



## **Agriculture Economic Development Advisory Board 2009 Report**

The Bedford County Agriculture Economic Development Advisory Board, (Ag Board) continued to address many Ag related issues during 2009. The following is a summary of the work of the Ag Board during the year.

### **Marketing and Production**

#### **County Agriculture Web Page**

Our Bedford County Agriculture Web Page continues to be very well received. It is the place on the internet where people can go to find out everything agriculture in Bedford County and beyond. From where to take your sick horse, to where to buy a filter for your farm tractor, to when the next Ag related meeting will take place. The Agriculture Web Page has recently been redesigned in conjunction with the county's Economic Development Web Page.

The new web address is [www.bedfordeconomicdevelopment.com/agriculture](http://www.bedfordeconomicdevelopment.com/agriculture)

#### **Central Virginia Beef Initiative Expansion Project**

One of the grants sought and supported by the AEDAB was the Central Virginia Beef Initiative Expansion Project. This program provided a cash match up to \$3,000.00 per qualifying farm to make improvements in the areas of genetics and/or handling facilities. The goal of this project was to increase animal health and performance and facilitate better marketing opportunities which should in turn increase revenues. The program was initially funded for Appomattox, Buckingham, Campbell and Cumberland counties in 2007. At the request of Bedford County, a phase two grant was submitted to include Bedford as well as make additional dollars available for the original 4 counties. This grant was funded in the amount of \$186,750.00, with approximately 61% allocated to Bedford County. The Bedford Extension office had primary responsibility for managing the program locally including processing applications, making site visits, consulting on best practices and certifying project completion. As a result of receiving this grant, which concluded in August, 39 farms were able to participate, receiving a total of \$100,967.00 in reimbursement on a producer investment of \$236,856.00.

#### **Virginia Agribusiness Town Hall Meetings**

Members of the Ag Board continued to attend the Virginia Agribusiness Council's Town Hall Meetings. The Virginia Department of Agriculture holds these meetings for county agriculture representatives to get together and share ideas on agriculture development.

#### **Bedford Farmers Markets**

The Ag Board has taken a much more active role in the Farmers Markets in Bedford and Moneta. Members and advisors of the Ag Board have worked with Bedford Main Street and the Bedford market vendors to better coordinate the markets and operation and increase participation. The board has also worked with the vendors at the Moneta Farmers Market.

There was a Farmer's Market Forum held on Monday, November 9, 2009 at the Bedford Welcome Center. The speaker from the Staunton-Augusta County farmers market provided some ideas and discussed what their markets had done, such as having a single governing body for both markets, set days for the market to be open and coordinating activities between the market in Staunton and the market out in the county.

### Coyote Issues within the County

The Ag Board has continued to monitor the coyote problem in the county. Chad Foxx, USDA Wildlife Services Specialist and his associates worked with several county farmers during the year to help with predators. The Ag Board continues to instruct residents to use the USDA Wildlife Services to manage the predator problem.

### Central Virginia Commodity Storage Initiative

The AEDAB supported the effort of our local Extension office to seek another grant from the Tobacco Commission in 2009. The overall objective of the Central Virginia Commodity Storage Initiative is to improve the feed and/or storage efficiency of commodities for livestock and grain producers. Construction of on-farm structures will enhance farm profitability and therefore benefit the region's overall economy. Participating Virginia Counties include; Amelia, Appomattox, Bedford, Buckingham, Campbell, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Pittsylvania and Prince Edward. This program will provide a cash match up to \$3300.00 per qualifying farm to make improvements in the areas of hay/straw storage and/or feed/grain storage. Livestock producers will implement improved feeding programs that will increase production using lower input costs. The initiative will enable grain producers to implement marketing strategies to capture higher prices than available on the cash market at harvest and potentially capture new market opportunity with alternative fuels. This proposal was funded in the amount of \$500,000.00 and will be split amongst participating localities beginning in the spring of 2010.

