

# MEMO

From: Dan Wheeler  
Director – *Center for Profitable Agriculture*

Re: USDA-Rural Development Funds Center’s “Developing Rural Businesses” Program

Date: November 4, 2004

We in the *Center for Profitable Agriculture* (CPA) are pleased to announce that funding from USDA Rural Development for a two-year program in our Center has been approved. The program is titled “Developing Rural Businesses” and is designed to create, develop and implement a value-added training and outreach initiative which will provide technical assistance<sup>1</sup> to farmers and value-added entrepreneurs who are considering or pursuing the development of successful private enterprises. We hope to have a full-time program coordinator for this project on board by January 2005.

The DRB program will initially be implemented in a 19-county area of Tennessee with high unemployment and poverty rates, low median income and a sharp decrease in tobacco production in recent years. The program will serve as a model for possible, long-term implementation in other regions of the state. The 19 counties included in the initial project implementation are: Campbell, Claiborne, Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Fentress, Grainger, Hancock, Jackson, Macon, Morgan, Pickett, Putnam, Overton, Scott, Smith, Trousdale, Union and White.

In pursuit of ultimate rural business development through the support and development of entrepreneurship, the primary objectives of the program are to 1) provide technical assistance, 2) identify, assemble and disseminate information on resources that are available to assist, foster

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<sup>1</sup> “Technical assistance” in the DRB program will include assistance in the development of feasibility studies, marketing studies/plans, industry evaluations, financial analysis/plans, product development, product and marketing surveys, identification of funding opportunities, identification of appropriate business development/assistance resources and enterprise consultations.

and develop value-added enterprises and 3) coordinate training opportunities that supplement technical assistance.

Under the direction of the CPA and appropriate State and Regional Extension administration, a full-time UT Extension Specialist will be assigned to serve as the primary program coordinator and training provider. A packet of printed resource materials will be assembled to assist in the one-on-one delivery of technical assistance and training. Two new educational resource materials will be assembled as a response to specific business development needs.

A systematic “format” will be assembled to guide the delivery of on-site technical assistance. The program coordinator will facilitate and provide “targeted” technical assistance through consultations. A goal of the DRB program is to provide this targeted technical assistance to 45 entrepreneurs in the region. The program coordinator will facilitate “general” technical assistance through large-group outreach efforts at a regional conference, workshops and other educational meetings. Information will also be disseminated via a specific DRB website and a variety of promotions of the website will be implemented.