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**The Sustainable Connection** is a quarterly publication intended to provide applicable, easy to understand information, for farmers in Southern Missouri.

## OASDFR: An Introduction

**By K.B. Paul, Associate Program Director and Sanjun Gu, Program Director**

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR), also known as the "Section 2501" program after its Farm Bill section number, provides competitive grants to land-grant institutions and other minority serving and non-governmental organizations to work with minority farmers by assisting them in owning and operating farms, and for participating in agricultural and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) specific programs. The purpose of the OASDFR program is to ensure that socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers and forest landowners (OASDFRFL) have

equal opportunities to successfully acquire, own, operate and retain farms, and to equitably participate in all USDA programs. Socially disadvantaged farmers include, but are not limited to, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asians and Pacific Islanders. This 2501 program is currently administered by the Office of Outreach and Advocacy of the USDA.

Lincoln University Cooperative Extension (LUCE) has a history of receiving OASDFR grants. The two most recent OASDFR grants were awarded in 2009 and 2011. The objectives were to assist Missouri SDF in participating in sustainable

agriculture, to enhance SDFs participation in USDA program's, organize annual Missouri Minority and Limited Resource Farmers' (MLRF) Conferences, and develop an online SDF Resource Center for sustainable agriculture and USDA programs.

The two 2501 projects awarded to LUCE serve SDF in the Southwest, Southeast and Central regions of Missouri and work closely with LUCE's Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Program (ISFOP), which covers the east central and west central regions. Contact information is listed on the back of this newsletter.

## The Missouri Minority and Limited Resource Farmers' (MLRF) Conference 2012

**By Catherine Bohnert, Program Assistant-Central Region**

In early March, the Missouri MLRF Conference was held at Lincoln University's George Washington Carver Farm in Jefferson City. This two-day conference brought together more than 65 minority and limited resource farmers from across the state of Missouri.

The two keynote speakers, Jerry Pennick and Victor Harris, gave inspirational speeches about the important role minority farmers play in US agriculture and the introduction of a farm turnaround team created to help family farms become more profitable.

Breakout session topics were on deciding farm enterprises, growing fruits and vegetables, rotational grazing, meat processing, soil health, and the intro-

duction of programs and funding opportunities pertinent to SDF from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)/ Farm Service Agency (FSA)/ Rural Development Agency (RD) and Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA).

A farmers' panel allowed participants to ask questions about each successful operation. Panelists included an urban poultry farmer; cattle, turkey and egg producer; vegetable, herb and flower

grower; and a vegetable and worm farmer. Advice was given on raising poultry, growing vegetables for farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture, applying for NRCS cost share program for rotational grazing fencing and constructing high tunnels.

The exhibitors' hall included booths from agencies eager to answer questions about their farm programs and register farms for the 2012 Agriculture Census. The conference concluded with plant and animal tours of Carver Farm.

As a result of the positive evaluations, comments and suggestions, LUCE is looking forward to holding the second annual Missouri MLRF Conference next spring. Watch for details in the upcoming issues of *The Sustainable Connection*.



**Farmers' panel (from left to right): Pov Hun, Kenn White, Jeri Villarreal, Sam Harris and Debi Kelly (moderator)**

## The Birth of a New 2501 Program

By Sarah Becker



**Sarah Becker,**  
Previous 2501 Program  
Assistant-Southwest Region

In 2010, I had the privilege of helping establish Lincoln University's 2501 Program in Missouri's Southwest region. Its success is largely due to the dedicated staff at LUCE and their passion to assist minority, low-income and socially disadvantaged farmers in the creation of sustainable and vibrant livelihoods. I found this same passion among the Southwest region's University of Missouri Extension

(UME) specialists and countless community members who have been instrumental in helping the program connect with farmers.

The year-and-a-half of my work was not without its fair share of obstacles—all of which brought new learning experiences that only heightened my resolve to find methods that brought the most assistance to the most people. I was happy to pass the torch on to Nahshon Bishop, current 2501 Program Assistant of the Southwest region, this past December. I know that he has great

plans in the works for further assisting our farmers by bringing them research-based information and introducing them to a hands-on learning environment, which will help them thrive and reach their goals.

It was such an honor getting to know each and every one of you professionally and personally. I hope the new 2501 program, OASDFR, continues to be a means of help and support in all your ventures!

