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Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Non-Technical Summary

The participation of African-Americans in farm businesses is in decline (NASS, 2007). In the last 25 years, the population of black farmers in North Carolina (NC) has decreased by approximately 50%. In 2007, there were 1,491 black (non-white) principal farm operators on 157,777 acres. NASS reported in 2007 (NASS, 2007) that the number of black farm operators less than 25 years of age decreased from 37 to 16, and black operators 25 to 34 years of age decreased to 50 to 46. More than 56% of black farm operators reported less than \$5,000 in market value of products sold (including government payments). Less than 177 principle farm enterprises reported by black farmers in 2007 could be classified as specialty crop (fruits, vegetables, nurseries) enterprises. A "Beginning Farmer Recruitment Council" will be organized to provide a framework of support and guidance of this apprenticeship project. The BFRC will be charged with providing recommendations for recruitment and development of a multi-faceted, non-traditional program An apprenticeship program to place willing participants with mentor farmers will be developed and conducted. Participants will be "placed" at farms with mentoring farmers. Mentoring farmers will provide exposure to and experience in all aspects of production. In the second year, participants will be placed again with a mentor, who will provide the apprentice with a plot of land to develop a personal farm enterprise. University faculty will provide enterprise planning, production and marketing assistance to each apprentice for the development of a "farm plan." In the third year of the project, participating youth who want to continue farming will be provided with guidance for locating rental farmland and securing operating loans from the Beginning Farmer Program at USDA-FSA or other financial institutions. In year two, a new apprenticeship opportunity will be marketed to individuals not enrolled in the program in year one. Curriculum will be developed and delivered for short courses, field days, workshops and tours that. There will be enterprises demonstrated as part of the short course learning practicum. We will evaluate the success of the four program objectives by 1) determining whether or not an ongoing, integrated network of service providers is in place to support socially-disadvantaged beginning farmers; 2) measuring knowledge gained, skills learned, and changes in attitudes and aspirations of participating apprentices, as well as the numbers of apprentices completing training, selling product in local markets and beginning farm start-ups; 3) quantifying the formal training sessions that are developed and implemented; and 4) measuring demand for and use of digital media developed by program staff.. Follow-up surveys after six months, one year and two years to participating mentors and beginning farmers will evaluate the extent that program content results in increased farm income and new farm startups.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

The long range goals of the Standard BFRDP projects are to enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers through education, training, mentoring and outreach programs that enhance self-employment in farming. This project will address that goal by addressing priority topic (I) production and management strategies that enhance land stewardship by beginning farmers. Specifically this project will assist socially-disadvantaged stakeholders in accessing beginning farmer training, education, outreach and mentoring programs and other opportunities to access grants, loans and other services by providing those opportunities through an apprenticeship program. Specific objectives include: 1) Create a Beginning Farmer Recruitment Council (BFRC) and Producer Advisory Panel (PAP) for development of a program that will promote opportunities for socially-disadvantaged youth to participate in community-based food systems; 2) Create a model apprenticeship program whereby socially-disadvantaged youth will gain practical experience in production agriculture on working farms; 3) Create short-courses, workshops and demonstrations addressing the development of specialty crop enterprises for local markets; and 4) Develop an on-line continuing education series addressing production and marketing of specialty crops for local markets. Outcomes expected for (by) each objective include: 1) Successful development of a BFRC and PAP, recruitment of participants to the program, active participation by BRFC and PAP members in administrative meetings, and implementation of BFRC recommendations in curriculum development; 2) Increased knowledge and skills gained by apprentices, changes in aspirations by participants upon completion of the program, completion of entrepreneurial projects by apprentices while in the mentoring program and the establishment of farm businesses by participants in the program; 3) Development and adoption of business plans by participants, including marketing plans, participation of apprentices in "short courses" for underserved and socially disadvantaged farmers, resulting in the adoption of farming practices and enterprises that are sustainable for those farmers (that is, the environment will be conserved, the participants will make a profit where none existed before and rural farm economies will be strengthened), knowledge gained with respect to USDA programs that benefit underserved and beginning farmers and knowledge about profitable farming enterprises, direct marketing, farm management, and agribusiness; and 4) Utilization of the digital resources created by project faculty and staff to increase income on their farms, as well as begin new enterprises.

What was accomplished under these goals?

