



"Increasing the value of Tennessee's economy through new, expanded and improved processing and marketing of agricultural, aquacultural and forestry products as well as home-based industries"

Quarterly Summary –

During the first quarter of 2004, Specialists in the Center submitted two new funding proposals and finalized a contract on one other. These three projects combined for more than \$68,000 in external funds. Specialists were also beating the pavement in their 21 farm visits and 25 presentations to some 1489 people in 21 counties. Three news releases were developed on behalf of the Center as were 8 departmental fact sheets.

Working Directly With Farmers –

The winter months of 2004 provided great opportunities for the Center to work directly with farmers across the state in several capacities. Specialists sat down and taught, consulted and advised 31 farmers in their home communities and most often right at their own kitchen tables. Topics of consideration and discussion at these visits included: On-Farm Marketing, Bagging Farm Wastes, Considering a Cooperative, Developing a Non-Profit Co-op, On-farm Milk Processing and Biodiesel Production. The Center's priority of working one-on-one with farmers in the evaluation and analysis of their own ideas has proven not only a unique service of our overall value-added program but also one of the most valuable.



A new sign at the main entrance of the Experiment Station is well enhanced by noting the home of both the Middle Tennessee Experiment Station and identifying the Center for Profitable Agriculture as a U.T./Farm Bureau Partnership.

Educational Resources Available – Much of the one-on-one and group teaching activities during 2004 have been complemented by a number of educational materials developed, printed and distributed by the Center. Six new educational presentations (PowerPoint) were created, 8 new fact sheets were developed, three “project” information packets were prepared and numerous additions were made to the CPA web site during the first quarter of 2004. The Center's dedication to summarizing, documenting and printing conclusions and assessments on non-confidential projects and findings continues to further the impact of our work far beyond our initial intent. This has recently been noted by the many inquiries and complements on the CPA web site where most every educational resource is published and available.

Outreach and Teaching – In addition to the primary organizational responsibilities for the Marketplace for Ideas Conference, Specialists in the Center also conducted 4 break-out workshops on marketing cut-flowers, on-farm marketing and value-added agriculture at the 2004 conference. In addition, Center specialists conducted other presentations at various workshops, trade shows, conferences and farmer meetings in the following locations:

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|--------------|-------------|----------------|----------|
| Nashville | Morristown | Manchester | Jackson |
| Cleveland | Springfield | Mayesville, Ky | Franklin |
| Murfreesboro | Centerville | Cookeville | |
| Knoxville | Crossville | Rogersville | |

Update on Grant-Funded Programs – Our Specialists are currently in the process of implementing numerous activities that are supported by 7 different grant programs which have collectively contributed \$129,000 to the Center. An update on the Center's recent activities in three of the grant-funded programs is provided below.

Agri-Tourism Initiative – The Agritourism Initiative was a major focus of the CPA this quarter. Two CPA faculty and three UT Extension Farm Management Specialists attended the North American Farmer's Direct Marketing Association Conference February 5-8 in Sacramento, CA. This professional development activity allowed them to learn about issues of importance to agritourism operators and network with people tied to the industry. Attendees shared their experiences and CPA specialists reported on other initiative activity progress at a meeting of the Initiative Steering Committee on February 18. Specialists also participated in 4 Regional Workshops by teaching sessions on marketing to approximately 360 agritourism operators, tourism industry professionals, agricultural industry professionals and others. The CPA staff created and analyzed participant evaluation forms for the workshops.

Cooperative Development Emphasis(CDE) – Two farmer groups have been selected as “pilot projects” of the Center's “cooperative development emphasis.” The two groups are located in Hawkins County and Robertson County and will have focused attention and assistance from the Center as they consider and develop possible cooperative alliances, businesses and activities. The CDE program also supported the participation of three UT Extension faculty in a multi-state “Cooperative Winter School” program. As another component of the CDE program, the Center has also drafted a “commentary” regarding the Processing Cooperative Bill which is being considered in the current session of the Tennessee General Assembly.

Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group – As a partner in the SSAWG enterprise development learning network, one Specialist participates in conducting pilot studies designed to identify ways to get targeted assistance to more sustainable farming practitioners at reasonable costs. The Center is one of eight state partners in the southeast who have monthly teleconference calls to communicate and discuss their programs and project, challenges, successes, resources, etc.

Program Highlights from 2003 – During January of 2004, the Center submitted its “Annual Report” for 2003. Here is a summary of the Center's overall program for 2003. Specialists in the Center provided teaching, training and instruction to more than 1,500 individuals through more than 51 sessions and 22 farm/business visits in 2003. Assistance was provided to 11 farmers through project-specific service. Contributions were made to multi-agency programs through some 20 planning meetings and activities. Center staff served as the primary author for three Extension Publications (PB) and 23 other published documents. Ten news releases were prepared and distributed as were 4 quarterly progress reports, 3 posters with abstracts, 6 radio interviews and two television interviews. The Center also organized and implemented an educational tour to two sweet potato farms and visits with two buyers. As a result, approximately 50 acres of sweet potatoes were planted and marketed by contractual agreement. As a part of the Agri-Tourism Initiative (supported through a \$40,000 contract with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture) the Center coordinated an inventory of Tennessee Agri-Tourism operators and began developing an agri-tourism training manual. Center staff assumed primary responsibility for planning, organizing and coordinating the 2003 Marketplace of Ideas Conference where there were 325 registered attendees and 42 presenters. Outreach and training programs conducted in 2003 enabled some 600 participants to improve the planning and development of their value-added ideas. More than 120 agriculture leaders improved their knowledge, understanding and comfort level of value-added agriculture through the Center's numerous tours, workshops and conferences. Significant time and resources have been devoted to providing information and technical assistance to producers seeking value-added grants.

UPDATE ON RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS:

Dairy Processing Opportunity Analysis – With slim margins at the commodity level, some dairy producers are looking for ways to earn more of the consumer dollar. Processing fluid milk products and marketing them under a farm label is often seen as a method to add value to commodity milk. Building, equipping and operating a milk processing facility, however, comes with its own challenges. The CPA evaluated the start-up and operating costs of an on-farm processing facility, investigated opportunities for co-packing and conducted a preliminary market analysis. Limiting factors of such a venture often include capital financing, regulations, distribution, retailer cooperation, financial feasibility, competition and other issues.

Commercial Kitchen Feasibility – Adding value to tomatoes by developing salsas, sauces and chow chow for commercial sale requires the use of a commercial kitchen facility. Several factors influence the feasibility of starting and operating a commercial kitchen including equipment needs, fixed costs, variable and operating costs and market potential. Marketing activities will be very important to the potential success of the products. Government regulations for food processing must also be met in the construction and operations of the kitchen.