

West Virginia Small Farm Advocate

WVU Extension Service Small Farm Center Risk Management Education

Summer 2015

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2015 WEST VIRGINIA SMALL FARM CONFERENCE

BY LISA LAGANA, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, WVU EXTENSION SMALL FARM CENTER

The history of the West Virginia Small Farm Conference is one of change. What started out as a small group of farmers attending a few classes during a day long workshop at the Ramada Inn in Morgantown has grown to over 700 attendees twelve years later. The conference has outgrown many locations over time, previously in the Morgantown area, it has now found a new home in our more centrally located capitol city at the Charleston Civic Center. The Civic Center has recently unveiled plans to expand over the next two to three years, which will allow ample space for the Conference to continue to grow there in the future.

What once was a one day workshop has transformed into a three-day event, a separate youth agricultural business plan competition, and many additional days of hands-on workshops and certification classes. With over 180 sessions to choose from this year, it was difficult for some to decide on a course! From the very popular 'Hoophouse Summer Crops' session with author Pam Dawling to the 'Pest Management Roundtable Discussion' with Growers, there were plenty of opportunities for every farmer to significantly improve their business through education and networking.

Highlighting the Farm to School movement, our plenary speaker, Stephen Ritz, founder of the Green Bronx Machine, helped us launch our conference on Thursday at lunch in his Swiss cheese cowboy hat by pumping up the crowd. He provided inspiration for real change through his stories and video of teaching garden-based learning at inner city schools, finalizing with his favorite saying "Together, we can all prosper. Si se puede! (Yes, we can!)"

After a long history of continued success, the Winter Blues Farmers Market was also moved to Charleston alongside the conference, with the help of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, drawing more than

40 vendors, 500 customers, and, rewarding those loyal farmers for sticking with us, \$13,000 in sales on Thursday evening. Though the Winter Blues has never been held in the capitol city until this year, the customers were excited to see the large variety of produce in the winter, crafts, meats, fresh baked goods, and, of course, the maple cotton candy. Families danced to the music of the Buck Mountain String Band and enjoyed tasty creations from different Charleston-area restaurants at the Local Dine Around. Needless to say, everyone is excited for its growth in future years.

One thing that hasn't changed about the conference is the meals, and Friday night's

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SAVE THE DATE

February 25-27, 2016
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston, W. Va.

It's all about THE FOOD and Community



CONFERENCE cont.

Small Farm Celebration banquet was no different. They are always sourced from products grown or raised locally from farmers in West Virginia, coordinated by the WVU-ES Small Farm Center Team, and prepared with care by chefs throughout the event. If you



are a grower interested in partnering with the Team to provide us with your W.Va. product, please contact us!

At the Celebration

banquet, the 5th Annual Great West Virginia Pop-Off! was awarded to David & Barbara Miller, of Mountain Diamond Longhorns, for first place with the tastiest popcorn out of five entries. WVU student, Evan Dodrill, was awarded \$10,000 for his livestock tracking system entry into the Vanguard Design Competition by the Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing. Potomac State College of WVU awarded Colton Shoemaker the Chessie Federal Credit Union Scholarship, giving him a free year of tuition. Another scholarship was also awarded for free conference registration to student Justin Brackenrich in memory of Del Yoder and his lifelong commitment to educating youth on sustainable agriculture.

The conference of 2015 was definitely one of change. One for a continually better conference that will inspire hope and creative

ideas in West Virginia small farmers around our great state. We hope you enjoyed it. See you in 2016!

For more information on next year's W.Va. Small Farm Conference and other events by the West Virginia University Extension Service Small Farm Center, please visit small-farmcenter.ext.wvu.edu and follow us on Facebook. Contact information: Lisa Lagana, Program Coordinator, llagana@mail.wvu.edu, 304-293-2715

THE NEW FACE OF AGRITOURISM - COMBINING AGRICULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS ON THE FARM

BY DEE SINGH-KNIGHTS (PH.D.), EXTENSION SPECIALIST, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE AND CINDY MARTEL, MARKETING SPECIALIST,

WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Since 2007, the National Agricultural Statistics Service has reported a continuous decrease in the number of farms and the number of acres being farmed in WV. Thousands of agricultural acres have been converted into alternative uses. However, a growing number of entrepreneurial farmers are using every measure to maintain and improve the economic impact of their farms. One resource that local farms are finding to be highly successful is development of agricultural attractions that invite local residents and tourists onto their farms to experience their unique farm environment.

Tourists' travel patterns and preferences

are changing. There is currently increased demand for - family-oriented activities; 'staycations' combining educational and recreational experiences; culinary and heritage tourism; knowing where their food comes from; and activities that support local farms and communities. These trends have led farmers to explore agritourism and farm-based education as an emerging agribusiness opportunity, to help diversify farm income and improve cash flows. In fact, WV is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this opportunity having the highest number of family farms per capita in the nation and >20,000 small and/or part-time operations. Agritourism increases the poten-

tial for higher margin, on-farm sales of value-adding products and services, further diversifying the product line of the farm operation.

Agritourism is recreation at its finest! Visitors might tour an orchard; pick pumpkins, apples, berries, and other produce; or they can navigate corn mazes or enjoy hayrides, barnyard animal visits, and local treats; and many other "fun-things-to-do" on the farm. But agritourism is much more than recreation or entertainment. When done right, agritourism can be used as a form of experiential, interdisciplinary education that connects kids and adults alike, to the environment, their community, and the vital role of agriculture

in our lives. Visitors can combine farm recreation with activities that explore how to make jams and jellies, or discuss the artful process of tapping maple trees to get delicious WV maple syrup, or learn how to turn fleece into cats' toys or 'felted sculptures' (see HeartsoftheMeadow.com). In a recent conversation, an agritourism operator said it best when he told me "While educating visitors about local agriculture in the market, I see light bulbs go off sometimes when they begin to realize the role their decisions as consumers play in our economy and even our heritage." Many practitioners have promoted agritourism and farm-based education as one of the most effective and promising forms of environmental, experiential, and place-based education because of the innate ability in all people to connect to farms.

Agritourism and farm-based education is increasingly seen as a diversification strategy to promote a more diverse and sustainable rural economy and to protect farming incomes against market fluctuation. Creative ideas for agritourism activities are unlimited, but agritourism is not for everyone! Before you start implementing a new farm adventure, you will need to analyze the fundamental business competencies required to successfully manage the synergy between operating a farm and operating a tourism enterprise on a farm. To have a successful agritourism operations requires the agritourism operator to consider the impact of the tourism enterprise in relationship to the farm's character, values, goals, and financial resources. Be sure to consider the following critical questions before you jump head first into any agritourism enterprise:

- Assessing your Agritourism Potential - What experiences can I offer the public that will make my operation unique and profitable?
- Location - Does my region have the necessary characteristics to draw people to the area? Does my farm have the necessary resources characteristics to draw people to this enter-

prise? Do I have the necessary personal characteristics to make this enterprise successful?

- Visitors' Needs and Preferences – Who is my target market and what products, services and amenities are they looking for?
- Financial Feasibility - Is the proposed enterprise economically feasible? What are the potential returns relative to the costs from this investment? Are there considerable up front costs? Do I have the necessary financial resources to make this successful? Will I be able to generate enough cash on a regular basis to pay daily operating expenses? Do I understand how the proposed enterprise affect my whole-farm income?
- Market Feasibility - What is the market feasibility of this enterprise? Can I deliver this product at a reasonable cost? How many visitors must I attract to my enterprise to make it profitable?
- Legal Liability – What legal risks will I incur from the proposed enterprise? Do I understand how to effectively manage these new risks?
- Marketing Strategy - What do I want customers to think of when they hear my business' name? What is my unique marketing position/advantage? How will I let potential customers know that I am in business?
- Hospitality and Visitor Management – Do I have the people skills to deliver a good agritourism product? Do I understand how to management the visitor experience so I can have repeat customers? Am I open to listening and adapting to visitors' feedback?
- Partnerships – Who else will I work with to create an attractive 'regional destination' that visitors will be attracted to?

According to Travel Weekly Magazine, tour operators and travelers are hungry for authenticity. According to their 2014 Traveler Happiness Study, one of the four key in-

redients in having a happy travel experience was making a local connection and creating a connection with people and places, cultures and histories, that allows people to open their minds and increase their chances of experiencing happiness. (<http://www.travelweekly.com/Travel-News/Tour-Operators/Tour-operators-respond-to-the-hunger-for-authenticity>). WV farms are well poised to take advantage of this growing trend for authentic experiences.