### Review of Horse Slaughter Bill

The AG Board continues to stay abreast of the current status and the effects of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. The Board reviewed several articles including one from the National Counsel of State Legislators (NCSL) concerning horse slaughter and transportation ban. Members of the Ag Board have stayed in contact with representatives Goode, Perriello and Goodlatte concerning this legislation and its effects on county producers.

### CVCC Wind Energy Project

The Ag Board worked with Central Virginia Community College in the pursuit of a grant in conjunction with Virginia State University and Morgan State. The grant is to study wind turbines and the energy they produce. The Bedford County Board of Supervisors provided a letter of support stated that in concept the county supports this project.

### County Equine Group

The Bedford Equine Association (BEA) was formed in 2009 to promote and develop the equine interests in Bedford County. This includes being a tool for the dissemination of news and items of interest to the equine enthusiast members. To accomplish this goal they have developed a web site listing many equine and farm related businesses in the area and links to many local, state and national equine organizations. In 2008 equine activities in Virginia resulted in \$107 million in revenue. Bedford County is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in Virginia in the number of equines. BEA has held or participated in several events in the county in 2009 and have several planned for 2010 including a hay auction. A member of the Ag Board is a member of and represents the newly formed Bedford Equine Association (BEA). Ag

board representatives met with BEA leaders to get their input on what the equine community would need in a county agriculture complex.

### Local Grown Foods Meeting

The Extension Service held a meeting on locally grown food at Mountain Run Farm in the county. Ag Board representatives were in attendance.

## Land Protection and Conservation

### County Agriculture Zoning

One of the most important and time consuming undertakings of the Ag Board in 2009 was, at their request, working with the county Planning Commission on how the upcoming changes to the zoning ordinances could be setup to preserve agricultural land without inhibiting development. Members of the Land Protection and Conservation Committee attended numerous meetings with the Planning Commission, Bedford County staff, and the Board of Supervisors to present the Ag Board position.

### Citizens for Land Preservation Meeting

Members of the Bedford Citizens for Land Preservation (BCLP) attended several Ag Board meetings. Members of the Land Protection and Conservation Committee and the Ag Board have tried to take the BCLP's concerns and opinions into consideration when addressing the new zoning ordinances.

## Education and Events

### Community College Agriculture Curriculum

Classes began fall 2009 with 20 students at Central Virginia Community College (CVCC), Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC), and Southwest Virginia Community College. The typical goal for a cohort of students at the community college is 12 to make a class. We definitely had enough critical mass to justify the program. The first students ranged in ages from 18 to 60's and included a mix of full-time and part-time students. The student's interests ranged from agribusiness (3), dairy (3), horticulture (5), farm management (2), horse boarding and training (1), golf course management (1), vegetable production (2), viticulture (2), zoology (1). We have 19 students (down one) that returned for spring semester. We actually lost three students (1 due to full-time job offer, 1 due to academic probation, and 1 due to only taking last semester as elective in other degree program). That means we gained two new students at CVCC to get back up to 19! Three additional colleges will join the project for fall 2010; Southside Virginia Community College, Danville Community College, and Virginia Highlands Community College.

Jeff Laub (CVCC) has reported that his surveys came back very positive about potential student interest in the agricultural curriculum program. They plan to continue support of the project and expand classes to the Bedford Center soon. We are in the process of researching the technology necessary to accommodate satellite locations like the Bedford Center and remote students who would like to participate from home.

We have completed the degree proposal and course proposals. They will be presented by Jeff Fields (PHCC Dean) at the Virginia Community College System review meeting on February 25, 2010. **This is a significant accomplishment for the project.**

The USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher grant announcement was recently made and is due on April 6, 2010. We indicated in other commission grant requests that we would pursue it in order to leverage their funds. We will work with other groups in the state and agricultural industry to create a proposal that increases demand for the college program, assists with recruiting, and provides technical assistance for current students and graduates as they pursue their own business interests. Farm Credit of the Virginias has expressed an interest in supporting the project. They are congressionally mandated to provide assistance and special loan programs to young, beginning, and small farmers. We hope to form a partnership that amplifies all of our efforts.

