



THE ALABAMA
SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE
NETWORK

ASAN UPDATE

Fall 2013

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A DIFFERENT PATH FROM FARM TO FORK: COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE IN ALABAMA

By Mary Ignatiadis

Kelli Robinson loves many things about belonging to a CSA, but her favorite part is the box she carries in her arms: it contains her entire supply of fresh food for the coming week.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is changing the relationship between farmers and their customers all across Alabama as it offers customers the chance to invest directly in local agriculture. In a



Contents of a typical veggie CSA box.
Photo credit: Jen Barnett

vegetable CSA operation—known simply as a “CSA”—a farmer sells pre-season shares of his or her produce and then delivers that produce to customers on a regular basis throughout the season. Farmers offering shares of chicken, beef, lamb, or pork sell their animals either by portions or pounds weeks or months before processing. In both cases, the farmer has a much clearer idea at the beginning of the growing season of how much he or she will need to grow, and how much capital he or she will have to invest in his or her business.

CSAs remove the chaos and uncertainty of the traditional farmers market for both farmers and consumers, and can run in late fall and early spring when many farmers markets are closed. Pick-ups usually

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VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE AND JOIN ASAN TODAY!

We have a brand new website! The new site is clean and simple, but is packed full of event information, resources, news, and more. It has a fully functioning membership sign-up section and pared-down membership levels. Eventually, it will feature a Food Policy page for the Alabama Food Policy Council, and it will house digital versions of all our Local Food & Farm Guides. Check it out at asanonline.org, and please support our work by joining ASAN today!

Just before the site launched, we held a
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COVER UP! COVER CROPS 101

By Jan Garrett

Fall is just around the corner and time to plant cool season crops. Why not plant some fall cover crops? Cover crops are planted to cover the soil between cash crops.

Cover crops have multiple benefits including: protecting the soil from erosion; improving soil fertility; weed control; and attracting and maintaining beneficial insects.

Bare soil is vulnerable to wind and water erosion. The U.S. is losing soil 10 times faster than the natural replenishment rate. NRCS Worldwide Soil Erosion Risk Maps (<http://soils.usda.gov/use/worldsoils/mapindex/ch2orisk.html>) show much of the eastern U.S. soils are at very high risk of human induced water erosion. Coastal plain soils are also very vulnerable to wind erosion. Much of our rainfall occurs in the winter months. Keeping the soil covered with crops can prevent soil loss due to erosion.

In addition to preventing nutrient loss by erosion, cover crops take up and store soil nutrients preventing them from

(Continued on page 5)



Cover cropping is beneficial and achievable on any scale. Photo credit: Jan Garrett

LETTER FROM THE ASAN BOARD PRESIDENT



Since the inception of the Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network in 2002, the organization has been a collection of small farmers and

dedicated individuals working to create a better food system across the state. Over a decade later, I am thrilled to see the progress we have made. This month ASAN launched a new web site that is focused on one main idea – bringing farmers and consumers together to build a robust food system. The web site makes it easy for you to become a member of ASAN and provides you with a tremendous amount of information about how to help improve your own farming operation and get connected with others. Please take a moment and visit the site, sign up to become a member, and join the great work we’ve been doing for years to build a better Alabama.

As part of this work, I’m excited to announce that ASAN has brought on two new Board members who are already helping to make the organization stronger. Anne LaBelle, VP and Co-founder of Mighty Grow, Inc., brings all the knowledge of operating an organic fertilizer business to ASAN as well as a deep commitment to our mission. Randal Wilson, co-

owner and winemaker at White Oak Vineyards, also joined the ASAN Board and not only represents the expanding wine-making industry of Alabama, but is the only eco-friendly producer in the area. With the addition of these two great new Board members and our new web site, ASAN is poised to make an even bigger impact on the sustainable agriculture movement in 2014.

We are working hard to plan a series of Regional Food and Farm Forums across the state this fall. These forums will bring farmers and consumers together to talk about how to increase the effectiveness of the local food movement and how ASAN fits into that work. Please make plans to join us for one of the three gatherings in September and October. More details inside this newsletter!

Please consider joining ASAN as a member and also making a tax deductible donation. You can help us support local sustainable food system and make 2013 a great year to be a small farmer, rancher, fishermen AND consumer of Alabama produced food!

Edwin Marty
Board President
Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network

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REGARDING CYPRESS CREEK ORGANIC FARMS

A lot of folks in North Alabama and southern Tennessee have been talking about and asking us about a new venture called Cypress Creek Organic Farms. The company is recruiting affiliate farmers to invest in the business and grow organic high tunnel tomatoes on contract, with the promise of a gross income of \$25000-\$40000 per year.

While we would love to see more successful businesses that provide organic growers with a good income and strong market, we are getting some mixed reports including an advisory from the Tennessee Cooperative Extension System calling the business a probable scam. We’re not sure if it is or it isn’t, but would like to remind our farmers and landowners that it is a start-up operation with no track record, and that they need to consider the risk and do the research before signing up.

CONTRIBUTORS: SUMMER 2013

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter, including (but not limited to):

Mary Ignatiadis is a native of Huntsville, AL, and served as ASAN’s fearless intern this summer. She is now a sophomore at Williams College in Williamstown, MA. Thanks, Mary, for all your help this summer!

Skye Borden lives and farms in Pine Level, AL. She is an environmental attorney, the coordinator for the River Region Food Policy Council and an AmeriCorps VISTA for EAT South in Montgomery.

