January 10, 2008

AGRICULTURAL UPDATE

Dear Friend,

Following are some informational topics and an overview of various activities that will be coordinated by the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service during the next few months. If you desire additional information about any of these topics, please contact the appropriate agent by calling 671-3276. Individuals with disabilities and/or special needs desiring accommodations to participate in any of these programs should call 671-3276 by the designated deadline or one week prior to the meeting date so proper arrangements can be made.

Sincerely,

Everett Davis
County Extension Director

ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT MOTOR CARRIER LAWS BUT DID NOT WANT TO ASK A WEIGHT MAN

Thursday, January 17, 6 p.m.
Sampson County Agri-Exposition Center, 414 Warsaw Road, Clinton

The Motor Carrier Enforcement Section of the N.C. Highway Patrol will provide a special meeting for farmers and truckers who specialize in transporting agricultural products. The major topics to be discussed are the Federal Motor Carrier Rules and Regulations and North Carolina’s size and weight laws. Additional subjects related to both local and interstate trucking will be presented. Ample time will be allowed for questions and answers. For more information, call Ray Jordan at 910-592-6451.

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, 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 cooperating.
CARBON CREDITS MEETING
Monday, January 21, 6 p.m.
Farm Bureau Office, 302 Bailey Road, Lumberton

North Carolina Farm Bureau will host a meeting to discuss the role of agriculture in carbon credit trading. The presentation will highlight background information regarding greenhouse gases and global warming as well as the driving factors in carbon credit markets. For more information, contact Paul Sherman at 919-782-1705.

CORN PRODUCTION MEETING
Tuesday, January 22, 10 a.m. – 12 noon
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, Lumberton

Dr. Ron Heiniger, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Specialist for corn, will be the speaker. Dr. Heiniger will discuss his latest research on starter fertilization and nitrogen rates. Lunch will be provided, so please call one of the Extension Centers by Tuesday, January 15, to register: Robeson – 671-3276, Scotland – 277-2422, Hoke – 875-3461. Pesticide recertification credits will be available for category X for private applicators. Contact Everett Davis for more information.

UPCOMING FORESTRY MEETINGS
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, Lumberton

Whether you realize it or not, trees are one of the major crops in Robeson County. Local landowners usually harvest more than $20 million worth of forest products annually. Unfortunately, very few forests in the county are managed properly causing landowners to lose out on millions of dollars of income each year.

Many landowners want to know how they can increase the income from their farms. If the farm is greater than 20 acres in size, the answer is usually to do a better job of managing the timber. Of course, it takes 20 or more years to harvest a crop from trees, but it is wise to plan ahead. If you had started 20 years ago managing the timber on your farms, just think how much extra money you would have today.

To help landowners learn more about forest management, the following meetings will be provided this winter at the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

- Forestry Issues for Minority Landowners Tuesday, January 22, 7 p.m.
- Forestry Management Makes Cent$ Monday, February 11, 7 p.m.

Watch for upcoming mailings and news releases for complete agendas and more information. Contact Everett Davis for more information.

CORN AND SOYBEAN MARKETING MEETING
Thursday, January 24, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, Lumberton

Nick Lassiter, marketing specialist with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, will provide a seminar on Marketing Strategies for Corn and Soybeans. There is no charge for this seminar, so all corn and soybean producers are encouraged to attend. Lunch is on your own. For more information, please call Mr. Lassiter at 919-715-0115.
POTENTIAL FOR AGRITOURISM
IN ROBESON COUNTY IS TREMENDOUS

Have you ever paid any attention to travelers on vacation or to people attending tourism events? What about yourself? It almost seems as if cost is not an object. If the experience is something that the traveler really wants, they will pay whatever price is charged (within reason).

We sit at the crossroad of two major interstate highways. Over 70,000 travelers pass through our counties every day. Many of them are on vacation, looking for an experience they can enjoy. Why can’t we offer them one? If we do, they will gladly pay.

