



Photos by Bob Ratliff

PRODUCER ADVISORY GROUPS Meet to Discuss Needs

By Bob Ratliff

Producer advisory groups gathered during March at the North Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Verona and at the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Raymond to provide input on their research and education needs.

More than 200 producers of crops and livestock ranging from corn to catfish gathered in Verona for the March 4 meeting. The North Mississippi Producer Advisory Council is the oldest such group in the state, meeting this year for the 51st time.

During the morning session at Verona, the producers divided into 13 commodity groups to discuss the research needed to support their enterprises and the Extension programs that apply to their operations. MAFES personnel and MSU Extension specialists and county directors were on hand to answer questions and participate in the discussion.

Following a catfish lunch, representatives of the various commodity groups presented a summary of their discussions.

Paul Wellborn of Union County represented the turf producers. He reported that the turf industry in Mississippi would benefit from Extension programs designed to assist with marketing of their products. The primary research activity requested by the turf producers was continued work with shade-tolerant varieties.

Continued support for the Wiley L. Bean Swine Demonstration Unit at the Pontotoc Ridge-Flatwoods Branch

Experiment Station is a priority for north Mississippi producers, according to Chickasaw County producer Kevan McQuary. The swine group also discussed the need for a support network to assist independent producers with securing feed and other supplies.

Calhoun County producer Stephen Bailey reported that the sweetpotato group discussed the need for additional research with herbicides and insecticides for their crop and for assistance with securing Section 18 permits for the use of needed pesticides on sweetpotatoes.

The producer group for ornamental plants discussed support for national field trials at the North Mississippi Research and Extension Center's Magnolia Botanical Gardens, according to Lafayette County producer Jack Brown.

Ben Harlow of Monroe County reported north Mississippi grain producers want more dryland soybean variety trials. Their discussion also included the need to evaluate seed treatments and insecticides for corn and soybeans.

The fruit and vegetable group report was presented by Ralph Hanskiewicz of Union County. He reported that the group discussed the need for additional information on organic gardening and on muscadines and blackberries. The producers also requested additional research with greens, carrots and butterbeans.

Economic issues were a major topic in the forestry group, according to Marshall County producer Art Waymire. Of particular interest was the TimTek pilot plant on the Starkville campus. TimTek is a process for producing manufac-

tured lumber from small-diameter trees. The forestry group also cited the need for more research with invasive insect species that threaten their industry.

Beverly Jones of Oktibbeha County reported the equine group discussed the need for a state Extension equine specialist. Better access to information via newsletters and a Web site for the MAFES stallion service also were major topics of discussion in the equine group.

Research needs dominated the discussion in the dairy group. Tate County producer James Barham said more research is needed on the problems of heel warts and other foot problems in dairy cattle. He also reported that the dairy producers would like to see additional research with forage production for dairy operations.

Research also dominated the cotton discussion, according to Tippah County producer Keith Morton. The north Mississippi producers asked for additional ultra-narrow row research. Their research requests also included additional work with Roundup Ready varieties.

Marketing and controlling production costs were the major topics in the beef group. Reporting for the group, Tom Breland of Oktibbeha County said producers would like to see more research with ways to control input costs, especially those related to hay production.

Ben Koehn of Clay County reported the catfish producers would like more information on meeting industry grade and yield standards. The catfish group discussion also included the need for continued off-flavor research and work with ways to improve aeration.

Following the producer reports, Extension Assistant Director Will McCarty thanked the participants and adjourned the meeting.

“What we have learned today is some things that, if implemented, will improve our agricultural enterprises,” he said.

Almost 200 producers, industry leaders, Extension personnel, and MAFES scientists representing seven production areas met March 17th for the eighth annual Central Mississippi Research and Extension Agricultural Advisory Council at the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center.

For the first time, an equine group was part of the Raymond meeting. Lynn Strickland of Newton County was one of the nine participants.

“Mississippi has quality horses. If you can compete in Mississippi, you can compete anywhere,” she said during the group’s discussion of equine activities in the state.

Shelby Bearden, County Extension director in Copiah County, presented the equine group report. He noted that the group discussed the need for additional horse health programs, especially for first-time buyers. The participants also cited a need for more publications dealing with horses, including marketing, and the potential benefits of an Extension horse short-course.

The beef cattle report was given by MAFES animal scientist Ronda Vann. The group discussed the need for seminars related to beef production in their area of the state. The producers also noted the need for continued funding of Extension and research programs for beef cattle.

Walthall County Extension director Lamar Adams presented the dairy report. Forward contracting of milk was discussed. The dairy group also cited the need for continued research and educational activities dealing with health issues, including foot care and BSE.

Producer Kendall Garraway of Hinds County reported the row crop group would like to see more cotton plot tests in the area and a variety trial in Rankin County. The row crop producers also expressed interest in more peanut research in the central part of the state, including a study with peanut/corn rotation.

MAFES horticulturist Bill Evans reported that the fruits and vegetables meeting included an update on where producers can take samples for diagnoses of diseases and other problems with their plants. The fruit and vegetable group also discussed the need for additional integrated plant management training.

Concern about the high cost of fuel was a major topic in the ornamentals group, according to producer Willie Rivers of Rankin County. The group requested that MSU provide a team to help address concerns about fuel for use in greenhouses and nurseries. The need for an agricultural economist to work with the state’s green industry also was discussed.

Central Mississippi forest landowners would like to see timber price reports in a form useful to small producers, according to the group report from Joe Fox of Newton County. The forestry group also asked for a separate wildlife advisory group for the 2005 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned by MAFES Associate Director Reuben Moore, who noted that the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center is a model for cooperation because of the work it carries out in conjunction with Hinds Community College, Alcorn State University, Louisiana State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service.



Alcorn State University Extension Administrator Dalton McAfee addressed the Central Mississippi Advisory Council.