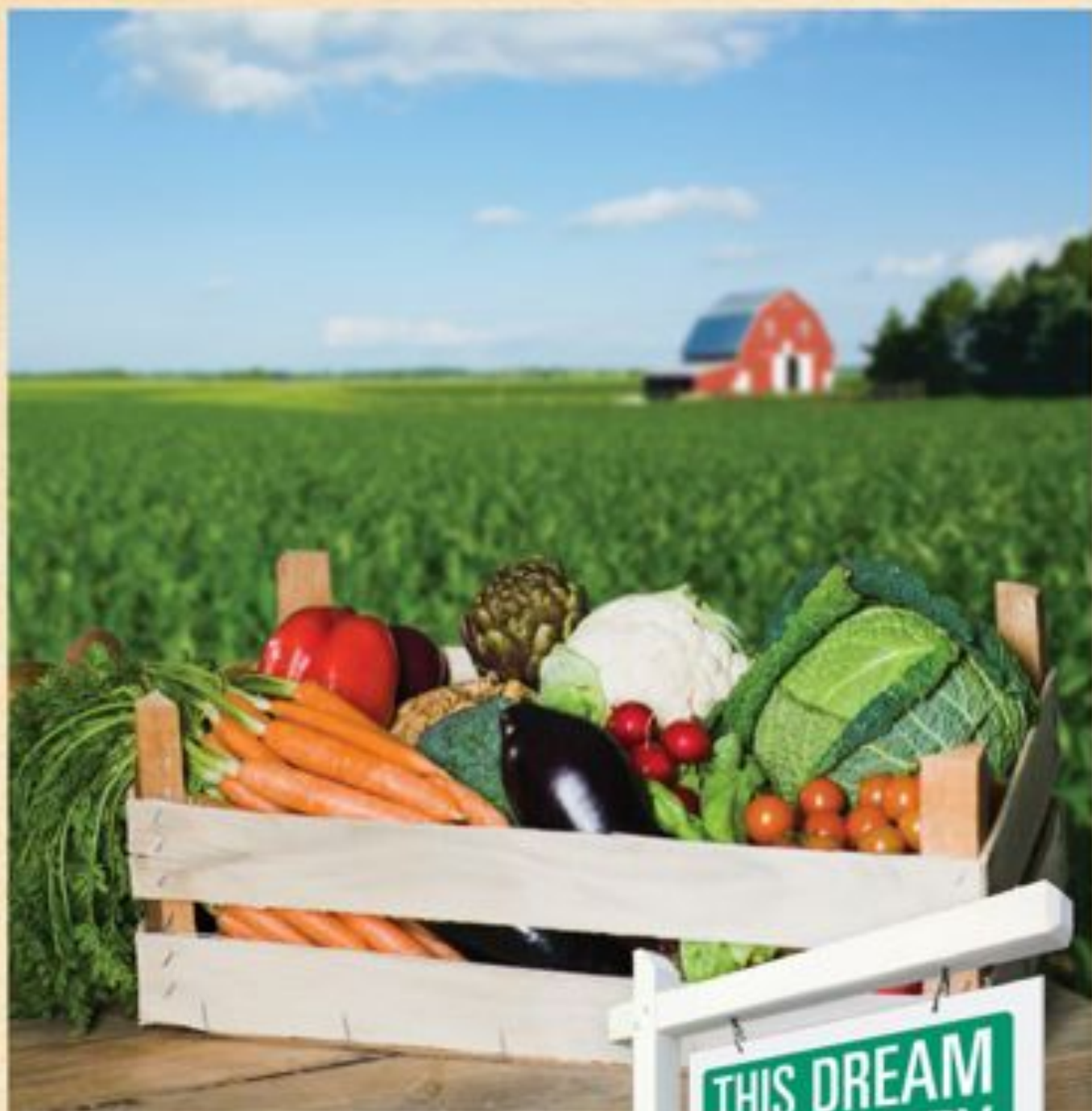
Jan Garrett owns a certified organic farm in Macon County, AL. She is an organic inspector and, until her recent retirement, coordinated Auburn University’s Organic Vegetable Production Research Program.

Karen Wynne is a farmer, soil scientist, and former ASAN Program Director, who owns and manages Rosita’s Farm in Hartselle, AL.

Steve Bunner is the Executive Chef and Owner of 1892 East Restaurant and Tavern in Huntsville, AL.

Edwin Marty, ASAN Board President and Executive Director of EAT South

Alice Evans, ASAN Statewide Coordinator



First South Farm Credit, building the bridge to coordinate retail agriculture and credit opportunity. First South's mission is to provide credit and credit opportunity for young, beginning and small farmers in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The new generation of retail agriculture is supported by farmers markets, community supported agriculture and other direct to consumer marketing options. First South Farm Credit supports the continued improvement of retail agriculture and non-traditional agriculture through the First South Young, Beginning and Small Farmer Credit Program and the First South marketing plan to identify and coordinate with the new generation of retail farming.

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INCUBATOR FARM PROGRAM IS GROWING SUCCESSFUL NEW FARMERS

By Karen Wynne

Early on an August morning, a crew of aspiring farmers gathers on the porch of Tune Farm, coffee in hand, getting ready to get their hardest work done in the cool part of the day. A few miles down the road at Rosita's Farm, a family from Elkmont helps harvest potatoes and make plans for their own small farm. In Limestone County, two high school friends chop surplus vegetables from Harvest Roots CSA for the homemade sauerkraut that they will sell at a Saturday market. Just over the Tennessee line at Eat Wright Farm, a couple harvests beans on their new farm as they watch their children play nearby. Fueled by the desire to make a positive contribution to the community and find a fulfilling career, plus a blend of entrepreneurial spirit and optimism, a new generation of sustainable farmers is putting down roots

in North Alabama.

"It's great to see the young people that are taking an interest in farming," says Dove Stackhouse of Whirlwind Farms in Geraldine. She and her husband, Russell, have worked over the past decade to develop local markets and mentor beginning farmers. "Twelve years ago, when we started, there weren't any good markets nearby and all the farmers growing organically were our age. It's great to see the values and enthusiasm that younger people bring to farming. It gives me hope for the future of farming."