The fastest growing segment of tourism is cultural tourism. We also sit at the crossroads of culture -- agriculture, family farm culture, rural America culture, Native American culture, African American culture, civil war culture, small town culture, and many other types of culture.

I will be attending a one-day Agritourism Conference at Camp Caroway in Asheboro on Friday, February 1. It features morning workshops on several very good topics and afternoon tours of successful agritourism operations. I have plenty of room in the van if you would like to go with me. If so, let me know so I can share registration information.

I am currently working with a group to develop the Robeson Tourism Development Association. We meet at noon the first Wednesday of each month. I invite you to join us. Also, if you have been thinking about an agritourism project to generate more income on your farm, please contact me (Everett Davis) at 671-3276.

ANNUAL AWARDS AND RECOGNITION BANQUET
Thursday, February 7, 6:30 p.m.
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, Lumberton

This banquet, sponsored by the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, the Robeson County Crop Promotion Association, Cape Fear Farm Credit, and many other local agribusinesses, will feature a night of special awards. It is a time when we recognize those who have excelled in various areas of agriculture, those who have made significant contributions to promote and support agriculture in Robeson County, and our yield contest winners for the past year. You will not want to miss the special after-dinner speaker who will be with us. Please call 671-3276 by Friday, February 1, to reserve your seat and meal. Contact Everett Davis for more information.

SOYBEAN PRODUCTION MEETING
Wednesday, February 13, 10 a.m. – 12 noon
Scotland County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service
231 East Cronly Street, Laurinburg

Dr. Jim Dunphy, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Specialist for soybeans, and Dr. Alan York, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Specialist for weed science, will be the featured speakers. Included in their talks will be soybean rust, drought-tolerant varieties, public varieties, herbicide resistance, and other production practices. Lunch will be provided, so please call one of the Extension Centers by Wednesday, February 6, to register: Robeson – 671-3276, Scotland – 277-2422, Hoke – 875-3461. Pesticide recertification credits will be available for category X for private applicators. Contact Everett Davis for more information.
TRI-COUNTY COTTON MEETING
Tuesday, February 26, 6:30 p.m.
Hoke-Robeson Gin, 7480 Old Maxton Road, Red Springs

This is your best chance to get the latest cotton production and marketing information before the production year starts. Private and commercial pesticide recertification credits will be available, along with credits for Commercial Crop Advisors. A meal will be provided, so please call Keith Walters, county Extension director in Hoke County, at 910-875-3461 by Tuesday, February 19, to register so proper arrangements can be made.

KNOW YOUR PRODUCTION COSTS

Management is a process in which information is the input and decisions are the output. Budgets provide information for farm management decisions. An enterprise budget is an estimate of projected income and expenses associated with the production of a commodity. Once you know your production costs, then you can decide what prices are needed to make a profit.

Most agricultural operations are made up of a combination of several crops and/or livestock. Enterprise budgets break the operation down into segments in order to tell which commodity is contributing to profitability and which commodity is losing money. An enterprise is a distinct part of the farm business that can be analyzed separately and is usually based on some production unit such as an acre of corn or one breeding cow.

Enterprise budgets can be either historical or projected. Historical enterprise budgets are the same as income statements by enterprise and are created using actual income and expense information. Projected enterprise budgets attempt to estimate income and expenses in the future.

A business-minded producer will evaluate each commodity within his operation to determine where he is making money and where he is not. Budgets can help identify this as well as areas where he could cut costs and become more efficient, breakeven prices for marketing, and the operations level of risk exposure within his or her enterprises.

For more information on enterprise budgeting, please contact Nelson Brownlee, area farm management Extension agent, at 671-3276.

FARMERS TAX GUIDES

Farmers can visit the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, Lumberton, to pick up a free copy of the 2007 IRS Farmers Tax Guide. There have been quite a few changes in the tax laws this year, and some of them affect farmers. Whether you do your own federal tax returns or you just check behind your tax preparer to make sure they do it right, you need to be aware of how the tax laws affect you. Make sure you stop by the Extension Center and pick up your free copy. Contact Nelson Brownlee for more information.

