June 23, 2006

This is the third in a series of updates to assist small and part-time farm families in Robeson County. This will be a continuing effort through the Robeson County Small Farms Program. Please do not hesitate to call the Robeson County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at 671-3276 if you need any assistance.

Sincerely,

Martin L. Brewington
Extension Technician
Agriculture

Nelson Brownlee
Extension Area Agent
Agriculture - Farm Management

HONEYBEES

Beekeeping can be a hobby or a business. Honeybees are important to Robeson and surrounding counties. Honeybees are also important throughout America and, in fact, throughout the world. Honeybees are one of the most fascinating insects in the world. They have a society of their own and, in many respects, each colony is like a small city. Important crops pollinated by honeybees in North Carolina and their values are:

- Cucumbers ($36.2 million)
- Apples ($18.3 million)
- Blueberries ($18.1 million)
- Watermelons ($9.6 million)
- Squash ($9.2 million)

Total economic value of honey and hive products in the United States is $4 billion per year -- $10 million in North Carolina. Studies indicate that about 90 crops in the United States depend on bees for pollination. Bees will travel up to 55,000 miles to collect pollen and nectar. They will visit over 2.6 million flowers to produce one pound of honey. One out of every three mouthfuls of food we eat comes from bee-pollinated plants. A Cornell University study says pollinated agricultural crops are valued at more than $14.6 billion per year to our economy.
Folks interested in beekeeping as a hobby or small business can obtain more information by attending the Area Beekeepers Meetings that are held every third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center located at 455 Caton Road (Highway 72 West) in Lumberton. For more information about beekeeping, contact Martin Brewington, agricultural technician and local beekeeping coordinator, at 671-3276, or you can E-mail him at Martin_Brewington@ncsu.edu.

**USING PLASTICULTURE**

Today's small vegetable growers are looking for new ways and ideas to achieve higher-quality produce, superior yields, and early markets. The plasticulture system has helped to increase the number of producers reaching these goals. Growers using the plasticulture system have doubled and tripled yields and harvested their crops two to three weeks earlier than is possible with traditional growing practices. Its benefits, however, can be many. Before you invest in plasticulture, you should carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of plastic versus traditional practices. You have to be open-minded to see these events unfold, but don't expect that one system or one way of doing things is going to work for every farm.

Once you realize that you want to make changes in your farming operation, a conscious decision-making process can help those changes be good ones that improve profitability, protect family stability, diminish risk, and strengthen your farm's overall sustainability, both for the short and long term. There are always new technologies, new seed varieties, new chemicals, and change in market. First, find some farmers who have already done what you are considering, then visit their farm and talk to them and look at what they've done to be profitable.

**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WEB SITE HAS NEW FEATURES**

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has a new web site design to provide timely, local news and information on agriculture, food, health and nutrition, and other topics. The web site is located at:

[http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu/](http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu/)

From the site, visitors can access hundreds of educational publications developed by local Extension agents and by Extension specialists at North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University. They can also subscribe to syndicated news feeds that provide clients with immediate access to new information as it is published by Cooperative Extension. The new site includes a bar at the top, which directs visitors to contact information and staff listings as well as links to county events, news, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Visitors to the web site will also find lists of Extension events available in Robeson County and nearby counties. Such events include many free workshops and educational programs related to home, garden, and youth programs.

To receive county Extension news as it is posted to the web site, clients and local news organization can subscribe to syndicated news feeds by clicking on the “RSS” button at the bottom of the page. For information on how to subscribe to these feeds, visit the web site at:

[http://www.ncsu.edu/project/calscommblogs/archives/2005/06/what_is_rss.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/project/calscommblogs/archives/2005/06/what_is_rss.html)
**Estate Planning**

A farm manager should ask the following three questions:

1. Have I made any plans for someone to inherit my estate when I retire from the farm business or in the event of my death?
2. Who will manage the farm business when I retire or die?
3. What operations will continue with my farm business when I can no longer manage it?

When a manager answers these questions, he or she is doing what is called Estate Planning. Estate Planning deals with arranging for the transfer of your family’s wealth and property from one generation to the next. It is how you plan to divide up your property and wealth between your surviving spouse and heirs. Estate Planning is important, because it gives the manager the responsibility of deciding how they want their estate divided. If there is no Estate Plan in place, the property may not be divided the way the manager wants it.

A will is a legally enforceable declaration of how the manager wants the property to be distributed at death. It is recommended that an attorney be consulted to draft a will suited for an individual situation.

Estate Planning involves decisions requiring professional skill and judgment. If you need help in drawing up your Estate Plan, please contact a local lawyer, accountant, bank, or insurance officer.

**Upcoming Events**

**North Carolina A&T Small Farm Field Day** -- Thursday, July 6, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, at A&T Research Farm, Greensboro: Farmers will have the opportunity to view the latest research and innovative projects in animal husbandry and horticultural science. For more information, please call 671-3276.

**Regional Web Page Design Workshop** -- Late Summer or Early Fall at Bladen Community College: Farmers will get the opportunity to create their own web page to provide more marketing opportunities for their products.

Individuals with disabilities and/or special needs interested in these meetings should call so proper arrangements can be made.

/newsletters

If you would like to receive newsletters from us periodically, give us a call at 671-3276, and we'll add you to our mailing lists.