The WV Agritourism Initiative is a collaborative educational partnership focused on building the critical success factors and core competencies outlined above. To find out more about the WV Agritourism Initiative or how we can help you successfully prepare for undertaking an agritourism operation.

Please contact Dee Singh-Knights (dosingh-knights@mail.wvu.edu) at (304) 293-7606 or Cindy Martel (cmartel@wvda.us) at (304) 465-3762 or visit <http://anr.ext.wvu.edu/agritourism>.



WEST VIRGINIA'S FOOD ECONOMY CONTINUES TO GROW; SOMETIMES IN LEAPS.

BY TOM MCCONNELL, PROGRAM LEADER, WVU EXTENSION SERVICE SMALL FARM CENTER

Way back when we first talked about the West Virginia food economy, we mostly talked about farmers markets and the need to establish them in more communities. As the community of farmers, support, and leadership staff kept studying, growing, marketing, and coordinating it became clear that this was going to be a slow process.

Sometimes though, the movement has grown in huge leaps. That is what I observed this year. Here are some of my observations that support that.

Farm to School is now being considered a valid option. Not too many years ago, sometimes at the same meeting, farmers would voice their discontentment that they couldn't get their food into the schools and then food service directors would lament that they couldn't find locally grown food to use in their cafeterias. Many changes have been made to service both camps, like many, many meetings between the two and several communications to growers and support staff about the very business of getting their product into those schools.

One young farmer and processor from Marion County actually used a school kitchen to tip, wash, package and freeze 550 pounds of beans he grew to sell the school. There we learned that a public/private partnership can serve as one way to get farmers started in the value adding business.

We learned also this year that the raw product or farmer's percentage of the food dollar has dropped to a sad 11%. This is a 9% drop from recent years. That doesn't mean that our farmers have taken a cut in their price, but that the food dollar has increased and our share has not kept pace. What we learned from Wyatt Kincell in Marion County is that process-

ing those beans got them into the schools year around. His story was published in the Fairmont Times West Virginian at <http://bit.ly/1T0zRit>

He created a market beyond fresh and he uncovered that he could use the school's approved kitchen. He negotiated with the food service director in the school system and obtained approval.

We also learned from the WV Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition that green beans are served at least once a week. They are high in protein, dark green, low fat and the students like them. So that looks like an option to consider! Now, it is a little more complicated than that, as Wyatt and his family found that there is a lot of work involved in producing, namely picking them, tipping, and washing them than his family wanted to do.

We also learned that we have other ways to make this work. At last year's WV Small Farm Conference we heard from Millard Long, with KHI Foods, who processes vegetables in Kentucky. We visited him and watched his equipment wash, mechanically tip, freeze, and bag beans for markets to schools. His experience led him to the same conclusion as Daniel Todd of the WV Dept. of Education Office of Child Nutrition, that the schools offer an "almost infinite" demand for frozen beans.

That brings us to the next hurdle - harvesting. There are bean harvesters out there but, of course, they cost at this time a little less than \$50,000. So it is easy to see that to pay off that investment will need several acres of production; it is pretty obvious that one farmer won't want to make that investment but what about a small group/cooperative that would borrow the money to harvest

those bean and process them?

This little enterprise could create jobs and make a small community just a little more sustainable, as well as the farm families who are growing for that market.

Another leap in growth of our food system is the appearance of our 4 different local food stores. Following the lead and vision of the Wild Ramp folks in Huntington, West Virginia now has four additional stores with really four different origins and philosophies. The Wild Ramp, now in its 4th year, has learned (and is willing to share their knowledge) how to find farmers and work with them in way that compliments their production schedule, which has made their product line and volume grow steadily over the years. Their model has encouraged other communities to follow; that list includes:

- Alderson Green Grocer - part of the Alderson Community Food Hub aldersonfoodhub.org/alderson-green-grocer.html
- Highland Food & Farm Market – part of the Potomac Highlands Food and Farm Initiative phffi.org
- The Market Place / Barbour County Community Garden Market – initiative of the Heart and Hand House, Inc. heartandhandhouse.org/home/ministries/garden-market
- Farmer's Daughter Market & Butcher [facebook.com/farmersdaughterwv?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/farmersdaughterwv?fref=ts)
- The Wild Ramp wildramp.org

Be sure to check out the Small Farm Advocate articles from some of these local food stores to read about their challenges and successes.

One of the recent WV grown products that has been realized through these independent groceries and is now being sold at The Wild Ramp, is an all WV hot dog. The 30 Mile Meal Huntington organization through

Unlimited Future, Inc. and in collaboration with the WVU Extension Small Farm Center brought the all WV dog to life through Kickstarter funding, which was then successfully ‘tested’ at the Annual Huntington Hot Dog Festival. These hot dogs have been such a hit that not only are customers hunting for them, but two more establishments in the Charleston area also want to sell the product. Be sure to see the article about the success of these hot dogs and their origin story.

So, here we are leaping forward into the West Virginia food economy, what previously slowly churned has gone full speed ahead. Opportunities in West Virginia products are seemingly limitless and ready for you to grab ahold of them! So the real question is, are you going to ride this food system train? Don’t let it pass you by. . . For more information on these opportunities contact Tom McConnell, TRMcConnell@mail.wvu.edu, (304) 293-2642

SHOW ME THE SLAW!

BY: LAUREN KEMP, PROGRAM DIRECTOR, 30 MILE MEAL



After meeting Brad Gritt of Gritt’s Farm at the Huntington Local Food Expo, Randy Blatt of Down Home Salads says, “It’s the best cabbage I have ever used.” Randy knows cabbage, he has been making Down Home Salads signature coleslaw for 15 years. This year Randy has purchased over 4,000 pounds of green cabbage from Gritt’s Farm. 30 Mile Meal sponsored the second Local Food Expo with the goal of the providing farms, food processors, and restaurants opportunities to network and

make new business connections.

Down Home Salads’ coleslaw is a mixture of cabbage, carrot and a top secret homemade dressing. Randy distributes his product with WV-Grown cabbage to over 150 business in the Tri-State Area, including restaurants, institutional food service, grocery store deli counters, and at his own Little Store at 2003 Johnstown Road in Huntington. He also has purchased pickling cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, and onions from Gritt’s Farm.

Randy’s Coleslaw was just one of the locally sourced products that went into the grand debut of the WV Dog at the 11th Annual WV Hot Dog Festival. The 30 Mile Meal Huntington group spearheaded the project bringing together 12 partner businesses and organizations to make the local hot dog a reality. Lindsey Good, 30 Mile Meal Project Coordinator, was lead on the project and quoted, “People of all ages love hot dogs and this project is a great way to put local food on the average eaters’ plate.”

As for the hot dog, two varieties were created. An All-Natural All-Beef by Working H Meats & Market in Terra Alta, WV and a combination with pork from Mil-Ton Farms in Ona, WV and beef from Call Farms, Milton, WV. The combination hot dog was processing by Nelson’s Meat Processing in Ona, WV and SS Logan Packing Company in Huntington, WV.

Of course, to have a hot dog you need a bun, which was baked at Brunetti’s Bakery in Kenova, WV with wheat from McConnell Mills in Terra Alta, WV. Finally, we created all the hot dog toppings you could ever want! Mustard - Uncle Bunk’s in Sistersville, WV; Onion- Gritt’s Farm in Buffalo, WV; Sauce, Slaw, Sauerkraut, Pickle Relish- Made by Down Home Salads in Huntington, WV using local beef from Call Farm and produce from Gritt’s Farm; Ketchup- Made by Mountwest Community and Technical College Culinary Institute with Roma tomatoes from Gritt’s Midway Greenhouse in Buffalo, WV.

The WV Dog received an overwhelmingly

positive response at the WV Hot Dog Festival with over 950 hotdogs sold. The top selling hot dog was, of course, a traditionally topped, WV style hot dog which has chili, onions, mustard, and slaw. Others went for the ketchup and mustard combo or spicy mustard and sauerkraut. The festival hosts over 10,000 visitors annually and organizers are already asking if the WV Dog will be returning next year!

The 30 Mile Meal raised over \$5,000 on Kickstarter in order to process the first small batch of hot dogs, nearly 7,000 hotdogs. The 30 Mile Meal will be selling the hotdogs through the Wild Ramp located at 555 14th Street West in Huntington, WV. They are available in 1 lb, 5 lb, and 50 lb units, for a limited time. “If the demand is there we will most likely process another batch,” Lindsey

Good adds.

