The Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA) Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund will make cost-share demonstration grants to farmers, farm organizations, and community groups in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Davidson, Forsyth, Iredell, McDowell, and Wilkes counties.

Cost-share support of up to $10,000 will be awarded to individual producers and support of up to $20,000 will be awarded to collaborative farmer efforts. Demonstration grants will be awarded through a competitive selection process. Grants will be awarded to innovative projects which show farmers a new direction or opportunity.

Priority will be given to projects that benefit farmers under 40 years of age with at least three years of farming experience and to farmers who had income from tobacco.

Deadline for applications is October 1, 2008. Funds will be available to farmers in December 2008.


For more information or to discuss potential project ideas contact Jason Roehrig at 919-621-0534 or jason@rafiusa.org.

RAFI-USA is a private, non-profit organization based in Pittsboro, North Carolina. RAFI cultivates markets, policies and communities that support thriving, socially just and environmentally sound family farms.
You may be wondering why is she writing about zebra mussels? Zebra mussels are an invasive species. They were first detected in the Great Lakes in 1988, in Lake St. Clair, located between Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario. It is believed they were accidentally introduced into the lakes in the ballast water of ocean-going ships traversing the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Now to the point. Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) was first identified in the Great Lakes. VHS is a virus that has caused significant die-offs of different species of fish. I have heard it said that the spread of VHS might mimic that of the zebra mussel. I found this web site that follows the spread of the zebra mussel through the years. Take a look at the website (United States Geological Survey Florida Integrated Science Center Gainesville). Interesting stuff!

http://cars.er.usgs.gov/Nonindigenous_Species/ZM_Progression/zm_progression.html

Dealing with Drought

We have been blessed with recent rains. Even though the recent rains have seemed to fill our waterways, water is still a valuable resource. Many of us have changed behaviors that reduce our water usage. Keep it up!

In response to the drought, NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) has created a site called "dealing with Drought". It has many tips for around the home, farm, and garden.

http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agcomm/difference/drought/index.html

The Internet or the web is rapidly becoming the primary tool that many business people are using to reach their customers. If you have a business, more than likely you have a website. Your website is a tool where your customers can find you.

Regardless of the size or type of your business, the flexibility offered by a web site helps you tell people about your operation, and even to transact business. Here are a few tips designed to help you organize your efforts with a website, and to guide you in the decisions you make about this potentially effective marketing tool!

Picking A Domain Name

A domain name is your identity on the internet. Your domain name should contain as much of your regular business name as possible. If your business name has already been used, consider using a different suffix such as .biz instead of .com. You can also shorten your name. For example Creek Valley Aquaculture can be shortened to "creekvalleyaqua.com" or "creekvalley.com". Another suggestion is to add a geographic identifier like "creekvalley-nc.com".

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Registering A Domain Name

Domain names are acquired through authorized domain name registrars. All registrars have access to the same list of reserved names, but they may have different fees. When you go to one of these sites, you can do a search for your domain name to see if it is available. Some of the registrars are partnered with web hosting sites. To learn more about securing a domain name, go to http://www.internic.net/ which is operated by the US Department of Commerce. On internic.net, there are MANY different registrars listed. Again, you just have to find a fee that fits your budget. One site offers to register your domain name for $9.99/yr.

Finding A Web Host

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services provides free web hosting and a design template at no charge for producers. You can create and edit your free web page at http://www.ncagr.com/ncproducts/CultivateStart.asp. They have categorized different groups. Fishing is under Agritourism. There is a category under Fish & Seafood for Farm Raised Fish. By setting up this site, you can gauge how much activity a web site will generate before you spend money on web hosting and web design. You do not have to have a domain name for this service.

If you want more than just basic information on the web, you will need to find a web hosting service. Cost should not be your main criteria. How reliable and dependable is the hosting service. You want to take advantage of “24/7”. Bandwidth is another consideration. The wider the bandwidth the faster your site will download. Wider bandwidth is especially necessary if you have a site with many pictures.

If you use your site for business transaction involving payment, you will need a hosting package with space on a secured server. A secured server URL has https instead of http. Secured servers have an additional layer of encryption to protect the identity of individuals and the data that is being transacted.

Adapted from: Dunlap, Annette. How to Start an E-Commerce Web Site. NC State University College of Agriculture & Life Sciences.

Upcoming Events

April 3, 2008, 6:30 pm—Farmers’ Fresh Market meeting—McDowell County Cooperative Extension Service, Marion (mcdowell.ces.ncsu.edu) For aquaculture producers who want to learn more about a potential market opportunity for food fish growers.

March 29, 2008, 8:30am-4:00pm—WNC Independent Poultry & Rabbit Meat Producers Workshop—McDowell Technical Community College, Marion. Meeting on tips & techniques in how to succeed in this growing niche market.

Kudos to Sunburst Trout Company for being awarded the Seafood Champion Award at the recent Boston Seafood Show. This is a highly prestigious award given to sea-food industry leaders in sustainable, eco-friendly seafood. There were only six from around the world to win the honor. More information can be found at: http://www.seafoodchoices.org/membership/champions.php
The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service is an educational agency funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, North Carolina State University, and local governments. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service’s mission is to help individuals, families, and communities put research based knowledge to work to improve their lives.

Four major program areas:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Community & Rural Development
- Family & Consumer Education
- 4-H & Youth Development

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