Beginning farmers need help in many areas, from marketing to production to access to land and capital and business planning, and many partners are needed in the effort. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System hosted its first Farming 101 course in Cullman this spring and has followed up with summer workshops based on participant feedback. The



Beginning and aspiring farmers Emmaline Fenner, Wade Austin, Emily Wilt, April Hobbs, and Sam Dawes, potting up seedlings at Tune Farm in Falkville. Photo credit: Alice Evans

Farm Food Collaborative, Happy Heart Market, and the many new farmers markets in the area are providing additional marketing outlets. The Farm Service Administration and the North Alabama Revolving Loan Fund are both working to provide microloans to new farmers and food businesses. ASAN is hosting crop mobs, dinners, and networking meetings that encourage new farmers to make connections

(Continued on page 5)

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INCUBATOR FARM PROGRAM (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 4)

and learn from one another. These and many other efforts to help train and support beginning farmers are starting to make a difference.

“We want to encourage new farmers, but we also want to be sure that they can succeed,” says Karen Wynne of Rosita's Farm. The farm is working to develop a local incubator program in partnership with Alabama A&M's Small Farms Research Center and Tune Farm, with help from a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program grant. “We are keeping better records this year in the hopes of sharing some realistic numbers on raising these crops. There are so many more marketing options than there were ten years ago; we think that a farmer with a good plan can make it now. Though it's still a lot of hard work.” Rosita's is host-

ing regular potlucks, films, and workshops on the farm (the next potluck and movie is September 8th), and is focusing on individual growers that are getting started on their own land. Tune Farm is working to develop an incubator site that provides landless farmers with a place to try out the trade. For the 2014 season, Tune Farm plans to work with a small group of young farmers and establish four separate farm businesses on the 265-acre farm. Both farms are sending representatives to a national incubator farm training in Minnesota in September and hope to develop a more comprehensive program next year.

The demand for local and organic foods is far from met in North Alabama, and with more and more support beginning farmers have some great opportunities. Stay tuned or get involved! Contact Karen Wynne at 256-520-2400 or rositasfarm@gmail.com for more information.

Weed Control: Grow Your Own Mulch!

Cover crop residue that is left on the soil surface can help with weed control. The next crop is planted into the crop residue. The residue is not likely to remain and prevent weed emergence for the whole season so that additional mulch and/or weed management efforts will probably be needed. By planting the subsequent crop at close densities and reducing bare areas between rows, weed control can be further enhanced.

Attract and Maintain Beneficial Insects:

Beneficial insects are insects that provide beneficial services for your cropping systems. Some them prey upon and parasitize pest insects and some of them pollinate your crops. Beneficial insects need pollen or other alternative food sources to keep them around when pest populations are not high enough to keep them well fed, such as at the beginning of the growing season. They also need shelter. Fall cover crops tend to bloom early in the growing season which provides bees and other pollinators with an early source of food. Clover, especially white clover, is a good pollen source for bees. Austrian winter pea and vetch are other good pollen sources. Rye and other grasses provide good habitat for ladybeetles and other beneficial insects.

COVER CROPS (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 1)

leaching deep beyond the root zone where they become unavailable to crops. When the cover crop is terminated by mowing, tilling, rolling, or by frost, soil organisms break down the residues and recycle the nutrients for use by the next crop. Cereal rye and other grasses are especially efficient at scavenging nutrients.

Cover crops can increase soil organic matter content, especially when high residue cover crops are planted and tillage is minimized. High residue cover crops are those that produce a lot of biomass (plant matter) that decomposes relatively slowly after the cover crop is terminated. Grasses

generally fall in this category because their residue is higher in carbon than that of legumes and it takes longer for soil microorganisms to break it down. Cereal rye is one of the best high residue fall cover crops. Other grasses, such as wheat, oats, and barley are also good candidates for high residue fall cover crops.

Legumes: Grow Your Own Nitrogen Fertilizer!

The air is about 78% nitrogen, but it is not available for plant use. Nitrogen-fixing bacteria that live in the roots of legumes can take this nitrogen from the air and fix it in a form that plants can use. This is practically free nitrogen (just for the cost of the legume seed and planting it). Nitrogen is usually the most limiting nutrient for organic farmers, which is why manure is needed. Manure has its own problems and restrictions. Much of the nitrogen needed for crops can be obtained from leguminous cover crops. Clovers, Austrian winter pea, and hairy vetch are examples of leguminous cover crops that are planted in the fall.



Ladybeetle on a cover crop of rye. Photo credit: Jan Garrett



Tomatoes planted in residue from a cover crop of rye. Photo credit: Jan Garrett

How to Grow Fall Cover Crops:

Get a soil test and apply any needed nutrients, such as lime, phosphorus, potassium, nitrogen, etc. Grass cover crops need more nitrogen than legumes. If you have not planted legume cover crops in this area in the past, inoculate the seed with the right strain of rhizobia.

Prepare the soil. Broadcasting seed into standing weeds is not likely to lead to success. Prepare the soil by tilling, etc. just as you would for a cash crop.

The best time for planting fall cover crops is between mid-September and mid-November. The goal is to get good growth before cold weather.



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CSAS (CONT)

take place once or twice a week, in coffee shops, church parking lots, existing farmers' markets, schools, or, in Kelli's case, local grocery stores such as Freshfully in Birmingham.

Kelli enjoys the convenience of being able to pick up her box on her way home from work, and being part of a CSA, "just feels good. I'm investing in my local community and my health."

The History and Future of CSAs in Alabama

Community was what motivated Jean Mills and Carol Eichelberger to start Alabama's first CSA in Coker (outside of Tuscaloosa) in 1989. "It was a different world," recalls Jean, who is currently the Program Manager of the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG), in which "the organic produce section at the grocery store was the size of your desk." The idea for the new take on farming came from an article in *Mother Earth News Magazine* which followed the seven CSAs open in the United States the year before. Their operation expanded from a circle of about 20 friends to 100 shareholders in just 3 years. Not only did their produce taste great and include exciting new things like salad mixes, but their business, Jean says, "became a lifeline" for their community. Jean and Carol enjoyed hosting CSA members – local families, university faculty and students – on open-farm days, giving them a real understanding of what it is to grow food. Their story, as well as the scoop on all things CSA, is featured in *Sharing the Harvest: A Citizen's Guide to Community Supported Agriculture* by Elizabeth Henderson and Robyn Van En.