“This project embodies the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that the 30 Mile Meal hopes to bring to West Virginia,” Gail Patton Executive Director at Unlimited Future explains.



“Through projects like the WV Dog, consumers can experience eating locally raised foods and appreciate the incredible variety of locally available products.”

The 30 Mile Meal Huntington is a project of Unlimited Future, Inc., which is the small business incubator and resource center that incubated the Wild Ramp, a successful retail marketplace for local foods.

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GROWING OUR FUTURE FARMERS, HORTICULTURALISTS, NUTRITIONISTS IN PUTNAM COUNTY

CHUCK TALBOTT, WVU ANR EXTENSION AGENT FOR PUTNAM COUNTY, TIM SAYRE, WVU FAMILIES AND HEALTH EXTENSION AGENT FOR PUTNAM COUNTY, SCOTT BYARS, WVU 4-H AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION AGENT FOR PUTNAM COUNTY



Pre-school students watch 4th graders plant.

Background: The hope for Food Security in our counties and state relies on getting our youth excited about agriculture and learning how to grow their own food. WV enjoys a heritage of small family farms (currently #1 in the country), but with our “get big or get out” food policies established in the 60s, we have lost two to three generations of small-scale farmers and with them, role models for our youth. Since the 1800’s, school gardens have been used to educate and excite students about our environment. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in teaching children how food is grown in hopes of intro-

ducing them to better nutritious choices to combat our nation’s current health crisis (diabetes and obesity). While training students to grow produce for the cafeteria, it is equally important to teach them how to reduce the risks of food borne illnesses from their agricultural practices and harvesting techniques. Most food-borne illnesses can be prevented with proper food handling and cooking. Currently, there are no food safety guidelines or regulations in the WV Farm to School (F2S) program that require farmers or students to document their production and harvesting practices.

Students produce cool season crops for the school cafeteria: In 2012, Talbott received a USDA/WVDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) to build a high tunnel and introduce garden-based learning (GBL) initiatives into our Putnam County school system. Our GBL project focuses on our public school students as our “special crop”. Our harvest may be Putnam County’s future farmers, horticultur-

alists, organic vegetable producers, county nutritionists or gourmet chefs. This project also enhances the best resource we have in our communities, our youth.

One in five jobs is connected to US agriculture and Putnam County is ranked 2nd in the state for total sales from nurseries, greenhouses, floriculture and sod. These community resources are already in place to further expand our students’ education as interns or supply our future workforce. Currently, over 1300 students and 65 elementary school teachers are producing food for their cafeteria with assistance provided by the WVU Extension Service, volunteers from the Putnam County Master Gardener Association (PCMG), WVDA and the WVDE School Nutrition Program.

Besides learning how to manage the day-to-day activities in the high tunnel (temperature control, ventilation and watering), students also learn to identify evidence of pests (insects and weeds), thin plants, and identify stages of plant growth. They learn about soils, composting, proper harvesting techniques, data recording, gross, tare, and net harvest weights, and life cycles of plants. Students are introduced to math concepts such as grids, area and perimeter, as well as many new vocabulary words (condensation, germination, moisture, humidity, etc. Teachers use the high tunnel for a variety of learning activities including math, science, art, and even physical education. The gardens are very productive

and yield hundreds of pounds of vegetables that are served in the school cafeterias. Revenue is used to sustain the garden projects. The Putnam County Board of Education endorses the USDA Farm to School Program through the Nutrition Director's office.



Growing carrots and farmers in Putnam County.

Students Learn Food Handling and Safety, Important Life Skills: There are sixty public schools throughout West Virginia that participate in the Farm to School Program (F2S). In 2013, students sold over \$44,000 of produce to their local Boards Of Education for serving in the school cafeterias. In Putnam County alone, students (1044) from four elementary schools and Buffalo FFA Chapter (45) plant and harvest cool season plants during the spring and fall semesters and use the receipts (\$1000+) to sustain their garden-based learning programs. The expansion of the F2S and garden-based learning programs in our WV schools will ultimately depend on whether students and teachers can provide safe produce to serve in the cafeteria. All students need training in safe food handling techniques as an important life skill.

While training students to grow produce for

the cafeteria, it is equally important to teach them how to reduce the risks of food borne illnesses from their agricultural practices and harvesting techniques. In 2013 Talbott and Sayre wrote a WVU ES Nutrition grant to introduce "Food Safety in School Gardens".

Food safety, nutrition and production resources are available on-line for those interested in developing GBL initiatives for our youth (below).

Project Impact:

The real beneficiaries of our GBL project have been the students and the community. As per our academic goals, students at GW Elementary improved their Math and Science West Test scores (13% and 19% respectively) over the previous year's scores (no GBL), representing the

most improvement in Putnam County elementary schools for 2013. Based on project evaluations, teachers who added their own comments wrote that: 1) "Students were excited about all aspects of the high tunnel", 2) "The students learned so much and were very proud of what they grew", 3) "The students were always excited and eager from pre-planting stages to harvesting", 4) "They enjoyed gardening and were very excited and most importantly learned so much", 5) "They enjoyed planting and harvesting, weighing, and tasting what they grew", and 6) "My students wanted to come to the garden every day!" Over the last three years, volunteers have accumulated over 2300 volunteer hours to assist the teachers and students in growing food for their cafeteria. Our GBL project with the Putnam County Schools was recognized "Best Hands-On Youth Project" at the

2014 and 2015 Annual WV Master Gardener Conference by the State MG Association. For his work with our school gardens, Robert Carter (PCMG) was awarded the 2014 WV MG of the Year Award. Talbott and Sayre were invited to present our GBL work at the "100th Anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act Conference on September 23, 2014.

Food Safety and Nutrition Link:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h6f2lkahosist3k/AAD3irjgVDDL5wDO_VIrSzQGa?dl=0

Production Link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/oueqw1j2pab9d6/AACo2PkeXTuxPTQ6fEYreU5xa?dl=0>

Contact information:

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Students weigh produce to sell through the "Farm to School" program.

LOCAL FOODS: BIG BUSINESS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

MICHAEL HARMAN, EXTENSION AGENT, WVU EXTENSION SERVICE

In many places, people think of local foods as a trend or an urban fad. The truth is that local foods are an important and growing movement. But, you don't need to have a giant market to sell into to or a metropolis on your doorstep to make local foods work. To harness the local food dollar, you simply need to produce a good product at a good price that your community wants. I know that sounds too simple to be true, but it is in fact true. If you are the best goat cheese maker in the world and you live in a lactose intolerant county, you will have a hard time making it off of sales from local foods. However, if you grow an assortment of vegetables and make a selection of products that the community loves, you have already won the local food battle. While I live and work in the Eastern Panhandle, where about 9.3 million folks live within a hundred miles or so of my office, we still have a significant local foods movement. Sure, we have folks who produce and sell into that DC-Baltimore-Northern VA market, but we also do a significant portion of business here in Jefferson County. We have several farmers markets on multiple days, with lots of vendors. We have restaurants and caterers who specialize in or utilize local foods, and we have community supported agriculture (CSA). Here is a little bit of what make local foods big business in Jefferson County.

I want to share a little about the Charles Town farmers market. The older, more established, farmers market in the county is the one in Shepherdstown, with a loyal clientele, it has been doing very well for many years. Charles Town is the upstart, the new kid on the block. As recently as the end of the 2011 season they only had about 8-10 regular vendors at the market. By 2013 they were up to 28 total vendors for the season and between \$92,000 and \$120,000 in sales. By 2014 they had grown until they had 15,000 visitors to

the market who purchased over \$230,000 in products from an average of 23 vendors per market day. Not a bad harvest for one day per week, six months per year. All of this product is sold in a town with the population of about 5,500. In addition to the old school market in Shepherdstown, the new kids on the block in Charles Town and Morgan's Grove, there are mid-week markets in Bardane and Bolivar as well as a half dozen farm stands, and at least that many farms where you can stop in and buy cherries, peaches, and of course apples. But farmers markets are only a small part of our local food industry.

In the panhandle, there are several restaurants who advertise their local foods on the menu and people respond. For example, in Charles Town on Main Street you will find Dish Bistro. Dish strives to create meals around the wealth of fresh local ingredients. At Dish, they say, buy local, be local. In Shepherdstown, there are places like Bistro 112 who serve French style cuisine prepared from fresh local foods. The list goes on and on of small local eateries who recognize they can make a better meal from better ingredients, and those ingredients are available locally in Jefferson County.