HOBBY BEEKEEPING CAN LEAD TO SUPPLEMENTAL INCOME

Robeson County is home to many beekeepers. Many of these beekeepers started keeping bees as a hobby in the hopes of getting their bees to produce honey or to use for their own pollination purposes. Soon, many of these
beekeepers realized that their hobby could actually turn into a profitable enterprise. Bees are crucial players in the fruit and vegetable industry as they act as pollinators for fruit and vegetable crops. Through educational programs, many commercial fruit and vegetable farmers in Robeson County have to come to recognize how important bees are to having a high-yielding crop and have, therefore, reached out to hobby beekeepers in order to rent hives for their farms. This means that the beekeepers not only get the pleasure of working with their bees but they also earn a small profit while their bees do all the work. The more colonies and hives the beekeeper rents, the higher potential for supplemental income he or she has.

For those who might be interested in finding out more about keeping bees as a hobby, the Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association meets on the third Tuesday of every month at the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center at 6 p.m. and welcomes anyone who might be interested in learning more about beekeeping. For more information about beekeeping, please contact Howard Wallace, commercial horticulture Extension agent, at 671-3276.

5 TIPS FOR A BETTER VEGETABLE CROP IN 2008

Even though the winter of 2007/2008 is in full swing, there are several inexpensive things that you can be doing now, either as a commercial vegetable grower or as a homeowner with a hobby vegetable garden, that can help you save money and increase yields with your vegetable production in 2008.

1. **Soil sampling** - Many times, poor yields and poor plant growth can be traced back to improperly managed soils. Soil sampling will allow you to receive a report that shows exactly what fertilizer and lime requirements your soil will need in order to effectively grow your crop for the upcoming season. Several common vegetable diseases, such as blossom-end rot of tomatoes, are related to poor soil fertility and can be managed by proper fertilization. Soil sample analysis is a free service for North Carolina clients, and soil sampling boxes and information forms can be picked up at the Extension Center. You can mail your soil samples to the lab in Raleigh or bring them to the Extension Center for an agent to take them to the lab. However, the agents do not go to Raleigh on a regular basis, so it may be several weeks before they are taken. With sample turnaround times at 5-6 weeks and with the soil sampling process being entirely free of charge, there is no reason why you should pass up an opportunity to sample your fields or gardens this year.

2. **Control winter weeds** - Winter weeds growing along tree lines, in ditches, and along walkways near your fields or garden are prime areas for insects to overwinter. Keeping weeds controlled during the cold winter months, either by cutting them back or using a herbicide, will limit the amount of insect pressure you will have in your vegetable fields or garden at the beginning of the year.

3. **Field rotation** - If you have been planting your crops or garden in the same spot for many years, your chances of having to deal with soilborne diseases in the future increases every year. You may have even dealt with a soilborne disease problem in the past already. Rotating your crops or garden into a new field or garden spot will help decrease the disease pressures you could have for the upcoming year.

4. **Purchase quality seed** - Many times, vegetable gardens and even commercial vegetable plantings will not germinate properly after seeding. This leads to sparse plantings and decreased or poor yields. Many environmental factors can cause this, but the main culprit is usually poor-quality seed. Be thinking now of which crops and varieties you want to plant for the upcoming year and buy them from reputable seed catalogs and stores. Also, keep in mind that improperly stored seed from previous years usually will not germinate well.

5. **Prepare for drought** - Now is the time to be proactive in case you have to deal with drought conditions again in 2008. For vegetable gardens, planning their location in relation to water supplies is key.
Soaker hoses are fairly inexpensive and can give you plenty of water in the garden over a prolonged period. Sprinklers can be used as well, but be mindful that overhead irrigation systems, like sprinklers, help spread disease in the garden. For commercial vegetable growers, planting on black plastic mulch helps to maintain moisture around the root zone and can help limit the amount of watering needed. A plastic layer is available to use through our office if interested.

