



NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Week Ending 1/23/09

- ◆ In 2008, NC Cooperative Extension in Lenoir County played an important role in working with Sanderson Foods, a large, integrated poultry company interested in locating facilities in Lenoir County. NC Cooperative Extension's County Extension Director and Livestock Agents participated in ground-level meetings with Sanderson company managers to discuss the pros and cons of locating plants in Lenoir County. Extension was also responsible for notifying growers in the area to attend an informational meeting with Sanderson Company. Our organization provided the liaison role between the company and potential growers. **Sanderson Foods announced in April that they would be locating an arm of their business in Lenoir County. This is a multi-million dollar company and will provide jobs for Lenoir County's citizens. This is also significant because many growers who lost poultry contracts in 2002 will be able to revitalize their farms by signing contracts with Sanderson Foods.**
- ◆ In order to reduce the number of Duplin County youth sent to training school, the Duplin County 4-H Outreach program reached 54 youth in 2008. These youth were referred by the court, law enforcement, or parents. **These youth were diverted from training school through participation in the program, saving taxpayers \$3,153,600 in incarceration costs.**
- ◆ Niche pork producers in Duplin and Sampson Counties are facing higher input costs, due to increasing grain and feed prices. In an effort to assist area niche pork producers to receive a premium market price for their products, Area Farm Management and Livestock agents in Duplin and Sampson counties partnered with North Carolina A&T State University Cooperative Extension Associates and Specialist to conduct a workshop to assist small pasture-raised pork producers in the areas of: alternative grains, supplements, grazing on rotational cover crop and economical methods for feeding swine. As a result of participation in the workshop, 15 pasture pork producers have reported an increase in income. **Participating farmers are now able to deliver and market 60 hogs per week to Whole Foods Market, and are receiving \$1.04 per pound with an average per carcass weight of 200 pounds. The combined income earned for all participants was \$648,960.**
- ◆ Many children do not like science because they do not get the chance for a "hands-on" learning experience. Robeson County 4-H offered Embryology to second and third grade classrooms in Robeson County, with 23 teachers implementing the hands-on science curriculum in the classroom. **The classrooms reported back through a written evaluation that the student's science grades increased at a rate of 40 to 100 percent. Of the classrooms that reported youth receiving a D or below before the project, 80% reported the same students increasing their overall grade to a C or better after the Embryology Program.** One teacher even noted that she would use experiential learning to better motivate her students to learn. Robeson County 4-H will continue to offer this program to classrooms in the future.
- ◆ As a means to bolster tourism and draw attention to NC's native grape, NC Cooperative Extension, Duplin County Center led an effort to conduct the third annual NC Muscadine Harvest Festival. As a result, more than 5,500 people attended the day-long event that featured 19 NC wineries, educational seminars on growing and using Muscadines, and musical entertainment for the entire family. **Festival goers accounted for a more than a \$395,000 increase to the local economy.**