Caterers also recognize the value and marketability of local foods. One example is Jane Tabb's Fresh Feast on the Farm. The Feast is a unique dining experience highlighting delicious, locally produced foods served in beautiful farm settings throughout Jefferson

County. The Fresh Feast on the Farm is about Agritourism, local foods, agricultural education, and fine dining all in one. It is a traveling example of locally grown elegance. Between events, Jane, and other local caterers, often source local foods for everything from regional meetings to tradeshow to weddings. Local foods can be classy, classical, or down home, but always good.

At the other end of the spectrum, far away from white linen napkins and bustling city markets or quaint farm stands, you will find the CSA. Community Supported Agriculture is like a cross between a delivery service and the stock market, but with vegetables. Individuals make conscious decisions about supporting local farmers, including the type of food they chose to consume and sharing the risk all agriculture endures. Basically, folks find a producer who grows the crops they like, the way they want, at a price they can afford, and the pre-pay for a share of the harvest. If the farmer has a good year, they can expect more produce. If the farmer has a bad year, you get less. CSA's lower obstacles of entry into farming like insufficient capital, and it helps many producers with off season cash flow issues. In turn, customers get a box or a bag of produce, fresh local produce, just the way they want, every week for a defined period of time. Everyone wins with a CSA.

I like to say, local is another way of saying quality. Remember, success or failure is contingent on few things. To be successful, you still need a product that was picked ripe, stored carefully, sold quickly, with a smile and the reassurance that comes from knowing the farmer. This is what local foods is about. Local food opportunities are real, and they are here. Your ability to harvest that local food dollar depends on your skills as a producer, and your communities' faith in you as a person.



A VERY WET SUMMER

BY KAREN COX

Many of you are starting to see the effects of continual rain in the plants. Excess moisture disturbs the oxygen balance in the root zone, drowns roots, and reduces plant water uptake. When the air is excessively humid plants close their stomates which reduces transpiration or stops the flow of water up through the plant. When the flow of water is reduced it also reduces the plants intake of minerals and nutrients. Blossom end rot is a common result of this lost nutrient flow. While blossom end rot is typically localized damage, secondary organisms often invade causing the entire fruit to rot.

Excessive moisture can also leach nutrients from the soil, cause micro-organisms that convert minerals into plant available nutrients to pause, and can cause nitrogen to turn to a gas and escape into the atmosphere. All these things together can lead to nitrogen deficiency. Typically soils need to be flooded or saturated for more than 24-48 hours (depending on the soil and other conditions) to deplete oxygen conditions and reduce nitrogen.

Root oxygen deficiency and nitrogen deficiency are exhibited by a yellowing and dying of the lower leaves or interveinal chlorosis in the older leaves. This problem is less likely in soils with a high nitrogen content. Side dress $\frac{1}{2}$ the recommended nitrogen application 4-6 weeks after planting, or when corn is 12-20 inches tall. However, if you see signs of nitrogen deficiency side dress now with a urea based fertilizer.

Some nutrient deficiencies can be caused by too much of certain nutrients. For example, too much potassium can reduce manganese absorption. The only way to know for sure which nutrients your plants are lacking is to do a tissue test and a soil test that mea-

sures micronutrients.

Soil testing cannot adequately tell us how much nitrogen is available. Recommendations are based on the standard needs of the crop. If you suspect your crop is lacking nutrients, send in samples for a tissue and soil test. This will cost you from \$40-\$80 but may save money in unneeded fertilizers and will aid your yields next year and into the future.

Too much water can also decrease soil temperatures which often causes plants to develop shallow root systems. Shallow root systems are more sensitive to changes in water and are less efficient in obtaining nutrients from the soil. This can lead to root lodging in high winds. While this won't be a total loss as long as the stem doesn't break, lodging does stress the plant and make it more prone to some diseases and increases difficulty of harvest.

Root crops may split with drastic changes in water levels. Thankfully this is only cosmetic. Unfortunately, some other crops can split from too much water opening them up for disease. Split tomatoes and cabbages should be harvested and consumed quickly.

Diseases are more prevalent with wet weather. Calls to the office have diagnosed black rot on grapes, Septoria leaf spot on tomatoes, and powdery mildew on cucurbits.

As a final note, be wary of foods touched by flood waters. Flood waters pick up many contaminants such as raw sewage and petroleum products. If the edible portion of a crop is exposed to flood waters, it is considered adulterated and should not enter human food channels. Animal feeds that have been in contact with flood water should also be discarded, this includes hay and grains.

Please contact your local extension office if you have any questions.

Ten tips on reducing damage from too much rain:

1. If you won't significantly damage the root systems, digging furrows between rows may help with drainage and reduce damage from too much water.
2. Soil can be mounded around tomato crops to help raise the roots above the water levels.
3. Mulch around plants to help regulate moisture levels. Keep mulch from touching the stem.
4. Avoid walking in the mud, put boards down to walk on if you need to get out and harvest.
5. Remove excessive foliage to encourage fast drying. Be wary of sunscald and don't remove too many leaves from near the fruits.
6. Remove diseased materials and discard or burn them. Do not compost diseased materials.
7. Fertilize nitrogen deficient plants with high nitrogen fertilizer to replace what is lost from leaching and mineralization.
8. Aerate lawns in the fall to reduce compaction.
9. Do a tissue test if you suspect your plants may be nutrient deficient.
10. If you suspect disease confirm the diagnosis. Treatments are often host specific.

SECURING YOUR PRICE IS AS EASY AS L-R-P

Livestock Risk Protection is an insurance program that insures against a decline in the national market for Fed and Feeder cattle. It provides producers an indemnity if a regional or national cash price index falls below an insured coverage price. Similar to a put option, the LRP policy is price insurance only, providing single-peril price risk protection for the future sale of insured livestock.

Locate an agent using the online agent locator: www3.rma.usda.gov/apps/agents

RMA USDA

FORAGE TESTING IS ESSENTIAL TO COST EFFECTIVE CATTLE FEEDING

BY ED RAYBURN, EXTENSION SPECIALIST, WVU EXTENSION AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

This year, Northern West Virginia had the wettest spring and early summer that I have ever seen. Little hay was made prior to the last half of July. This usually results in hay that is low in digestible energy and protein. However, given the second growth growing in many fields, we may be surprised how good the hay is. The big risk is not knowing. If we guess that the hay is poor, we may purchase supplements that are not needed. If we guess that the hay is good enough, we may not provide adequate supplements resulting in poor animal nutrition and calf health problems or low conception in breeding cows next spring. This can be avoided by forage testing.

Many of the West Virginia Conservation Districts have a cost share program for forage testing and may have a field person who will come to the farm and help take forage samples. Likewise, your WVU Extension Agent can help teach you how to take a forage sample, submit it to a certified laboratory, interpret the results and apply that information to feeding your livestock. Your County Extension office or Conservation District may have training classes this fall that will help you learn what you need to know about forage testing and livestock feeding. If they are having such a class, sign up and learn how to improve your skills and management.

If you use the Web, you can go to the WVU Extension Service web site (anr.ext.wvu.edu) to find factsheets that will teach you what you need to know. On the Pasture & Hay page of the WVU-Extension Service web site you will find links to Forage Quality and Animal Nutrition and Production. Under Forage Quality you will find two factsheets, Sampling Hay and Haylage and Understanding

Forage Analysis. Under Animal Nutrition and Production you will find factsheets on Beef Cattle Nutrient Requirements, Body Condition Score of Beef Cattle, and Matching the Hay to the Cow. There are also links to factsheets on the nutrient requirements of sheep and goats on this page. If you do not have access to the web, these fact sheets are available at your County Extension office.

Beef producers in West Virginia have found that they get a \$10 return on every \$1 invested in forage testing when they supplement cattle based on a forage test compared to conventional supplementation. This is through cost saving of feeding the right supplement at the right rate at the right time in the animal's production cycle.

When calf mortality loss in early life is high or when a significant percentage of cows are not breeding on time, poor nutrition may be the cause. When needed, proper supplementation can improve calf survival and increase cow conception rates. At today's calf prices having one additional calf a year in a 30 cow herd will give a \$10 return on each \$1 you invest in forage testing.

The basics of forage testing are as follows:

- Using a forage corer take cores from 12 or more bales from each hay field.
- Place the cores in a plastic bag as the forage sample for the hay from that field.
- Label the bag and submit the samples to a certified forage testing laboratory.
- Identify bales from each field so you

know the hay being feed during the winter.

