

# VENDOR NEWSLETTER



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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- FFM vendors plan to offer about 20 new products this season.
- FFM was promoted at the Shelby Christmas Parade.
- Act now sell at our Mobile Market!
- Learn about funding opportunities for value added producers
- Encourage customers to take our survey!
- Three vendors submit RAFI-USA grant proposals.

## OUR 2010 SEASON

We hope you are planning to use Foothills Farmers' Market as a sales outlet for your fruits, vegetables, meats and other commodities again this year. We will be undertaking even more advertising and promotions activities in an effort to continue to grow our customer base during our third season of operation.

Dates and operating hours for 2010 have been established as follows:

### Uptown Shelby Location

*Season opens April 24 and runs through November 27*

- ▶ Wednesdays & Saturdays from 8 AM until 12 Noon
- ▶ Fridays from 2-6 PM

### Cleveland County Health Department Mobile Market

*Season runs May 4 through August 31.*

- ▶ Tuesdays from 8:00 AM until 12:30 PM

## VENDOR PRODUCTION PLANS

Thanks to those of you who completed the Vendor Checklist sent to you by mail in early January. This tool provided us with some valuable insight into your collective production plans for 2010.

This new information will support the FFM Steering Committee and Work Teams in marketing and promotions, identifying gaps in production, and developing educational programs.

The following new items will be available at FFM for the first time this season:

- Pole beans
- Lima beans
- Brussel sprouts
- Butterbeans
- Chinese cabbage
- Celery
- Mushrooms
- Daikon radishes
- Salad mix
- Winter squash
- Oriental greens
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Pickles
- Fruit & berry plants
- Peaches

- Fall strawberries
- Sprite melons
- Farm-raised turkey
- Goat cheese

We also have good levels of interest in all of our market days. Nine (9) vendors plan to sell in Uptown Shelby on Wednesdays; five (5) on Friday afternoons, and; sixteen (16) on Saturdays. Seven (7) vendors have expressed interest in selling at the Tuesday mobile market.

## PROMOTION TEAM UPDATE

The Promotion Team is charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive, regular promotional strategy for the FFM that will establish a brand name for this community enterprise that is different from other local farmers' market experiences and that will increase the number of people from Cleveland County and beyond who shop at FFM regularly. Team members are Lowrey Young, Wade Nichols, Tim Crotts, Thomas Lewis, Jackie Sibley and Pat Steele.

The team coordinated an entry in the 2009 **Shelby Christmas Parade** on December 20. Russell Leonhardt of Cherryville graciously permitted us to use his classly 1951 Ford F-100 stepside pickup (a real head turner).

They has also arranged for free advertising on the **Gateway Billboard** at Pleasant City Grill during the month of May.

The Team is also working to develop a **2010 Market Calendar** that will provide the community with product tastings, live entertainment, demonstrations, and family/children's activities throughout the season. Steve Leatherwood has volunteered to secure commitments from local bluegrass musicians.



*Isaiah & Jeremiah Underwood, representing Underwood Family Farms, sit among winter produce provided by Lewis Farms for the 2009 Shelby Christmas Parade.*

*“FFM will provide the community with product tastings, live entertainment, demonstrations, and family/children’s activities throughout the season.”*

*“...vendors selling at the 2010 Mobile Market are required to grow everything they sell.”*

## MOBILE MARKET REPORT

Our Mobile Market provides added sales opportunities for growers, but also improves access to fresh fruits and vegetables for county and hospital employees and limited resource citizens living in the adjoining neighborhood.

Beginning this year, vendors who participate in the Mobile Market will be required to grow everything they sell and comply with other requirements set forth by FFM. They will also be asked to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the

Cleveland County Health Department that specifies the roles and responsibilities of both parties.

These vendors have already expressed interest in selling at the Mobile Market in 2010:

- Lewis Farm
- Hoyle Farms
- Stamey Farm
- Sain Farms
- Wilson Farm
- PaPaw’s Produce
- Holla Holler Farm

Anyone else interested in being considered for Tuesday sales should contact Anne Short at 704-484-5112.

## GROWER OPPORTUNITIES

### Learn about funding opportunities for value-added producers

Value-added agricultural operations are an emerging sector of North Carolina agriculture. Several funding programs are in place to assist value-added producers. A series of three informational sessions (two meetings and a webinar) will be held across North Carolina in March to explain and answer questions about the USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) and the new N.C. Value-Added Cost Share Program (NCVACS), administered by N.C. MarketReady.

