Mountain Farmers Eligible for Funds to Help Diversify: WNC AgOptions Grant

WNC Agricultural Options will award approximately 45 farmers in 17 counties and the Cherokee Indian reservation $3,000, $6,000, and $9,000. These funds will be used to help farmers to diversify or expand their operations.

Interested applicants should see the agricultural agents at their local Extension Centers by November 23, and can visit www.wncagoptions.org to download an application. Projects should increase the sale of farm products and lead to the long-term sustainability of the farm business. The postmark deadline for applications is January 8.

WNC AgOptions is managed by the NC Cooperative Extension Centers in the West District. The program works with producers who demonstrate ways to increase farm income to other transitioning farmers, particularly tobacco growers. WNC AgOptions works in partnership with RAFI-USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund, and the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission sponsors the program.

"The partnership we have with the WNC AgOptions program is very valuable to us," said William Upchurch, Executive Director of the Tobacco Trust Fund commission. "Our experience has shown that participating farmers utilize these grants for innovative, resourceful and profitable enterprises that can make a huge impact on their farming operation."

Recent recipients are transitioning from commercial to direct markets, extending their growing seasons, or developing value-added processing systems so that they will have a product to sell year-round. With a grant they received in spring 2009, Tammie and Mike Edwards of Yancey County are building a germination chamber in a greenhouse they previously used in tobacco production to start plants for their potted flower operation. Saving them the cost of buying their own plugs, "...could make a difference if we stay in business," Tammie Edwards said.

Skipper Russel of Haywood County, a 2005 and 2009 recipient, and Kaleb Rathbone, a 2006 recipient, both have the infrastructure in place to open up markets with Ingles grocery stores this year, in large part due to the WNC AgOptions grants. Russel, who purchased a refrigeration truck, sells lettuce to Ingles, and Rathbone, who installed irrigation, sells strawberries.

Other WNC AgOptions recipients use the funds to offset the financial risk of trying untested, unique endeavors, such as hops production. "Just applying for the
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grant was about the best thing I could have done," said Van Burnette of Buncombe County, who started "Hop 'N Blueberry" on his family's seventh generation farm. "I learned so much about the cost, timeline, and the activities, and narrowed down what I wanted to do with the farm."

Established in 2003, WNC AgOptions is entering its sixth funding cycle. Members of the WNC AgOptions steering committee include: representatives from NC Cooperative Extension Service, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services-Marketing Division, HandMade in America, Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project, former WNC AgOptions recipients and other leaders in agribusiness.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension WNC AgOptions

2010 Western Piedmont Region Demonstration Grant Program

The Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund aims to assist farmers and rural communities to develop new sources of agricultural income through provision of cost-share grants. The Reinvestment Fund will make two types of demonstration awards: Producer Grant Awards up to $10,000 for individuals and Community Grants Awards up to $30,000 for collaborative farmer projects.

The Fund will make cost-share demonstration grants to farmers, farm organizations, and community groups in the Western Piedmont Region of North Carolina. This includes: Alexander, Alleghany, Anson, Ashe, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Davidson, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Rutherford, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Union, Wilkes, Yadkin, Davie, and Rockingham.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION is January 13, 2010.

Tight margins for most commodity crops and changing farm programs provide new challenges for North Carolina farmers. The purpose of the Reinvestment Fund is to help farmers to develop enterprises that allow them to earn more for their products through innovative production, processing, or marketing approaches.

The Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund is supported by a grant from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

ELIGIBILITY
Qualifying PRODUCERS must be farmers, who are actively engaged in full or part-time farming in the Western Piedmont region. Priority is given to farmers who earned a significant portion of their income from tobacco at the time of the Master Settlement Agreement (1997-1998) and to projects that create an opportunity for a new generation of farmers.
Qualifying COMMUNITY GROUPS must include qualifying farmers from the Western Piedmont region, and farmers must be active in the leadership of the group. Groups of farmers, farm coops, farmer associations, churches, local business, civic organizations, or combination of these are eligible and encouraged to apply.

