

**OPEN FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
SUNDAY JANUARY 13, 2008
Sandhill Research and Education Center, Columbia, SC**

MEETING MINUTES

12:00 till 1:00: Lunch prepared by Rosewood Market and Deli using locally grown chicken, produce and grains.

OPENING SESSION

Welcome and Introduction, *Geoff Zehnder, Clemson Sustainable Agriculture Program*. Overview of the SARE funding mechanism, the SC Model State Program and 2007 activity highlights. PowerPoint presentation available at www.clemson.edu/sustainableag.

Update on the New SC Sustainable Agriculture Websites. *Kelly Gilkerson, Clemson Sustainable Ag Program*.

Low Country and Upstate Advisory Group Updates. Geoff Zehnder (for Susan Chewning) and Bill Welch. Reports on 2007 activities and plans for 2008. Susan Chewning remains chair of the Low Country group and Brandon Grace with Anderson County is the new Upstate group chair. Announcements of 2008 group meetings and activities will be forthcoming.

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Update; *Roland McReynolds, CFSA Executive Director*. Roland gave an update on CFSA activities in SC during 2007 including the successful Upstate Farm Tour in October, and the CFSA Benefit Dinner hosted by Walker Miller and the Happy Berry on October 13. He mentioned that CFSA will also organize Biodiesel workshops in SC in conjunction with Piedmont Biofuels with a grant from USDA Risk Management Agency. Roland also mentioned CFSA interest in helping to establish community kitchens and a farm incubator in SC.

Anderson County Farm to School and Farm to Plate Initiatives. *Brandon Grace (Anderson County) and Allison Schaum (Palmetto Agricultural Consultants)*. A report was provided on the recent and successful Ag Summit held in Anderson County, and on plans for the local food initiatives to enhance opportunities for farmers in the county. Anderson County has also submitted a proposal to host the CFSA Conference this year.

Walker Miller also mentioned that SCDA will receive significant funding for promotion and marketing of ag products. SCDA contacts include Fred Broughton, Ansley Rast, Larry Boylston and Martin Eubanks.

Joe James with the Corporation for Economic Opportunity gave an overview of renewable energy initiatives in the state, including the SC Biomass Council that provides funding opportunities through an in-house grants program. Joe indicated that stakeholders representing the small farm community should provide more input into discussions on renewable energy from biomass. Joe also mentioned the SC Climate, Energy and Commerce Advisory Committee, of which Joe is a member. The Committee was recently established by Governor Sanford to address climate change issues.

Review of 2007 SC Sustainable Agriculture Program Activities. Geoff Zehnder, *Clemson Sustainable Agriculture Program*. A list of 2007 activities is available in PowerPoint format at www.clemson.edu/sustainableag.

DISCUSSION: Critical Issues to Address in 2008 (facilitated by Roland McReynolds)

An initial discussion focused on the need for community connections to facilitate the growth of local food movements. Specific suggestions for individuals/groups we should contact included:

- Agriculture Commissioner Weathers
- SC Food Policy Council (contact there is Susan Frost with DHEC)
- Develop displays/presentations to present at ag industry meetings
- Engage Extension. Develop training on forming local food teams led by extension agents in cooperation with community leaders. Provide agents with a toolbox of strategies for them to take the lead in promoting community food systems (i.e. engaging appropriate community members to promote community food systems).
- Involve Community Development Agents in training programs. Agents could bring local farmer market managers and community leaders to training events. Outcome of this training would be the formation of community food groups that could take steps to enhance market opportunities.

A suggestion was made to conduct research and training in critical areas of importance to new farmers. Critical topics that were identified are:

- Organic vegetable production, particularly high value varieties like heirlooms
- Market economics; i.e. how to price products
- Market demand and assessment
- Farm site evaluation
- Consumer education
- Product packaging and displays
- Good Agricultural Practices
- Practical and easy solutions that address infrastructure needs (i.e. ideas to build inexpensive cold storage facilities, etc)
- How to create a system for marketing and distribution of farm products
- Engaging farmer market managers and local community leaders to assist with marketing efforts
- Use successful farmers as instructors (i.e. Alex Hitt could speak on farming as a livelihood)

Other suggestions:

- Organize grant-writing workshops for extension agents and farmers in cooperation with the USDA Rural Development Center at Sandhill REC (Walter Harris)
- Develop a model for forming local food policy teams (CFSA has developed a curriculum on forming local food advisory groups)
- Organize basic training on organic certification
- Organize training on organic grain production and marketing (Glenn Roberts with Anson Mills was suggested as a potential instructor)
- Communicate the need for research on soil fertility (i.e. appropriate use of cover crops, organic soil amendments) to appropriate research people
- The Meat Lab at Clemson University. Contact the manager Mark Stevenson about the possibility of making the processing facility available to the public.