Across the interstate from Jean and Carol in Coker is Snow's Bend Farm (snowsbendfarm.com), where David and Margaret Ann Snow have been growing their CSA since 2004. According to the Farmer's Market Authority (fma.alabama.gov), there are at least 19 CSAs operating in Alabama, though this is certainly an underestimate. A typical sum-



Weekly all-fruit CSA basket from Hazelrig Orchard. Photo credit: Jen Barnett

mer's day will find the Snows and their employees loading up their van with heaping boxes of produce and – new this year – fresh-cut flowers for delivery to one of seven locations in the Birmingham/Tuscaloosa area. Some of their 235 shareholders even have their boxes delivered at home for an additional fee.

More than half of Snow's Bend's annual business come from their CSA, which runs from mid-April into November. Their pastured pigs, raised with care on five acres, are available by the quarter, half, or whole. Customers interested in purchasing shares of vegetables or meat should do so as early in the season as possible; as with many popular CSAs, Snow's Bend often has a wait list.

Marketing and Deliveries

With all these benefits, why doesn't every direct-market farm have its own CSA? "It's a real challenge to grow a consistent variety for a CSA membership throughout the course of a season," says Karen Wynne, manager of Rosita's Farm in Hartselle. Still, farmers are finding more and more innovative ways to surmount that challenge. Smaller farmers can work together as one CSA, which enables them to achieve the large and consistent output of overlapping crops required to fill hundreds of boxes every week. In fact, multi-farm CSAs can minimize their risk enough to take orders on a week-to-week basis. And it's one way that small farms without the time or personnel to make their own deliveries throughout the growing season can still run successful CSAs. Another option is for farmers to allow CSA members to shop at their farmers market booth on the credit of their pre-season share purchase. Jean and Carol included their shareholders in the delivery process by inviting one person per

neighborhood out to the farm each week to pick up for that neighborhood. This worked out so that each customer got to visit the farm and his or her neighbors four times per year, and truly became a vital part of the CSA.

Local grocery stores such as Freshfully can provide a secure and air-conditioned drop-off location that is another great option for farmers and consumers alike. Store owners Jen Barnett and Sam Brasseale started Freshfully (freshfully.com) as a website where farmers could offer their veggie boxes, meat shares, and co-op foods in return for a percentage of retail sales. Farmers who partner with Freshfully benefit from Freshfully's advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, and can reach consumers unfamiliar with farmers markets or who are unable to easily access them. CSA customers can even have their boxes delivered to them at work through Freshfully's Workplace Wellness program. Partnering with businesses is a popular way for CSAs to efficiently advertise, sell, and deliver their produce to lots of people at once.

Becoming a CSA Member

Many CSAs sell their meats, dairy, and vegetables for competitive prices, but an entire season's worth of fresh food can cost a large sum up-front; a weekly share of produce for a family of four from April to October could cost anywhere from \$400 to \$700. Most CSAs guarantee about \$20-\$30 worth of food (at market price) per week. "I think that average consumers balk at the price tag and their own fear that they won't know how or find time to cook it all," says Jen Barnett, co-owner of Freshfully. "As customers learn and change, farmers are going to find more and more opportunity offering CSAs."

Low-income folks are more able to access the benefits of CSAs and the community they build, too, through farms that now accept SNAP (food stamps) as well as at places like Freshfully. Weekly CSA boxes, which don't put the same large, up-front burden on the customer as whole-season CSAs, can be ordered through Freshfully and paid for in the store using their SNAP machine. Additionally, Doe Run Farm, Hepzibah Farms, and EAT South are just some of many CSAs that donate uncollected weekly shares to local food



Harvesting flowers at Snow's Bend Farm in Coker. Snow's Bend's included flowers in their CSA for the first time this year. Photo credit: Alice Evans.

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COOKING WITH THE SEASONS: FALL

CARAMELIZED ONION AND BUTTERNUT SQUASH TART

From Steve Bunner, Owner and Executive Chef at 1892 East Restaurant and Tavern (Huntsville, AL)

- 1 10" unbaked pie shell, home-made or store bought
- 4 large yellow onions
- 4 fresh thyme sprigs
- 2 whole butternut squash
- 1 stick or 1/4lb butter



Melt your butter and brush a coating of butter onto the inside of your pie crust, setting aside the remaining butter. Be sure your crust is well chilled. This layer of fat will help keep your crust from getting soggy while baking. Return your crust to the refrigerator.

Next slice your onions thinly. Using a large, heavier-weight sauté pan on medium heat, add the rest of your butter, onions, thyme sprigs, and a pinch of salt. Don't worry about the sticks. We will remove them later.

It is very important to not rush your onions or to over stir them. Keep them at a medium heat so they do not burn and occasionally stir them. Stirring them too much will actually slow down the caramelization process. As browned, not black, sugars build on the bottom of the pan add a splash of water to release them. Repeat the rest-stir-splash until the onions reach a deep brown color. Allow onion to cool and remove the thyme sticks.

Next peel and deseed your squash, by cutting it in half lengthwise and scooping the seeds. Save the seeds if you wish, they can be roasted like pumpkin seeds. After that slice the raw squash into 1/8 inch half-moon shaped slices.

To assemble the tart, remove the pie shell from the refrigerator. Cover the bottom of the shell with an even layer of your caramelized onions. Next tightly and evenly shingle your squash into your shell until you fill it. Be sure to salt and pepper your squash as you go.

Bake your tart in a preheated 350° oven. The tart is finished with the squash offers no resistance when poked with a fork and the crust is golden brown. Allow tart to cool, to allow the ingredients to set. Best served warm with a nice salad.

CSAS (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 7)
banks.

