, diversified vegetable farm approximately 10 miles from where Kevin and Christina live, hence the name “Ten Mile Farm”. They use a combination of biodynamic practices, cover crops, rotation and organic approved applications to grow over 40 varieties of vegetables that can be purchased at the downtown market on Wednesday afternoons, the Asheville City Market on Saturdays, and through their CSA subscription.

Kevin and Christina are wonderful examples of how you can make anything happen if you are willing to use your available resources. While they are actively driving forward creating a successful business, they are searching for the perfect opportunity to find a permanent location they can call their own through direct purchase or through a farm transition program.

Tailgate Markets
Looking for Vendors

Mills River Farmers Market:
The Mills River Farmers Market is looking for vendors for the 2010 season. The market takes place on Saturday mornings throughout the growing season (May-October). The Mills River Farmers Market is located just five miles from the Asheville Regional Airport on NC 280 (Boylston Highway) at the Mills River Town Commons (G & B Shopping Center). If you are interested in selling your farm products at the market, please contact D.J. at 828-458-7748 or Joe at 828-891-3332 or email millsriverfarm@yahoo.com.

Flat Rock Tailgate Market:
The Flat Rock Tailgate Market is looking for vendors. It reopens April 22nd. The market will continue every Thursday through October 28th and is free and open to the public. To obtain an application to become a vendor or for further information about the Flat Rock Tailgate Market, call Molly Sharp at 828-698-8775, Cheryl Stippich at 828-693-0781 or Saundra Poces at 828-698-8149.
Research shows that farmers are among the least likely workers to receive a skin examination by a physician. It’s important to perform regular skin self-examinations!

Learn to identify a mole or lesion that needs the attention of a dermatologist:

- Asymmetry (one half is unlike the other)
- Border (irregular, scalloped or poorly defined)
- Color (varies from one area to another)
- Diameter (the size of a pencil eraser or larger)
- Evolving (changing in size, shape or color)

To minimize their risk, the American Academy of Dermatology recommends everyone be sun smart:

- Use water-resistant sunscreen with SPF 30
- Wear long sleeve shirts, pants, a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses
- Stay in the shade when possible
- Remember that water, snow and sand reflect the sun’s rays increasing your chance of sunburn

The American Academy of Dermatology offers a downloadable Body Mole Map with information on how to perform a skin exam, images of the ABCDEs of melanoma, and info on how to find a free cancer screening at www.aad.org/checkspot.

Winter Sun Farms Seeks Produce for 2010-2011 CSA Season

The concept behind Winter Sun Farms, a program of Blue Ridge Food Ventures, is simple: Consumers purchase “winter shares” from Blue Ridge Food Ventures in advance of the growing season. The money is used to help area food growers purchase seeds and get their crops in the ground. During harvest time, the fresh-picked produce from area farmers is processed and stored. Each winter month, members pick up their winter share – a box of at least 6 items.

This year, Winter Sun Farms is planning to significantly increase their subscriber base to 300 members and needs new farmers to fulfill produce needs. The program will be run very similar to last year, with more attention paid to quality.

Vegetables and fruits that can be economically and efficiently handled from a prep standpoint are ideal. Also, any fruit or vegetable that has a reputation of freezing well will be considered. As much as possible, Winter Sun Farms is seeking to single source as many of these vegetables and fruits as possible to help with delivery timings as well as processing.

For additional information about Winter Sun Farms visit their website at www.wintersunfarmsnc.com. If you are interested in working with Winter Sun Farms as a contract grower, please contact Chris Reedy, the new Farms Outreach Programs Manager and Coordinator of the Winter Sun Farms CSA, at 828-216-0468.
Tomato Growers & Strawberry Growers Information Portals Up

**Tomato:** There is a new and exciting resource for Tomato Growers! The Tomato Growers Information Portal is a new web portal designed specifically for N.C. tomato growers and Extension agents. Online resources include business management tools, the latest production guidelines, links to weather and climate data and much more.

