OPEN FORUM AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
AND SC SARE ADVISORY MEETING
Saturday, February 21, 2009
Anderson Civic Center, Anderson, South Carolina

MEETING MINUTES

12:00 till 1:30: Lunch sponsored by Anderson County and prepared by Friends Catering prepared using local ingredients.

Meeting called to order at 1.30 pm.

Advisory Committee Members Present:
John Andrae, Russell Duncan, Brandon Grace, Dave Lamie, Alan Moore, Amy Nichols, Allison Schaum, Jim Smith, Jennifer Sparks, Ellie Taylor, James Wilkins

OPENING SESSION

Welcome and Introduction. Geoff Zehnder, Clemson Sustainable Agriculture Program. Overview of the SARE funding mechanism and the SC Model State Program. PowerPoint presentation available at INSERT LINK

Review of 2008 Critical Issues and Advisory Recommendations. Geoff Zehnder, Clemson Sustainable Agriculture Program. A list of 2008 critical issues is available in PowerPoint format at INSERT LINK

Review of 2008 Sustainable Agriculture Program Activities. Geoff Zehnder, Clemson Sustainable Agriculture Program. A list of 2008 activities is available in PowerPoint format at INSERT LINK

Updates presented by Regional Groups. Brandon Grace, Upstate chapter of Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. Alan Moore for Lowcountry Local First and Lowcountry chapter of Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

Discussion on Training Topics for 2009. During the group discussion the following training topics were recommended for development given available resources (not in priority order).

• Training on new grant programs that individuals can apply for; i.e. agriculture programs related to the economic stimulus funding, value-added producer grants, etc.
  o The Rural Development Center at Sandhill REC can assist with this
• Training for extension agents on sustainability (concepts, new initiatives, etc) and how to connect with growers and consumers
  o Organize an agriculture summit in Charleston
• Training on technology that can help local growers. For example email applications to reach consumers, eCommerce technology, other internet technology (Dave Lamie has developed a curriculum on this)
  o Training on distance learning technology; i.e. Adobe Connect
  o Conduct training using webinars so anyone with a computer can participate
• Organize a workshop on economic opportunities in agriculture
  o Conduct another Marketing 101 workshop
  o Creating local markets for small farmers
• Organize a workshop or course on the “Transformation of Agriculture in the 21st Century
• Training on draught mitigation strategies in agriculture
• Conduct Farm Energy training (SC agents will be invited to attend NCAT energy training in North Carolina in September
• Organize trainings in conjunction with the CU Extension Program teams (i.e. Agronomy, Horticulture, etc)
• Agritourism training (Dave Lamie can help with Agritourism training)
Training on farm labor issues; i.e. labor alternatives and solutions for small farms (Alan Moore can help with this)
Training on collecting production and economic data on the farm

Potential Training Sites
- The Madren Center at Clemson University
- Lowcountry Location such as Restaurant that sources local food
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Following these recommendations participants discussed the need to strengthen relationships between Clemson University and local farmers. Participants felt that a top priority issue is the need for strategic planning among Clemson administration, specialists and extension agents on how to meet the needs of a changing agriculture in South Carolina. A suggestion was made to organize an Agricultural Summit involving the above plus state agribusiness representatives, state legislators and proponents of sustainable agriculture and the sustainable agriculture industry (i.e. business leaders like Glenn Roberts of Anson Mills). It was also suggested that the format include a keynote speaker, poster session and published proceedings, and presentations on the available resources (i.e. taking inventory), and on priority issues, needs from each sector; i.e. farming, extension, industry. The Farm Bureau should also be involved. Another suggestion was made to investigate holding the Summit in conjunction with the PSA Conference in December.

Participants felt that it is important to get Clemson administrative buy-in for this Summit. A suggestion was made to organize a core group of CU people with an interest in sustainable agriculture to meet and develop a strategy for planning the Summit that would have the support of stakeholders. Once developed, the plan could be presented at the VP Cabinet meeting.

As a next step, Geoff Zehnder will develop a draft list of potential members for the core CU Sustainable Agriculture group with input from other CU members present. A meeting of the core group will be organized sometime in early April.

Respectfully submitted,
Geoff Zehnder
February 22, 2009
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