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## "Helping Farmers Develop Value-Added Enterprises"

### Progress Report 45

July 2009

#### Funding Approved for Center from USDA Rural Development:

During June, the Center was notified by USDA Rural Development that a recently submitted project proposal had been accepted for funding. The funding helps support a larger effort between the Center and TSU that is focused on developing and utilizing educational materials for direct marketing meat products. The project provides \$30,000 over the next 12 months.

**Fruits of the Backyard:** The Middle Tennessee Research and Education Center hosted the second annual "Fruits of the Backyard" field day in Spring Hill on June 16. Staff of the Center participated in the trade show and featured three local farmers who were available to discuss their production, marketing and value-added experiences. We extend appreciation to Ed Rollins, Giles County; Gail Chessor, Hickman County; and Dan and Debbie Eiser, Lawrence County, for their participation with the Center in the field day. More than 200 people attended the event which focused on blueberry and grape production as well as home horticulture/landscaping issues.



**A Message from the Director** – We continue to focus on filling vacant positions and completing the staffing plan of our Center. We are in the process of announcing a new half-time position that is supported by external funds for three years. The position will involve development of a farm-to-market initiative in conjunction with Extension's organic initiative. We are also proceeding to re-announce the Extension Specialist (Financial Analysis) position. The search for this position was suspended in December 2008 in response to the uncertain budget situation. We plan to resume this search in the near future and then turn our attention to the vacant Marketing Specialist position. I extend my sincere appreciation to the numerous folks that are assisting our Center in searching to fill these vacancies. With three vacancies, we have three different search committees of individuals that are investing time in this important process. All too often, the efforts and activities of search committees go unrecognized, which is unfortunate. It is an important role, and we in the Center are fortunate to have three excellent committees in place at this time.



Rob Holland, Director - Center for Profitable Agriculture

**CPA Launches "Farmers Market Connection"** In April, the Center launched a new electronic newsletter designed to educate and inform farmers market vendors, market leadership and professionals who work toward enhancing the industry. The "Farmers Market Connection" newsletter includes educational information such as regulatory issues, marketing tips, available resources and opportunities, profiles of existing farmers markets and upcoming educational events. If you would like to be added to the e-mail list to receive this newsletter, please contact Kim Martinez at [kamartinez@utk.edu](mailto:kamartinez@utk.edu). The April 2009 issue of Farmers Market Connection is available online at <http://cpa.utk.edu/pdf/files/FarmersMarket/apr-2009.pdf>. Articles in the first issue include: Food Manufacturing Regulations Impacting Farmers Market Vendors; Producer Diversification Cost-Share Program; Spotlight on Farmers Markets: Dickson County; Online Resource Directory and Market Minute: Type of Farmers Market Facilities.

**Agritourism Program Update:** Extension Specialist Megan Bruch presented a program called "Lessons Learned from the Agritourism in Action Bus Tour" at the National Value-Added Agriculture Conference in Moline, Illinois on June 3. The session provided information on tour planning and implementation as well as lessons learned from operations visited on the tour. In addition, copies of the fact sheet of the same title were provided to participants (CPA Info #158 <http://cpa.utk.edu/pdf/files/cpa158.pdf>). The latest issue of the *Tennessee Agritourism Today* electronic newsletter was published in May. The newsletter provided updates on the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program and agritourism liability bill, profiled Three Creeks Farm, provided marketing resource information, introduced a new farmers market newsletter and provided information on upcoming events. All issues of the newsletter are available on-line at <http://cpa.utk.edu/level2/agritourism/training.htm>.

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**GROW-10 Program Update:** An encouraging number of farmers and agri-entrepreneurs have been served by the GROW-10 program through technical assistance and educational outreach during the second quarter of 2009. The program's educational initiatives included multiple agritourism workshops, farmers market meetings and community development workshops which positively impacted 236 participants across all ten of the GROW-10 targeted counties. Further achievements include the completion of two new fact sheets to assist growers with regulatory issues related to direct marketing fruits and vegetables in Tennessee and the ongoing development of a publication to aid beginning farmers and agri-entrepreneurs in the selection of a new farm enterprise. As part of the GROW-10 program's goal to strengthen economic and business development in local communities, three value-added enterprise tours have planned. These half-day tours are designed to educate and assist farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, community leaders and extension agents in the areas of farmers market development, community supported agriculture and agritourism. Tours dates have been set for July 29, September 8 and November 4, and will start and end in Humphreys, Lewis and Lawrence counties, respectively. Contact Amy Ladd with the Center for Profitable Agriculture at (931) 486-2777 for more information.

**Tennessee Agents Participate in Multi-State Agritourism Training:** The Center's Megan Bruch and Amy Ladd, along with seven other Tennessee Extension agents and area farm management specialists, attended a multi-state training on agritourism in Asheville, NC on April 27-29. Called "The Business Side of Agritourism" the training included presentations by agritourism operators, Extension agents and tourism professionals on a variety of topics related to evaluating and developing agritourism enterprises. The training was hosted by the University of Georgia and North Carolina State University. Partial funding was provided through SARE for travel expenses.

**"Ag Day" on Capital Hill** – Rob Holland and Amy Ladd represented the Center during the annual "Ag Day on Capital Hill" in April. The event focused on the importance of agriculture across Tennessee and featured exhibits and discussions which highlighted the historical significance of the state's agriculture industry and cutting-edge initiatives. Amy and Rob updated state legislators on the success and program impact of the Center and took advantage of the opportunity to visited one-on-one with Governor Bredesen about agritourism, value-added products and grass-fed beef.

**National Value-Added Agriculture Conference:** Megan Bruch and Rob Holland represented the Center at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Value-Added Agriculture Conference held during June in Moline, Illinois. Bruch participated in the program as a presenter for the agritourism program track. Value-added agriculture educators and service providers from more than 15 states participated in the 3-day conference which featured program tracks for agritourism, local food systems and business development and provided networking opportunities with colleagues. The 2010 and 2011 conferences will be held in Mississippi and Pennsylvania, respectively.

**CPA's 10-year Anniversary Recognized by House Agriculture Committee with Resolution:** The State House Agriculture Committee formally recognized the Center for a decade of outstanding service to the citizens of Tennessee. Committee Chairman Stratton Bone, Jr., representative from District 46, including Lebanon, presented a framed copy of the proclamation to CPA Director Rob Holland during a May 12 session of the committee. Holland thanked the committee for the recognition, and he pledged that the Center will continue to work diligently to serve the state's citizens. Citing the USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture, Holland said from 1997 to 2007 the number of Tennessee farmers participating in direct farm sales to consumers has increased by 33 percent. Since its establishment, the Center has generated more than \$1.25 million in external grants that have helped provide value-added educational opportunities to more than 3,000 Tennesseans. Again citing the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Holland said that the total value of agricultural products sold directly to consumers from farmers increased by 83.5 percent – up from approximately \$8.4 million in 1997 to \$15.4 million in 2007. Tennessee Farm Bureau President Lacy Upchurch also spoke before the committee reiterating the Center's contributions to the state's farmers and rural communities. He remarked on the necessity for farmers to operate on "tight margins" and how assistance from the Center has helped operations to become profitable and to thrive.