For more information on these tips, or anything else related to vegetable production, please contact Howard Wallace at 671-3276.

2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

The Census of Agriculture is taken every five years. It is a complete count of the nation’s farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It provides uniform and comprehensive data for every county in the nation. If you are a farmer, you should have recently received census information in the mail. WE URGE YOU TO COMPLETE THE FORMS AND RETURN THEM BY FEBRUARY 4, 2008. If you need help, contact one of the Extension agents on our staff.

Why complete the forms?

- The Census provides information used by many companies and agencies to provide services to farmers and rural communities.
- Census data is used to make decisions about things directly affecting farmers and ranchers.
- By responding, producers help themselves, their communities, and all of U.S. agriculture.
- The Census is the responsibility of every farmer and rancher, regardless how small or how large.
- The law requires your participation in the Census.
- The Census is your voice, your future, and your responsibility.

For more information, or for on-line forms, go to www.agcensus.usda.gov

PLANT DISEASE AND INSECT CLINIC

Suspicious plant diseases and insects show up everywhere. They are in our yards, our gardens, our fields, and even sometimes in our homes. While some plant diseases and insects are easy to identify, others can be very similar and require different measures of control. When samples submitted to our office cannot be identified by our experienced staff, they are sent to the North Carolina State University Plant Disease and Insect Clinic. Experienced pathologists and entomologists examine the samples, identify the disease or insect, and recommend best management practices for their control. Samples from North Carolina submitted from our office cost only $10 and could mean the difference between an insect-infested front yard or a disease-ravaged field. If you have any questions about a suspicious plant or an unusual insect, contact our office and speak to one of our agents for more information.

CARING FOR HOLIDAY PLANTS AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

There are many plants associated with the holidays that are purchased as gifts or decorations for the home. These plants make wonderful additions to our homes during the holiday season, but what do we do with them after the holidays? Several of these plants can be kept to bloom another year while others are best enjoyed while flowering and discarded afterward. Here are a few tips for keeping three kinds of holiday plants looking their best after the holidays.
Poinsettias are definitely a holiday favorite for their beautiful display of holiday colors. When cared for properly, poinsettias retain their colorful bracts for two to three months. Keep plants away from cold temperatures and from drafty locations, such as windows, air registers, and doors. Keep temperatures between 65°F and 70°F. Cold temperatures and drafts will shorten the life of the “flowers.” Bright, infrequent light (but not direct light) and frequent watering are essential. Do not allow the poinsettia to wilt. Water the plant only when the soil surface becomes dry to the touch. If your poinsettia came with decorative foil around the pot, remove the foil or punch holes in the bottom of the foil to allow excess water to drain out. Poinsettias do not tolerate poor drainage. Poinsettias can be re-flowered, but this can be a rather demanding process and does not always work.

A popular bulb given as a gift is the amaryllis. These bulbs typically are forced to bloom around the holiday season and can easily be planted to rebloom every year. Amaryllis bulbs will bloom within six to eight weeks of planting. After the flower fades, cut the stem off one to two inches above the bulb. Do not cut the leaves. These will be used to manufacture food that will be stored in the bulb. This food reserve is needed in order for the bulb to bloom the next season. Place the plant in a sunny window and water when the soil surface becomes dry. Fertilize every two to four weeks with a houseplant fertilizer. Amaryllis prefers bright light to full sun, with a night temperature above 60°F. As soon as danger of frost has passed, set the plants in the garden in a semi-shaded location. In the fall, you can leave the bulbs in the ground or bring the plants back indoors to bloom again. Stop watering to allow old growth to die back, and store them in a cool, dark place to rest. The bulbs will be ready to force again around November 1. Place them in a warm, well-lighted room and water moderately to begin new growth.