Take care,  
Sarah Becker

## In the Spotlight: Eileen Nichols

By Nahshon Bishop, Program Assistant-Southwest Region

The below conversation took place between Eileen Nichols, Webb City Farmers' Market manager, and myself on November 30, 2011.

**Nahshon:** I think we should put on a workshop, a year-end workshop to discuss the difficulties local farmers faced in 2011.

**Eileen:** When and where would you like to hold this workshop?

**Nahshon:** I was hoping that you would help me with that.

**Eileen:** What kind of time frame are we looking at?

**Nahshon:** Everything needs to be ready by next Wednesday.

**Eileen:** Okay, but next time, Shon, try to give me more warning.

The following Wednesday, December 7, 2011, Eileen and I

met with Dr. Jamie Pinero, LUCE State IPM Specialist, Patrick Byers, University of Missouri Extension Regional Horticulture Specialist and 16 farmers (because of Eileen's efforts). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss farm related topics, including difficulties and challenges that farmers faced throughout the 2011 growing season. I came away from this meeting with an appreciation of those who have dedicated their lives to agriculture. Thank you! These two simple words carry a heartfelt sense of gratitude. Unfortunately, they are oftentimes underutilized when dealing with those dedicated individuals.

*In the Spotlight* has been created for a place to say "thank you" to the farmers: men, women and their families, as well as agricultural enthusiasts in Southwest Missouri. Thank

you to those who get up early in the morning and work long after the sun has set so the rest of us can enjoy safe, nutritious, healthy and wonderful varieties of fresh farm commodities at almost any time of the year.

Each issue of *The Sustainable Connection* will feature a new person, whose work and efforts help strengthen and maintain the important role that agriculture plays in today's fast-paced society. Eileen Nichols stepped into the spotlight 11 years ago with a simple idea of starting a farmers' market in Webb City. Since its inception, the Webb City Farmers' Market has enjoyed exponential growth and an influx of vendors as well as the prestigious Missouri Market of the Year Award in 2009.

Thank you, Eileen!

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**At right: Eileen Nichols,**  
Webb City Farmers' Market Manager

## NRCS Has Money Available to Help Pay for High Tunnels

By Brad McCord, Natural Resource Specialist, USDA-NRCS



Above: High tunnel at Lincoln University's George Washington Carver farm

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has money to help Missourians build seasonal high tunnels. Beginning farmers and those considered historically underserved may receive an even higher payment.

High tunnels look like greenhouses. They capture solar energy and enable farmers to grow crops in climates at times of the year when it would otherwise be too cold. High tunnels reduce pesticide use, keep vital nutrients in the soil and extend the growing season, which increases yields.

NRCS reimburses farmers for 2,178 square feet of high tunnel. The regular rate of reimbursement is \$2.57 per square foot, but there is a higher rate of \$3.08 per square foot for beginning farmers or historically underserved farmers. Landowners may build high tunnels that are larger than 2,178 square feet, but NRCS cannot pay the additional expense. It has helped pay for 187 high tunnels in Missouri since 2010. NRCS has paid \$852,538 to those producers.

"I'm pleased that Missouri has received more money than any other state for NRCS' high tunnel initia-

tive," NRCS State Conservationist J.R. Flores said. "It speaks to both the interest and the need of the landowners in our state. The farmers who sell their produce locally benefit from the extra income that comes from a high tunnel and the community benefits from the availability of fresh, locally grown food."

To apply, call a local NRCS office. Look in the phone book under U.S. Government Department of Agriculture," or online at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

Farmers approved by NRCS for high tunnel funding, may also get short-term loans from the state to help them pay the initial cost. Contact the Missouri Department of Agriculture at (573) 751-2129.

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## Irrigation Water Quality

By Patrick Byers, University of Missouri Extension Regional Horticulture Specialist

The summer of 2011 was noteworthy for the extended period of hot, dry weather. Hopefully, Southwest Missouri will not see a repeat of such extreme conditions, but fruit and vegetable growers should plan on at least one 2-week period when rainfall is insufficient to meet the needs of plants. Remember that sufficient water is critical for maximum production and acceptable quality.