**South Carolina Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee Meeting
January 13, 2008, Sandhill Research and Education Center, Columbia, SC**

Meeting Minutes

Advisory Committee Members Present

Sharon Alvarez, Elaine Beardon, Bob Bett, Fred Broughton, Patrice Buck, Gayla Carle, Fran Davis, Russell Duncan, Kelly Gilkerson, York Glover, J. Brandon Grace, Roy Hollingsworth, Joseph James, Dave Lamie, Amanda McNulty, Roland McReynolds, Walker Miller, Allison Schaum, Jim Smith, Bill Welch, James Wilkins, Geoff Zehnder

Meeting called to order at 9:00 AM.

Dr. Dave Lamie with the Clemson Inst. for Community and Economic Development gave an overview and update on the MarketMaker system, an interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products. The South Carolina MarketMaker website that will link producers and consumers will be available soon.

Fred Broughton with SC Dept. of Agriculture gave an update on the Certified SC Grown Program to promote local products. \$2 million has been allocated for the program and an additional \$2 million has been requested. SCDA is also partnering with individuals and organizations in the Lowcountry to promote local foods, with plans to expand the initiative to other areas of the state. SCDA will also be conducting training for farmers market managers on topics such as food safety and Good Agricultural Practices (Jack Dantzler is the contact person). They have plans to form an association for farmers who sell to farmers markets; may be handled through the Direct Marketing Association

Discussion on Training Topics for 2008. The committee reviewed discussion from the Open Forum meeting on January 13 and suggested the following training topics for development (in priority order):

- General training in organic farming practices (to be held in conjunction Sumter Cooperative Farms with funding from SARE PDP).
- Organic heirloom vegetable production. Select varieties from the Clemson Heirloom Vegetable Program for demonstration and track costs of production and potential profits.
- Management of Livestock Parasites (John Andrae and Susan Duckett suggested as instructors)
- Use the Sandhill Farmers Market as a demonstration site; i.e. what makes a successful farmers market vendor
- Good Agricultural Practices and Food Safety
- Small Livestock Production and Processing (hold at Clemson and use the Meat Lab)
- Integrated Livestock Production and Rotational Grazing (could possibly be integrated with above)
- Biodiesel and Oil Seed Crop Production (Bob Bett, Geoff Z., Terry Walker, Mac Horton)
- Development of Community Food Systems (Nancy Creamer and Lisa Forehand with CEFS are NC contacts who have organized training)
- How to Organize a Local Food Shed (related to above topic). Develop a training model with lead extension agents who will partner with others in the community to create a team and procedures for working together. Agents will be asked to bring someone from their community; i.e. farm market manager, town planner, etc.
- Training Topic: "You Have 5 Acres; Now What Do You Do?" This training would focus on initial infrastructure needs, costs, getting started.
- Goat Production (Danny Howard and Jerry Mums possible instructors)

Potential Training Sites

- Pee Dee REC (Biodiesel workshop; Bob Bett contact person)
- Spartanburg Library (Fran Davis contact person)
- Jersey Thyme Farm (Patrice Buck contact person)
- Furman University (Southern Living House and Farm; James Wilkins contact person)
- Sandhill Farmers Market (Austin Jenkins contact person)

- Clemson Meat Lab (Mark Stevenson contact person)

Some Funding Opportunities to Investigate

- USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants
- USDA Value Added Producer Grants
- USDA Organic Research Program

Next Steps

- Organize Biodiesel Workshop to be held the end of February at Pee Dee REC (Elizabeth Gibbs with CFSA, Bob Bett, Geoff Zehnder)
- Plan summer training in organic farming practices (Gayla Carle and Azeez Mustafa, Sumter Cooperative Farms, and Geoff)
- Develop training/demonstration on organic heirloom vegetable production. Quantify economics of production as part of the project.
- Contact CU Meat Lab manager Mark Stevenson re: use of facility for processing and training events (Kelly and Geoff)
- Contact County and State Extension Advisory Committees (Kelly and Geoff)
- Contact Sandhill Farmers Market manager Austin Jenkins about possible workshop for extension agents and farmers on marketing strategies.
- Write letter of interest in use of Sandhill Farmers Market for training (to Mac Horton from Geoff)
- Cooperate with South Carolina State University to organize training on Sustainable Vegetable Production and Pest Management for minority farmers
- Pursue ideas for training on the following topics given availability of funds (if people are interested in organizing a workshop on any of these topics please contact Kelly or Geoff):
 - Organic Grain Production and Marketing
 - Small Livestock Production and Processing
 - Integrated Livestock Production and Rotational Grazing
 - Good Agricultural Practices and Food Safety
 - Goat Production and Marketing

Advisory Committee meeting adjourned at noon followed by lunch (provided by Rosewood Market) and a meeting of SC CFSA members led by Roland McReynolds.

Respectfully submitted,
Geoff Zehnder
January 31, 2008
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