

SMALL FARMS RESEARCH CENTER NEWS UPDATE

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, LIFE AND NATURAL SCIENCES



United States Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture NIFA

United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO)

2015 AGRICULTURAL RISK MANAGEMENT & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

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Upcoming Community Activities & Events



Small Farms Research Center
Alabama A&M University
4900 Meridian Street
James I. Dawson Building
RM #219
P.O. Box 700
Normal, AL 35762

The AAMU Small Farms Research Center in collaboration with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) will host its Agricultural Risk Management and Business Development Workshop on August 19-21, 2015. This two-day event will be held at the Jon Archer Agricultural Center, 1070 Schillinger Road North, Mobile, Alabama.

The workshop will focus on risk management strategies, business development and new and beginning farming issues. This workshop includes the following topics: *Healthy Meat Goat Herd; Business Plan: Tips, Strategies and Lifeline; Overview and Updates Small Farms Research Center, Overview of the Cottage Law; Market Marker: Marketing Agricultural Products, Overview of Gulf Coast RC&D Council, Cottage Law Training; Leadership Training: Community Projects and Sustainable Agriculture and New and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers-Financial Management and NRCS Soil Testing.* The sessions will be held August 20-21 at the Jon Archer Agricultural Center. **Registration is ongoing NOW!**



Everyone must pre-register online at <http://www.aamu.edu/sfrc> and submit your \$20.00 fee to reserve your spot for this event. Please make checks or money orders payable to the Small Farms Research Center Foundation and mail to the Small Farms Research Center, P.O. Box 700, Normal, AL 35762. There are limited scholarships available along with transportation (optional) for this event. To learn more about this event contact Mr. JaMarkus Crowell at (256) 372-4424.

AAMU SMALL FARMS RESEARCH CENTER RECEIVES FUNDING TO ASSIST GOAT AND SHEEP PRODUCERS IN ALABAMA AND TENNESSEE

Alabama A&M University's Small Farms Research Center and Tennessee State University are the co-recipients of \$499,998 for three years to assist goat and sheep producers in Alabama and Tennessee through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



The project seeks to increase market accessibility for small limited resource farmers by developing and implementing an online marketing tool for small goat producers, which in the long-term will help these small goat and sheep farmers grow their market opportunities in the Tennessee Valley. Goat production provides supplemental income for limited resource farmers. This enterprise is ideal for small producers with meager land and limited capital. With good management, goat production can be a profitable alternative enterprise. However, small and mid-sized farmers and ranchers face multiple obstacles accessing the market for goat meat production. This project will assist small farmers and ranchers in expanding their market opportunities in Tennessee and Alabama. The project's specific objects include; (1) Conducting a structural analysis of the meat goat industry to examine marketing opportunities for meat goat farmers; (2) Evaluating the effectiveness of the channels used for marketing to explore the feasibility of placing goat meat into selected grocery stores in Tennessee and Alabama; and (4) Creating and implementing a web-based marketing system for goat.

The project's research component will examine the structure of the meat goat industry, including a comprehensive review of the current methods and marketing channels used by small limited resource and beginning meat goat farmers for marketing their goat products. For more information about this program and services, visit the Small Farms Research Center's web portal at www.aamu.edu/smallfarmscenter or call us at (256)-372-4970 or 1-(866)-372-4970.

USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Agricultural Producers in Alabama Still Have Time to Apply for Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program

Low-Interest Loans Can Help Producers Start or Expand Farms

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Alabama Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that farmers and ranchers still have time to apply for low interest loans available through the FSA direct farm ownership program. Applications must be approved by Sept. 30, 2015, to take advantage of the funding available.

Eligible farmers and ranchers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. The interest rate can be as low as 1.5 percent with up to 40 years to repay.

New farmers and ranchers, military veterans, and underserved farmers and ranchers also are encouraged to apply. Each year Congress targets 80 percent of available loan funds to beginning and targeted underserved farmers and ranchers. Targeted underserved groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians, or other Pacific Islanders Hispanics and women.

For more information about farm loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans, or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <https://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

NRCS Financial Assistance Programs

Eligible producers may receive a payment based on the statewide average cost of the installation of the conservation practice. Socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers are eligible for a higher payment based on the statewide average cost of the installation of the conservation practice. In addition, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers can receive up to 30 percent advanced payment for purchasing materials or contracting.

- **Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) (not available in Alabama for 2014)** is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land to conserve surface and ground water and improve water quality.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** - The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations. CSP is a new voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. CSP provides opportunities to both recognize excellent stewards and deliver valuable new conservation.
- **Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)** - is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production.