- ◆ Pesticide use is an important component of producing agricultural commodities in Lenoir County. Once the pesticides are used, applicators must properly dispose of the containers. Although pesticides are becoming available in larger reusable containers, the number of small containers remains quite large. In addition, applicators are limited to particular disposal methods. As a result, in 2005, the agricultural community embraced the Plastic Pesticide Container Recycling Program under the leadership of NC Cooperative Extension, Lenoir County Center. To date, this program has resulted in the recycling of 22,164 plastic pesticide containers estimated at over 4,435 pounds being recycled. **This represents an annual average recycling increase of over 140% and has saved Lenoir County Taxpayers an estimated \$75,000 in landfill space.**
- ◆ Soybean producers continue to look at ways to improve profits. Research has shown that many growers can significantly lower planting population, select varieties with small seed size (more seed per pound), and fertilize according to NCDA recommendations without reducing yield. NC Cooperative Extension, Greene County Center provided educational information through grower meetings, newsletters, personal visits, and volunteers utilizing this research. As a result, 70% of producers reduced their seeding rate by 10 pounds per acre on 15,000 acres, saving them \$75,000; 10% reduced their seeding rate by 11 pounds by using the smaller seeds per pound on 5,000 acres, saving \$30,000; and 50% of soybean acres were fertilized according to NCDA recommendations on 18,000 acres at a savings of \$180,000. **These three practices saved Greene County producers \$285,000 without reducing yield.** Greene County's average soybean yield was 40 bushels per acre for 2008. There were four producers that entered The Soybean Yield Contest.
- ◆ Hay storage for horse owners and beef cattle producers in Eastern NC is in limited supply. As people move to rural areas to enjoy country living, horse ownership is growing. Hay production and storage are limited in the region, forcing horse and cattle owners to purchase hay from outside the area. One Jones County farmer hoping to meet this demand for hay storage requested NC Cooperative Extension's assistance in writing a grant application to the Rural Advancement Foundation Institute (RAFI-USA). **This farmer requested and received \$8,000 to build a 40' X 75' steel-framed hay storage barn. Extension's grant writing assistance is expected to generate \$1,600 annually in part-time employment for youth in the area, plus an additional \$5,000 per year annual income for the farm.**
- ◆ The demand for local food is growing. Consumer survey data from farmers markets in Eastern NC indicate 91% of consumers eagerly support the production of local food. To meet this demand, small farmers must expend large amounts of money to develop new projects; money that is difficult to find for new farm ventures. **NC Cooperative Extension helped a Lenoir County couple write a grant application to the Rural Advancement Foundation Institute (RAFI-USA) requesting grant money to buy fencing for sheep to provide weed control in an organic muscadine grape vineyard. Extension's grant writing assistance helped this family receive \$8,000 in grant funds to expand their organic weed control program.** After being awarded the grant, the family stated in a letter to NC Cooperative Extension, "We appreciate everything you've done to help us with our farm. We couldn't have done it without you."
- ◆ Beach Vitex is an invasive, non-native plant species that destroys beach ecosystems in New Hanover County. Beach Vitex chokes out native dune plants like sea oats and blanket flower, which stabilize dunes. Over the last two years, Habitat herbicide applied in a specific manner has been found to be nearly 100% effective in controlling this weed. NC Cooperative Extension has conducted eradication seminars in partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, NC Aquarium, and the South Carolina Vitex Taskforce; 78 local landscapers have been trained on correct eradication procedures and 87% of participants indicated they understood and were capable of treating Vitex infested beaches. **This training also allows landscapers to participate in a federally-funded eradication program, saving homeowners thousands and municipalities millions of dollars on dune repair to re-establish beach ecosystems.**