- For each sample compare the reported crude protein, total digestible nutrients, and minerals to the needs of the livestock relative to when they will be calving and lactating.
- If hay from a give field meets the animal's needs no major supplements are needed.
- If the hay does not meet the animal's needs the appropriate supplement and rate of supplement can be calculated.
- A mineral mix may be needed to supply magnesium, calcium, or phosphorus based on the forage test results.
- We do not recommend testing for minor minerals for beef cattle since it doubles the cost of forage analysis and in most cases in West Virginia trace mineral zinc and copper are needed.

Many cattle have been fed in West Virginia without the aid of forage testing. Also, many dollars have been thrown away feeding the wrong supplement to animals at the wrong rate. Forage testing provides good information at a low cost. This enables the manager to identify if a supplement is needed, which one and at what rate of feeding. At the current cost of supplements and value of calves, forage testing is a practical, low cost tool for increasing the bottom line.

BUILDING FARM CAPACITY IN MCDOWELL COUNTY THROUGH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE VOUCHERS

BY KRISTIN MCCARTNEY, MPH, RD, LD, PUBLIC HEALTH SPECIALIST, WVU EXTENSION-FAMILY NUTRITION PROGRAM

Fruits and vegetables are well known to provide many health benefits, however, not all people are eating enough. As a state, West Virginia ranks #1 in the United States for lack of adequate fruit and vegetable intake. In fact, 9 out of 10 West Virginia adults (1,240,143) suffer from health risk due to limited fruit and vegetable intake. (2011 Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey) Those with limited education and income are at the greatest risk.

McDowell County in West Virginia is a community struggling with poverty and poor health outcomes. A once vibrant community supported by a strong coal industry has struggled with a declining coal industry and lack of other economic opportunity. Agriculture in the area is limited due to the mountainous terrain but a handful of dedicated farmers, interested in reviving the agricultural heritage of West Virginia, have recently begun work there.

CSX and the Conservation Fund provided an opportunity to support these burgeoning efforts through their "Increasing Healthy Food Access" grant opportunity. The objective of the grant is to support farmers markets and improved health in children through the use of fruit and vegetable vouchers. This grant provided \$12,000 in 2014 and \$20,000 in 2015 to support the growth of farmers and farmers markets in McDowell County.

When the grant was awarded in 2014, there were only 2 farmers in the county and they were just getting up and running. The need to overcome the barrier of a lack of existing farmers markets led to an innovative project model that centered on bringing the market to the kids and families vs. bringing the families to the market. This was achieved by arrang-

ing markets to correspond with school open house events as well as markets at the school during the school day. WVU Extension 4-H faculty member, Donald Reed, worked with school administrators and staff to gain approval for hosting the market events at school events, farmers were brought on board and the Kids Koupon project was born. Families attending open house events received \$20 in kcoupons to use at the on-site farmers market. Children in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades were able to participate at school. Each child received up to \$8 to go shopping at the on-site market. In addition, tastings, food demonstrations and give-aways were offered to all attending.

Last year, in the months of August-November, 192 families and 373 children participated in the project. Over \$5,500 in kcoupons were redeemed in just 4 months. The revenue created by the project has allowed the farmers to quickly scale up production. Since the project ended in December, the farmers have formed a cooperative, bought an additional 200 acre farm, developed a CSA and are offering markets in communities across the county and in bordering counties.



With the increase in funding from \$12,000 to \$20,000 there is a greater opportunity to expand programming to additional audiences. In addition to hosting the markets at the schools, vouchers are now being offered to participants of SNAP-Ed nutrition education classes offered by the WV Family Nutrition Program, Energy Express students and families and through a Produce Prescription project with federally qualified health centers.

The project is the perfect combination of nutrition education, food access and agriculture. The events have provided an opportunity to introduce children and families to both the foods and farmers at the same time. It has also provided the financial support for both the farmer and consumer to invest in healthy foods. The hope is through this project, those participating will develop relationships with the farmers that sustain beyond the availability of kcoupons.



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PARCHMENT VALLEY VETERAN THERAPEUTIC PROGRAM HOLDS FIRST TRAINING RETREAT IN RIPLEY, WEST VIRGINIA

BY BETHANN EARL, PARCHMENT VALLEY VETERANS THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS



Veterans helping Veterans that is what we do. Regardless whether it is Parchment Valley Veterans Therapeutic Programs (PVVTP) or WV Veterans to Agriculture, we help Veterans and their families. There are many Veterans in the West Virginia region that have served and sacrificed some part of themselves, and it is those men and women that we strive to help. However, being a group of Veterans ourselves, we never limit our services to combat Veterans; we include all Veterans, Blue Star Families, and Veteran families in our programs.

Our recent Training Retreat is one example. The event, which was funded by a generous \$5,000 grant from Farm Credit of the Virginias, allowed us to reach out to Veterans who have an interest in agriculture. We hosted a Veterans' Training Weekend Retreat at Parchment Valley Conference Center, in Ripley, WV. The grant allowed for ten Veterans and their families to come to Ripley, WV and stay on the PVCC campus, attend financial and basic training in soil health, beekeeping, marketing, and food safety. The cost per family? Zero. These were full scholarships for the entire family with meals, lodging, and

training materials included.

In all, 34 people attended and the feedback was amazing, with many requests for more training events. So, we are currently working on having a full day of training for Veterans, focusing solely on beekeeping. While the date has not been set yet, we will make the announcement on our Facebook page when the event has been set up.

PVVTP assists Veterans who struggle with PTSD, TBI, MST, Substance Abuse and Addiction, and other mental, emotional, and physical disabilities in healing and reintegrating into their communities, by becoming self-sustaining agri-business entrepreneurs. We achieve that goal by developing a network of sustainable Veteran farmers using agri-therapy, holistic training methods, and mentorship to ensure strong businesses that



will contribute to the overall well-being of communities in the Ohio and West Virginia regions.

Currently, the all-volunteer group is working under the fiscal sponsorship of Parchment Valley Conference Center, which allows them to operate under the rules of a non-profit, while building their team into a fully self-reliant organization. Working closely with Parchment Valley and the founding partners (Raising Cane Farms, Inc., Noni's Farm LLC, and Sugar Bottom Farms) the group has managed to raise funds and in-kind donations to prepare and plant a five acre Veterans Farm at PVCC and through a partnership with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture's Veterans to Agriculture Program, they have established a one acre food plot with high tunnel, proving just what can be done by a few people.

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GRANT TO BUILD SOLID FOUNDATION AND CREATE CONSISTENT FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

BY: KERI KENNEDY, COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF CHILD NUTRITION AND MELINDA GRISER, LOCAL FOOD COORDINATOR

Farm to School is a public health and community development initiative that has the potential to change the way students and young people eat, think about food, and improve their health through the development of life long healthy eating habits. The West Virginia Farm to School Program works to strengthen WV communities by connecting school with local farmers to bring fresh local fruits and vegetables into the schools. Since 2012, over 38 of West Virginia's 55 counties have spent almost \$900,000 on local products in West Virginia schools. Of the \$900,000 spent \$44,000 was for products produced by West Virginia Agricultural Education Students.

In April 2013, the West Virginia (WV) Legislature passed the WV Feed to Achieve Act, which was effective from the date of passage. The act provides the WV Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition, the opportunity to enhance and expand existing efforts to ensure that every student in WV is afforded the opportunity to receive a minimum of two nutritious meals per day. In addition to supporting the federal Child Nutrition Programs that are currently in place throughout the state, the Act promotes a partnership with the private sector to combat childhood hunger issues. Additionally, the Act requires:

“The Department of Education and county boards of education shall form or expand existing partnerships with the federal and state departments of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Resources, local master Gardeners, county extension agents or other experts in the field of agriculture or gardening to develop community gardens, farm to school programs, and other such programs that teach students how to grow and produce

healthy food, and provide healthy food to the students.”

This landmark legislation will significantly increase the demand for local foods in West Virginia schools, therefore creating a system that can support the increase of production and strengthen the supply chains essential to meeting the demand.

The WV Farm to School Community Development Group believes that creating and maintaining vibrant local food systems, which include aggregation-and-distribution, requires a basic level of infrastructure to move food efficiently from farms to school cafeterias. These regional hubs would establish economies of scales that allow schools to purchase local products at an affordable cost, while at the same time maintaining a sustainable profit margin for the local farmer.

