

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
WEEKLY UPDATE
Week Ending 4/4/08

1. Items for Approval – None this week.
2. Items for Discussion – None this week.
3. Summary of County Visits by Dr. Jon Ort

DATE	COUNTY VISITED	PURPOSE
3/31/08 – 4/3/08	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Association of Southern Region Extension Directors Meeting

4. Items for Information

- ✚ An auto mechanic inherited his parent’s farm and wanted to use the farm to generate supplemental income, but still work as an auto mechanic. He turned to our Extension Agent in Guilford County for educational assistance. Our agent worked with this client to establish an ornamental tree farm/nursery. After an initial investment of \$11,250 five years ago, his profit margin is \$101,250.
- ✚ Improper food handling in food and restaurant establishments account for a high percentage of the reported 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses each year in the United States. NC Cooperative Extension, Cleveland County Center, in collaboration with the Cleveland County Health Department, provided a 16-hour food safety certification course in January. Sixteen restaurant managers and foodservice employees completed the food safety training with fourteen establishments represented. Ninety-four percent passed the certification examination. The National Restaurant Association (NRA) estimates the average cost of a foodborne illness outbreak to an establishment to be about \$75,000. If 14 establishments prevented one foodborne illness outbreak, food safety education provided an estimated cost savings of \$1,050,000. Through course evaluations, participants reported increased knowledge and skills that will be implemented in their establishments. Food safety certification courses will be offered three times per year in Cleveland County due to the positive impact in preventing foodborne illness.
- ✚ Wilkes County area corn producers need assistance to increase their understanding and proper adoption of new technologies in corn production. Wilkes County ranks second in NC in corn silage production and two farms are heavily involved in contract silage production. North Carolina Cooperative Extension addressed ways to combat insect and disease problems, which are caused by continuous corn production. Surveys and feedback from the seed corn representative show adoption of high rate seed treatment technology has increased to 35% of the county acreage or 2,500 acres. This is reducing pesticide usage and farmer exposure as well as increasing yields. Additionally, more are using Bt traits to combat insects. Adoption of superior hybrids is increasing yields with impacts of \$750,000.
- ✚ In the past, tobacco was the primary means of generating income on small farms in Robeson and Bladen Counties. Due to the elimination of the tobacco program and low prices for traditional row crops, small farmers are now faced with the challenge of finding new sources of income. The Robeson and Bladen County Centers of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and the North Carolina A&T Cooperative Extension Program worked with small farmers to plant acreage in specialty crops, and showed them the advantages of using plastic mulch and drip irrigation. Since 2004, 14 farmers have used this system to generate \$165,000 in additional income. With this new source of income, these farmers have an excellent opportunity to sustain their family farms. Due to the success of this program, we will continue to provide information on plasticulture.

☒ Families continue to have greater need for afterschool care. As the need for care becomes great, so does the need for financial assistance to pay for afterschool. Subsidy dollars through the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R) had not been available since the beginning of the school year. Ashe County 4-H Afterschool personnel worked in partnership with the CCR&R to award eligible families subsidy dollars that will allow them to pay for afterschool care. Twenty-three children were enrolled in the 4-H Afterschool program in January assisted by these subsidy dollars to pay their fee.

5. Routine Items – None this week.