



## NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Week Ending 3/27/09

- ◆ By law, fossil fuel power plants have to replace a portion of their fuel with renewable resources. *Integro Earthfuels*, a new energy company, was looking for a site to place their new plant to produce torrefied wood, a product to co-fire with coal. This new product will help fossil fuel plants meet the new regulations. **As a result of the efforts of the Person County Economic Development Commission and North Carolina Cooperative Extension, *Integro Earthfuels* chose to locate its first plant in Person County. This new industry will create a demand for waste wood products and new energy crops. The new industry will bring an investment of \$12 million and up to 50 new jobs to Person County.**
- ◆ As a result of the NC Cooperative Extension's effort in Carteret County, the 20-member *Bogue Sound Watermelon Association* was formed received over \$415,000 in grants to build a melon packing facility to receive, pack and ship their produce. Property has been donated by the local Electric Membership Cooperative for the land to place the facility. **The members have increased their production and sales over 100% in the last year, with a sales increase of over \$250,000.**
- ◆ *Weaver Street Market* had a large market for antibiotic-free broilers raised in low concentration production systems, but there were no local suppliers. NC Cooperative Extension's Agent for Sustainable Agriculture and the Area Poultry Agent worked with *Weaver Street Market* to organize a meeting for prospective growers with retired chicken houses in Chatham County. The agents also organized meetings with *Weaver Street Market*, NCSU Poultry Specialists, and *Growers Choice Cooperative* to develop production models, and identify proper diets, feed sources, hatcheries and processing facilities. Within the next twelve months, these retired poultry growers should be producing 600-1,200 broilers per week for *Weaver Street Market*. **As a result, these previously retired chicken houses will generate over \$300,000 in gross income for the local growers and economy.**
- ◆ Over one-third of the food we eat relies on bees for pollination. These bees – both honey bees and native bees – rely on farms and natural areas for forage and nesting sites. As Chatham County's population grows and significant acreage is cleared for new development, crucial forage and nesting habitat is lost. Local farms depend on forage habitat to sustain the pollinators and other beneficial insects that contribute to crop production and pest management. When pollinator species decline, crops are not fully pollinated, yields are reduced, and farmers suffer economically. If more farms and home gardens included forage and nesting habitat, pollinator species would benefit. **NC Cooperative Extension received an \$86,000 grant from a private citizen to develop demonstration sites for pollinator conservation.** Two pollinator habitat demonstration sites have been planted and educational outreach has begun. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2009.
- ◆ In Lenoir County, 40% of assessed youth have a known use of alcohol or illegal drugs according to the *2007 Juvenile Crime Prevention Council's Annual Report*. **NC Cooperative Extension receives \$75,151 in grant funding annually to operate an educational program to combat this problem.** In an effort to reduce the incidence of youth substance abuse, Cooperative Extension partnered with the Lenoir County School System, Mental Health and community organizations to educate Lenoir County youth. This intensive prevention program has educated over 700 at-risk youth in 2008 by providing programming in the elementary, middle and alternative schools in this county. Additionally, programming is offered at summer day camps, church youth programs, after school facilities and daycares. A fifth grade student stated at one program's graduation celebration, "I learned how to say no to drugs and how to be drug free, and that 4-H All Stars Junior has taught me the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco."