Please visit your local NRCS office for more details. You can find your local office by visiting <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT (RD)

USDA Seeks Applications for Loans and Grants to Create Jobs and Support Rural Economic Development

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is accepting applications for loans and grants to support business expansion, create jobs and increase economic opportunities in rural communities. "Small businesses are the engine that drives job creation and investment capital coupled with business savvy provide the spark that gets that engine running" Vilsack said. "This funding will help the nation's rural microentrepreneurs strengthen their capacity to create jobs, grow their businesses and fuel the economy. USDA is working with local organizations to provide capital to help small business owners achieve higher performance."

Funding is being provided through USDA's Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP). The 2014 Farm Bill reauthorized the program through 2018. For Fiscal Year 2015, more than \$16 million is available in loans and grants.

Details about how to apply for this are on page 35299 of the June 19 Federal Register. Application forms may be obtained from any USDA Rural Development State Office.

SUCCESS STORY: SMALL BUSINESS WORKSHOP

The AAMU Small Farms Research Center, in collaboration with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) hosted its Small Business Workshop on May 7-8, 2015 at the James I. Dawson Building. This workshop covered the following courses: Starting a Business from Scratch, Business Economics and Marketing, Short- and Long-Term Business Planning/Affordable Care Act Business Requirements, and Bookkeeping and Business Taxes. Great emphasis was placed on a business plan being critical to ensure that businesses or agribusiness owners have aligned their marketing, production, and financing capacities/strategies in ways that minimize risk. This course was offered to anyone considering starting a business or agriculture business. The in-depth course provided hands-on and real-life examples to further illustrate the purpose of a business plan.

Please see testimonials from our producers, landowners and entrepreneurs who attended the Small Business Workshop.

Once again, the Small Farms, through its Business Workshop has provided critical information which insures accountability and opportunity for success for small farmers and people in business. The workshop told us about various options for organizing the business (LLC; Corporation; sole proprietorship, et al.) and asked us to think about which organizational structure best fits our needs. — Regina Colston

I first want to say thank you to the Small Farms Research Center for hosting the Small Business Workshop. I really enjoyed and obtained a lot of valuable information that I can use. Before attending the workshop, I thought I only wanted to do something with farming for myself. However, after attending the workshop, I am planning on starting a consulting practice and doing some training classes for others. I am now gathering the information needed to do so. — Nora Morris

The workshop held on 7-8 May 2015 by Rick Zapata was appropriate, interesting and informative. The main point I received and appreciated was the information on how we as farmers and individuals can legally protect our property. I personally like the way he allowed questions, and answered them based on the Law of Alabama. It would be an honor to hear parts 2-4 of his presentations. — Nellie Rembert

We thank all of our participants and financial expert, Rick Zapata along with USDA FSA Personnel, William “Shane” Seay, Gina Williams and Michael Foster; USDA NRCS, Joyce Lane and USDA RD, Eric Brooks for making our Small Business Workshop a success story. See highlights on page 4 from the workshop.

USDA SECRETARY APPOINTS AAMU AG PROFESSOR TO SERVE ON LAND TENURE SUBCOMMITTEE

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has appointed an Alabama A&M University agricultural economist to the distinguished Subcommittee on Land Tenure.

Dr. Duncan M. Chembezi serves as professor of agricultural and applied economics, in addition to his post as director of the Small Farms Research Center. Chembezi will sit on the 13-member subcommittee comprised of experts from the private sector, government and academia and will review the wide range of USDA programs and provide recommendations on the topic of farm business transition and land tenure in the United States.



Moreover, the Subcommittee will provide a detailed report and draft recommendations to the Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (ACBFR), which will subsequently develop and deliver final recommendations to the Secretary.

“The charge of the Subcommittee is to provide technical input to ACBFR on matters of land tenure to advise the Secretary and potentially influence the direction and outcomes of legislative and USDA administrative actions to better serve the needs of young, beginning, and small farmers in the United States,” said Chembezi, who is serving his second term on the Secretary’s ACBFR.

Dr. Chembezi believes the appointment reflects the confidence the Secretary has in people on the ground who tirelessly execute and implement his vision and USDA’s mission of meeting every producer’s farming need, including needs of socially disadvantaged beginning farmers and ranchers.

Dr. Chembezi currently sits on the Advisory Board of the Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics (C-FARE), a non-profit national organization dedicated to strengthening the national presence of the agricultural and applied economics profession.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SMALL BUSINESS WORKSHOP



MADISON COUNTY'S NEWEST FARMERS' MARKETS AIM TO SERVE NORTH HUNTSVILLE COMMUNITY

Huntsville, AL (WHNT) - The idea first sprouted last summer. After visiting various farmers' markets throughout the city, Kerri-Noelle Humphrey noticed a need for better access to locally grown fruits and vegetables in north Huntsville.

"When you look in a five or six mile radius, there's really not another farmers' market that's flourishing," she said.

She said she worked with her church, Lakeside United Methodist, throughout the winter to cultivate the idea. "We wanted to find a creative way to serve people."