Stephanie White has been working with Virginia Community Capital, Virginia Economic Bridge, Center for Rural Virginia, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech Outreach, USDA Rural Development (Virginia Office), Farm Credit Council, and American Farm Bureau since December to solidify support for the curriculum project and related grants that will help our students be successful in their chosen pursuits and gain recognition in the industry to aide in recruiting.

### Sedalia Country Fair

Members of the Ag Board attended the 2009 Sedalia Country Fair. The Ag Board is committed to doing everything possible to promote the Sedalia Fair and other local community agricultural festivals.

### Ag in the Classroom Program

The Ag Board has helped promote the Virginia Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom program to the Bedford County school system. Ag in the Classroom is a national program that provides and trains teachers to teach students about agriculture in a SOL format. Bedford County Schools had approximately 70 elementary school teachers participate in the program again this year. The school system has been receptive to the program and the Ag Board hopes the program can be implemented countywide in the future.

### Red Barn Project

Michael Stokes, Bedford Parks and Recreation Director reported to the Ag Board that after many community meetings and meetings with the Virginia Tech Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC), he has several renderings of what the Red Barn could look like and many purposes for which it could be used. Mr. Stokes asked AEDAB for help find funding for the Red Barn Project. Mr. Stokes stated that he believes this project has the ability to affect everyone in the County.

### Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

Several Ag Board members attended the Bedford County Farm Bureau's annual meeting. Joy Powers, daughter of Ag Board Chairman Jeff Powers, was a keynote speaker at the meeting.

### Vocational Agriculture School Board Presentation

The Ag Board set up a presentation by the county's Vocational Agriculture departments at Staunton River High School, Liberty High School, and Bedford Science and Technology Center to the Bedford County School Board. Each department gave a summary of their accomplishments for the school year. The Ag Board also made a special presentation to Mr. Wayne Stephenson, long term agricultural teacher at Staunton River High School, who was retiring at the end of the school year.

## Agriculture Brochure

The Ag Board developed a colorful and informative brochure to promote the county's agriculture products and Ag Tourism in the County. The brochure is available at the Welcome Center and businesses throughout the county.

## Virginia Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

Representatives of the Ag Board attended the 2009 Virginia Farm Bureau Annual Meeting held in Richmond. The convention addressed many topics related to the state's agriculture. There were workshops and a trade show.

## Congressman Bob Goodlatte's Energy Conference at CVCC

Representatives of the Ag Board were in attendance at Congressman Bob Goodlatte's Energy Conference held on Central Virginia Community College's Lynchburg Campus. It was a standing room only crowd at which experts talked about many aspects today's energy and possible alternatives.

## CVCC Summer Youth Education Program

The Ag Board helped promote the CVCC Summer Agriculture Academy that was held at the Bedford Campus. This class was available to area 4<sup>th</sup> graders interested in agriculture. Pete Parziale, instructor for the class spoke to the Ag Board about what the class would entail.

## Farm to School Program

Representatives attended a Farm to School Conference that promotes the use of local farm products in the school systems by coordinating efforts to link schools with local producers, and providing information on grant programs to purchase the necessary kitchen appliances to handle this fresh food. In the future the Ag Board hopes the Bedford County School System can take advantage of this program.

## **Other Activities and Actions**

### Bedford County Agriculture Complex

Since the Ag Board meeting last year with the Board of Supervisors members have been diligently communicating with county officials, agriculture groups and private individuals to fund and construct an Agriculture Complex in the county. We feel this facility would be used for many large and small events both agricultural and non-agricultural. This could include, but not limited to county agricultural fairs, horse shows, conferences and many different youth activities. The Ag Board will continue to work to make this facility a reality hopefully in the near future.

### Historic Barns Project

The Ag Board voted to support the Bedford County Farm Bureau's Historic Barns Project. The board feels this is an important part of our county's heritage and has educational value.