- ◆ The cost of providing health insurance for county employees has increased approximately 10% in each of the last several years. In January 2008, the County Health Promotions Coordinator and the FCS agent requested county funding to support education and promotion of healthy practices amongst county employees. **A county wellness committee was started titled *Wellness Works* and was given a budget of \$10,000 for fiscal year 2008 to include already conducted Health Risk Assessments. The county commissioners agreed to pay the costs for county employees to attend Extension's *Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less* series, and passed a policy that allows employees two 45-minute walking periods per week on work time.** The wellness committee is working with other community groups in planning additional incentives and programs to encourage smoking cessation and adoption of healthier practices.
- ◆ The Air Quality Subcommittee of NC Cooperative Extension's Quality of Natural Resources Commission worked with the Gaston County Public Works Director to develop an anti-idling policy for county-owned vehicles. All gasoline and diesel powered vehicles and equipment owned by Gaston County or personal vehicles being used for official County business, regardless of size, shall be idled only as necessary to perform the required duties of a given employee's position or the essential function(s) of the equipment. **Potential fuel savings from reducing overall idling by just 15 minutes is approximately \$64,000. Potential reduction in air pollutants (VOCs, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides) is estimated to be 116 tons.**
- ◆ The McDowell County Commissioners asked the solid waste advisory committee to initiate an educational program. Increased recycling would save the county money on solid waste disposal fees, decrease the litter problem and help to improve the environment. **NC Cooperative Extension, McDowell Public Works, McDowell County Schools and *Keep McDowell Beautiful* joined together to plan and initiate the program. A grant was received for \$15,000 to fund the program.** The program began with a new recycling initiative in the schools. Recycling equipment was purchased and one dumpster at each school was converted to recycling. Programs on recycling were presented and a monetary incentive was developed to encourage recycling in the schools. **The school maintenance director estimated that 35% of school waste has been diverted to recycling since this program was implemented.** Future plans include a brochure to inform the public about new recycling opportunities and recycling in other public buildings.
- ◆ Growing grapes can be a good alternative to row crop production on the sandy soil of Scotland County. Proper pruning of grapes can increase yields and provide for more sustainable production of grapes. A grape pruning demonstration conducted in 2007 and 2008 in collaboration with North Carolina Cooperative Extension and a local winery provided invaluable insight into how different pruning techniques can affect yields. As a result of these demonstrations, the winery changed their pruning techniques to reflect the most sustainable pruning regime. Yields were increased over 1 ton per acre as a result of this pruning research. **This resulted in an income increase per acre of more than \$500 on 30 acres. This \$15,000 increase in net income was critically important to the long-term sustainability of this vineyard.** Proper cultivation can insure that growers are producing profitable and sustainable crops.
- ◆ The lack of good genetics in beef cattle herds limits producers' feeder calf weight gains and therefore limits net income. Through recommendations from NC Cooperative Extension's educational programming, 12 Stanly County area cattle producers purchased a total of 20 bulls that improved their herd genetics. **With average weight gain increases of 50 pounds per feeder calf and an average of 15 cows bred per bull, this equals an additional total income of \$15,000 for these progressively thinking beef cattle producers.**

- ◆ Prices for fertilizers reached an all-time high in 2008. Growers had to decide whether to fertilize their soybean crops as normal, or make drastic cuts and sacrifice yields. Due to the educational efforts of North Carolina Cooperative Extension, one grower was able to quickly take soil samples and get a custom blended fertilizer to meet his unique needs while supplying all the necessary nutrients needed by the crop. **As a result, this grower saved \$39 per acre by reducing his P application, totaling a savings of \$23,000.00 in fertilizer costs on 600 acres of soybeans.**
- ◆ A few tobacco growers in Person County are still experimenting with growing burley tobacco as an alternative to flue-cured tobacco. These growers are still suffering from yields and quality that are lower than what is desired. One grower strictly followed a nutrient management plan recommended by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. **The end result was this grower was able to increase his yield by 520 pounds per acre. This increase in yield added \$920 in gross income to each acre of burley tobacco he produced.**
- ◆ In Pamlico County, 5th grade teachers reported that students were having difficulties in fulfilling requirements set by NC Standard Course of Study Science Objective 4: “The learner will conduct investigations and use appropriate technologies to build an understanding of forces and motion in technological designs.” Pamlico County 4-H, with funding from United Way of Coastal Carolina and resources from NC Cooperative Extension, created a hands-on learning experience that assisted teachers in helping students comprehend the objective. The program takes each goal and sets friendly competition between the classrooms. Students gained a “real world” understanding of their class work by participating in this 6-week program featuring an egg drop, bridge building stress test, and a catapult contest. **End of program evaluations from every teacher in Pamlico County showed that of the total 136 students 100% showed an improvement in science grades and class participation and 83% showed an improvement in homework quality and completion.**
- ◆ **Cherokee youth receive trust fund gaming revenue payments upon graduating from High School or reaching 21 years of age. These payments total approximately \$80,000 per student.** Very few students are receiving financial management education. **Through three years of collaboration and negotiation the Cherokee Reservation Extension office received funding from the tribe to hire a Financial Skills Educator. Students will receive training in Banking, Wise Consumerism, Budgeting, Credit and Debt, Living Away From Home, and Investments.** A program is in the developmental phase to address this problem. This program will be a comprehensive money management tool for students. When payments are received, youth will have a better understanding of how money (as a tool) can help provide the things they need and want. Youth can acquire financial skills outside of the school day.