Hepzibah Farms (hepzibahfarms.com) in Talladega makes their 25-week CSA more accessible by offering half-shares and a two-installment payment option. With the early income from this year's CSA, they were able to convert their well to solar power and build more space for food preservation. Hepzibah Farms CSA members surprised to find Peruvian Purple Potatoes or Louisiana Long Green Eggplant in their boxes will also find ingredient-specific recipes and herbs; many CSAs post recipes to their websites or blogs. Farmers selling animal shares may need to explain the different cuts of meat and how to prep them.

There are as many different ways to run a CSA as there are farmers to run them. What successful CSAs have in common is their power to transform communities. Friends and neighbors can come together to share the initial cost, weekly pick-ups, and food prep that come with CSA membership. Extra freezer space trades nicely for home-cooked meals. Just as Jean and Carol gave their customers a new understanding of food and farming, Snow's Bend and Hepzibah Farms both hold annual Harvest Parties for their shareholders, and keep them up-to-date with farm life through newsletters and blogs. Community Supported Agriculture has a lot to offer Alabama.

For a list of CSAs in your area, check out the ASAN Local Food & Farm Guides or localharvest.org.

PECAN PIE

From Becky Rogers, co-owner of Pecan Point Farm (Hurtsboro, AL)

For your sweet tooth: This is a great fall dessert when the local cane syrup mills are going, though I must admit that the maple syrup version is my favorite – if it is possible with something so sweet, the maple syrup seems a little less sweet, but it is somewhat softer in texture.

- 1 9" unbaked pie shell. I use a crust made with whole wheat flour – the flavor of the whole wheat goes really well with the syrup and pecans.
- 1 cup cane syrup or 1 cup maple syrup
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 3 large pastured eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups pecans – halves or pieces, your preference. I prefer the pieces.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. If cane syrup is thick, warm until thin enough to mix with other ingredients. Maple syrup should not need to be warmed. Mix syrup, sugar, eggs, melted butter, and vanilla until mixture is smooth. For the very best pie, pour through a sieve from one bowl to another to assure smoothness. Stir in 1 cup pecans.

Pour filling into pie shell. Sprinkle remaining pecans evenly on top. Place pie on a baking sheet (in case it spills a little) and bake in the oven for 50 to 60 minutes. Pie is done when it feels somewhat firm when touched, or to an internal temperature of about 200 degrees.

Makes one 9 inch pie. If there are leftovers, keep refrigerated.



Becky's husband George measures out pieces of their farm-grown pecans. Photo credit: Julie Hunter

GETTING PAID FOR DOING GOOD: PROTECTING OUR WATER SUPPLY

By Skye Borden


When the Clean Water Act was first passed in 1972, the legislature had hoped that the new law would return all America's rivers back to a "natural state" by 1985. But today, nearly forty years later, we're still only about halfway there.

Municipal and industrial water pollution has declined, but our

nation's rural and agricultural pollution continues to cause serious problems.

One of the challenges of rural water pollution is that it's very difficult to monitor. The sites are far apart from one another, agricultural runoff is difficult to measure, and the relative isolation of rural lands makes it unlikely that violators will be caught in the act.

(Continued on page 11)



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GETTING PAID FOR DOING GOOD (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 10)

For this reason, government agencies would much rather meet their rural conservation goals through voluntary programs as opposed to the typical command-and-control regulations that were so effective against industrial and urban polluters.

Although every environmental agency has some kind of landowner incentive program, one agency in particular – the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – is exclusively focused on partnering with rural landowners to protect the nation's resources.

The NRCS was created during the Dust Bowl, when it worked with Great Plains farmers to plant trees and recover topsoil that had been lost in the region's dust storms. Now, after almost eighty years, the NRCS faces a different set of environmental problems, but its motto – Helping People Help the Land – remains the same.

With the help of an NRCS financial assistance program, my family was able to transform our overgrazed and eroded cattle ranchland into a series of green tree reservoirs and wetland habitats. Every winter and spring, the area provides shelter and food for egrets, geese, ducks, mallards, and a number of other shorebirds. The wetlands also purify flood waters and halt erosion, effectively serving as a filter for the nearby Greenbrier Creek.

We received funding for our wetland project through the NRCS Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative. This program worked to restore inland wetlands to offset the coastal habitat loss caused by the Gulf oil spill. To date, the program has restored over 470,000 acres of wetlands across the southeast.

This habitat initiative is just one of many NRCS programs that may be able to

help you improve your land value and water resources without going broke at the same time. Other popular programs in Alabama include:

- **Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)**: This program provides technical assistance and funding for groups that want to conserve water. It has helped farmers build efficient and environmentally-friendly reservoirs in Geneva, Coffee, Lee and Houston Counties.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**: EQIP pays participants to implement conservation practices on their land. In Alabama, the program has paid for a number of projects across the state, from stream-saving cattle troughs to water-efficient turf irrigation systems.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**: This program pays farmers and foresters for the value of their good management practices. For example, if a participating Alabama farmer used a crop rotation system to reduce erosion, CSP would pay him/her for the value of that practice. The more erosion he/she prevented, the more he/she would get paid.

The details of these programs differ based on your specific geographic area, so you should always contact your local NRCS branch office for more information before applying to participate.

Outside of NRCS programs, conservation easements are another way for landowners to generate income while improving water quality. An easement is a legal tool that sets aside land *in perpetuity*, meaning that it can never be developed or used in a way that conflicts with the easement's terms. The landowner continues to own the property, but he/she effectively donates the right to develop it in a way that would harm the environment.

Because easements are forever, the stakes are a little higher than they are for most governmental programs, but the rewards are greater, too. Landowners who



Building the Migratory Bird Habitat. Photo credit: Skye Borden

create conservation easements on their land can receive an IRS income tax deduction for the easement's entire value, an amount that can easily reach tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Conservation easements can be adapted for a number of different uses. They've been used to protect endangered species habitat, pristine rural views, freshwater resources, and everything in between. If you have a floodplain or wetland on your property, an easement could be used to preserve that habitat, and the water quality benefits that stem from it, forever.