- ◆ Activities are on-going in the effort to promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables, particularly those locally grown. The Food Services Director at a local 4-H Camp approached our Extension Agent in Rockingham County expressing the desire to serve more local foods to campers. She then presented information at the annual Farmers Market meeting about the delayed vendor payment method through the NC State University system and delivery needs, as well as quality and quantity concerns. Farmers were assisted with the process for set up as University vendors. Throughout the season, the Food Services Director used local produce as much as possible. **Total local produce sales to the camp totaled \$2,867, and everyone served enjoyed the fresher foods.** The Camp Director reported that the campers and staff were always commenting about the delicious, healthy produce. Farmers were pleased with the new outlet for their crops and are planning for the next season.
- ◆ There are a number of young people with low esteem and they don't know what direction they need to take to be productive citizens. Programs like 4-H can make a difference for these youth. The NC Cooperative Extension, Robeson County 4-H Program Associate recognized a youth with very low self esteem and no future goals, she was very shy and would not express herself. The 4-H Program Associate noticed she had potential and worked with her to set goals for the future. After a couple months, her self-esteem and confidence improved. The youth decided she wanted to be a school teacher to help other young people. **Thanks to the skills she learned in 4-H, she graduated with honors from high school and college. Her 4-H public speaking skills helped her to be crowned Queen of her college. She says 4-H impacted her life and gave her the confidence she needed to be the person she is today, teaching and helping other young people to be all they can be.**
- ◆ Peanut production can be a viable alternative crop for the sandy soils of Scotland County. A production meeting was held by NC Cooperative Extension with potential growers, highlighting the opportunities by covering production techniques and budgeting. **Acreages of peanuts were increased by over 1,000 acres in 2008.** Farmers growing peanuts were very pleased with the crop yields and profits, and wondered why they had not been growing peanuts before now. **Growers that followed Extension's recommendations concerning insect, disease, weed management and properly timed harvesting produced profits of as much as \$300 per acre. This represented and increased value to growers of \$200,000 over traditionally grown crops such as soybeans and corn.**
- ◆ **Due to the consistently increasing scope of programming efforts and impacts made in Lenoir County by the staff of NC Cooperative Extension, the county budget has increased since 2002 by \$86,680, showing continued and growing support. Grant funds have increased by \$147,000.** Three full-time employees have been added to the staff; one Family and Consumer Science Agent, one Agricultural Technician, and one Bilingual Parent Educator. Three three-quarter time employees were added: two 4-H Prevention Educators and one Parent Educator. One quarter-time employee was added, a 4-H Prevention Educator. In addition, one contracted services Marketing Specialist was added to the staff.
- ◆ In 2007, with the help of NC Cooperative Extension personnel, a local farm began directly marketing in the Raleigh area through the establishment of a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. The farm diversified their operation, found a use for surplus produce, and increased farm net income while building a substantial market in the surrounding area. The farm distributed 75 shares to clients at the retail value of \$350 each at a drop-off point in North Raleigh. In 2008, marketing efforts by the farm, and information provided by the Agricultural Extension Agent, enabled the operation to expand and produce a larger amount and a more diversified selection of produce to include in the CSA shares. **During the 2008 growing season, the farm offered 180 shares to clientele at six different drop-off locations around the Raleigh/Cary area at a retail value of \$425 each, bringing in an additional \$50,250 in net income.**

- ◆ Unhealthy diets and lack of physical activity are contributing factors that increase the risk for obesity and chronic diseases. In New Hanover County, 60% of adults are overweight. Only 47% of adults in the county get enough physical activity. The City of Wilmington implemented a weight management class as a part of their health and wellness program. North Carolina Cooperative Extension in New Hanover County conducted a 12-week weight management class entitled "Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less" for city employees. Each class consisted of 30 minutes of education and 30 minutes of physical activity (walking). **Measurement data indicated the 29 participants lost an average of 2-5 pounds and 70% of the participants implemented a routine exercise program at least 5 times per week for 30 minutes. As a result of weight loss, most participants' BMIs decreased 2 to 5 points, and waist measurements also decreased.**
- ◆ Hoke County residents struggle with ideas to implement water conservation practices. NC Cooperative Extension, Hoke County Center partnered with Raft Swamp Farms to teach homeowners, vegetable growers, and landscapers water conservation best management practices. Thirteen participants attended a Rain Barrel Workshop in which they learned how to properly install and use rain barrels at a cost of \$25 each. **Each participant can harvest more than 700 gallons of water per one inch of rainfall. By doing this, each participant can save \$1,150 annually per household in county water usage.**
- ◆ In May 2008, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources and the North Carolina Arts Council published a new Agricultural Tourism trails book—HomeGrownHandMade (HGHM) Art Roads and Farm Trails of NC. The 400-page book of 16 self-directed driving trails with ideas of affordable travel includes almost 1,300 sites in 76 North Carolina Counties. The book is a companion to the highly successful HomeGrownHandMade.com website. **A research report from East Carolina University showed that travel parties who visited one of the listings spent \$58.64 associated with their HGHM site visit.**