



THE ALABAMA  
SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURE  
NETWORK

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# ASAN UPDATE

Summer 2013

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## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF FARM-TO-RESTAURANT

For many local farmers, selling to local restaurants is a great way to diversify their marketing outlets, gain exposure to new potential customers, and enjoy a year round source of profit. But selling to restaurants, like selling anywhere else, doesn't come without its own unique challenges and headaches.

Likewise many chefs and restaurateurs are interested in connecting with local farmers to source their ingredients, but doing business with local farmers almost never resembles the exchanges they have with large-scale distributors, which can lead to frustrations as well.

We've gathered the thoughts and advice of some Alabama farmers and Alabama chefs who have experience selling and buying "farm to

restaurant," in order to make the process more navigable for those just starting out.

### Where do you start?

Dogged persistence and simply putting yourself out there. In some cases the farmer makes the initial connection, in some cases the chef.

Will Doonan of Heron Hollow Farms says he would simply "walk in and show them what I had." Of course, it improves your odds if you pre-select for restaurants that are supportive of local foods, and are familiar not only with the opportunities but with the challenges that buying directly from local farmers can entail. Will says, plain and simple, "because of our attention to

(Continued on page 6)



Locally sourced fried green tomatoes at Lulu's at Homeport Marina in Gulf Shores. Photo courtesy of Lulu's.

## WHY NOT PICK YOUR OWN?

By Mike Reeves

There are many farms across the state that offer some of their crops for harvest by the consumer. This is commonly referred to as "Pick-Your-Own" or "U-pick". This is not something new. U-Pick operations have been around, in some form, as long as modern



U-pick farms teach kids about "where their food comes from and the effort it takes to produce it." Photo credit: Mike Reeves

agriculture. The popularity and availability of U-pick has varied over the years. By describing a u-pick operation from both the farmers view point and that of the consumers, I hope you can see why this type of arrangement can be mutually beneficial.

### Why U-Pick: Growers

The primary reason for a grower to offer his/her crop on a U-Pick arrangement is to reduce the requirement for harvest

labor. The grower may not have the available labor needed to harvest certain fruit and vegetable crops. While all vegetable and fruit crops require significant amounts of labor to harvest and pack, some crops require more harvest labor than others. For example, butterbeans and peas require more harvest labor than watermelons or cantaloupes, and strawberries and blueberries require more harvest labor than peaches or apples. For this reason you will most likely see U-Pick operations for these more harvest intensive crops. The list of crops that you might find available for U-Pick could include: strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, muscadines, peas, beans, tomatoes, squash, or cucumbers. Growers can pass the costs required to harvest these crops on to the consumer in the form of reduced prices.

Farmers offer an "on farm" experience as part of the U-pick operation. This can be especially the case where the actual harvesting of the crop is the primary event. Such an example is Pick-Your-Own Pumpkins. Most consumers are paying for the experience more than for the crop. When you combine this with corn mazes and wagon rides it becomes more "Agriculture Tourism" than "Pick-Your-Own".

## LETTER FROM THE ASAN BOARD PRESIDENT



I recently heard a discussion about research showing how Alabama is just simply not a very good place to grow food and it's really not worth the

effort.

I had to smile thinking about the steaming hot August days I've been in the field picking beans and cursing the Japanese beetles descending from the heavens to devour my crops. So I can't deny that growing food in Alabama is not an easy endeavor. But to say it's not worth the effort seems to be a serious mistake.

I have the good fortune of getting to travel the state talking to farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and consumers of Alabama food. These people clearly disagree that it's not worth the effort. From one end of the state to other, farmers markets and restaurants are finally starting to show how rich a bounty the soil and water of Alabama can produce. The diversity of locally-produced food appearing in our markets has never

been so great. And the dollars paid for those products stays right here in Alabama, where they belong.

At last month's Southern Makers event in downtown Montgomery, I got to spend some time with Chris Bennett, a 'food forager' and farmer. Chris scours the backwoods of central Alabama finding the most delicious foods that grow unencumbered and are highly sought after by local markets, such as the Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham.