Another popular holiday plant is the holiday cactus. These plants include the Christmas cactus, Thanksgiving cactus, and many others. These plants prefer a relatively cool night temperature between 55°F and 60°F. Night temperatures above 70°F inhibit flowering and cause bud drop. Place the plants in a well-lighted location. Water thoroughly, but allow the soil surface to become moderately dry between waterings. Holiday cacti bloom best when somewhat pot-bound. Repotting is necessary only about once every three years. Full sunlight is beneficial in midwinter, but bright sunlight during summer months can result in pale to yellowish foliage. Holiday cacti require less water from October to March than when new growth is active (April to September). Cacti will develop flower buds in the fall if the night temperatures drop to 55°F. Reduce watering and withhold fertilizer during flower bud development and flowering stages.

Plants are great for all seasons. Winter is a great time to nurture your indoor plants and make sure they are healthy. Don’t just throw those holiday plants away. Keep them healthy, and they’ll be beautiful throughout the year. Contact Everett Davis for more information.

**SOIL SAMPLING**

Now is the time to be soil sampling! Anytime is a good time to take soil samples. Begin with evaluating how each field performs in your farming operation. This will allow for the development of an economically and sound fertilization program. The first step in a sound fertilization program is soil testing. If a better job of soil sampling is done and recommendations are followed, most producers would see an increase in profits. Profits would increase from increased yields and better use of dollars spent for fertilizer and lime. In some situations, however, a yearly soil test is a good idea to see if you are maintaining the best production pH possible. Also, needed lime can be applied now and save valuable time this spring for other important management and production practices.
For the next couple of months, several positions with the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service will be vacant. We ask for your patience and understanding as these positions are being filled. Please continue to rely on us for information and assistance since Extension agents in the adjoining counties and Extension specialists in Raleigh and Greensboro have agreed to assist you as needed. If you know of qualified individuals who might be interested in one of these positions, please have them contact this office.

Crops Agent – Congratulations to Kent Wooten who transferred to Sampson County on January 1 to take over responsibilities as County Extension Director. This position is responsible for tobacco, cotton, corn, soybeans, small grains, and pesticide education and recertification related to agricultural production. It will be advertised in January.

Consumer Horticulture Agent – Melissa Hoggard left Extension in November to pursue another agricultural related career here in Robeson County. This position is responsible for consumer horticulture, which includes lawns, ornamentals, hobby gardens, and ornamental trees; landscape design and maintenance; turf; and pesticide education and recertification related to turf, horticulture, and ornamentals. It will be advertised in January.

Agricultural Technician - This is the position previously held by Martin Brewington. Responsibilities include small, part-time, and limited-resource farmers; beekeeping; and assisting Extension agents as needed. It will be advertised in January.

Family and Consumer Science Agent – Ms. Susan Noble will retire at the end of January with 33 years of service to Cooperative Extension. This position is responsible for foods and nutrition, food safety, housing, and home furnishings. It will be advertised in March.

Robeson County is filled with livestock owners. Many producers not only grow crops but they raise cattle, sheep, hogs, chickens, turkeys, and even some exotic species such as buffalo and ostriches. The Robeson County Livestock Association works with the Extension Center to bring informative guests and speakers to Robeson County in an effort to promote growth in the county’s livestock industry. Last year, speakers discussed the ethanol plant coming to the county, drought survival tips, and the use of alternative feeds. The group is looking forward to expanding its members in 2008 and has planned some very informative meetings and fun get-togethers. Meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of every month except June, July, and August. For more information about the Robeson County Livestock Association, please contact Michelle Shooter, livestock Extension agent, at 671-3276.
The following meetings have been scheduled to assist farmers in obtaining the credits they will need to maintain their private applicators pesticide certification card. They will need two hours of the traditional recertification credits (category V) and two hours of the extra recertification credits (category X). All meetings will fulfill categories V and X. Don't miss out on these meetings, so your card will not expire. If it does expire, you will have to take a written exam to get a new one.

