

Northeast Mississippi Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

October 2014 Newsletter



****Grower Meeting** - November 6th, 11:00 a.m. – noon.**

Jake's Restaurant, Okolona, Hwy 145 S. A light meal will be provided after the meeting. Come to hear what research is being done in Verona, to discuss the ups and downs of this past growing season, and give us your thoughts on the conference in February. **Please RSVP at 662-566-8002 by November 4th.**

Dr. Jeff Wilson – Regional Horticulture Specialist

It has been busy here at the NMREC with horticulture research projects and trial gardens. We have conducted a Tomato fertilizer study, a pumpkin variety trial, a pumpkin disease study, and a pepper demo trial. We look forward to sharing the results with you at the Conference in February. Some of this info will be covered at the grower meeting November 6th in Okolona. We had a great turnout for the Fall Flower & Vegetable Tour in September with over 200 participants. As always, contact me if I can help you in any way.

UPCOMING EVENTS

GAP/GHP Cost-Share Program Available

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is currently offering a cost-share program to provide financial assistance to Mississippi fruit and vegetable farmers receiving Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) Certification. Eligible farmers will receive reimbursement for 75% of the certification costs up to a maximum of \$500. To receive reimbursement, farmers must submit a completed application with proper documentation of costs incurred. Only audits completed by an approved USDA certifier will be eligible for reimbursement. A list of auditor contacts is available at www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp. Funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis until the funds are depleted. Funding for this program is provided through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. For more information about this program or to obtain an application, visit www.mdac.ms.gov, call Michael Lasseter at [\(601\) 359-1120](tel:6013591120) or email michaelL@mdac.ms.gov.

National Organic Cost-Share Program

The Agriculture Act of 2014 authorized the USDA to provide \$11.5 million to assist producers & handlers of agricultural products in obtaining certification under the National Organic Program. The USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) consists of the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP). The OCCSP defrays the cost of organic certification by authorizing USDA to allocate funds from the NOCCSP to eligible State Agencies. The State Agencies then reimburse certified organic operators for a portion of their costs incurred to obtain or maintain certification to the National Organic Regulations.

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is now offering a cost-share program for MS organic producers and handlers receiving certification or continuation of certification by a USDA accredited certifying agent. Funding is for fiscal year 2014; individual organic operators are eligible for

reimbursement of 75 percent of their 2014 (October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014) certification costs up to a maximum of \$750 per category of certification. National Organic Certification Cost Share

To be eligible for reimbursement, applicants must provide: proof of certification issued by a USDA accredited certifying agent, a reimbursement form, an itemized invoice for certification-related expenses, a IRS W-9 form and a documentation of the payment made (In the form of a cancelled check). You must be a Mississippi organic producer and handler located within the State of Mississippi. Funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis until the funds are depleted. Operations may receive one reimbursement per year. If you have questions regarding the cost-share program, please contact Michael Lasseter [601-359-1120](tel:601-359-1120) or michaell@mdac.ms.gov. [National Organic Cost-Share Application and W9](#). Please complete all forms and mail to: MS Dept of Agriculture, Marketing-Organic Cost-Share, P.O. Box 1609, Jackson, MS 39215.

TRANSPORTING NUTRITION TO FOOD DESERTS

CSX and The Conservation Fund today announced a program of grants aimed at improving the transportation and distribution of fresh, healthy food to communities in need. More than 23 million Americans across the country have limited or no access to fresh produce, dairy, meats and seafood. One of the contributors to these so-called “food deserts” is the lack of infrastructure to distribute fresh food to markets. To support local distribution and help address this need, CSX and The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit dedicated to finding conservation solutions that balance environmental and economic needs, teamed up to create a program that will help farmers and distributors enhance their delivery capabilities.

Grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 will be made available to entities that distribute fresh produce/perishable food in the 23 states where CSX operates. The grants can support a range of activities related to transportation such as: acquiring refrigerated vehicles for direct delivery to markets; financing “veggie vans” to bring fresh food to isolated communities; providing better access to food hubs or other sites where produce, dairy, seafood and meats can be stored safely for distribution; or purchasing produce boxes and cold storage bins to keep unsold food fresh for the next day's farmers market or wholesale purchase. Grant applications are due by October 1, 2014. To download a grant application and see more information about the program, please visit <http://www.conservationfund.org/partner-with-us/corporate-partners/profiles/csx/> or contact Margarita Carey at mcarey@conservationfund.org.

2014 USDA Local Food Directories

Anne Alonzo, the head of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, announced that the department is developing three new directories in an effort to better connect farmers and buyers, and enhance awareness of available local food sources. The Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Enterprise Directory will list farms or farm networks that offer delivery of locally-grown products; the Food Hub Directory will provide information on businesses or organizations that can organize the marketing of products to multiple buyers from multiple producers; and the On-Farm Market Directory will list farms with on-premise sales.

Like the Farmers Market Directory, there is no cost to be listed in any of the three new USDA directories and it is easy and quick to update and keep your information (e.g., new hours, new products) fresh. USDA is currently requesting that managers and owners of local food entities enter their business information in the new directories. All CSAs, food hubs and farm markets owners/managers need to do is go to <http://usdalocalfooddirectories.com/>, then click on “Add or Update a Listing,” and then click on CSA, Food Hub or On-Farm Market.

Once a sufficient number of operations have been listed in the new directories, they will be available for public viewing in addition to USDA's Farmers Market Directory. The numbers of directories required

before the directories become available are provided on the pages. Contact us at: directoryupdates@ams.usda.gov if you have any questions concerning the new Local Food Directories.

Growing Lunch-A School Garden Grant Program

Growing Lunch is a school garden grant program administered through the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce with the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Eligible schools can receive a grant up to \$500 to purchase supplies needed to plant a school garden. Growing Lunch seeks to enhance the Farm to School program across the state. Farm to School provides locally-grown produce to our state's schools and also seeks to educate students on agriculture. This program will act as an educational tool to enhance the knowledge of school-aged children on agriculture, healthy eating, and how food arrives on their plate three times a day. As society becomes increasingly further away from agricultural practices and the farm, it remains pertinent to educate students on the origin of their food; MDAC has designated a website for those interested in the Farm to School Program and educational resources and materials for Farm to School Week, www.farmtoschoolweek.org. All schools, K-12, in the State of Mississippi are eligible to apply, although this program is ideally geared towards younger school-aged children. For more information, please see the attached application

New Pilot Program Offers Coverage for Fruits/Vegetables, Organic and Diversified Farms

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a new risk management option that will be available for fruit & vegetable growers and producers with diversified farms. The policy, called Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, will provide flexible coverage options for specialty crop, organic and diversified crop producers. The program will be implemented in counties across the country and will expand in availability over the next several years.

Whole-Farm insurance allows farmers to insure all crops on their farm at once, rather than insuring commodity by commodity. This allows farmers greater flexibility to make planting decisions on their land. More flexibility also empowers farmers and ranchers to make a broader range of decisions with their land, helping them succeed and strengthening our agriculture economy."

This policy is also part of USDA's [commitment to small and mid-sized producers](#) managing diversified operations. It offers coverage levels from 50 to 85 percent; recognizes farm diversification through qualification for the highest coverage levels along with premium rate discounts for multiple crop diversification. The Market Readiness Feature, as outlined in the Farm Bill, simplifies insurance coverage for producers under the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection pilot policy by allowing the costs such as washing, trimming, and packaging to be left in the insured revenue instead of having to adjust those amounts out of the insured amount.

As part of the pilot, Whole-Farm Revenue Protection will be available where AGR and AGR-Lite are currently offered, and will expand to other counties as data are available for underwriting and actuarial ratemaking. RMA will release information on the policy later this summer when it becomes available. This information will be announced on the RMA website at www.rma.usda.gov.

MSU-ES Contact info:

Below are the contact names and numbers that are directly related to the association and your production issues. Please start with your local county Extension agent to help find answers to your questions. They are capable of handling your request and have access to all of our resources

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