Don’t be fooled by the title. Lands that produce $250,000 or less in gross annual income, may be considered “small farms” but that appellation in no way reflects their importance.

Small farmers make enormous contributions to the economy and well-being of North Carolina and to the country at large. Honoring that impact is once again the privilege of The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T State University, with support from the Cooperative Extension Service at N.C. State University.

With the theme, “Small Farms: It’s a Growing Business,” Small Farms Week is scheduled for March 21 to 27 at various sites across the state. The yearly observance gives Cooperative Extension the chance to show off the work of small-scale farmers, to celebrate new agricultural technology and trends, and to highlight those Cooperative Extension programs that benefit small farmers.

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, associate dean and administrator of The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T, says that American society too often takes its food supply for granted, stressing that the expectation for a safe, affordable and abundant food supply is made possible by the hard work of the nation’s farmers.

“There is a face behind agriculture,” McKinnie says.

“There are many faces, whether we are talking large scale or small scale, and they are the reason we enjoy these perks. It’s our responsibility to bring attention to those small farmers who sweat and toil every year to put food on our table and help keep our local economies going.”

In keeping with the theme of Small Farms Week, the agribusiness aspect of farming will be reflected in much of the programming during this year’s observances. Workshops on computer literacy, marketing, and financial literacy will be conducted during Small Farms Day on March 24 at A&T, and a Growers’ Forum featuring farm-business success stories, will be presented during the Small Farms’ Week Kickoff program March 22 in Robeson County.

“Small farmers continue to contribute to a vital rural economy which is an important part of the landscape and fabric of North Carolina, providing livelihoods that keep open space around our urban centers and providing incomes to people that service the rural economies in small towns,” says Dr. Keith Baldwin, who helped coordinate the Small Farms Week program.

Claude Deyton, Yancey County Agriculture technician, is the recipient of a $1,000 innovation grant to be used to produce or support programs for Small Farms Week. The grant money will pay to send 30 Yancey County farmers to the Southern Spring Home and Garden Show in Charlotte on March 4.

Economically crippled by the decrease in tobacco allotments, Yancey County farmers have turned to alternative crops, such as flower production, and will learn at the garden show how to prepare and sell their products at future trade shows. Without the grant, which pays for transportation and admission to the show, many of the farmers would not have the opportunity to take advantage of this educational opportunity, Deyton says.

“The county depends so much on tobacco and manufacturing, which have been hit hard in our area,” Deyton said. “We’re in such a financially-strapped county that when you lose that much production, a grant like this is extremely important.

“So you see the importance of what the Extension service means to the people in this county.”

Yancey County farmers will also offer a tour of their flower demonstration sites sometime during Small Farms Week, Deyton says.

Provided by Extension at A&T, the $1,000 Small Farms Week innovation grants were offered to each of the Extension system’s seven districts.

**Small Farms Week Schedule of Events March 21–27**

**Monday, March 22:**
- **10 a.m.** – Kickoff in Robeson County at the County Extension Center

**How I Grew My Small Business**
Farmers who have created successful small farm businesses discuss the secrets of their successes and advise their peers on pitfalls.

**Facilitator:** Dr. John O’Sullivan, marketing specialist for the Cooperative Extension Program.

**Panelists:**
- Alex Hitt, Alamance County small farmer discusses the direct marketing of cut flowers and vegetables at farmers’ markets.
- Lynda Bete, Pender County small farmer and operator of Best Asparagus Farm, talks about production at roadside stands and to local markets.
- B. C. Brown, Franklin County Meat Goat Cooperative Chairman shares how a population shift spurred an agribusiness opportunity for meat goat production.

**Wednesday, March 24:**
- **10 to 11:30 a.m.** – Break Out Sessions

**Presentation Counts: Setting Up A Roadside Stand that Sells** – You’ll get tips and strategies on setting up a roadside stand at farmers’ markets to attract customers and increase your ability to sell your farm products. Presenter, Dr. John O’Sullivan, Coop. Ext. marketing specialist. Coitran Hall.

