

on the move

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North Carolina A&T State University
School of Agriculture and
Environmental Sciences
Newsletter

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Range on the homes

Consumers, manufactured housing builders and the environment all stand to benefit from housing research taking place at the SAES. A survey of consumer satisfaction getting under way this month should produce information that builders can use to improve their products and service. Meanwhile, other research into new technology could help conserve energy and help consumers lower their utility bills.

Research on manufactured homes is especially relevant in North Carolina, where nearly 16 percent of all dwellings are manufactured. The state ranks fifth in the nation in manufactured homes as primary residences.

The survey, "Housing Challenges of New Manufactured Home Owners in Rural North Carolina," is led by SAES housing researcher Dr. Thessalenuere Hinnant-Bernard. It will ask consumers who have purchased manufactured houses in the past five years to describe any problems they encountered, and to indicate how the problems were resolved. Findings will be shared with the North Carolina Manufactured Housing Institute, a trade organization that hopes to use the data to improve its products and customer service.

The survey represents the latest project in a long-standing partnership between SAES, the N.C. A&T Center for Energy Research and Technology (CERT) and the manufactured housing industry. The three partners began collaborating in 1999 with the Manufactured Housing Research Initiative.



Dr. Thessalenuere Hinnant-Bernard is embarking on a new study to examine how consumer problems with manufactured homes were resolved.

The project compares energy usage in two manufactured homes which were set up for research purposes at the University Farm. Both units have identical floor plans but the test home has more energy efficiency features, such as thicker insulation (the insulating material's "R-value"), thermopane windows, solar powered hot water, and other energy saving features. Data has been collected since 2001, comparing energy usage in the two homes.

"It helps to have that kind of data, not only in promoting your own product, but in promoting energy efficiency," said Bert Kessler, vice-president of engineering for Palm Harbor Homes. Energy efficiency is important because it helps consumers save money in the short term, and also conserves natural resources for future generations in the long term.

SAES researchers have turned their attention to heat pump efficiency. Engineers at

CERT are inventing a system to automatically turn off heat pumps when temperatures drop below 30 degrees and switch to a more efficient supplemental heat source. The hope is to give homeowners a device that will improve energy efficiency and lower their utility bills, said Renee Robinson, housing research associate at SAES.

Hinnant-Bernard is planning further research into fair housing and predatory lending. Her contacts in the housing policy arena enabled her to coordinate an October visit to N.C. A&T by Carolyn Peoples, assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Peoples used the occasion to present N.C. A&T with HUD's Keepers of the Dream Award, in recognition of the university's contributions to research and service in fair housing issues, including its recent establishment of a Community Outreach Center near downtown Greensboro.

Dr. T's Moment

I often describe the SAES as being on the move.

A lot has happened in SAES since we started this journey. And a lot more remains on the horizon.

But like any good conductor, there comes a time when you have to slow down. That's where we are now. We aren't stopping. Not by any means. We are going to spend some time refining some processes and redefining some directions.

For example, earlier this year we signed an historic partnership agreement with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. This collaboration can provide funding opportunities, academic exchanges, student employment and internships and so many more avenues for SAES and A&T. We will spend the time needed to develop the relationship to the fullest.

We are in the process of completing our five year plan, called "Planning Our Preferred Future." This document will determine what we do, and how and when we do it, for the next five years. As well, we are building in evaluation methods to keep us on track and successful.

SAES's growth strategy is to maintain current strengths while expanding into new strategic areas. We are building our focus around six initiatives. Academics, Research and Cooperative Extension will redefine what it means to work together to solve the challenges and issues facing our state.

I'd like to think we are on the move with a purpose. Ask me now where we are going and I'll say "we're moving on that."

— Dr. Alton Thompson
Dean, SAES

inside

- **Tobacco subsidies subside forever**
- **Top USDA official comes to GSO**

Tobacco Road gets new traffic configuration

North Carolina tobacco farmers and landowners have some tough issues to sort out in the coming months as the smoke clears around the \$10.1 billion buyout of the federal tobacco quota system. The limited-resource, small-scale farm audience served by The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T has mixed reactions about the effect the buyout will have on them.

Now that the federal government will no longer control the amount of tobacco that each farmer can grow, or support the price structure, farmers must determine if it is still profitable for them to grow tobacco in a free market system where they will deal directly with tobacco companies. Small-scale, limited-resource farmers — by virtue of their limited access to equipment and opportunity — may have even greater challenges to tackle in the wake of the buyout.

Extension will actively work with its audience to help farmers make informed choices, says Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, Extension administrator. The impact of the tobacco buyout will also be a factor in the workshops and programs planned for Small Farms Week activities March.

“If there is a farmer who has the equipment, the desire and the capability of producing a high-grade, high-quality tobacco, they should consider seeking a contract with the tobacco companies,” McKinnie says. “There are not a lot of small farmers out there who are standing ready and can compete (because of the expense), but we intend to support those who want to remain in the industry.

“What we will also do here is continue to develop and

evolve programs and alternative enterprises to help substitute for the lost tobacco income. We want to work with those farmers on transitioning into new enterprises and generating new ideas.”

