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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"**

## Progress Report 33

July 2006

### Summary of Program Inputs:

From April to June, Specialists with the Center conducted on-farm visits with 27 different farmers in 24 different counties. Subject matter discussed during these visits included pick-your-own marketing, agritourism, goat-cheese, food processing, farmers' markets, rabbit processing, milk bottling and produce auctions.

Specialists also developed 8 new teaching presentations and conducted sessions at 16 different teaching events to more than 465 people -- these presentations were made in 10 different Tennessee communities. The Center was also represented at 36 additional meetings and events across the state.

During June 2006, the Specialists in the Center completed work on 7 programs which provided more than \$98,000 of external funding to the Center.

Information was disseminated through more than 90 contacts including telephone calls, e-mail, direct letters, information packets and office visits.

Recent farmer project activities, visits and consultations have involved the following enterprises:

- ▶ Produce Auction
- ▶ Rabbit Processing
- ▶ Milk Bottling
- ▶ Livestock Waste Packaging
- ▶ Food Processing
- ▶ Agritourism
- ▶ Cheese
- ▶ Pick-Your-Own Grapes
- ▶ Meat Processing

### A Message from the Director

### - - Megan Bruch Named Outstanding New Specialist by TAAA&S:

During the annual meeting and professional development conference of the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Agents and Specialists (TAAA&S) in Paris, Tennessee on April 20, Megan Bruch, Marketing Specialist with the Center for Profitable Agriculture, was named by her peers as the 2006 "Outstanding New Extension Specialist." The award was made by TAAA&S president Kevin Rose and president-elect Dr. Charlie Hall. Bruch was praised for her leadership with the state's agritourism initiative, her development of quality educational materials and her dedication to value-added teaching across the state. Megan is a very talented and dedicated Extension professional. All of the CPA staff are proud of her accomplishments and honored to claim her as a member of our team.

Dan Wheeler

Director - Center for Profitable Agriculture

**Initial Study of the "Tennessee Veal Advantage Program" Completed:** During May and June, an initial study of an expanded veal industry in Tennessee was conducted in the Center. The study was sponsored by the Tennessee Beef Industry Council through a grant from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. The objectives of the initial study included a preliminary assessment of the Tennessee veal industry, evaluation of the state's existing veal market and an outline for future steps and studies needed. The 21-page report included comparisons between Tennessee and other veal-producing states and results of informal surveys with potential veal markets.

**Hispanic Market Development Project Culminates in Release of New Extension Publication:** The Center's newest educational publication was released in June. The new publication is titled "The Growing Hispanic Population in Tennessee: A Potential Market Opportunity for Farmers and Value-Added Entrepreneurs." The availability of this new publication coincides with the completion of the Center's two-year project funded in part by a grant from USDA and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. A draft of this publication was used as a primary teaching tool with county Extension agents during an in-service training conducted by the Center earlier in the year. The publication is now available in each County Extension office across the state and on the Center's web site at: <<http://cpa.utk.edu>>.

**Final Report of the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative Completed:** The Center has been pleased to be a strong part of the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative since 2003. Several Specialists in the Center have been involved in numerous aspects of the initiative including the recent development of a comprehensive "recap" of all initiative activities. A written report was developed in June that compiled documentation of many of the activities and accomplishments of the initiative. The "recap" report discussed the initial planning meetings, development of a definition for agritourism, implementation of an inventory of existing agritourism enterprises in the state, training and education programs which reached more than 3,500 participants, development of the Tennessee Agritourism guide, the 2005 agritourism conference and many of the other activities and accomplishments of the initiative.

