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"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"

Many Program Accomplishments During Fall Months:

During October, November and December, Specialists in the Center delivered educational information across the state to more than 1,200 individuals through 22 different group-meeting presentations. Many of these outreach programs targeted agricultural leaders and farmers in the Upper Cumberland region, as well as participants in the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative.

Specialists also provided information to specific requests from 61 different inquiries from 35 different Tennessee counties. Topics of information include biodiesel production, value-added food product development, farmers markets, value-added grants, meat marketing regulations, cooperative development and agritourism enterprise expansion. Three news articles were released and five new educational workshop presentations were developed.

CPA Specialists Help Lead Agent Training Sessions:

During October and November, Specialists in the Center collaborated with other Extension Specialists by presenting information to more than 130 County Extension Agents in four different in-service training sessions across the state. Topics prepared by the Center included "Producing and Marketing Freezer Beef" and an "Outlook for Value-Added Agriculture Enterprises."

Agritourism Conference Great Success:

The *Agritourism Cultivating Farm Revenue* conference was held November 7-9, 2005 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Franklin, Tennessee. A total of 284 participants attended the event. While over 90 percent of participants were from Tennessee, attendees also traveled from Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia. The Center's Megan Bruch served as program chair and the entire CPA staff attended the conference and assisted in various ways.

Thirty-six percent of those who evaluated the conference were *agritourism operators* while 32 percent were *farmers interested in agritourism*. On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not effective and 10 is very effective) the conference was rated 8.66 in improving knowledge, 8.75 in usefulness and an 8.86 in quality of instruction. All respondents indicated that some type of educational event was needed in the future. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents indicated a similar conference should be an annual event. Suggestions for topics to be included in future educational included insurance and liability issues, grants and grant writing strategies, legal aspects and marketing topics.



(Left to right) Ben Sanders, Megan Bruch, Amanda Ziehl and Rob Holland at the conference trade show.

Two New Publications Released: UT Extension publication PB1754 *Agritourism in Focus: A Guide for Tennessee Farmers* and PB1759 *First Things First: Initial Steps for Developing Value Added Cooperative Farmer Ventures* were recently released by the Center. *Agritourism in Focus* was developed to assist Tennessee farmers and agri-entrepreneurs in evaluating agritourism enterprise opportunities, planning agritourism enterprises and dealing with issues and obstacles faced by existing agritourism enterprises. It also serves as a resource for professionals working with existing or potential agritourism entrepreneurs. *First Things First* provides information for farmers who are considering a cooperative venture. The information discusses various steps and stages that farmers will likely encounter as they take a cooperative venture from an idea to a complete feasibility study. The information presented is based on various experiences developing farmer cooperative ventures in Tennessee and from numerous other cooperative development educational publications and resources. These and other publications developed by Center specialists are available electronically at <http://cpa.utk.edu>.

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Update on “Developing Rural Businesses Program:” In January 2005 the Center launched the “Developing Rural Businesses” (DRB) program as a special initiative to work with farmers and entrepreneurs in 19 rural Tennessee counties in the analysis and development of value-added ventures. The DRB program has just completed its first year of programming and is slated to continue through June 2007. As of December.....

- 188 individuals participated in 11 informational meetings.
- 177 individuals received specific educational materials at 3 workshops.
- 19 agri-entrepreneurs received one-on-one technical assistance from Center specialists representing 19 different counties .
- 2 large group, Extension DRB introductory programs were conducted with county Extension agents.
- 17 county Extension offices and 7 county Farm Bureau Board of Directors have been visited by the DRB coordinator.
- 8 news releases and 4 e-mail updates have been developed and released.
- 3 new Extension educational publications are underway addressing regulatory issues involved in the production of value-added meat products, listing of available resources for value-added businesses and a guide to identifying new enterprises.

CPA’s Cooperative Development Initiative Wraps Up: In October, the CPA submitted a final report to the Kentucky Center for Cooperative Development for Phase II of the Cooperative Development Initiative. The objectives of Phase II include the continued delivery of technical assistance, development of training programs, dissemination of information and development of educational tools – all related to cooperative ventures by farmers and agribusinesses. During the project, the Center participated in a significant number of Cooperative Development program activities. In response to specific requests by farmer groups, two new educational publications were developed: UT Extension Publication #1759 “First Things First: Initial Steps for Developing Value-Added Cooperative Farmer Ventures” and CPA Info #117 “Steps Involved with Filing Articles of Organization as a Tennessee Processing Cooperative.” In addition to development of new educational materials, “cooperatives” was the theme of seven group meetings with more than 120 participants. Educational information was also assembled and disseminated for 11 different farmer inquiries.

Surveys of Agritourism Web Site Development Workshops Summarized: During 2004 and 2005 the Center provided leadership for two rounds of Web site development and marketing workshops as part of the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative. The workshops provided training to a total of 80 participants. In June 2005, 49 participants from the workshops were asked to participate in a follow-up mail survey to determine how participants had used the information from the workshops. According to the survey results, in the three to six months following the workshop, 48 percent of the respondents used the information to “plan a Web site,” 41 percent “improved their ability to communicate with a Web developer,” and 37 percent “made improvements to an existing Web site.” Respondents reported a total of \$7,575 in expense savings and/or revenue increase in the three to six months following the workshops. Respondents reported an average benefit of \$76 saved in class or workshop fees, \$210 saved from not having to hire Web developers and \$175 saved from better communication with their Web developers. Respondents also reported an average increase in sales for the period of \$751 and other benefits of \$467. The average financial benefit per participant is estimated at \$445. A total of 18 respondents, 67 percent, indicated they would be interested in an advanced workshop.

CPA Specialists Contribute “FAQ’s” to National Extension Database: Twenty-four “Frequently Questions Asked” (and answers) were recently submitted by CPA specialists to the National Extension web-based databases at <http://intranet.extension.org>. Questions related to agritourism, value-added marketing and developing cooperatives. In addition to being posted on the Extension Web site, FAQ’s and numerous educational materials are located on the CPA website at <http://cpa.utk.edu>.

Around the Corner.....

- “North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association” Annual Meeting & Conference, Austin, Texas, January 9 -15
- Tennessee “Young Leaders Conference,” Jackson, Tennessee, February 10 - 11, 2006
- Value-Added In-Service Training, Spring Hill and Vicinity, March 7 - 9, 2006
- “Results of Hispanic Market Development Study,” to be released during the Spring of 2006
- National Value-Added Agricultural Conference, Music City Sheraton – Nashville, June 12 - 13, 2006
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UPDATE ON COMPLETED PROJECTS:

Agritourism Marketing and New Attraction Considerations: Marketing is often cited as both the most important factor of success and biggest obstacle for agritourism enterprises. Development of a thorough marketing plan is essential to increase the potential for success for agritourism operations. The plan needs to clearly identify the target audience(s) for the product(s) offered and strategies to effectively reach these specific audiences through promotions: publicity, advertising, discounting, sampling. The plan should also include a marketing budget and methods to evaluate the results of the plan as it is implemented. A marketing plan check list will help identify tasks to be completed, a deadline for completion and person responsible.