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Incubator Farm Project Proposed for Robbins

The *Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS)* has announced the launch of a new *Incubator Farm Project* in partnership with the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA), and North Carolina Cooperative Extension. This project makes support for beginning farmers an integral part of CEFS 10% Campaign, an initiative that invites consumers, businesses, institutions and agencies to commit 10% of their food dollars to local foods (www.nc10percent.com).

CEFS will partner with up to five county governments, municipalities or state agencies across the state over the next two years to plan and implement five incubator farms on vacant urban, rural or peri-urban public land. The **Town of Robbins** has submitted a proposal to CEFS for consideration. Final decisions will be made early in 2012.

With the help of Moore County Extension Agent Taylor Williams, and Town of Robbins manager George Hayfield, a 60-acre parcel near the town's reservoir will provide the ideal setting for small, sustainable organic farms. The hope is to infuse the small community of Robbins with the entrepreneurial spirit of young farmers, delivering the much-needed agricultural component the area has been lacking in recent years. According to George Hayfield, *"The local food movement in North Carolina needs beginning farmers and can't possibly succeed without them. The economic forecast for Robbins will be a good deal brighter with this organic farm incubator project in place"*.

Access to land has been identified as one of the top challenges facing new farmers in North Carolina. This Incubator Farm Project will work with

communities to address this need by repurposing vacant public land into places that incubate new farmers. These new farmers get access to land, in exchange for "rent" in the form of a percentage of fresh farm products or other services donated to communities in need -- a win-win-win opportunity for everyone involved.

The average age of North Carolina farmers is now 57. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, North Carolina's 9.5 million residents currently spend approximately \$35 billion per year on food, and the state's population is expected to increase from over 9.5 million today to over 12 million by 2030.

Research shows that money spent at locally owned businesses has a multiplier effect and can increase wealth, jobs and income for local communities more than money spent at non-locally owned businesses.



Learn more:

- Find resources at www.ncnewfarmers.org
 - Check the 10% Campaign website for updates and resources.
- State Coordinator for the *Incubator Farm Project* - Joanna Lelekacs
(jmleleka@ncsu.edu).