To me, Chris epitomizes the notion that Alabama IS a good place to grow food. It sure doesn't make much economic sense to pay to import food that grows naturally, even wild, in our own state. Fortunately, Chris is working on a book about foraging food in Alabama and will soon be able to share his wisdom with all of us.

But there's still much work to do in order to keep our momentum going. Alabama produces less than 5% of its own food. If we can increase that by only a few percentage points, we'll see millions of dollars stay in our state and form the foundation for rural and urban communities that desperately need a strong financial base.

The emerging Alabama Food Policy Council, a group facilitated by ASAN, aims to

research and help drive good policy to achieve this goal. ASAN and the Food Policy Council hope to work closely with the Alabama Department of Agriculture to increase the number of processing facilities for locally produced food.

ASAN is working hard to provide connectivity to producers and consumers of Alabama-grown food by distributing our Food Guides in Huntsville, Birmingham, and Mobile. ASAN continues to provide trainings for producers to help make their farms and ranches more efficient, profitable, and resilient. And this work is really just beginning.

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

Edwin Marty  
Board President

### CONTRIBUTORS: SUMMER 2013

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

**Jetson Brown**, farm manager at EAT South in Montgomery

**Will Doonan**, co-farm manager and co-owner of Heron Hollow Farm in Nauvoo

**Steve Bunner**, Owner and Executive Chef at 1892 East Restaurant and Tavern in Huntsville

**David Bancroft**, Owner and Chef at Acre, a restaurant slated to open in Auburn in September

**Dylan Feenker**, Executive Chef at Lulu's at Homeport Marina in Gulf Shores

**Mike Reeves**, farmer and Regional Extension Agent in Hartselle

**Victor Khan**, plasticulture expert and sweetpotato breeder for Tuskegee University. He constructed the first walk-in high tunnel in Alabama in 1992 and is finalizing a book about high tunnel production.

**Lucy Buffett**, ASAN Board Member and owner of Lulu's at Homeport Marina in Gulf Shores

**Mark Bowen**, Education and Outreach Coordinator for EAT South in Montgomery. He is also the interim farm manager at the Hampstead site.

**Natilee McGruder**, Organization Developer at the Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama (FOCAL), based in Montgomery

**Shavaun Evans**, Grassroots Associate at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), based in Washington, DC

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

**Alice Evans**, ASAN Statewide Coordinator





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## SOLARIZATION CAN HELP RID YOUR HIGH TUNNEL OF DISEASES, PESTS AND WEED SEEDS

By Victor Khan

High tunnels are designed to extend the growing season during the cool and cold months of the year; however, many producers are growing vegetables year round in high tunnels. Continued cropping of these small areas eventually leads to a buildup of diseases and other pests.

Soil solarization is a non-chemical process of using clear plastic mulch to trap the heat of the sun in moist soil, increasing the soil temperature and killing disease organisms and weed seeds. Since high tunnels tend to be fixed structures and cannot be easily rotated, solarization offers a low cost and environmentally friendly method of disinfesting the tunnel – for both conventional and organic growers. Solarization is most effective when done during the hottest months of the year, which in Alabama is from June to August.

Solarization your high tunnel using the following steps:

**STEP 1.** It is very important to remove or incorporate all plant debris from a previous or cover crop before beginning the solarization process. The soil needs to be finely



Soil preparation with tractor and rototiller. Photo credit: Victor Khan

tilled, smooth, and level. This can be accomplished through the use of a tractor and rototiller or with a regular garden tiller. It is important

that the soil be free from soil clumps and other debris to ensure that the plastic makes direct contact with the soil. Failure to remove these objects and smoothing the soil will lead to the creation of air pockets where disease spores, weed seeds, and pest larvae, can survive the solarization process.

**STEP 2.** Incorporate all soil amendments such as poultry litter and cabbage, collards, and turnip crop residues. Amendments can make the solarization process even more effective.