For farmers, an easement can be used simply to keep the farm in sustainable agricultural production. Typically, some use restrictions will apply. Prohibitions on clear-cutting and requirements for stream buffers, for example, are popular easement terms. But, a farmer who already practices environmentally sound land management strategies will often be able to continue to work the land in the same way that he/she did before the easement took effect. This makes easements an excellent tool for cash-strapped farmers that want to pass their land on to their kids.

Easements, NRCS programs, and other incentives provide a wide array of choices for the conservation-minded landowner. With so many different options to choose from, any farmer should be able to find an environmental strategy that works well for his/her family, farm, and budget.

Next Steps

For more information on government programs, visit the NRCS website at nrcs.usda.gov.

To set up a conservation easement, contact your local land trust, NRCS branch, or Nature Conservancy chapter for more information.



Northern Choctaw Lily in the Migratory Bird Habitat. Photo credit: Skye Borden

“GROW YOUR VOICE” AT ASAN’S 2013 REGIONAL FOOD & FARM FORUMS

We are thrilled to invite you to one (or all!) of our 2013 Regional Food & Farm Forums, coming to a town near you in September and October!



THE ALABAMA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE NETWORK'S
2013 REGIONAL FOOD & FARM FORUMS

WEST	FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 THOMASTON, AL
	WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9 MUSCLE SHOALS, AL
	WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23 RAMER, AL

This is technically the 6th annual ASAN Food & Farm Forum. But for you ASAN old hands, this is a little different than Forums in years past. This year, instead of doing a single, multi-day, statewide Forum, we're doing three one-day regional events.

In doing it this way, we're hoping: 1) to create more opportunities for Forum discussions to lead to real collaborative action, after the events, and 2) not to duplicate or compete with what the Southern SAWG Conference (www.ssawg.org) does so well,

which they're bringing to Mobile in January 2014!

We intend for these Regional Forums to open the

floor for rich dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and relationship-building across ASAN's network.

Each Regional Forum will feature roundtable discussions on a wide variety of topics, a delicious locally inspired lunch, and an afternoon of hands-on

opportunities like farm tours, demos, and crop mobs.

(A crop mob is a group workday in the spirit of old-fashioned barn-raising. For example, at previous crop mobs we've pulled up a field of old plastic mulch, inoculated shiitake logs, potted up tomato seedlings, and

repaired the plastic roof of a high tunnel.)

Registration

To register, or to find out more go to www.asanonline.org/blog/post/rfff – from there, click on the link to the registration page for your preferred Regional Forum.

Registration is just \$5 for ASAN members, and \$20 for non-members. You will need a coupon code to access the member price. Contact Alice (info at end) to get the coupon code.

You can become a member at the individual supporter level AND register for the Forum for just \$30. Don't know if you're a member? Check the address label on this newsletter – if you are, or ever have been a member, it will tell you the date through which your membership has been paid.

We don't want the registration cost to be prohibitive for anyone, and we do have funds for scholarships. If you need help getting to the Forum, contact Alice (info at

(Continued on page 13)



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REGIONAL FOOD & FARM FORUMS (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 12)

bottom) for more information. Also, see below about carpooling.

Want to help?

Fantastic! Please contact Alice (info at bottom)

- Organize a carpool: All you'll need to do is pick a place and time for folks in your area to gather, and be a point person for questions ahead of time. Once everyone's there, jump in as many cars as you need, and hit the road! It's a simple way to save on gas and meet some new friends in the process!
- Be a notetaker, facilitator, or photographer: Ideally we will have one expert facilitator AND one notetaker/moderator at each roundtable discussion. And the more folks taking pictures throughout the event, the better!
- Help the day of the event with registration, serving lunch, and in other ways as needed.
- Spread the word!

Contact Alice at alice@asanonline.org or 256-743-0742.

Like ASAN on Facebook!

Get more up-to-the-minute news, event announcements, and more!



NEW WEBSITE CONT'D

(Continued from page 1)

membership drive to gain exposure and drum up support for ASAN. We had a fantastic time meeting new folks and telling them about our members and our work, and would've loved to stay on the road longer and go to even more places! There's always next year...

Here are a few photos from our membership events in July!



Simp McGhee's Farm-to-Table Dinner, (L to R) Marilyn Champion and Alyssa Krause of Champion Farms, Karen Wynne and Emmaline Fenner of Rosita's Farm.



Homegrown Alabama Market in Tuscaloosa. Above left, Mo Fiorella, market manager.



Top to bottom: Stopped by Jones Valley Teaching Farm for a tour and a visit (JVTF Farm Manager Katie Davis and ASAN intern Mary Ignatiadis). Share the Harvest day at Freshfully just a week after they opened their new cafe! And a typical jam-packed morning at Pepper Place Market.



The Alys Stephens Center's Nite Market and presentation of Susan Werner's Hayseed Project was a little soggy but spirits were high! Above: EAT South intern Amanda Edwards and Bay Area Food Bank VISTA Katie Cordell.



Donation Day at Gerson's Garden in Roanoke. From L to R: Colin MacDougall (manager), Judy Collins and Jim Allen (founding ASAN members), Siri Wilkinson (Gerson's owner/chef), Velma Walker, Bill Wilkinson (Gerson's owner/chef), and Gene Thornton (ASAN Board member).

NEWS FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS

Big thanks to Mary Ignatiadis and Xantheia Watkins, ASAN's summer interns! Mary helped research the Huntsville Food Guide, staffed the ASAN table at several membership events, and contributed an article on CSAs to this newsletter. She is starting her sophomore year at Williams College in Williamstown, MA. Xantheia, who also helped research the Huntsville Food Guide, is continuing to work on her Masters in Community and Regional Planning at Alabama A&M University.

Congratulations to ASAN Board member Lucy Buffett and her team on the opening of their new Gulf Shores restaurant, Lucy B. Goode! Lucy B. Goode is next door to Buffett's existing restaurant, Lulu's, but it's a totally different concept. Lulu describes the new restaurant, which will focus on dishes that feature fresh, local ingredients, as "upscale but not fancy."