**How the Mouse Can Help You Keep Up With Your Cheese** – Learn how computer programs can help you improve your bottom line, manage your farm more effectively and keep better farm records. Try out this Farm-Win software yourself in a campus computer lab. Presenter, Marcie Joyce, Coop. Ext. associate. Carver Hall computer lab.

**Tuesday, March 23:**
- **9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** – *Bridging the Biotech Divide* – symposium that addresses emerging issues in biotechnology. Presented by Dr. Mubarak B. Wurie, ass. professor Animal Sciences, N.C. A&T, Memorial Union, Stailings Ballroom.

**Mushrooms & Reap Cash** – Learn first-hand how easy it is to become part of the fast-growing mushroom industry, whose small farmers inoculate spawn into logs and let Mother Nature do most of the work. You will take part in on-site demonstrations conducted at Dark Hollow Farm, owned by Richard and Deborah Davis. Call (336) 342-6515 or (336) 334-7259 to register. Presenter, Debrah Davis, Brown Summit, N.C.

**Small Farms Week Registration Form**

Each individual should complete a separate registration form. Check each of the events you will attend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location/Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, March 22</strong></td>
<td><em>“How I Grew My Small Business”</em></td>
<td>10 a.m. — Robeson County Extension Center</td>
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<td>Lunch – U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre</td>
<td>11:45 a.m. — Robeson County Extension Center, $6.00</td>
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<td>Black plastic demonstration</td>
<td>2 p.m. — Farm of Eliza MacLean, Saxapahaw, N.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, March 23</strong></td>
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<td>9 a.m. – 2 p.m. — Stallings Ballroom, Memorial Student Union, N.C. A&amp;T State University</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>“Nutritious P.I.G.”</em></td>
<td>10 a.m. – 1 p.m. — Farm of Eliza MacLean, Saxapahaw, N.C.</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday, March 24</strong></td>
<td>Welcome and Solutions Premiere Party</td>
<td>9 a.m. – 10 a.m. — Coitran Hall, N.C. A&amp;T</td>
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<td>Drip Irrigation Demonstration</td>
<td>10 – 11:30 a.m. — Coitran Hall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How the Mouse Can Help You “Keep Up With Your Cheese”</td>
<td>11:45 a.m. — Robeson County Extension Center, $5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small Farms Appreciation Luncheon</td>
<td>Noon — Stallings Ballroom, Memorial Student Union, N.C. A&amp;T</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drip Irrigation Demonstration</td>
<td>2 p.m. — N.C. A&amp;T Farm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, March 27</strong></td>
<td><em>“Loaded Logs: Grow Mushrooms and Reap Cash”</em></td>
<td>8 a.m. – 4 p.m. — Dark Hollow Farm, Richard and Deborah Davis, Brown Summit, N.C.</td>
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**To register:**
- Fax this form to (336) 256-0810
- e-mail to deborahh@ncat.edu
- call (336) 334-7956
- *call (336) 334-7956*
Monday, March 22:

10 a.m. – Kickoff in Robeson County at the County Extension Center

How I Grew My Small Business. Farmers who have created successful small farm businesses discuss the secrets of their successes and advise their peers on pitfalls.

Wednesday, March 24:

Small Farms Appreciation Day at N.C. A&T

9 to 10 a.m. – Welcome and Premiere Party – Unveiling of new Solutions for North Carolina annual report of the Cooperative Extension Program, featuring CD and video. Coltrane Hall.

Hollie Brown, left, a Duplin County farmer and A&T graduate, talks about his pigs to Elizer MacLean, a research technician at A&T’s swine unit. Brown participates in Dr. Charles Talbott’s small-scale hog program. Talbott, with grant funds from the Golden LEAF Foundation, is connecting 10 farmers a year for three years with a growing niche market for premium pork.