**STEP 3.** Wet the soil thoroughly.

Water is essential because it improves the heating process during solarization. The soil needs to be saturated. It is recommended that the watering system be left on overnight, depending on the soil type. The wetness level can be determined by taking a handful of soil and squeezing it – when released the soil should remain as a nice ball. If it crumbles or is too hard to squeeze it needs more water, and if the soil is soggy then you have applied too much water, and it will need a day or two to dry out.

**STEP 4.** Dig shallow trenches around the interior edges of the high tunnel. Do this using a big wheel hand plow or a hoe and shovel. These trenches are intended to bury the edges of the plastic film to keep it in place. You can apply the plastic more tightly if you divide the tunnel into two sections with a 1ft wide walkway running down the center. When digging the trenches avoid walking on the area to be solarized, to prevent compaction of the soil.

**STEP 5.** Measure the width and length of the area to be solarized, and cut your plastic sheet a bit longer and wider, because you will need to bury the edges in the surrounding trenches. It is recommended to use a 4-6 mil thick plastic that is at least 40ft wide and 100ft long. A thick plastic can be reused at a later date, withstand rough handling, and in some instances prevent certain weeds from puncturing the plastic if they emerge from the soil. Position the plastic over the area to be solarized, place the edges in the surrounding trenches, and put a shovel load of soil every 10ft. Repeat this procedure on the opposite side, stretching the plastic to make sure that it is smooth.

Follow the same procedure for the width sides of the plastic. Then back-fill the trench all the way around, ensuring that the plastic is held firmly in place. When this is done correctly, you will immediately begin to see condensation building up under the plastic. This is a sign that you have successfully prepared your high tunnel for solarization. Allow your tunnel to remain closed for



Trenches created by shovel and hoe. Photo credit: Victor Khan



Spreading the plastic film and placing the edges in the trenches. Photo credit: Victor Khan



Back fill the trenches. Photo credit: Victor Khan

at least six weeks during the warmest part of the year. After six weeks, open the tunnel and remove the plastic.

Consider solarization if you have had major problems with soil-borne diseases, soil-borne pests, or weeds. You shouldn't need to solarize every year, but it is an invaluable tool and can be worked into a crop rotation every three to five years or so. Only solarize if you need to – successful solarization kills both “bad” organisms as well as the beneficials. However, research has shown that populations of beneficials rebound more quickly once solarization is complete.

## PICK YOUR OWN (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

### Why U-Pick: Consumers

The primary reason for a consumer to be attracted to a U-Pick operation is cost savings. Since the farmer is counting on the consumer to harvest his crop, he or she will often offer their crop at a significantly lower price than the pre-picked version of the same crop.

Another reason for picking your own is freshness. While our farmers do a great job of providing fresh fruits and vegetables (most picked the same day), there is actually no way to get fresher fruits and vegetables than picking them yourself. Fruit and vegetables can be consumed or preserved literally within minutes of harvest.

I also like to think that education is a good reason to go pick your own, especially when children are involved. Most families are now at least two generations removed from the farm. Getting on a farm allows young people to get a sense of where their food comes from and the effort it takes to produce it.

### Current U-Pick Situation

Many fruit and vegetable are still offered through U-Picks, but the number may be declining. After giving all the positive reasons for U-Pick, let me list some reasons why this may be occurring:

The costs of producing a crop continue to increase, for the grower. As a result, the farmer has a much more valuable crop in

the field. In turn, he has to be much more efficient at harvesting and

marketing his crop. Relying on U-Pick customers alone to harvest a crop is sometimes risky. Sometimes, the U-Pick customers might not follow the rules set forth by the grower, as far as where to pick and what to pick. As a result, the grower will have to bring his own labor crew in behind the U-Pick customers to properly harvest the crop. If this becomes a pattern, the grower will just find a way to harvest the

### Guides to Find a U-Pick Near You

Be sure to call ahead before going to a U-pick. Each one has different open hours, and crops aren't always available exactly when expected.