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**Tennessee is Host to Successful 8<sup>th</sup> Annual National Value-Added Agriculture Conference:** The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual *National Value-Added Agriculture Conference* was held in Nashville, Tennessee on June 12 and 13, 2006. One-hundred seventy (170) people from 24 states registered for the conference. The two-day conference featured 5 general session presentations, 12 concurrent session speakers and a panel of value-added entrepreneurs from three southern states. There were 21 conference sponsors and 14 trade show participants. Those attending the conference were asked to complete conference evaluation forms – 75 percent of the respondents said they were Extension/outreach educators. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is terrible and 5 is outstanding) the average rating of the overall conference experience was 4.40. Ninety-seven percent of participants indicated that the conference met their expectations. Participants were asked to rate each session of the conference (on a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 is not effective and 10 is very effective) for its level of improved knowledge, usefulness and quality of instruction. The average rating for improved knowledge of all sessions was 7.60. The average rating for usefulness and quality of instruction for all sessions was, 7.69 and 7.90 respectively. Some of the most positive aspects of the conference identified by participants included networking opportunities, the value-added videos, quality speakers/sessions and the educational tools that were featured. Suggestions for future conference included continuing the value-added videos, addition of field trips/tours, pre-conference activities and a larger trade show.

**Annual Report to Farm Bureau:** A report of activities, events and impacts from 2005 was made to the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Farm Bureau during the Board's quarterly meeting in May. The report included brief presentations from each of the Center's state-wide specialists and covered program inputs and accomplishments in 2005 and outlined planned programs for 2006. The continued partnership with the Farm Bureau is an important aspect of future impacts of CPA outreach and teaching programs.

**Agritourism Today Newsletter:** The second issue of "Tennessee Agritourism Today" was released in April. Tennessee Agritourism Today is an electronic newsletter produced by the Center and dedicated to educating agritourism partners. The April issue included information about USDA guidelines for animals used in exhibits, an update on TDA's cost-share programs, target marketing and a listing of upcoming agritourism events.

**CPA Specialists Teach at Regional Workshop Sponsored by Auburn University:** As part of a two-day multi-state training program in alternative meat marketing, Extension Specialists from the Center, Amanda Ziehl and Rob Holland, conducted a workshop titled "The Art and Science of Business Planning and Management." More than 50 people participated in the regional workshop which applied traditional business planning principles with value-added intuition. Participation in the workshop at Auburn represented the fourth time that Ziehl and Holland have conducted this workshop in the Southeast.

## UPDATE ON COMPLETED PROJECTS:

**Pick-Your-Own Grape Marketing:** Starting a new enterprise can require significant start-up capital. Often, entrepreneurs run low on cash when it comes time to market their enterprise. This situation should be avoided by careful planning when at all possible, but when it happens operators often seek relatively low-cost (in dollars) marketing options, although these options often require significant investments of time. Options may include developing relationships with media and aggressively submitting news releases, developing relationships with local tourism organizations, working with other area tourism ventures to develop cooperative marketing arrangements, and utilizing free listings in community events calendars and organizational Web sites. Another low-cost method is to collect customer e-mail addresses and, with their permission, send notifications of crop availability or special events.

**Heritage Breed Dairy Products:** Using a unique breed of dairy cattle to create a differentiated cheese product requires significant planning and technical assistance. Access to specialty food marketing channels and audiences still leave the need for business plan development, acquisition of required licenses and permits and development of food safety protocols. The development of attractive labeling and marketing materials along with the need to identify capital financing are also necessary. Resources should be consulted that provide technical information on dairy parlor and cheese processing facility design, business planning and funding programs at both the state and federal level.

**Pick-Your-Own Berry Marketing:** Marketing is often a challenge for direct marketers. Choosing which types of marketing strategies may be most effective and developing marketing materials are important components of market planning and implementation. The key to choosing effective marketing strategies is to clearly define and understand a target audience to determine which methods will be most likely to reach members of this group. Roadside signage is important in directing customers seeking the operation and drawing potential customers to the operation. A list of existing customers is valuable in direct communications through mail or e-mail. Paid advertisements, promotions or sponsorships, press releases, Web sites and word-of-mouth referrals may also be effective promotional strategies.