Continuing to work with our collaborating partners, Operation Spring Plant, Sandhills Family Heritage Association, and the Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help, 30 socially disadvantaged, limited resource youth completed the final year of this project. Apprentices continued to work alongside their mentor farmers between 10-40 hours a week during the summer months. During the fall and winter months, some students continued to work 5-10 hours a week mostly during market hours. Students attended on campus educational forums focusing on small farm innovations, and attended regional sustainable agriculture conferences. Three of our students participated in an eight-week intensive beginner farmer workshop series hosted by Orange County Cooperative Extension. These courses reviewed marketing, business planning, pest management, and integrative livestock management.

In the final term of this project, we finalized plans for an open access online continuing education series. These online new farmer modules are focused on increased success in local markets. We will be working with area farmers and educators to highlight their business successes. The digital resources created by project faculty are focused on increasing financial sustainability, enterprise development, holistic farm planning, marketing and business management and sustainable soil management. In the final term of this project we developed an open access online continuing education series. These online new farmer modules are focused on increased success in local markets. We worked with area farmers and educators to highlight their business successes. The digital resources created by project faculty are focused on increasing financial sustainability, enterprise development, holistic farm planning, farmland access, marketing and business management, and sustainable soil management.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

Students attended on-campus educational forums focusing on small farm innovations, and attended regional sustainable agriculture conferences. Three of our students participated in a eight week intensive beginner farmer workshop series hosted by Orange County Cooperative Extension. These courses reviewed marketing, business planning, pest management and integrative livestock management.

At the NC A&T SU Small Ruminant Demonstration Site at the Upper Piedmont Research Station, the Site Manager, Sara Beth Routh, hosted Jessica Cannoy, a local high school agriculture teacher, and 25 high school FFA students to provide training in small ruminant production and a tour of the facility (May 2014). In 2013, Joe French, the Upper Piedmont Station Superintendent provided tours of the station and site to over 120 individuals, youth, and adults.

A Food Preservation Workshop was shared with six youth at a local value added facility, Food Works/ Working Landscapes in Warrenton, North Carolina. Youth processed their own peppers into pepper jelly.

(See text above under Accomplished Goals)

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

Our community partners reported the outcomes of the project in their newsletters, on their websites and through social media. Program directors presented the project through regional conference lectures and poster presentations. Apprentices made presentations summarizing their work at site agency board meetings, and to local food pantries

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants

{Nothing to report}

Target Audience

Socially and economically disadvantaged African American and Latino high-school aged students, with little to no prior background in agriculture were the primary target audience. Additionally, three community based organizations that had ongoing new farmer training programs.

Products

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
Conference Papers and	Accepted	2013	YES

Citation

Pullan, E.S., N.N. Ranells, J. O'Sullivan J, M.L. Eley, J.O Idassi, M.J. Ibrahim, and K.R. Baldwin. 2013. Youth Engaging in Agriculture: Cultivating Successful Small Scale Enterprise Endeavors. Professional Agricultural Workers Conference, Tuskegee, AL, 8-10 Dec 2013.

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
Conference Papers and	Accepted	2014	YES

Citation

Pullan, E.S., and N.N. Ranells. 2014. Youth Engaging in Agriculture. 6th Sustainable Agriculture Educators Association Conference, 6th Sustainable Agriculture Education Association Conference, Raleigh/Pittsboro, NC, 3-6 Aug 2014.

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
Conference Papers and	Accepted	2014	YES

Citation

Ranells, N.N., and J.M. Lelekacs. 2014. Beginning Farmer Training. 6th Sustainable Agriculture Education Association Conference, Raleigh/Pittsboro, NC, 3-6 Aug 2014.

Other Products**Product Type**

Audio or Video

Description

An online educational series for beginner farmers. The resources created by this project focus on increased success in local markets, financial sustainability and enterprise development.

Product Type

Survey Instruments

Description

Surveys were administered to sub-grantee mentors and apprentices to gauge changes in their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior.

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

An open access online continuing education series was created with citations to beginner farmer resources and related research.

Changes/Problems

In the winter of 2014 an adjustment was made to our budget to include the development and design of an online small farm simulator. At that time we based the adjusted budget on a quote shared with us by a software development firm. In July of 2014 our sole source justification was denied and under university policy the project was opened up to bids. At that time the design firm that we had been working with decided not to put in a bid, due to an internal change in staff structure. The bids that were received were at 300% above the allocated budget, making any attempt at renegotiation impractical. Because of the specific technical factors of the project made up such a significant amount of the project, and the time frame was so short the suggestion from the purchasing department was to cancel the request for the proposal. During the course of the proposal, the PI was changed on two occasions.