- ▶ March 9, 2010 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center, 455 Research Drive, Mills River, N.C.
- ▶ March 10, 2010 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. at the N.C. Cooperative Extension Center, Wilson County, 1806 SW Goldsboro Street, Wilson, N.C.
- ▶ March 11, 2010 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. via a live webinar, accessible from any location using your personal computer and the Internet. No password required, simply log on at the designated time.  
[http://illuminate.wolfware.ncsu.edu/join\\_meeting.html?meetingId=1261498476176](http://illuminate.wolfware.ncsu.edu/join_meeting.html?meetingId=1261498476176)

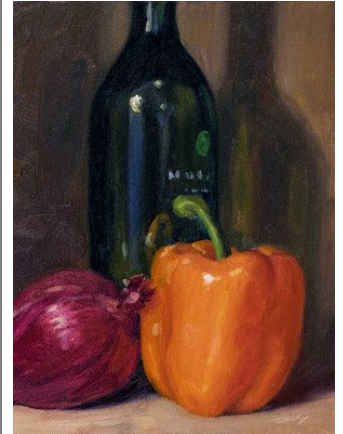
If you engage in agriculture, are considering a value-added venture or know someone who may be interested in funding assistance, consider these questions:

1. What are the eligibility requirements for funding?
2. How do these programs define “value-added”?
3. How can these funds be used?
4. How much money is available to eligible producers?
5. When are the application deadlines?
6. Where can I find more information?

If you are an N.C. producer, Cooperative Extension agent or someone who provides a service to farmers, these meetings will introduce you to these funding programs and answer all of these questions. The meetings will be led by individuals closely associated with each program to provide the most valuable resources and ensure that each participant leaves with an understanding of these programs.

For more information about VAPG and NCVACS, please visit [www.ncmarketready.org](http://www.ncmarketready.org) and click on “Value-Added Cost Share” on the left menu bar.

For information about the upcoming meetings, contact [brittany\\_whitmire@ncsu.edu](mailto:brittany_whitmire@ncsu.edu).



*“The spring grant cycle allows value-added producers to apply for 25 to 50 percent cost share on the cost of new or used equipment.”*

## Foothills Farmers' Market

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# STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT

- ▶ The FFM Steering Committee took important action at its February 8 meeting, adopting By-Laws and 2010 Operational Guidelines. Copies of these documents are enclosed for your reference.
- ▶ If you are interested in serving as an officer or director for Foothills Farmers' Market under the provisions set forth in our newly-adopted By-Laws, please contact county extension director Greg Traywick at 704-482-4365 or [greg\\_traywick@ncsu.edu](mailto:greg_traywick@ncsu.edu).
- ▶ The first Saturday of each month has been designated for **Grillin' & Jammin'** at FFM. Bluegrass musicians are invited to bring their instruments and play along with the Polkville Pickers. We will also be serving up free samples of our wonderful foods hot off the grill.
- ▶ The Promotion Team is working to secure commitments for live music, how-to demonstrations, children's activities, and other attractions for each Saturday during our 2010 season. These will be posted in the "**Events Calendar**" page or our web site ([www.foothillsfarmersmarket.com](http://www.foothillsfarmersmarket.com)). If you have an idea for an event or know someone who might like to demonstrate or perform, please let us know.
- ▶ FFM has been fortunate to receive a portion of its operating funds from county government (\$3000 last season). In order to continue to receive this funding, it will be important for us to work to secure a 501(c)3 non-profit designation as quickly as possible.
- ▶ **Customer feedback is important to us.** It helps us track who is shopping with us and what they think about the goods and services we provide. Please encourage your customers to take a minute to visit our web site and complete our new **online survey**. There are only 13 questions, and the input we receive will help us continue to expand and improve the market as our customers deem important.
- ▶ The next Steering Committee Meeting will be Monday, March 8 at 2 PM at the County Extension Center. We will be establishing an operating budget, defining our goals for marketing & promotions, developing a timeline for incorporating and applying for non-profit determination, and discussing strategies for implementing the membership and officers/directors provisions of our new By-Laws.

# RAFI-USA PROPOSALS

Our hats are off to three FFM vendors who recently submitted RAFI-USA grant applications.

Charles Wilson submitted a proposal for using hoop houses and other season-extension techniques to grow fall strawberries and other crops.

Rock Bottom Farm's proposal

was to develop a low-cost on farm cooling and prep facility unit to provide added flexibility to their harvest schedule and to maintain freshness of their vegetables and cut flowers for an extended period of time.

Knob Creek Orchards proposes to use grant funds to help finance the establishment of 15 acres of primo-

cane blackberries. These new varieties produce a high-value berry crop in the fall.

FFM submitted a proposal for a Community Grant that would support visibility & branding, market expansion and community engagement.

Applicants will be notified March 8, 2010.