#### ASAN's Food and Farm Guides

<http://asanonline.org/resource-center/resources-for-eaters>

#### Alabama U-Pick Operations (Alabama Dept. of Agriculture and Industries)

[http://agi.alabama.gov/uploads/sl/-8/sl-857r1ghcns\\_u-\\_pp6xw/upick-2011.pdf](http://agi.alabama.gov/uploads/sl/-8/sl-857r1ghcns_u-_pp6xw/upick-2011.pdf)

#### U-Pick Operations by County (Alabama Farmers Market Authority)

[www.fma.alabama.gov/MapUPick.htm](http://www.fma.alabama.gov/MapUPick.htm)

#### PickYourOwn.org

[www.pickyourown.org/AL.htm](http://www.pickyourown.org/AL.htm)

crop himself or not continue growing it. So, as a U-Pick customer, you are helping the farmer with his crop. The better job the customer does, the more likely the farmer will plant more crops for U-Pick.

It seems consumers have less free time at their disposal to do things like picking their own fruits and vegetables. There are many local farmers who have very fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables available on their farms or at farmers markets. So with less time, many U-Pick customers may have decided it is much easier for them to pay a little more to let the farmer do the harvesting.

For those who want to get out on the farm and harvest their own fruits and vegetables, there are still some great farms waiting on you!



Photo credit: Mike Reeves

## FARM-TO-RESTAURANT (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

detail, our prices tend to be a little higher. So if their desire for quality exceeds dollar signs, then that's what we're going for."

Jetson Brown, the farm manager of EAT South in Montgomery, shares that same filter, narrowing the field by looking for "restaurants that were already using quality ingredients and [making] great food with them." He adds, "a changing or rotating menu is important because it means that they are able to change what they buy during the different seasons."

Many chefs said they connected with farmers through word of mouth, mutual connections, and through farmers markets. Steve Bunner of 1892 East Restaurant and Tavern in Huntsville says he started with local "farmers

markets, local food guides, and asking everyone and anyone if they know people." David Bancroft of Acre in Auburn took a more direct approach, joking that he drove out to the first farm and bugged them until they agreed, then moved onto the next farm...

Whether you're a farmer or a chef, reach out at a time when you can actually have a conversation — don't waltz into a restaurant in the middle of the lunch rush, and don't demand a farmer's attention while they're trying to serve customers at the farmers market. You can always set up an appointment to come back.

### How do you know you're on the right track?

Good relationships between local farmers and local chefs are founded in

trust, mutual understanding, and good communication. When both parties trust one another enough, and are familiar enough with one another's limitations, there can be frank conversation about things like pricing and availability.

Steve Bunner comments, "Commonly the first step in setting a price is saying we can't pay that much. The next step is farmer telling me they can't go as low as commercial agribusiness. With that out of the way the relationships that are going to stick, begin with an earnest conversation about what each other's margins really are. When we started, I had little understanding of the business of farming, and most farmers have as much knowledge of menu pricing." Lasting relationships depend on both parties enjoying "shared profitability," he says.

## FARM-TO-RESTAURANT (CONT.)

(Continued from page 6)

On the other hand, if a restaurant goes back on a commitment to buy a product the minute they find it cheaper somewhere else, take Jetson Brown's advice and "stop doing business with them immediately." Will Doonan echoes that sentiment, saying he grows wary of restaurants who "say they want to do business with local farmers but when you show them prices, they're not interested. A lot of these guys talk the talk," he says, "but when it comes down to it, cooking seasonally is tough."

For chefs, look for a high quality product above all else. It should raise a red flag, says David Bancroft, if a farmer shows a "lack of understanding of clean farming methods, or poor product handling." Steve Bunner agrees. "Quality and consistency have to be taken as a given," he says. "If the farm cannot produce a good product on a consistent basis then it becomes a liability to work with them."

### So why do it?

Dylan Feenker, the Executive Chef at Lulu's in Gulf Shores, says simply that locally raised product is going to be better than "the product from other chain suppliers that is shipped long distances." Plus, he says, "by purchasing from local farmers we help support our local community," and "build great relationships with people in our community. It is a win-win situation for us."

