Informational Tools Developed to Help Plan the Future of Your Farm

Decision assistance tools have been created to help our farmers here in Buncombe County evaluate their circumstances and to help plan for the future of their farms.

Several tools have been established through the Farm Prosperity Project, a federally funded study, to help farmers evaluate their personal situation and help them plan for their future; to help choose the appropriate farm protection tools for their farms; and to help evaluate whether any of the twelve new crops and enterprises studied in the Prosperity Project might fit their situation. The new crops and enterprises include agritourism; specialty nursery; valued-added products; specialty meats, eggs and cheeses; organics; specialty fruits and vegetables; medicinal herbs; mushrooms; truffles; hops; organic grains; and wasabi. Further information about these tools and how to use them will be available in the near future at the website below:

www.ces.ncsu.edu/fletcher/programs/herbs/prosperity/index.html

“Planning the Future of Your Farm; a Workbook Supporting Farm Transfer Decisions” is another tool offered by the North Carolina Farm Transition Network (NCFTTN). It is a workbook for families that own (and produce income from) farm, forest and horticultural land in North Carolina. It is specifically for those who want to keep their farm in production and/or in the family as it passes to the next generation. This tool was developed to help families make sense of seemingly overwhelming array of issues such as retirement, healthcare, taxes and family harmony. For more Information please contact Andrew Branan, at (919)732-7539 or on the web at www.ncftn.org.
12 Steps to Ecological Weed Management

1. Know the weeds on your farm
2. Plan cropping systems to minimize open niches for weeds
3. Keep the weeds guessing through crop rotation
4. Design the cropping system and select tools for effective weed control
5. Grow vigorous, competitive crops
6. Put the weeds out of work – grow cover crops
7. Manage the soil weed seed bank: minimize deposits and maximize withdrawals
8. Knock the weeds out at critical times
9. Utilize biological processes to further reduce weed pressure
10. Bring existing weeds under control before planting weed-sensitive crops
11. Keep observing the weeds and adapt management practices accordingly
12. Experiment, and watch for new developments in weed management

These steps were taken from an article entitled “Ecological Based Weed Management for Sustainable/Organic Vegetable Production” By: Dr. Mark Schonbeck. More detailed information on these 12 steps can be found on the web at:

www.extension.org/article/18539

‘Got to be NC Food Safety’ Website

The Food and Drug Protection Division at the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has created new ways for North Carolina consumers to find answers to their food safety questions.

A newly redesigned “Got to be NC Food Safety” Web site, www.ncfoodsafety.com, provides food safety information, laws and news for consumers, retailers, producers and educators. The site also features a “Food for Thought” section with statistics and trivia for children and families.

In addition, a new toll-free number and e-mail address will provide North Carolina residents with more in-depth responses to their food safety questions. Consumers can call (877) FOOD-644 (877-366-3644) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or e-mail ncfoodsafety@ncagr.gov.

NCDA&CS Putting Agronomic Reports Online

Starting Nov. 1, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will no longer routinely mail out paper copies of agronomic reports. This policy will apply to reports for soil tests and nematode assays, as well as plant tissue, waste, solution and soilless media analyses.

All these reports are readily available through the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division’s Web site, www.ncagr.gov/agronomi. Basic instructions are outlined at www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/reportsearch.htm. Anyone who has difficulty using the PALS report-search feature or has questions can call (919) 733-2655 for assistance during regular weekday office hours.
Keeping Your Farm
A Workshop for Farm & Forest Landowners

Topics of Discussion:
• Tax information
• Insurance & financial options
• Forestry management plans
• Conservation easements
• Farm transition programs
• Value added & new enterprises

Where: Weaverville Town Hall, Community Room, 30 S. Main Street, Weaverville

When: Thursday, November 12th, 2009 from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm (Lunch provided) & Friday, November 13th, 2009 (One on one consultations) from 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Participation Cost: Free

Registration: Registration limited to 100 attendees. Contact Erin Bonito at (828) 255-5522 or erin_bonito@ncsu.edu

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Workshop

For those who have never heard of CSAs, the concept is simple: A farmer sells “shares” of his produce to the public at the beginning of the season. In return for cash they supply the farmer, the consumer gets a box of diverse vegetables or other farm products throughout the harvest season. This system is beneficial to farmers looking for cash flow early in the season and a steady stream of consumers throughout the year. CSAs are also beneficial to consumers who, not only want fresh, seasonal produce, but also want a connection to their food and a relationship with local growers.