### Help for Neighboring Counties

The Ag Board continued to work with other counties in the region to assist in the development of agricultural boards and develop joint agricultural projects.

### Bedford Farm Tour

The Bedford Extension office held its annual Bedford Farm Tour on August 15, 2009. The event was hosted by Royal Oak Farm in Huddleston which is owned by Ag Board member Ken Newman. The tour

centered on the farm's composting and recycling operations. There were also many displays including the Forestry Department and the FFA and 4H members displaying their animals and projects. The event was well attended by approximately 400 people from Bedford County and many surrounding counties. Several Ag Board and Board of Supervisors member were in attendance.

Guest Speakers during the year included;

- Chad J. Foxx, USDA Wildlife Services Specialist
- Greg Eaton, President of Bedford Citizens for Land Preservation
- Michael Stokes, Bedford Parks and Recreation Director
- Robert Lowry, Director, CVCC, Bedford Campus
- Stephanie White, College Ag Curriculum Coordinator
- Todd Kready, Bedford County Forester, DOF
- Dr. Jeff Laub, CVCC Lynchburg
- Pete Parziale, Instructor CVCC Bedford
- Joy Powers, President Smith Mountain FFA and Bedford County Livestock 4-H Club

### AEDAB in the Press

During 2009 several articles featuring the Bedford County Agriculture Economic Advisory Board have appeared in the Roanoke, Lynchburg, Charlotte and Bedford Newspapers.

The Virginia Wildlife magazine ran an article in the spring 2009 on Bedford County. Several Bedford County residents spoke about conservation efforts in the county. Ag Board members were involved and several were interviewed for the article. An article in Virginia Game & Fish on small game hunting in the state featured the Ag Board Chairman, who spoke about the Ag Board's land and wildlife conservation efforts in the county.

### AEDAB Future Plans

- Continue to invite **Agriculture Related Experts** as guest speakers to our Ag Board meetings
- Increase awareness and promotion of **Bedford grown products** and develop a **Bedford Produced Brand**
- Explore the establishment of **Start-up Incubators** for new food producers.
- **Promote and expand the Farmers Markets** in the county
- Promote the use of **Bedford County Cannery** in New London
- Continue to help and **promote our Equine** community
- **Research developing a large multi-use facility, Agriculture Complex** to hold large agriculture and non-agriculture events
- **Explore establishing a Bedford County Fair** (and work with and promote current fairs and festivals in the county)
- Continue to **work closely with Farm Bureau** on programs like **Ag in the Classroom and their Historic Barns Project**
- **Work with Bedford Tourism** to encourage and promote Ag related events and attractions including the Wine Trail
- Keep the **Bedford Agriculture Web Page** fresh and updated as needed
- Continue to **look for programs, grants and alternative resources** for Bedford County producers to offset the rising cost of doing business

- Continue to investigate programs and policies to **protect and preserve our county's farms and farm land**
- **Work closely with the Planning Commission** and staff and give our views on Ag related issues when needed
- Continue to promote the **Ag Curriculum at CVCC in Bedford**, and work with other CC's throughout the state as needed
- Encourage **expansion of Ag Education** in our county school system.
- Work with the **FFA Chapters** and **4H Clubs** through out the county whenever possible
- Work with **CVCC on their various Energy Programs** where it positively affects Bedford and Bedford Agriculture
- Find ways to better **educate the public** on the importance of Agriculture to our county
- **Work with other counties**, their Ag boards and/or Ag directors to share ideas, network resources, and give this region's Ag community larger markets and a stronger voice
- **Work closely with Bedford Staff, the Planning Commission, the School Board and the Board of Supervisors** to continue to make the county's agriculture community a strong and viable part of our county's economy
- Continue to promote Bedford as a **Farmer Friendly County**

This report was compiled and presented to the  
 Bedford County Board of Supervisors by the  
 Agriculture Economic Development Advisory Board  
 February 22, 2010