Steve Bunner adds, "Ultimately, one of our favorite benefits is our food comes with a story behind it. We are able to stand out in our market by holding to our claims and promises to be a local company."

From the farmer's standpoint, it's gratifying to have a buyer that gets as excited about a product as you do. Says Will Doonan, "It's the chefs that really fully appreciate our food. There's just a



Local spring onions in the kitchen at Little Savannah in Birmingham. Photo

level of appreciation from their experience" that you don't find with other customers in other markets. Jetson Brown adds, "I enjoy seeing the vegetables that I grow turn into amazing meals, [and the chefs'] enthusiasm around the produce that I am able to provide."

Although price points are higher at farmers markets or through CSAs, those outlets tend to follow the growing season. Restaurants operate year-round. So Will says that although in high season he can sell for as much as 30% more at the farmers market, he keeps in mind that he needs "to keep my restaurants happy so they want to do business with me in the winter."

Restaurants can round out the year but can also round out the week. Will makes restaurant deliveries on Wednesdays by design, because "Wednesday deliveries for restaurants fill a void for produce that needs to be harvested before Saturday," the day of their one farmers market. "That's what works for our regeneration and our successions and everything," he says.

Some farmers might shy away from restaurant sales thinking that they simply don't produce enough volume to meet chefs' demands. However, says Will, some of the restaurants they work with "just use our products for a flair. They're not buying large quantities from us but they're buying super specialty stuff like tiny radishes for pickling, stuff like that."

Plus, says Jetson, sometimes restaurants are willing to buy "seconds," produce that's too ugly for market but that's still perfectly edible. Also, restaurants tend to move through their products quickly, which can be valuable information for a farmer with a lot of product left after market, that won't last until the following week.

Ultimately, bringing locally owned and operated farms together with locally owned and operated restaurants simply makes sense. It opens up channels to have, as Steve Bunner says, "a true relationship with our producers and an ongoing conversation about product needs, market demands, and what works for the producers."

### A few pointers:

- Be flexible and communicative.
- Find out the best way (phone, email, text) and best time of day to get ahold of one another. Schedule your calls, visits and deliveries outside of peak busy hours. Ask what days, and what times of day, work best.
- Communicate your needs and limitations upfront as much as possible. Say what you're willing to compromise on, and what you're not. If something isn't going according to plan, say so.
- Once you've established a working relationship, think about meeting during the off-season or slow season to discuss specific crop/variety requests and planting plans.
- Honor your word.

### For chefs:

- Pay on delivery, preferably in cash.
- Share the spotlight – print farms' names on the menu, on table tents or posters. Highlight them in your publicity materials and on social media. Invite them to share their story with your waitstaff.
- Don't exploit a farmer's name. Represent your relationship with your suppliers faithfully.
- Recognize that farming is hard, "market" food prices are often grossly distorted, and that weather can change everything. Ideally, find ways to pass along this knowledge to your customers so you're not stuck in the middle of conflicting expectations.

### For farmers:

- Know going in how much a product costs you to produce and how much you need to make on it, and don't undersell yourself. If the crops aren't growing like you planned, let your chefs know.
- Be consistent. Steve Bunner comments, "Most restaurateurs are highly adaptable people but that does not mean they want more opportunities to flex their problem solving abilities."
- Establish routines. Part of being consistent, says Dylan Feenker, is showing up when you say you're going to. Establish a certain day of the week (and ideally, time on that day) that you email out your product list or call with availability information, make deliveries, etc. This will help you as much as it will help the chef.
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Restaurants, like all other marketing channels, can be inconsistent, and no matter how strong a relationship you build, ultimately it still hinges on the bottom line.



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## BLACK BELT SEWING COLLECTIVE LAUNCHES WEB STORE

By Natilee McGruder

From their mama's house to their house, the art of sewing has become a way of life for Shirley Kemp and Fannie Etheridge.

Shirley and Fannie are Alabama worker-owners of the limited liability sewing company Southern Journeys, and their fellow worker-owners span the Alabama and Georgia Black Belt and the Mississippi Delta.