EAT South is very excited to introduce our new Hampstead Farm Manager, Catherine Doe. Catherine comes to us from Oakland, CA, where she managed an urban farm at Berkeley Youth Alternatives, teaching high school students skills to grow, eat and share healthy food, and focusing on job skills and leadership development. Catherine completed a Masters degree in counseling psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies, and an apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture at the UC Santa Cruz Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems. Catherine has also combined her passions of farming and counseling to create therapeutic gardening programs in the Bay Area of California with adults in recovery and with youth.

EAT South also welcomes two AmeriCorps VISTAs this fall. Amanda Edwards, coming from Whittier College in Los Angeles, will be assisting with the development of EAT South education programs and outreach activities. Skye Borden, coming back home after studying in Vermont, will be leading the River Region Food Policy Council.

Congratulations to Freshfully on the opening of their new in-store café! Since July they have been serving delicious locally-sourced sandwiches, salads and more for lunch and are getting rave reviews!

This section appears in every newsletter and features updates both personal and professional, on ASAN members and friends: anything from a new farm, to a new baby.

Connecting people in this, the barest-bones of ways, we hope to provide a jumping-off point for folks to connect on their own in deeper ways.

Have news to add? Let us know at newsletter@asanonline.org or (256) 743-0742.

CLASSIFIEDS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Food Day: October 24 is National Food Day! If you would like to coordinate a crop mob on your farm, or some other event celebrating local, sustainable food and farmers, contact alice@asanonline.org!

NCAT Office Opening: The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) has opened a Gulf States Region office in Jackson, MS, which will serve Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. NCAT is a non-profit whose mission is to help people by championing small-scale, local, and sustainable solutions to reduce poverty, promote healthy communities, and protect natural resources. The Gulf states office will also be offering workshops, promoting local farm demonstration projects and funding innovative programs to meet local needs, especially in serving economically distressed and underserved communities. For more info, see: www.ncat.org/, <https://attra.ncat.org/>, or call 479-575-1385 or 866-643-2767 (toll free).

MSAN Training by Video: The Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture Network (MSAN) has been coordinating a Comprehensive Training Course on Sustainable Agriculture, and the trainings can be viewed live by video-conference from most ACES offices. If you're interested, contact Connie Templeton at conniet@ext.msstate.edu with the location and contact info for the ACES office where you'd like to tune in – she will coordinate with the local office to set up the video-conference connection. Remaining training course dates at Sept. 9, 16, and 23. More info including training topics at <http://www.mssagnet.net/programs/workshops-events/>.

Auburn Locally Grown Market: Auburn Locally Grown is a group of small farms and food producers located around Auburn. All member farms are dedicated to supplying their customers with the freshest and highest quality products possible, all entirely synthetic-chemical-free. Visit the website to browse the selection of fresh vegetables, artisan breads, farm fresh eggs, goat and cow dairy products, sprouted flours, jams, jellies, and preserves, and natural bath and beauty products from Alabama farms. <http://auburn.locallygrown.net>.

ASAN Team for Jacksonville Race: The Jacksonville Farmers Market is teaming up with Xterra's Dirty Spokes race series, to put on a combination trail race and healthy living fair on October 19 in Jacksonville. (See calendar listing for more details.) If we are able to gather a group of 10+ runners as part of an ASAN team, runners will get a \$5 discount on registration. Please get in touch with Alice at 256-743-0742 or alice@asanonline.org, if you are interested in running the race!

Farm to School: October is Farm to School Month! This May, ASAN is the Alabama state lead agency for the National Farm to School Network, and as such we are collecting information about what farm-to-school activities are currently underway around the state, and about how ASAN might facilitate an increase in farm-to-school work. Farm-to-school includes everything from local farms selling into school cafeterias or after-school programs, to school gardens, and much more. If you're involved in farm-to-school work, please contact alice@asanonline.org or 256-743-0742 to share more details.

SSAWG Homestays: Do you live in or around Mobile? Would you be interested in providing homestay accommodations to farmers and others attending the Southern SAWG Conference in Mobile in January 2014? Doing so will make this fantastic training and learning opportunity accessible to more farmers, who won't need to worry about paying for hotel accommodations, and it will provide an opportunity to meet new people from around the state and the region. If you're interested, please contact Alice at 256-743-0742 or alice@asanonline.org.

SSAWG Scholarships: ASAN will be providing scholarships for beginning farmers (farming 10 years or less) to attend the Southern SAWG Conference January 15-18, 2014, in Mobile. Please contact Alice at 256-743-0742 or alice@asanonline.org for more details including an application.

Help us build a better Alabama.

Join ASAN or renew your membership today!

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 quarterly print newsletter

If you're interested in making a larger donation to ASAN, or have any other questions, contact info@asanonline.org or (256) 743-0742.

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

Donations and annual dues are tax-deductible.

Individual Supporter: \$25

Farm: \$50

Business or Organization: \$200

Not sure if you need to renew? Check your address label to see when your membership expires.

Please mail checks made out to ASAN to:
 PO Box 2127, Montgomery, AL 36102.

Or you can pay online:
<http://asanonline.org/membership-account/membership-checkout/?level=1>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept 6 — Backyard Fruit 101, Anniston. Workshop series the 1st Fridays of Sept, Oct, and Nov at Cane Creek Community Gardens. 9:30am-12pm. More at 256-237-1621.

Sept 8 — The Garden Party, Tuscaloosa. Fundraiser for the Druid City Garden Project, 5-8pm at the Tuscaloosa River Market. Food by local chefs paired with local farms, live music, local beer, and children's activities. More info and tickets at www.druidcitygardenproject.org/thegardenparty/.

Sept 13 — ASAN Regional Food & Farm Forum: West Alabama, Thomaston. More info on page 12.