Eligible PROJECTS are those that: have a likelihood of generating new farm income; establish new markets for local products and services; develop new uses for greenhouses; add value to existing farm products by processing, packaging or marketing in a special way; make new use of tobacco facilities and equipment; maintain or create quality employment, including self-employment or opportunities for home-based businesses; make optimal use of on-farm and natural resources.

High priority will be given to projects that are innovative and demonstrate a new direction or opportunity for farmers in North Carolina.

IMPORTANT DATES!
Early Bird Deadline - December 18, 2009
Application Deadline - January 13, 2010
Award Notification - March 9, 2010
Interim Report Due - TBA
Final Report Due - TBA
Projects Completed - TBA

APPLICATION & DETAILED INFORMATION
http://www.ncfarmgrants.org
Jason Roehrig
jason@rafiusa.org
919-542-1396

EVENTS

Keeping on Track; Business Planning for Farms
October 19th, 2009 @ 2:00 PM - November 9th, 2009 @ 5:00 PM
Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center, 745 Research Drive, Mills River

This four week short course is designed to assist farmers, both beginning and seasoned, to develop a better understanding of the business planning process and the ultimate purpose of a solid business plan. Space is limited so reserve a space early. There is a $100 fee for this class to cover books and hand-out materials.

Contact
Cliff Ruth at (828) 697-4891
www.eXtension.org

www.eXtension.org is an interactive learning environment delivering the best researched knowledge from the smartest land-grant university minds across America. eXtension connects knowledge consumers with knowledge providers - experts who know their subject matter inside out. The Families, Food, and Fitness section of eXtension at http://www.extension.org/families_food_fitness provides education and skills to help families make informed decisions about healthy eating and physical activity by providing them with evidence (science/research) - based information and interactive learning opportunities through eXtension. This virtual educational environment is targeted to families with young children. The Families, Food, and Fitness (FFF) Community of Practice (COP) is organized around 3 goals:

1. improved diets,
2. increase physical activity, and
3. maintain body weight in a healthy range and avoid excess weight gain.

Interactive content and learning materials support these 3 goals in addition to focusing on the 6 key behaviors identified through the literature to be associated with achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight:

1. move more everyday,
2. tame the tube,
3. right size your portions,
4. enjoy more fruits and vegetables,
5. prepare and eat more meals at home, and
6. re-think your drink.

Help for healthy lifestyles includes a recipe section: http://www.extension.org/pages/Families_Food_and_Fitness_Dynamic_List_of_Recipes

A picture spice guide for suggested foods with each spice: http://www.extension.org/pages/Interactive_Spice_Guide and

A "Fast Food Menu," to size up fast food selections from McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Chick-Fil-A, Domino's, and Taco Bell is provided on an interactive menu at: http://www.extension.org/pages/Interactive_Fast_Food_Menu

Experienced extension personnel and researchers based in the 1862 and 1890 land-grant universities, as well as other universities and education centers contributed to this new eXtension site.

Fish, Fitness, Family Blog
http://fishfitnessfamily.blogspot.com/

Remember to check my blog. I update information on the blog on a more regular basis. Please feel free to give me ideas for blog articles. I like to think of the blog as a newsletter that is online, but updated on a regular basis as needed.

You can subscribe to the blog by e-mail. By doing this, you will receive an e-mail every time I post a new article. This way, you don’t always have to check the blog. The e-mail will tell you.
A few people have asked me about geese control...Here are some solutions for your geese problems. To control geese a COMBINATION of these methods are necessary. Here they are:

1) NOISE
Under best conditions, 3 - 4 strategically placed cannons may protect up to 25 acres from goose depredation. Many of today's newer models of cannons come with variable timers and rotators that increase effectiveness. Stationary noisemakers, such as a cannon, should be moved every 2 - 3 days to prevent habituation by geese.

Mylar tape or birdscares tape might work as well. It is a reflective piece of material that is bright red on one side and bright silver on the other. Feed and Seed stores should have in stock or order for you. Remote controlled airplanes can scare off geese and has had some success.