Hertford County farmer Jamison Eley who grows 12.5 acres of flue-cured tobacco on leased land, is happy about the



Rockingham County tobacco farmer John Ashe, Jr. walks through his barn, inspecting this season's crop.

buyout and hasn't decided if he'll pursue a contract directly with tobacco companies. He will depend on Extension, though, to help provide input and resources.

“I want them to continue to disseminate information as it becomes available and help get us into alternative enterprises,” says Eley who works with area farm management agent James A. Davis, III. “I also want A&T to continue to do research on innovative ways for farms to remain as productive as possible, while cutting costs. That will always be very important.”

Eley, 37, is particularly happy that farmers close to retirement age can use tobacco buyout money and pay off any debts that may have incurred or help build a

more comfortable retirement nest egg.

Farmers in the western region who crop burley tobacco are worried about how they'll fare, says Claude Deyton, an agricultural technician with the Yancey County Cooperative Extension Center.

“From what I've seen, the majority of farmers are

previous tobacco farming, many of the farmers would still rather have government involvement in tobacco,” Deyton says.

“We will have farmers in every different situation that you can think of,” Deyton says. “With the supports, they had funding there that the price was guaranteed. A lot of them are disappointed on the way the buyout came.”

While the farmers in the western region, as well as their counterparts all across the state consider if they'll continue to grow tobacco, Deyton says Extension continues to play a vital role in helping farmers shape their futures. Developing alternative crops to tobacco, such as the ornamental plant, galax; and ginseng and vegetable production is the kind of help the farmers in the region need, Deyton said.

“This region is heavily tied to tobacco, but we've been working for the last 10 years on various types of specialty crops in Yancey County,” Deyton says. “We've been working with a number of specialty crops anticipating these developments.”

not overly pleased with it,” Deyton says of the buyout; and added that many of the region's farmers have carefully avoided incurring debt from equipment purchases. Rather than having a buyout that pays them for their



Top USDA official kicks off Women in Ag. Conference



USDA disaster-relief programs for North Carolina farmers and landowners who suffered losses from hurricane-related flooding were announced by Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman — pictured with the SAES associate dean for Research, Dr. Carolyn Turner (r) — at the Women in Ag. Conference kickoff luncheon.

United States Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman visited Greensboro Oct. 25 to kick off the 10th annual Women in Agriculture conference sponsored by The Cooperative Extension Program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

Veneman, the first woman to serve as agriculture secretary, noted that the 2002 census of agriculture shows that the numbers of women operating farms and ranches have increased by more than 13 percent since 1997, and that one-fourth of all American farms and ranches. are now run by women.

“Here in North Carolina and all across the nation and world, women are changing

the face of agriculture,” Veneman said.

Veneman also used the occasion to mark the availability of nearly \$500 million in hurricane relief funds that will be used to restore farmland and forests lost or damaged in recent disasters in the Southeast. The funds are part of a \$13 billion hurricane relief package.

The Women in Agriculture conference which ended Oct. 27, was coordinated by The Cooperative Extension Program at the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at N.C. A&T, as a forum for women farmers to learn and network.

An accreditation team from the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences was in Greensboro the first week of November for a comprehensive look at all areas of the SAES's family and consumer sciences programs. Although official notification for reaccreditation is pending, faculty, staff and students involved in the accreditation review are in agreement that the presentations for the accreditation review team went extremely well — and that a lot of hard work will soon pay off. Pictured are Patricia Lynch of HEFS and HEFS student Shaundolyn Taylor.

Dean Alton Thompson of the SAES has been named to a three-year term on the 30-member National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board. He joins other agricultural leaders from across the nation — all named by Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman — on one of USDA's key sources for guidance on national priorities for agricultural research, extension, and education. The 1996 legislation that established the NAREEE stipulates representation from commodity groups, national farm support organizations, consumer groups and other constituencies. Thompson will be taking a board seat reserved for representation from 1890 land-grant universities.

Dr. Carolyn Turner, the SAES associate dean for research, was among six manufactured housing experts from across the country recently invited to appear before a Manufactured Housing Research Alliance (MHRA) task force that is formulating a roadmap for future research into improving the design, production processes and public perceptions of manufactured housing. This roadmap will be used by the US Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Housing to direct research funding over the next 10 years.

Drs. Claudette Smith and Keith Baldwin have been named program leaders for The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T. Smith will be assisting Extension administrators in prioritizing and developing Extension programs in family and consumer sciences and 4-H/Youth Development, while Baldwin will lead programming efforts in agriculture, natural resources management, and community resource development.

Smith and Baldwin will continue to devote a percentage of their time to current projects in their areas of Extension specialization; family resource management, and horticulture, respectively.

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Dr. Claudette Smith, the Cooperative Extension Program at A&T's family resource management specialist, has a new Financial Literacy Web site open for business at:

<http://www.ag.ncat.edu/financiallit/index.htm>

The Web site is designed to serve government agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofits that promote or support financial literacy in North Carolina. The Web site is set up to serve as a repository for training programs in credit management, savings and investment, household risk management, legal issues and general money management programs.