Where: Henderson County Extension, 740 Glover St, Hendersonville

When: December 9th from 9 am—11 am

Participation Cost: Free

Registration: Contact Ivy Olson at 828.697.4891 or ivy_olson@ncsu.edu

Transfer of Development Rights Workshop
Using the Private Marketplace to Protect Farmland

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a planning tool which allows communities to keep farmland available for agricultural production while directing development into areas where growth is being encouraged. Guided by local government, a developer will pay a farmer for their development rights in exchange for approval to build more densely in an area that public services can be provided more efficiently.

Where: Land-of-Sky Regional Council, 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville

When: Friday, November 13, 2009 from 10:00 -3:00

Participation Cost: $15.00 (lunch included)

Registration: Contact Annie at (828) 251-6622 or annie@landofsky.org

Hops Production Meeting

Topics of Discussion:
• Site selection & soil fertility
• Trellising systems & cover crops
• Disease, pest & weed management
• Economics and budgets

Where: Camp New Life, Mountain Research Station, 265 Test Farm Road, Waynesville

When: Wednesday, November 18th, 2009 from 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Participation Cost: Meeting fee is $5. Payment accepted at the door. CASH ONLY!

Registration: Contact Erin Freeman at 828-456-3575 or erin_freeman@ncsu.edu
Edible and Medicinal Mushroom Project

The Edible and Medicinal Mushroom Project at NC A&T State University is once again offering free shiitake mushroom spawn to growers who follow the requirements below:

1. You must live in North Carolina.
2. You must attend an inoculation workshop. *The WNC workshop will be held at Ray-Cort Rec. Park in Burnsville on February 26, 2010.
3. You must cut and inoculate a minimum of 200 logs in the first year.
4. You must purchase your own tools and materials for inoculation including drill bit, inoculation plunger, and cheese wax. These can be purchased at one of the following: fieldforest.net, mushroompeople.com, fungiperfecti.com. Plan on spending between $100 and $150.
5. Sign a consent form in which you agree to: provide information about your production; provide sales records which are used
6. At least once a year, you will be required to complete a survey.

Oak logs are recommended for this project. Cut your logs from live trees only when the leaves are down; inoculate within 3 weeks of cutting. Requests for spawn orders should be made through your county agent by January 15, 2010.

For more information about the project, contact
Melinda Roberts: Melinda_Roberts@ncsu.edu (828) 255-5522

More Upcoming Events

An Introduction to Beekeeping Class
- November 8th at the Folk Art Center, Blue Ridge Parkway; www.wncbees.org

North Carolina Irrigation License CEU Crash Course
- December 4th, 8:00 am- 3:00 pm at Mountain Horticulture Crops Research & Extension, Mills River; Contact Felicia at 704-909-3346

Carolina Farm Stewardship Sustainable Agriculture Conference
- December 4th-6th at YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly Conference Center; www.carolinafarmstewards.org

Green & Growin’ Educational Conference & Trade Show
- January 12th-16th, Greensboro; www.ncnla.com

The Business Side of Agritourism Workshop
- January 28th at Lake Logan Episcopal Center, Canton, NC; More info coming soon!

Intermediate Beekeeping School
- January 30th, 31st and February 6th, 7th at Warren Wilson College, Asheville, NC; www.wncbees.org

Landscape Management Workshop
- February 11th at NC Arboretum, Asheville, NC; More info coming soon!

Nursery Management Workshop
- February 25th at Mountain Horticulture Crops Research & Extension Center, Mills River, NC; More info coming soon!

Organic Growers School
- March 6th and 7th at UNC-Asheville Campus; www.organicgrowersschool.org

Western North Carolina Turfgrass Conference
- March 17th in Asheville, NC; More info coming soon!
Farmers in Western North Carolina will have the opportunity to apply for grant funds through NC Cooperative Extension for the next two years, to support their efforts in evaluating alternative farm income opportunities. In 2010, WNC AgOptions will award grants valued at $3,000, $6,000 or $9,000 through a competitive application and review process. In order to be eligible for the $9,000 grant, you must have a project budget that totals $27,000. Awards will total $225,000 each year within 17 western North Carolina counties and the Cherokee Reservation. The ultimate impact is preservation of the family farm. Award recipients are encouraged to explore crop diversification, ways to replace lost tobacco income and marketing & production techniques that demonstrate economic sustainability.