Check out the Tomato Growers Portal: www.ncsu.edu/enterprises/tomatoes

**Strawberry:** There is a new information website that was designed to be a 'one-stop shop” for strawberry growers. The Strawberry Growers Information Portal contains enterprise budgets, pest control information, production information, advisories, resources, event and training opportunities, videos, links to other important information and more!

Check out the Strawberry Growers Portal: www.ncsu.edu/enterprises/strawberries

**Current Grant & Money Opportunities**

Links to all of the grants below are available on the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Website. Go to http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu and click on “Agriculture & Food” and then under County Extension Programs, click on “Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative”. If you do not have access to the internet, please call our office at (828) 255-5522 for more information on any of these grants.

- **NCDA&CS Food Safety Cost-Share Grants** - Given on a First Come First Serve Basis
- **NCDA&CS Cost-Share Program for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)** - Given on a First Come First Serve Basis
- **OCIA Research and Extension Micro Grants** - Given on a First Come First Serve Basis
- **Appalachian Grown Matching Funds** - Ongoing through June 2010
- **USDA Small Farm Funding Resources** - Ongoing
- **FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan Program** - Ongoing
- **Farm Credit Financial Training Funding provided by NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Grant** - Currently Accepting Applications
- **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service** has several programs that offer financial and technical assistance, easements, incentive payments, cost shares and matching funds in the areas of conservation, watershed and wetland rehabilitation and protection, environmental quality, farmland protection, wildlife habitat, and grassland and grazing reserves
- **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)** has several opportunities including research and education grants, producer grants, sustainable community grants, professional development grants and on-farm research grants.

"Much appreciation to Erin Bonito for her assistance in comprising the Small Farms Initiative Newsletter"
Internet Marketing Series for Farmers: April 12th - May 3rd, 2010 from 10:00am - noon at EarthFare (West Asheville) 66 Westgate Parkway, Asheville, NC 28806. For more information visit http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/11/InternetMarketingSeriesFlyer.pdf, or contact Erin Bonito to register at erin_bonito@ncsu.edu or 828-255-5522.

Crisis Communication Event for Tomato Growers: April 13th, 2010 from 2:00pm - 5:00pm at the Mountain Horticultural Research and Extension Center on 455 Research Drive in Mills River, NC. For more information, contact Sue Colucci at sue_colucci@ncsu.edu or 828-255-5522.

A Successful Season - A Training Opportunity for Farmers market Managers and Vendors: April 21st, 2010 from 9:45am - 3:00pm at the Virginia Boone Building at the WNC Agricultural Center, Fletcher, NC. For more information visit http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agribiz/successfulseasonwncagenda.pdf or contact Annette Dunlap at 919-733-7887, ext. 257 or annette.dunlap@ncagr.gov. A registration form can be accessed at http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agribiz/successfulseasonwncreg.pdf.

Green Industry IPM Workshop Series: April 28, May 26, June 23, July 14, and August 25 from 3:00pm - 5:00pm at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC. Pesticide credits (2) available (GHLNDOX), for each session. For more information visit http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/11/2010Green20Industry%20IPM-1.pdf.

Poultry Production Workshop: May 10th, 2010 from 8:30am-4:00pm at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC. For more information visit http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/11/PoultryProduction-1.pdf, or to register contact Erin Bonito at 828-255-5522 or erin_bonito@ncsu.edu.

North Carolina Pesticide Recertification Opportunities: Ongoing; For more information, or to find a class near you, please visit the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences at http://www.ncagr.gov/SPCAPpesticides/license.htm.

For additional events, workshops and classes, please visit Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project’s Events Calendar at http://www.asapconnections.org/calendar.html and the Carolina Farm Stewardship Events Calendar at http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/events.shtml.

All event listings and links can be found online on the Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative website at http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/content/Buncombe+County+Small+Farms+Initiative
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.

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