Another type of auditory approach is use of pyrotechnics, such as whistlers, noise bombs, shell-crackers, and screamer or banger rockets. These firecracker-like devices are shot from a hand-held pistol or 12-gauge shotgun out over a group of geese on land or water where the projectile then explodes. Some of these devices have a range of about 50 - 75 yards. Always check local regulations (police/sheriff's dept) to be sure of noise ordinances and let them know of your intention to use these materials so that they will be aware of the activity and avoid an unnecessary response to calls of "shots being fired."

2) TASTE
Goose Chase and Fruit Shield are nontoxic bird repellents that contain 26.4% active ingredient, methyl anthranilate, by weight. Methyl anthranilate, or 2-aminobenzoic acid methyl ester, is an aromatic acid ester that occurs naturally in grapes (although the methyl anthranilate in these products is synthetically produced). Methyl anthranilate is a food-grade compound that is used to impart "grape" flavor. Apparently, this flavor is offensive to birds, and they will not eat vegetation treated with it. This product has a UV coloring agent that, according to the manufacturer, the geese are able to see and associate with an area that has been treated with the feeding deterrent. Follow directions and you shouldn't have a problem with it leaving your property and entering a local waterbody. Be sure to work closely with timing applications and mowing and watering schedules.

3) FEAR WITH WATER
Water Spraying Animal Repeller is a good deterrent because it senses motion and sprays a 3 to 4-second burst of water then resets. Spray coverage can be adjusted from a narrow 10° coverage to 360°, and the 35-foot range lets you place the device where it makes the most sense. Effective on dogs, cats, raccoons, deer, etc. Simply pull up the device, move it to a different location, and turn the water on. Soon, animals won't know where they'll be sprayed from, and will be wary of entering the protected area. Requires a 9V battery (sold separately), which powers the unit for approximately 6 months under normal use.

4) IRRITATING FEEL
Sticky, non-toxic material to stop bird roosting because it is extremely irritating to roosting birds; available in caulk tube; inexpensive. Varying product names: Bird Tanglefoot, Bird-Proof Gel or Liquid. Harmless to metal structures, sealed masonry and ornamental metals, works in any weather, indoors or outdoors, literally anywhere: on water tanks, trees, shrubbery, shipping docks and railroad sidings, yards, parking lots, etc. Apply to roosting edges ledges, windowsills, gutters, cornices, ornamental copings and

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protruding beams—any surface where birds roost or perch. For trees, bushes, shrubbery and most broad surfaces that would make cartridge application impractical, spray on Bird-Proof Liquid Spray. Keep birds away from parking facilities, trees, bushes, shrubbery and most broad surface areas with Bird-Proof.

5) EXCLUSION
Typically Canada geese prefer to have direct access from the water to walk onto the shoreline.
- Do the banks slope into the pond (this type of bank makes it easy to walk onto the shoreline or is there a straight drop off?
- Obstructions at the shoreline. This process involves the planting of certain types of vegetation or installation of fencing.
- Add in more plants around the banks or leave a buffer area 10-20 ft wide. Modifying uninterrupted shorelines with shrubs or boulders every 10 to 20 yards, may reduce an area’s attractiveness to geese, as well as to other waterfowl and shorebirds.
- If a fence is present at the shoreline then this obstruction can prove successful in limiting the presence of geese on the property. Fence ponds prior to the molt (loss of flight feathers in early summer) to prevent access to water and discourage geese from remaining in the area when they are flightless.
When Canada goose access denial to a water source is required, then serious consideration should also be given to the installation of an overhead “grid system” in conjunction with a perimeter fence. This may not be practical for large ponds.

6) POPULATION REDUCTION
Federal and state permits are needed to handle geese, or destroy eggs or nests.

*Thanks to Wendi Hartup, Extension Agent, Forsyth County, for providing this information.*
The use of trade named products is with the understanding that no endorsement is made to the exclusion of other equally effective products.

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

Newsletter edited and compiled by:

Molly A. Sandfoss
Extension Agent
Aquaculture

Secretarial support by Cheryl Mitchell

We're on the web
http://mcdowell.ces.ncsu.edu