The grant will be provided by the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, which will partner with Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) and the WNC Agricultural Options program to accept applications and monitor the recipients’ projects. Through this partnership, WNC AgOptions, a program established in 2004 and managed by N. C. Cooperative Extension Centers in the West District, will continue assisting mountain farmers transitioning from tobacco and other crops through 2011.

Examples of past WNC AgOptions projects include:
- Transition from tobacco production to ornamentals, berries, trout farms or agri-tourism;
- Improvements of existing operations, including horse boarding, mum production and choose-and-cut Christmas trees;
- Creative markets for livestock, including goats for invasive plants removal, grass-finished beef and naturally grown pork;
- Beekeeping, including integrated pest management and queen-rearing;
- Native plants nursery start-ups; Season extension for vegetables.

Interested farmers and representatives of agricultural cooperatives or associations may obtain applications from their local N.C. Cooperative Extension Center or at www.wncagoptions.org. Previous grant recipients may apply again. There is an application on the website for previous recipients. Please make sure you fill out the correct application! They are encouraged to contact their local agricultural extension agent by November 23 to discuss and research their project. Applications must be postmarked by January 8. Award recipients will be announced in February.
North Carolina Announces Energy Grants & Loans

A series of meetings scheduled for October and November are designed to help North Carolina’s farmers go green by providing $1 million dollars to help them save energy, while increasing farm profits.

The North Carolina Farm Energy Efficiency Project (FEEP) originated from a grant awarded to North Carolina Farm Bureau by the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission. The project’s goal is to provide educational and technical support for farmers regarding agricultural energy use and efficiency. Farmers may also apply for low cost energy audits that will evaluate ways to save farm energy costs.

“As farmers continue to face increasing costs, the data from energy audits and implementing energy saving plans can result in substantial, long-term savings,” said Paul Sherman, air & energy programs director with North Carolina Farm Bureau.

The USDA’s Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) can provide grants and loans on projects that meet the criteria to save energy or implement new energy programs. FEEP will also provide matching funds that will improve a farmer’s ability to obtain funds from REAP. The funds will provide technical support needed to analyze proposals, perform energy audits, and prepare competitive applications for REAP loans and grants.

FEEP personnel will offer six informational meetings about the project. USDA Rural Development personnel will also be at the meetings to further explain how farmers can benefit from the REAP grant and loan program. By the end of 2010, the project will have facilitated 200 on-farm energy audits and implemented at least 60 energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Visit the FEEP Web site at www.ncfarmenergy.org for more info.

Farmers are welcome to attend an educational session Thursday, November 19th, at 7 p.m. at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center located at 455 Research Drive Mills River, N.C. 28759.

2010 Environmental Quality Incentives Program Signup is Underway

The USDA-National Resource Conservation Service is taking applications for the 2010 EQIP Program now! Any farm landowner with problems such as erosion issues on cropland, pastureland or woodland can apply. Issues on horticultural land are also eligible. Organic producers can apply through special provisions of the EQIP Program.

EQIP provides payment of up to 75% of incurred costs and income foregone of certain conservation practices and activities.

The steps involved include having a farm number with the Farms Service Agency, and applying at the local NRCS Office. Both of these are upstairs from the Extension Office. NRCS is taking applications through the end of the 2009 calendar year.
Grants and Monies

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.

- **WNC Agricultural Options Intent to Apply Deadline - November 23rd. Information online at** [www.wncagoptions.org](http://www.wncagoptions.org)
- Southern SARE Producer Grant Program - Deadline November 15th, 2009
- Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grant - Deadline November 15th, 2009
- OFRF Organic Research and Education Project Grant - Deadline November 16th, 2009
- USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program - Deadline November 19th, 2009
- USDA Value-Added Producer Grant - Deadline November 30th, 2009
- 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
- Appalachian Grown Matching Funds - Ongoing through June 2010
- FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan Program - Ongoing
- USDA Small Farm Funding Resources - 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.

"Much appreciation to Erin Bonito for her assistance in comprising the Small Farms Initiative Newsletter"
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