Melinda Griser, the new “Local Food Coordinator” is working through a USDA Farm to School grant to streamline communication between both farmers and schools. By providing this communication, the farmers and schools can focus on their work while Melinda is able to tie all the pieces together and create a clear, consistent process. Creating consistency will establish a strong program that continually moves locally grown West Virginia produce into schools. The relationship between the farmers and the schools is an incredibly important relationship that is being built, supported, and strengthened with the help of this grant and the position of Melinda as the Local Food Coordinator.

“Just in the past month, I have gotten the chance to meet a handful of great farmers within my five county radius. These farmers are absolutely excited to be a part of such a tremendous opportunity. The schools I have spoken with are equally excited to have this communication standpoint that will help create a consistent process that mutually benefits both parties. On top of that, West Virginia students will eat higher quality food and know that it came from their home state. It really is an all-around exciting opportunity and I couldn't be happier with the start that we have had and also can't wait to get the program to where we ultimately see it going. With that in mind, we are constantly looking at the bigger picture of what this prospect offers and how we will eventually expand it to more counties,” said Melinda.

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GRANT cont.

The interpersonal relationships that are being built with the farmers are an incredibly important aspect of the position in which that it builds trust and allows farmers to feel comfortable working with the schools. These relationships create a solid foundation that the program can build upon and ultimately reach and surpass goals.

Working with Preston, Upshur, Barbour, Randolph and Tucker County, Melinda communicates directly with the farmer to learn what they grow, how much they grow, what they are willing to grow, and their capacity to grow in the winter. With this information, the school then has an idea of what each farm in their area can offer as well as the months the produce is available. Once a consistent relationship is built, farmers can plant according to the schools needs resulting in farmers knowing where that crop is going before the seed is even in the ground. This process allows the schools to plan accordingly and know they are getting specific produce from local farms and also allows the farmers a dependable outlet to sell a considerable volume of their crops.

“It is all about building a consistent, structured process that is beneficial to both the schools and the farmers. With a structured process, it will allow clear communication as well as the opportunity for the schools to plan far in the future what will be purchased locally. Some farms and schools have already done a great job of working together to get the local food into the school. With this grant, we are able to really get something big in the works and make this a well established process that will continue to grow throughout the state,” Melinda elaborated.

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Food Service Director Directory		
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Brooke	Thomas Davidson	(304) 527-2100
Cabell	Rhonda McCoy	(304) 528-5048
Calhoun	Christoph Melonas	(304) 354-7011
Clay	Michael Mullins	(304) 587-4266
Doddridge	Bonnie Allman	(304) 873-2322
Fayette	David Seay	(304) 574-1176
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Grant	Tamera Gossard	(304) 257-1011
Greenbrier	Jenny Curry	(304) 647-6462
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Harrison	Tiffany Curran	(304) 326-7322
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Jefferson	Arlene Leonard	(304) 728-9230
Kanawha	Diane Miller	(304) 348-6660
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Nicholas	Ernie Jarvis	(304) 872-3611
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Pleasants	Kristie Venderlic	(304) 684-3047
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Preston	Dylan Beitz	(304) 329-0580
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Randolph	LaDonna Rosencrance	(304) 636-9150
Ritchie	David Weekley	(304) 643-2991
Roane	Bill Chapman	(304) 927-6407
Summers	Kimberly Rodes	(304) 466-6006
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Wetzel	Amanda McPherson	(304) 455-2441
Wirt	Christoph Melonas	(304) 275-4279
Wood	Hollie Best	(304) 420-9663
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ALDERSON GREEN GROCER: GOING BACK TO BASICS

The Alderson Green Grocer opened its doors in April of 2015, less than 6 months after Gadd's IGA grocery store closed its doors. The lack of access to fresh food options in Alderson was felt acutely by everyone, with no clear alternative and a sense of uncertainty about Alderson's future. The Board of the Alderson Community Food Hub decided shortly thereafter to raise money to open a full-service grocery store, expanding to fill the space its smaller co-op grocer shared with a local business. The Food Hub launched a crowdfunding campaign – I HEART FOOD, I HEART ALDERSON -- in January to raise a match to foundation seed funding, and was successful due to tremendous and varied support provided by the Alderson community. Over 800 hours in volunteer labor helped transform the old Ford garage/Wolf Creek Gallery in Alderson into a space with full shelves, coolers and freezers, and a walk-up deli counter.

The Green Grocer is proud to accept SNAP benefits and feature local products. As it is now the “home” of the Alderson Community Food Hub, it also serves as an information center about other opportunities for producers and consumers in the community. We share in the optimism that community-based businesses can be root of revitalization West



Virginia's food economy, and a new prosperity for small communities across the state. We are always happy to share our experience when we are able.

The Alderson Green Grocer is a social enterprise of the Alderson Community Food Hub, an organization dedicated to supporting local producers and consumers and growing food access in our community. Our Food Hub got its start with the Alderson Community Market in 2011, and has since grown to include a Community Garden, a gardening and education program at Alderson Elementary School, a Grow Appalachia program, a seed library in the Alderson Public Library, a Mobile Market visiting low-income housing in Greenbrier County, and a Community Orchard. All of the Food Hub's programs are volunteer-based. The Green Grocer is just the latest way that the Food Hub is pursuing its mission, and welcomes new partners, supporting members, volunteers and producers.

PHILIPPI COMMUNITY GARDEN MARKET

BY BRENDA HUNT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HEART AND HAND HOUSE, INC.

For 23 years, the Community Garden Market in Philippi has been a source of fresh, local produce in Barbour County. The market, one of the first consignment-style farmers markets in the state, is operated by Heart and Hand House, Inc., and provides a unique marketing opportunity for local producers, while making fresh fruits and vegetables available to consumers in an area with limited retail

grocery accessibility. The market was originally established as a way for community residents to support one another, recognizing that local farmers supplying produce to local consumers keeps more food dollars circulating in the local economy, benefitting everyone. In keeping with Heart and Hand's overall mission, one of the original goals of the market was to provide a way for low-income families to earn additional money by growing extra vegetables in their garden and selling the surplus. Today the market is open to all local producers and customers, regardless of income, but food access for low-income families is still supported through the acceptance of SNAP EBT and WV Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons. In 2014, there were over 100 vendors participating in the market, with gross sales topping 67,000.

From its humble beginnings as a little farm stand on Main Street, to its current location in an old IGA grocery store building now called The Market Place, the market has grown significantly over the past three years. With grant funding from USDA, loan funding from Natural Capital Investment Funds, and technical support from VC2, Woodlands Development, the Food & Farm Coalition, just to name a few, the market has embarked on a major expansion of its efforts to serve as a local food hub. In addition to making the traditional garden market a year-round operation, a coffee and donut shop have been added, along with designated meeting room space, in an effort to make the market appealing as a community gathering place. Heart and Hand also anticipates the addition of a local foods café in the near future that will promote and feature locally-produce foods. Plans also are underway to establish the market as an aggregation center for farm-to-school sales, as well as produce sales to other local establishments.



IT'S ABOUT GOOD FOOD

BY KIMMY CLEMENTS, PROJECT COORDINATOR, PHFFI AND MANAGER, HIGHLAND MARKET

Locally raised produce, dairy, eggs, and meat make their way into the small Tucker County community of Davis, WV via the Highland Market. With over 60 percent of more than 60 producers being within 100 miles of Davis, shoppers and growers often cross paths in the Market, which opened in October of 2013.

The Highland Market is part of a larger project, the Potomac Highlands Food & Farm Initiative (PHFFI), which launched in January 2013 after months of brainstorming, spearheaded by the Tucker Community Foundation, and funds provided by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. With the encouragement of Mary Beth Lind, of the Tygart Valley Growers Association, Kimmy Clements, PHFFI Project Coordinator, attended the Road Map Conference, organized by the WV Food and Farm Coalition, in February, and inspiration for the project flourished. With PHFFI's mission to increase access to quality food and farm products, it became apparent that the best mode of success was to engage community members. Within six months, garden curriculum was implemented in the two local elementary-middle schools, a Community Garden was started in Thomas, Community Farm Days were offered to local farmers and Food & Farm Workshops were born.

In September of 2013, PHFFI received funds, through a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant, to purchase equipment and hire an Assistant Manager for the Highland Market. Surveys were circulated to seek what community members wished to see at the

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GOOD FOOD cont.

HIGHLAND



MARKET

Market. All meat, eggs, and produce is purchased exclusively from local farmers and store inventory is supplemented with specialty items from Frankferd Farms, a cooperative in PA, and select small producers throughout the region.