The Lakeside Farmers' Market officially opened for business Tuesday. It features farmers from throughout the Tennessee Valley, which provides patrons the chance to talk face-to-face with those growing what they eat. "This is an opportunity, get to know your farmer, get to know your food," said Humphrey. Madison County boasts at least a dozen farmers' markets, but until the Lakeside Farmers' market, none of them truly served the north Huntsville community.

"This is just another way of exposing the people to good things that are good for them," said Madison County Commissioner Bob Harrison. He said that with better access comes healthier food options for local families, along with increased financial support of local farmers. "It has social impact. It has economic impact. It has community unity impact. And it just makes you drool walking over and looking at it."

The Lakeside Farmers' Market will take place at the church, located at 3738 Meridian Street North, every Tuesday from June 2 through August 4. The hours are 4:00-7:00 p.m. The church will use the profits from the booth rentals to purchase food for its food pantry, which helps provide free meals to needy community members.

Staff of the Small Farms Research Center witnessed the ribbon cutting and the opening of the newest farmers' market known as Lakeside Farmers' Market. The farmers' market will be open June 2 - August 4, 2015. SFRC continues its outreach initiatives by connecting locally with producers on the assistance available through workshops, conferences and farm tours. The Center will be on-site to discuss one-on-one its various functions and events available. Come on out to Lakeside Farmers' Market, 3738 Meridian Street North, Normal, AL.





Cooperating Units: USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO), USDA/NIFA/ Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program (BFRDP), USDA/OAO/Outreach Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) Program, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and Alabama A&M University.



EDITOR'S CORNER



The Center is pleased to announce its NEW YOUTUBE CHANNEL! Please subscribe by searching for us by the name Small Farms Research Center. The Center will be updating the channel with discussions that are targeted for this age of new and/or beginning farmers. Be sure to watch our latest video that entails the Center's functions, target areas and who we serve and assist.

If you would like to submit articles related to agricultural issues, or would like to make an announcement of your upcoming event(s), please forward your information to:

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QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

"Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end, contribute most to real wealth, good morals and happiness."

Thomas Jefferson

UPCOMING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

July 16, 2015, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m., ***Raised Bed Vegetable Gardening 101***, Lawrence County Farm Service Agency, 13075 Highway 157, Moulton, AL 35650. Contact Allyson Shabel at (256) 773-2549 or by email at ams0137@aces.edu. Learn the basics of making, planting, and maintaining a raised bed garden on site at St. John's Episcopal Church's Common Ground Community Garden, in downtown Decatur. Rain date is Saturday July 18th at 9AM. *Hosted by ACES Home Grounds, Gardens & Home Pests; ACES Urban Affairs.*

July 18, 2015, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., ***Northwest Alabama Forage Field Day***, 293 Mt. Pleasant Road, Muscle Shoals, AL. This farm tour will include: Farm and forage tour, Soil and forage sampling demonstration, "Ask the experts" panel discussion, Local veterinarian on site and free BBQ lunch. *Hosted by Alabama Ag A+ Marketing, Alabama A&M Small Farms Research Center (SFRC), Northwest AL RC&D, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).* **Please be advised Pre-registration is required to determine sufficient amount of drinks and food. Please bring a lawn chair. To register, contact JC & Pat Holt at (256) 446-5210.**

July 22, 2015, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., ***Agricultural Investigation Seminar***, Charles Stone Agricultural Center, 819 Cook Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35801. This workshop will give vivid instructions on how to protect producers, buyers and sellers of agricultural products against illegal activities. To learn more, contact Margaret Mazikowski at twvia.info@gmail.com. Pre-registration is required, please visit <http://www.aamu.edu/sfrc> to register under Agricultural Investigation Seminar. There is a \$10.00 fee for this event that covers your materials, along with lunch. Please note on registration form whether you have a preference of chicken or pork. *Hosted by the Tennessee Valley Women-In-Agriculture (TVWIA) Association.*

July 29, 2015, 10:00 a.m. - ***Hydroponic Farm Tour***, J. Sparks Farm, 312 Esslinger Dr. Gurley, AL 35748. This farm tour is an open invitation to the *public* and all producers, farmers, gardeners, landowners that would like to learn about the hydroponic system, wide variety of produce grown and more on the history of J. Sparks Hydroponic Tomato and Vegetable Farm. *Hosted by The AAMU Small Farms Research Center (AAMUSFRC).*

August 19-21, 2015– ***Agricultural Risk Management and Business Development Workshop***, 1070 Schillinger Rd. Mobile, AL 36608. This workshop is an absolute must-attend event for those serious about Business Development/Risk Management, Cottage Law Training, Leadership Training, Financial Management and USDA programs and services. *Hosted by the AAMU Small Farms Research Center and Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES).* **Please register by calling the Center at (256) 372-4424 or online at <http://www.aamu.edu/sfrc> for Ag. Risk Management Workshop.**