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VIRGINIA AGRICULTURE & FOOD ENTREPREUNERSHIP PROGRAM SET FOR MARCH 30 & APRIL 6 IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Charlottesville, VA- According to the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the total impact of agriculture in Virginia is over a \$55 billion dollars, creating over 357,000 total jobs. Just since 2005, the number of Virginia farmers markets has increased from 88 to over 140, an approximate 62% increase. Today, consumers are demanding more and more local food and many food entrepreneurs and farmers are trying to keep up with this growing demand.

The Virginia Agriculture & Food Entrepreneurship program invites people interested in starting an agriculture or food-based business to a series of two workshops that will address many common questions about starting such a business venture. This two-day workshop series will give participants practical information on starting and operating a food-based business in Virginia and explain many of the common regulatory, business planning, and marketing issues and concerns that involve such a business.

These workshops are scheduled for Monday, March 30, 2009 and Monday April 6, 2009, at the Albemarle County Government Building from 9am to 5pm. The address for these events is 1600 5th Street Extended, Charlottesville VA 22902. The cost to attend one of these workshops is just \$20 while the cost to attend both is only \$35. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged and space is limited to the first 50 individuals who register. Walk-in registrations will be considered if capacity allows. However, lunch will be available for pre-registrants only. The agenda for each workshop is described below.

Monday, March 30, 2009

7:45am to 8:45am- Sign-in & Registration

8:45am to 9am- Welcome

9am to 9:30am- Keynote Address: “Developing an Innovative Food-based Business Model”, Joe Cloud, T&E Meats, Harrisonburg Virginia

9:30am to 10:30am- Health Department Regulations that Govern a Food-based Business, Archer Campbell, Thomas Jefferson Health District; Jillian Davis, Virginia Cooperative Extension

10:30am to 10:50am- Break

10:50am to 12:30pm- Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (VDACS) Regulations that Govern a Food-based Business, John Beers, Paula Vile, & Kate Weakley VDACS

12:30pm to 1:30pm- Lunch

1:30pm to 2:30pm- Food Entrepreneurship & Product Testing Opportunities, Joell Eifert, Virginia Tech

2:30pm to 3:30pm- Food Safety Regulations that Pertain to GAPS Certification; Rob Williams, Virginia Tech; Tom Smith, VDACS

3:30pm to 3:45pm- Break

3:45pm to 4:45pm– Q&A session with panel of experts from earlier sessions and producer experts joining in

4:45pm to 5pm- Wrap-up & Adjourn

Monday, April 6, 2009

7:45am to 8:45am- Sign-in & Registration

8:45am to 9am- Welcome

9am to 10am- Keynote Address: “The Changing Landscape of Virginia’s Food & Agriculture Business and Markets”, Andy Hankins, Virginia State University

10am to 11am– Food-based Business Start-up, Product Costing / Pricing & Writing a Business Plan, Nora Gillespie, Central Virginia Small Business Development Center

11am to 11:20am- Break

11:20am to 12:15pm- Risk Management– Business / Product Liability & Insurance, Jesse Richardson, Virginia Tech

12:15pm to 1:15pm- Lunch

1:15pm to 2:00pm- Marketing Opportunities for Virginia’s Agriculture & Value-Added Food Producers, Melissa Wiley, Piedmont Environmental Council; Charles Green, Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

2:00pm to 3:15pm- Panel Discussion: “Learning from The Field– Marketing Local Meats, Fruits & Vegetables”, Michael Clark, Planet Earth Diversified; Corey Childs, Virginia Cooperative Extension; Susan Swales, Wild Oats Farm & Others

3:15pm to 3:30pm- Break

3:30pm to 4:45pm- Panel Discussion: “How to Cultivate Food Retail & Value-Added Opportunities”, Kate Collier, FEAST; Ryan Ford, The Organic Butcher; Daniel Perry, Jam According to Dan & Others

4:45pm to 5pm- Wrap-up & Adjourn

This workshop series is sponsored by USDA / SARE, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, Piedmont Environmental Council, Meet the Farmer TV, Planet Earth Diversified, Charlottesville City Market, Scottsville Farmers' Market / Chamber of Commerce, Central Virginia Small Business Development Center, Gryfnsroost Photography and Design, Virginia Foundation for Agriculture Innovation and Rural Sustainability, Albemarle County Government, Growing Food & Community, New Moon Naturals, Flavor Magazine, Melli Productions & Farm Bureau VA.

For additional information or to pre-register, please contact the Piedmont Environmental Council at (434) 977-2033. Additional information about these workshops as well as agriculture and food-based business development can be found online at www.VAFEP.org. Questions can be directed to Matt Benson at mcbenson@vt.edu, (540)341-7961 or Dawn Story at dstory@pecva.org, (434)977-2033.

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