One of the biggest successes of the Highland Market is its support from local residents/consumers. Many say their biggest complaint of living in our remote community used to be the lack of availability of quality food and now we are regularly told how the Market has changed the way they eat. Visitors of Tucker County also joyously tell us how they no longer bring their groceries with them and that we have items they cannot often find in the city. We are also proud to accommodate those with EBT benefits.

Success doesn't come without challenges. We struggled to operate in a 400 square foot space, which included the store front, office and storage. Additionally, manpower was a limitation. Luckily, the Highland Market was able to double its footprint in early 2015. New inventory was acquired, a Market Assistant was hired and an additional day of business was added. With this new space, we will be installing a Certified Kitchen, also funded by the USDA, enabling us to begin purchasing even more local ingredients to create ready-to-eat, healthy meals for our customers this fall. Purchases from producers were over \$90,000 in 2014 and, with this new expansion, we expect those numbers to increase by 30-50% in 2015.

*To learn more or get involved, please visit our new website- phffi.org
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LIFETIME PRODUCTIVITY OF THE EWE FLOCK STARTS WITH THE EWE LAMB

MARLON KNIGHTS (PH.D.), WVU ANIMAL SCIENTIST AND DEE SINGH-KNIGHTS (PH.D.), WVU EXTENSION SPECIALIST

Replacement ewe lambs can comprise over 30% of the breeding flock; therefore, the productivity of ewe lambs has a great impact on the overall productivity and profitability of the ewe flock. Studies have demonstrated that ewe lambs bred at 7-9 months to lamb at 1 year of age have a higher lifetime productivity compared to those bred as yearlings. Despite the benefit of breeding spring-born ewe lambs in the fall of their year of birth, many producers delay the breeding of ewe lambs until the breeding season of the second year of their lives when they are 16-20 months of age. This management practice has several negative outcomes:

1. Delaying breeding has negative consequences on profitability of sheep operations as it reduces the lifetime productivity of the female.
2. Delaying breeding increases cost of production and reduces the rate of genetic improvement in the flock.
3. Recent evidence suggests that reproductive performance in ewe lambs bred at 15-20 months is not better than performance of lambs bred at 9-10 months.
4. The cost associated with poor performers that remain open after the breeding season is significantly higher as these females need to be sold as culled ewes rather than lambs.

So why do so many producers delay the age of first breeding? The major reasons given for the decision to breed replacements at an older

age are perceived negative effects on ewe lambs in subsequent years, lambing problems, birth of lighter lambs and higher mortality in offspring born to ewe lambs. However, most studies indicate that breeding replacements at 7-9 months to first lamb as yearlings has no effect or positive effects on their performance between 2-6 years as long as the ewe lambs are fed to meet nutritional requirements for lactation and continued growth. Further, contrary to common belief of many producers, breeding replacements at 7-9 months of age has not been reported to decrease ewe longevity or increase losses as mature ewes.

What can be done to ensure successful breeding of spring-born ewe lambs? Producers need to keep in mind that sheep are seasonal breeders with peak in reproductive activity occurring between September and December. Moreover, the duration of the breeding season may actually be shorter for ewe lambs. Therefore, a key consideration for successful breeding of ewe lambs is to manage the growth of animals so that they obtain the necessary weight and age to attain puberty by the start of, or early in, the breeding season. Typically, this means controlling growth rates so that lambs born prior to April 1 can attain 60-65% of their mature ewe weight by the end of September. Recent studies have also shown that ewe lambs with low body weights at breeding show poor reproductive performance; however, as body weight increases above 36 kg (80 lbs), the number of lambs weaned per replacement ewe lamb exposed to rams increases due to more ewe

lambs being bred and lambing, increased ovulation rate and prolificacy, and lower embryonic and postnatal mortality. Providing good quality pastures in late summer and providing ration supplements are useful practices to ensure high reproductive performance of ewe lambs. In addition to ensuring the animals are of the appropriate age and gain the appropriate weight prior to the breeding season, some additional management practices that can improve the outcome from breeding replacements as ewe lambs include the following:

1. Know the breed you are using! Breeds vary with respect to live weight and age at puberty, seasonality (length of the breeding season) and proportions attaining puberty and showing estrus during the breeding season. Knowing your breed will help you to determine the optimal age and weight at breeding and the best time of year to attempt to breed ewe lambs.
2. Induction/synchronization of estrus with CIDR devices has two potential beneficial effects. Firstly, estrus and breeding are induced in ewe lambs that are close to but have not attained puberty, and secondly, because the breeding season is shorter for ewe lambs, synchronization of estrus increases the chances of ewe lambs being bred and conceiving before the end of the breeding season.
3. Conduct pregnancy diagnoses. Determining which animals did not conceive allows the producer to cull ewe lambs early and avoid having to sell females as yearlings or culled ewes. Additionally, knowledge of the date of conception and potential number of offspring can be used in providing an optimum nutritional program.
4. Provide an optimum nutritional program during pregnancy and lactation. Keep in mind that the nutritional require-

ment increases significantly during the last month of pregnancy and increases further during early lactation. Additionally, ewe lambs are still growing and would require nutrients for their own growth during pregnancy and lactation. Providing some level of grain supplements and best quality forage during late pregnancy and lactation should be considered. Also, an appropriate nutritional program during pregnancy and lactation will likely increase the chance of survival and growth of the offspring produced by ewe lambs.

5. Implement an appropriate health management program based on consultation with your veterinarian and be prepared to assist ewe lambs during their first lambing period.

Breeding replacement females at 7-9 months of age will not only increase the total number of lambs weaned each year and the lifetime productivity of the individual female, but also can have a positive impact on the profitability of sheep operations. Studies at West Virginia University are currently further evaluating approaches to increase productivity of ewe lambs.


For more information or if you wish to participate in these studies, please contact Dr. Marlon Knights at marlon.knights@mail.wvu.edu (304-293-1946), Dee Singh-Knights at dosingh-knights@mail.wvu.edu (304-293-7606) or Adam Redhead at aredhead@mix.wvu.edu (304-293-7696).

Apple & Peach Insurance
11/20 Sales Closing Deadline

What does it protect against?

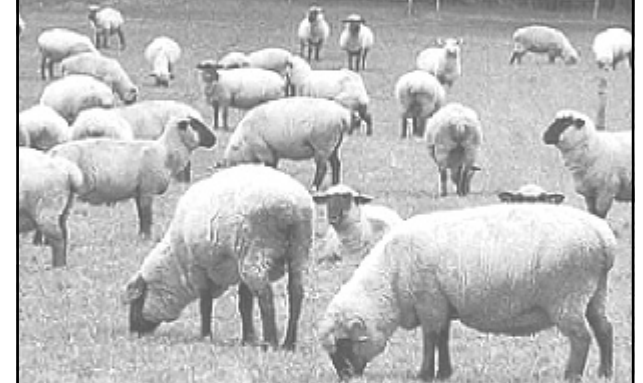
- Adverse weather conditions	- Failure of irrigation
- Fire	- Insects
- Wildlife	- Plant disease

NEXT STEP! Contact your local USDA service center
AGENT LOCATOR: www3.rma.usda.gov/apps/agents

Save the Date!

Improve your flock at the West Virginia Small Farm Conference



Feb 25-27, 2016

at the
Charleston Civic Center

MANAGING RISK WITH THE FARM SERVICE AGENCY

DOUG CYPHERS, DISTRICT DIRECTOR, WEST VIRGINIA FARM SERVICE AGENCY

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is an Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture tasked with implementing agricultural farm bill policies. The FSA in West Virginia administers loan, conservation, commodity and disaster programs in support of agricultural producers throughout the state. The programs are administered through locally elected county committees serving in our network of 23 offices located throughout the state. Rick Snuffer, State Executive Director, encourages all West Virginia agriculture producers to read the following summary of risk management programs offered by FSA. “West Virginia Farm Service Agency offers a wide array of risk management, production assistance and loan programs to assist WV farmers in the success of their agriculture enterprises. Please take time to review these programs below and then contact one of our local offices to discuss how we can assist you.” said Snuffer.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP):

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields/grazing loss, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occurs due to natural disasters including drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes.

In order to meet eligibility requirements for NAP, crops must be non-insurable, commercially-produced agricultural commodity crops for which the catastrophic risk protection level of crop insurance is not available.

