SMALL FARMS NEWS BREAK

IN THIS ISSUE

• 2008 North Carolina Small Farms Week
• What Makes A Small Farm Successful?
• Farmers Tax Guides
• Using Computers to Improve Farm Management Decisions
• Young Farmers Recruitment Program
• Upcoming Events

2008 SMALL FARMS WEEK

“It’s a Growing Business – Farm to Fork” is the theme for the 22nd Annual Small Farms Week, scheduled for March 30 - April 5. Activities will be held at various sites across the state.

There are approximately 41,000 small-scale farmers statewide, and in honor of their accomplishments, pioneering work, and technological advancements, the Cooperative Extension Program at North Carolina A&T State University is coordinating various programs and demonstrations to showcase what they do. Extension programs that benefit small-scale agriculture will also be recognized during the period.
In order to highlight Small Farms Week, the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service will host a Spring Alternative Enterprise Tour on April 3. The tour will depart from the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, in Lumberton at 1 p.m. and is scheduled to return around 6 p.m. This informative and educational tour will visit three farm operations that highlight successful small farmers. Growers will have an opportunity to visit a number of alternative systems such as utilizing plastic and drip irrigation, small-scale organic livestock, beekeeping, and intensive vegetable production. Refreshments will be provided.

All interested persons are encouraged to register by calling the Extension Service at 671-3276 by Tuesday, April 1, so that transportation can be arranged for you.

Other activities during the week include: Animal Agriculture Demonstrations at the NC A&T State University Farm; educational forums on marketing livestock locally, high tunnel production, and selling farm products from rural communities to urban markets; and the Small Farmer Recognition Luncheon honoring the 2008 North Carolina Small Farmer of the Year. Each of these activities will be held on campus in Greensboro.

**What Makes a Small Farm Successful?**

Three practices that make a small farm successful are:

1. Effective Cost Management
2. Active Engagement in Marketing
3. Clear Financial and Business Management

Cost management helps a farmer determine his costs of production and break-even point for each of his/her enterprises with the use of budgets, planning, financial records, and evaluation. Developing a marketing plan helps producers analyze their market strategy, so they can improve their position in the market. Strategic planning is analyzing the farm business and the environment in which it operates in order to create a broad plan for the future. It also permits farm families to make more profits, in the long run, by defining what is more important for the farm operation, allocating resources more efficiently, and anticipating problems and taking steps to eliminate them.

**Farmers Tax Guides**

Farmers can visit the Cooperative Extension Service in 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 prepare your own federal tax returns or you 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.
Using Computers to Improve Farm Management Decisions

Farming has never been more dynamic and competitive than it is today. Each decision a farm manager makes, or fails to make, can have a significant impact on the operation. In this fast-paced, high-risk climate, computers can play an important part in helping farm managers make crucial decisions about their farm. In the past, many farm managers have been content to keep only the data necessary for income tax preparation, but in today’s world, that approach is no longer sufficient. At a minimum, the farm manager must maintain production data as well as information on assets, liabilities, and all credit transactions.

Many farm families own or have access to computers. Numerous computer programs are available to help farm managers make a wide range of management decisions. They can help gather important data, provide a framework for analyzing options, and perform calculations thoroughly and accurately at a fraction of the time it would take to do the same thing with pencil and paper.

Unfortunately, no computer can decide which system is best for a particular farm operation. That choice requires careful matching of the technology to the farm manager’s objectives. Before choosing a computer, talk with agricultural leaders, computer dealers, financial consultants, and farmers who are already using a computer system. Also, the Extension Service can provide information about which software is available and how it can be applied.

With new technology, the value of computerized farm management tools depends on how conscientiously and wisely they are used. For a computer system to reach its potential, the farm manager must be willing to record data on a regular basis and use the resulting information and analyses in making crucial farm decisions.
**YOUNG FARMERS RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

If you are young, interested in owning your own business, energetic, and love to work outdoors, you may be interested in the North Carolina A&T Young Farmers Recruitment Program. For more information, please contact me at the Extension Center at 671-3276.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Making the Web Work for Your Farm Business Workshop – Late April or Early May** – Farmers will have an opportunity to create free web pages by attending a Web Page Design Workshop at Robeson Community College in Lumberton. With the creation of a web page, farmers will be able to compete in today’s global economy using the World Wide Web. Look for more details.

**Southeastern North Carolina Alternative Enterprise Tour – Late May or Early June** – Small and part-time farmers will have the opportunity to visit a number of alternative systems such as intensive fruit and vegetable production with plasticulture, a pastured pork operation, and greenhouse vegetables. Look for more details.

**Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association Monthly Meetings** – Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. for the meal or 7 p.m. for the educational program at the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, Highway 72 West, Lumberton. The next scheduled meeting is March 18.

Individuals with disabilities and/or special needs desiring accommodations to participate in these activities should contact me at the Cooperative Extension Service by calling 910-671-3276 at least 5 days prior to an event. Please do not hesitate to call the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at 671-3276 if you have any questions about any topics covered in this newsletter.

Sincerely,

*Nelson Brownlee*

Nelson Brownlee  
Extension Area Agent  
Agriculture - Farm Management

NB/dh