Sept 14 — Organic Gardening Workshop Series: Fall Gardening, Montgomery. More at www.eatsouth.org/events.

Sept 17 — Annie's Project, Oneonta. Six-session agri-business management seminar for women with a passion for business and involvement. 5-8:30pm. Later sessions at Sept 24 and Oct 8, 15, 22 and 29. Cost is \$50 for entire series, more info at www.extension.iastate.edu/annie/alabamaannie.html.

Sept 19 — Regional Backyard Composting Workshop, Carrollton. Free, 10am-12pm. More at wynnel@aces.edu or 205-367-8148. Program repeats in Bibb County Sept 26.

Sept 21 — Pasture Walk and Rotational Grazing Demonstration, Arley. 9am-12pm. More at llj0010@aces.edu and 256-309-4339.

Sept 24 — Planning Commission Meeting, Huntsville. For public response to new urban agriculture ordinance. 5pm in City Council Chambers, 308 Fountain Circle. More at nafoodpolicycouncil.org

Sept 25 — Lunch & Learn "Gardening for Dry Places," Anniston. 12-1pm at Cane Creek Community Gardens. More at 256-237-1621 or westdah@aces.edu.

Sept 26 — Lotion Making Workshop, Huntsville. Hosted by the Small Farms Research Center at Alabama A&M University. 10am-2pm. Workshop cost is \$10, limited space available. Pre-register at elicia.chaverest@aamu.edu and make registration check payable to Small Farms Research Center Foundation.

Sept 27 — Birmingham Food Summit, Birmingham. Featuring keynote speakers Lori Silverbush and Barry Estabrook, educational tracks and forum discussions. Registration \$55. More at www.bhamfpc.org.

Sept 28 — Front Porch Fest, Gadsden. Featuring craft beer by Back Forty Beer Co, locally sourced food by Alabama chefs, live music, and more. Starts at 1pm. Tickets \$35. More at www.facebook.com/thefrontporchrevival.

Sept 29 — MSAN Farm Tours, Columbus, Cedar Bluff, and Starkville, MS. More at

www.mssagnet.net/programs/workshops-events/.

Oct 3 — Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Huntsville. The largest environmental film festival in the US, 6-10pm. Tickets \$10. More at www.alabamarivers.org/events/wildandscenic.

Oct 7 — Lunch & Learn: Growing Micro Greens, Mobile. 12-1pm, more info at 251-574-8445.

Oct 9 — ASAN Regional Food & Farm Forum: North Alabama, Muscle Shoals. More info on page 12.

Oct 10 — Organic Gardening Workshop Series: Seed Saving, Montgomery. More at www.eatsouth.org/events

Oct 12 — March Against Monsanto, various locations including Gadsden, Mobile, and Birmingham. More at www.march-against-monsanto.com.

Oct 17 — Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Birmingham. The largest environmental film festival in the US, 5:30-10pm. Tickets \$10-25. More at www.alabamarivers.org/events/wildandscenic.

Oct 17 — Fall Fruit Harvest Workshop, Clanton. Presentations on a wide variety of fruit crops, for commercial and home growers. 1-4pm at the Chilton Research and Ex-

(Continued on page 16)

ASAN

P.O. Box 2127
Montgomery, AL 36102

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What do YOU want to read about? Send us your ideas or suggestions for future features!

Get in touch at newsletter@asanonline.org or (256) 743-0742.

**healthy farms,
healthy foods,
healthy communities.**

UPCOMING EVENTS (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 15)
tension Center. More at (334) 539-2128 or graygar@aces.edu.

Oct 19 — Henry Farm Park Trail Race and Healthy Living Fair, Jacksonville. 4-mile run plus a farmers market / healthy living fair, 7-11am. More at www.dirtyspokes.com/henry-farm-park/ and www.facebook.com/jacksonvillealfarmersmarket. See blurb in "Classifieds" re: group rate for race.

Oct 19 — 2nd Annual Alabama Festival of Flavor, Foley. 9am-6pm. More at www.southbaldwinchamber.com/major-events/alabama-festival-of-flavor-overview.

Oct 22-23 — Colbert County Progressive Safety Day, Tusculumbia. Geared towards 3rd graders, At North AL State Fairgrounds. More at etta.mask@al.nacdnet.net

Oct 23 — ASAN Regional Food & Farm Forum: South Alabama,

Brundidge. More info on page 12.

Oct 23 — Women and Youth in Agriculture Farm Camp, Camden. 9am-2pm, for youth and the community, workshops on goats, bees, canning, forestry and more. More at roseokra07@gmail.com and 334-419-1196.

Oct 24 — National Food Day

Oct 24 — EAT South Farm to Fork Food Invasion, Montgomery. Featuring Chef Rob McDaniel of Springhouse Restaurant. More at eatsouth.org.

Oct 24 — Backyard Poultry Management Workshop, Birmingham. Cost is \$10, pre-register at 205-879-6964 or ahd0001@aces.edu (Annette Drummonds).

Oct 24 — New and Beginning Livestock Producer Meeting, Hartselle. Free workshop, 6-8pm, to address getting started with cattle, goat, sheep, and rabbits. Pre-register at 256-773-8495.

Oct 26 — Peinhardt Farm Days with 4H, Cullman. 9am-4pm. All-ages event with syrup mill, honey bee exhibits, sawmill, turpentine mill, quilting, farm animals, cross-buck sawing and more. More at 256-737-9386 or rbs0005@auburn.edu.

Nov 15-16 — SE Citrus Expo, Chilton County. Tours, speakers, contests, and a trade expo. More at www.facebook.com/SoutheasternCitrusExpo.

Nov 17 — EAT South Fall Harvest Festival, Montgomery. More at eatsouth.org.

Dec 9-10 — Carolina Meat Conference, Winston-Salem, NC. For producers, processors, food professionals and buyers, to promote local, niche and pasture-based meat supply chains. More at www.ncchoices.com.

Jan 15-18, 2014 — Southern SAWG Conference, Mobile.