Trickle or drip irrigation offers

benefits to growers, especially when water supplies are either limited or expensive. For best performance of a drip system, however, growers must be aware of water quality issues. Bob Schultheis, University of Missouri Extension Natural Resource Engineering Specialist, has prepared a guide that outlines water quality issues. Go online to: [http://extension.missouri.edu/webster/irrigation/Maintenance\\_of\\_Drip\\_Irrigation\\_Systems.HDT.pdf](http://extension.missouri.edu/webster/irrigation/Maintenance_of_Drip_Irrigation_Systems.HDT.pdf) to

view the publication.

Water sources for drip irrigation systems should be tested before the need for irrigation arrives. A water quality analysis should identify inorganic solids such as sand and silt; organic solids such as algae, bacteria, and slime; dissolved solids such as iron, manganese, sulfates, chlorides and carbonates (calcium); and the pH and hardness of the water. Water testing can be done by a number of laboratories in the state.

***"Fruit and vegetable growers should plan on at least one 2-week period when rainfall is insufficient to meet the needs of plants."***

## Companion Planting

By Nahshon Bishop, Program Assistant-Southwest Region



**Companion Planting of Corn and Beans**

Some of the most helpful methods we use today as gardeners and commercial growers have been borrowed from nature. One such example is companion planting. This simple, yet effective, method of growing produce can benefit us through a variety of avenues.

Companion planting, also referred to as intercropping (when more than one crop shares a row or area), is not a new practice. Native Americans developed one method of companion planting known as the three sisters method. The arrangement of plants for the three sisters planting style typically includes, but is not limited to corn, pole beans and

squash. At first glance, it can be a little overwhelming to the average symmetrically minded, neat and clean, American grower. However, further observation reveals the scientific principles behind this simple and effective system of planting. First, the corn, which provides the grower with the highly sought after yellow kernels, also provides a living trellis for the pole beans so that no additional support is needed. In turn, the pole beans provide nitrogen from their nitrogen-fixing root nodules for the corn to use throughout the growing period. Finally, the squash plant then becomes living mulch for the pole beans and corn providing ground cover, which can smother young weeds.

As technology in the field of agriculture continues to develop, we are starting to observe and confirm many different methods of growing produce, some of which have been

part of folklore for many years. We now know that certain plants contain substances which naturally occur inside specific parts of the plant (e.g. roots, plant stalk, flower structure, etc.). These substances can help deter or attract specific insects to a crop.

A little research on your own will quickly uncover the most popular planting companions, attractants and deterrents for specific insects. However, please keep in mind that companion planting should not replace traditional control methods for plant diseases or pests that can cause economic loss to a cash crop.

The idea of companion planting should only be viewed as one tool in a farmer's toolbox, or one option among many for a successful integrated pest management (IPM) plan to provide the protection for the desired crop.

### Upcoming Events

#### 6th National Small Farm Conference

Memphis, TN

September 18-20, 2012

#### 2012 Small Farm Trade Show & Conference

Columbia, MO

November 1-3, 2012

### Job Announcement

Lincoln University Cooperative Extension is hiring a program assistant for the OASDFR Program. The assistant will be located at one of the satellite offices (Sikeston, Lilbourn or Caruthersville) in Southeast Missouri. An earned B.S. degree in horticulture, animal science or AgEconomy is required. Please visit <http://www.lincolnu.edu/web/human-resource-services/job-opportunities> for a complete job description or contact Dr. Gu by calling (573) 681-5524 for more details. AEO/AA/ADA.

### Contact Us!

The purpose of the OASDFR program is to assist traditionally underserved farmer and ranchers. We are here to help you from seed to plate!

Your phone number, physical address or email address will allow us to send you helpful information and notify you of upcoming outreach workshops and events. Call or email a member of the program staff below.

**Dr. Sanjun Gu**, Program Director  
(573) 681-5524 or email [Sanjun.Gu@LincolnU.edu](mailto:Sanjun.Gu@LincolnU.edu)

**Nahshon Bishop**, Program Assistant-Southwest Region  
(417) 846-3948 or email [BishopN@LincolnU.edu](mailto:BishopN@LincolnU.edu)

**Catherine Bohnert**, Program Assistant-Central Region  
(573) 681-5174 or email [BohnertC@LincolnU.edu](mailto:BohnertC@LincolnU.edu)

### Websites

**Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers (OASDFR) Program**

<http://www.lincolnu.edu/web/programs-and-projects/24>

**Innovative Small Farmers Outreach Program (ISFOP)**

<http://www.lincolnu.edu/web/programs-and-projects/innovative-small-farmers-outreach-program>



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