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill) allows producers to choose higher levels of NAP coverage. Previously, the program offered coverage at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed

50 percent of expected production. Producers may now choose higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. It is important to note that the higher coverage is not available on grazing crops.

Eligible producers must file an application for coverage and pay a service fee by the appropriate application closing date. Producers also pay a fixed premium for higher coverage. Beginning, limited resource, and underserved producers may request a waiver of the service fee and a 50 percent premium reduction when the application for coverage is filed.

To learn more about the Noninsured Crop

2016 Application Closing Date	Crops
September 1, 2015	Aquaculture, Christmas trees, Floriculture, Ginseng, Mushrooms, Ornamental Nursery, Strawberries, Turfgrass Sod
September 30, 2015	Barley, Garlic, Rye, Triticale, Wheat
November 20, 2015	Apples, Blueberries, Caneberries, Cherries, Grapes, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Plums
December 1, 2015	Honey, Maple Sap
March 15, 2016	Alfalfa, Clover, Grass, Mixed Forage, All Other Annual Crops

Disaster Assistance Program and how it can help you, USDA, in partnership with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois, created an online resource. The Web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap, allows you to determine whether your crops are eligible for coverage. It also provides an opportunity to explore a variety of options and levels to determine the best protection level for your operation.

Farm Loans:

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has loan funds available to purchase and/or improve farms in West Virginia. FSA makes and guarantees loans for family farmers to establish, purchase or expand their farming operation. Direct loans can be made up to \$300,000

and can be combined with other lenders loan funds, if needed. In general, loan funds can be used to purchase a farm, construct farm buildings, or develop other improvements essential to the farming operation. Interest rates for the Farm Ownership loans are made at a fixed rate and can be amortized for up to 40 years. This year, Congress allocated a record amount of funding to states to meet the growing needs of our family farmers. West Virginia was allocated over 14 million dollars to be used in Fiscal Year 2015, which ends September 30. West Virginia farmers are encouraged to contact their local FSA County office to discuss specific loan eligibility requirements and to obtain assistance in filing an application for these loans.

Additional changes to FSA eligibility requirements will enhance beginning farmers access to land, a key barrier to small and entry level producers. FSA policies related to farm experience have changed so that other types of skills may be considered to meet the direct farming experience required for farm ownership loan eligibility. Operation or management of non-farm businesses, leadership positions while serving in the military or advanced education in an agricultural field will now count towards the experience applicants need to show when applying for farm ownership (FO) loans.

FSA also makes loans for farm operating (OL) purposes up to \$300,000 for such items as purchase of livestock, farm equipment, and annual farm operating expenses. A relatively new type of operating loan offered by FSA is the microloan. Loans of up to \$50,000 offer borrowers simplified lending with less paperwork. The microloan allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers to access to loans using a simplified application process with up to seven years to repay. Microloans are part

DIRECTORY

County	Phone	WVU Extension Agent
Barbour	(304) 457-3254	Joshua Peplowski
Berkeley	(304) 264-1936	Mary Beth Bennett
Boone	(304) 369-5869	Philip See
Braxton	(304) 765-2809	Debbie Friend
Brooke	(304) 737-3666	Norm Schwertfeger
Cabell	(304) 743-7151	Rich Sherman
Calhoun	(304) 354-6332	Daisy Bailey
Clay	(304) 587-4267	Michael Shamblin
Doddridge	(304) 873-1801	Dave Snivley
Fayette	(304) 574-4253	Brian Sparks
Gilmer	(304) 462-7061	Daisy Bailey
Grant	(304) 257-4688	Brad Smith
Greenbrier	(304) 647-7409	John McCutcheon
Hampshire	(304) 822-5013	Stephen Starcher
Hancock	(304) 564-3805	Carole Scheerbaum
Hardy	(304) 530-0273	Dave Workman
Harrison	(304) 624-8650	Larry Campbell
Jackson	(304) 372-8199	John David Johnson
Jefferson	(304) 728-7413	Michael Harman
Kanawha	(304) 720-9573	John Porter
Lewis	(304) 269-4660	Bruce Loyd
Lincoln	(304) 824-7911	David Roberts
Logan	(304) 792-8690	Dana Wright
Marion	(304) 367-2772	John Murray
Marshall	(304) 843-1170	Cheryl Kaczor
Mason	(304) 675-0888	Rodney Wallbrown
McDowell	(304) 436-9006	Donald Reed
Mercer	(304) 425-3079	Jodi Richmond
Mineral	(304) 788-3621	Stacey Huffiman
Mingo	(304) 235-2692	Mark Whitt
Monongalia	(304) 291-7201	HR Scott
Monroe	(304) 772-3003	Brian Wickline
Morgan	(304) 258-8400	Cindy Smalley
Nicholas	(304) 872-7898	Brian Sparks
Ohio	(304) 234-3673	Karen Cox
Pendleton	(304) 358-2286	Dave Seymour
Pleasants	(304) 684-2448	Alice Bonanno (Sec)
Pocahontas	(304) 799-4852	Greg Hamons
Preston	(304) 329-1391	Bill Shockey
Putnam	(304) 586-0217	Chuck Talbott
Raleigh	(304) 255-9321	David Richmond
Randolph	(304) 636-2455	Ronnie Helmondollar
Ritchie	(304) 643-5200	Alexandria Straight
Roane	(304) 927-0975	Brandy Brabham
Summers	(304) 466-7113	David Richmond
Taylor	(304) 265-3303	John Murray
Tucker	(304) 478-2949/209	Jessica Streets
Tyler	(304) 758-2101	Natasha Robinson
Upshur	(304) 473-4208	Natasha Harris
Wayne	(304) 272-6839	Gary Selby
Webster	(304) 847-2727	Mike Hall
Wetzel	(304) 455-0934	Mollie Toppe
Wirt	(304) 275-3101	Patty Morrison
Wood	(304) 424-1960	JJ Barrett
Wyoming	(304) 732-0007/309	Stephanie Lusk

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

West Virginia University
Extension Service
ext.wvu.edu

Agriculture & Natural Resources
WVU Extension Service
anr.ext.wvu.edu, ext.wvu.edu

USDA Risk Management Agency
rma.usda.gov

West Virginia Soil Conservation Agency
wvca.us

WV Dept. of Agriculture
wvagriculture.org

Farm Service Agency (FSA)
fsa.usda.gov

USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Agency (NRCS)
nrcs.usda.gov

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304-293-2715

USDA SERVICE CENTERS

WV Agency Offices	Phone
WVDA State Office	304-558-3550
WVDA Executive Division	304-558-3200
WVDA Animal Health Division	304-558-2214
WVDA Marketing & Development Division (Market Bulletin)	304-558-2210 304-558-3708
WVDA Meat and Poultry Inspection Division	304-558-2206
WVDA Plant Industries Division	304-558-2212
WVDA Regulatory & Environmental	304-558-2227
USDA Agencies	
NRCS State Office	304-284-7540
FSA State Office	304-636-1785
Rural Development State Office	304-284-4860
Multi-Agency USDA Service Centers	
Beckley	304-253-9597
Buckeye	304-799-4317
Cross Lanes	304-776-5256
Elkins	304-636-6703
Franklin	304-358-2285
Gassaway	304-364-5103
Glenville	304-462-7171
Hamlin	304-824-3236
Huntington	304-697-6033
Keyser	304-788-2332
Kingwood	304-329-1923
Lewisburg	304-645-6172
Martinsburg	304-263-7547
McMechen	304-242-0576
Middlebourne	304-758-2173
Moorefield	304-530-2825
Morgantown	304-291-4377
Mount Clare	304-624-9232
Parkersburg	304-257-4702
Petersburg	304-257-4702
Philippi	304-457-3026
Point Pleasant	304-675-2020
Princeton	304-487-1404
Ranson	304-725-3471
Ripley	304-372-6231
Romney	304-822-3020
Spencer	304-927-1022
Summersville	304-872-1731
Union	304-772-3006
Weston	304-269-8431
Whitehall	304-363-8861
Conservation District Offices	
Captiol	304-759-0736
Eastern Panhandle	304-263-4376
Elk	304-765-2535
Greenbrier	304-645-6173
Guyan	304-528-5718
Little Kanawha	304-422-9088
Monongahela	304-296-0081
Northern Panhandle	304-238-1231
Potomac Valley	304-822-5174
Southern	304-253-0261
Tygarts	304-457-3026
Upper Ohio	304-758-2512
West Fork	304-627-2160
Western	304-675-3054