**Wednesday, January 23**
1 - 3 p.m.  
V -- Traditional Private Applicators Recertification Training

3 - 5 p.m.  
X -- Extra Private Applicators Recertification Training

**Wednesday, February 27**
1 - 3 p.m.  
V -- Traditional Private Applicators Recertification Training

3 - 5 p.m.  
X -- Extra Private Applicators Recertification Training

**Tuesday, March 11**
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.  
V -- Traditional Private Applicators Recertification Training

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
X -- Extra Private Applicators Recertification Training

**Thursday, May 22**
5 - 7 p.m.  
V -- Traditional Private Applicators Recertification Training

7 - 9 p.m.  
X -- Extra Private Applicators Recertification Training

**Thursday, September 11**
5 - 7 p.m.  
V -- Traditional Private Applicators Recertification Training

7 - 9 p.m.  
X -- Extra Private Applicators Recertification Training

**Tuesday, October 7**
1 p.m.  
EXAM -- Tests will be given for those whose card expired and for first-time cardholders (commercial and private). You must register with NCDA at 919-733-3556, so they will be properly prepared. Call us if you need study materials.

If you need information on pesticide schools, other test dates, or need to order books to study, call our office, and we will send you the appropriate information. Call a few days prior to the meeting to register. Contact Everett Davis for more information.
### 2008 Upcoming Events

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Check out the endless amount of information you can find on our web site at: [http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu](http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu).
DO YOU WANT INFORMATION FAST?

Do you have a computer? Do you have access to the Internet? Do you use E-mail? If not, you are missing out on one of the best ways possible to get any kind of information you need whenever you need it. As you can imagine, more and more people are using computers. Some are using them for record keeping and other special tasks. But the vast majority is using them for communications and information.

The Extension staff maintains web pages with a wealth of information with just about any topic you can imagine. We urge you to visit http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu. Bookmark this web address, so you can get to it quickly.

In addition, we maintain quite a few E-mail groups that receive regular information from us over their computers. This is especially important when we can quickly send out urgent updates about things such as diseases, disasters, financial assistance opportunities, and meetings. You might have to wait several days to get this same information in the mail, or you might not get it at all. Provide your E-mail address to your favorite agent(s). They will not share it with anyone else without your permission.

MAILING LISTS UPDATE FORMS

Since we are a government agency, we are required by law to update our mailing lists each year. This ensures that postage money is not used for mailings that are not wanted as well as ensures that citizens receive services they desire. PLEASE FILL OUT AND RETURN THE ENCLOSED FORM BY MARCH 1 INDICATING WHICH TYPE OF MAILINGS YOU WISH TO RECEIVE. If you have filled out one of these forms within the last two months, you do not need to fill out another one. Contact Everett Davis for more information.

-Please Cut and Return-

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
ROBESON COUNTY CENTER OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
P. O. BOX 2280, LUMBERTON, NC 28359-2280; FAX 910-671-6278

We maintain a number of mailing lists, so we can provide up-to-date information to the public. If you would like to receive this information from us, please check the following mailing list(s) you wish to subscribe to and return this form to the address above. Due to the Freedom of Information Act, our mailing lists are public information.

____ Corn
____ Soybeans
____ Cotton
____ Tobacco
____ Small Grains
____ Management and Marketing
____ Forestry/Timber

Landscaping
____ Commercial
____ Home

Vegetables
____ Commercial
____ Home

Fruit
____ Commercial
____ Home

____ Poultry
____ Goats
____ Swine
____ Beef Cattle
____ Horses

PLEASE PRINT

Name ____________________________ Date ____________________________

Company ____________________________ Home Phone Number ____________________________

Address ____________________________ Work Phone Number ____________________________

City ____________________________ FAX Number ____________________________

State _____________ Zip _____________

E-Mail Address ____________________________ Signature ____________________________

OPTIONAL: Male _____________ Female _____________ Race _____________ Age _____________

You may mail this form to P. O. Box 2280, Lumberton, NC 28359, or bring it with you when you visit our office.