Southern Journeys provides income to sewers from rural communities through the sale of conference bags, culturally inspired hand-crafted home décor, personal accessories and gift collections.

The sewing company recently established a website at [www.southernjourneyscollectives.com](http://www.southernjourneyscollectives.com) to promote their product line and increase the production sales. Their products and designs honor the spirit of their ancestors and celebrate their creativity as a people.

Southern Journeys is a project of the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic and Social Justice (SRBWI), a three state initiative that organizes grassroots women in impoverished rural areas to develop businesses, build networks of leaders, and advocate for public policies that help families and communities. Learn more about SRBWI at [www.srbwi.org](http://www.srbwi.org).



Alabama Sewers Shirley Kemp (L) and Fannie Etheridge. Photo courtesy of SRBWI.

## SELMA WORKSHOP WILL COVER GRASSFED BEEF OPPORTUNITIES

The Alabama Forage and Grassland Coalition, Alabama Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS), the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Alabama RC&D Association, National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and The United Christian Community Association (TUCCA) are organizing a day of presentations and a round-table discussion focused on grass fed beef production and marketing opportunities in Alabama.

Drawing on the experience of producers, suppliers and experts within the region, the purpose of the workshop will be to identify and discuss challenges that face producers such as raising grass fed cattle, forage selection, processing and marketing mechanisms, and operational sustainability in Alabama.

The workshop will be Thursday, June 27 from 9am-3pm at the Hank Sanders Technology Center on the campus of Wallace Community College in Selma.

The workshop is free, but please RSVP by June 21, 2013 to Tiffany Williams (NWF) at [williamst@nwf.org](mailto:williamst@nwf.org) or by calling 678-436-5078.

## COOKING WITH THE SEASONS: SUMMER

### CRAZY SISTA'S SHRIMP CEVICHE

(Serves 8 appetizer servings)

2 pounds poached shrimp (recipe follows)  
1/3 cup red onion, finely diced  
1/2 cup celery, diced  
2 whole ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped  
3/4 cup cucumber, peeled, seeded, and diced  
1 teaspoon fresh jalapeño (ribs and seeds removed), minced  
2 teaspoons fresh garlic, minced  
2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced  
1/3 cup cilantro, minced  
juice of 5 limes  
juice of 2 lemons  
juice of 1 orange  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon white pepper

Place all ingredients in a glass bowl and mix well. Cover with airtight lid or plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight, stirring occasionally.



### POACHED SHRIMP

6 cups water  
1/4 teaspoon liquid crab boil  
2 tablespoons (or a healthy splash) white rum or tequila  
1 lemon, sliced in rounds  
1/2 white onion, cut in large chunks  
6 cloves garlic  
2 tablespoons coarse salt  
4 sprigs fresh cilantro



Place 6 cups of water into a saucepan. Add crab boil, rum or tequila, lemon slices, onion chunks, garlic cloves, and coarse salt. Cover and bring to a boil over medium high heat.

Reduce heat to medium and add shrimp. Poach for **two minutes only!** Pour shrimp into a strainer and immediately cover with ice. When shrimp are cooled, remove and discard lemon slices, garlic, and cilantro.

Thanks to Lucy Buffett (above), ASAN Board Member and the owner of Lulu's in Gulf Shores, for providing these recipes!

## ON DECK FOR ASAN THIS SUMMER AND FALL...

We've got an exciting couple of months ahead! Here are just a few things that ASAN is up to:

### Website Redesign

In July ASAN will be upgrading its website to give users a cleaned-up and more streamlined experience. The new website will house an upgraded online forum feature, for members to ask one another questions and share their collective knowledge and experience. Like ASAN's existing website, the new site will be a central clearinghouse for news and event information from around the state, how-to's, farm profiles, links and other resources, and more.

In rebuilding the site we hope to have cleared up the glitches that have frustrated a number of our supporters recently, including issues with the event calendar and with the member registration and payment pages.

### "Share the Harvest" Launch Parties

We hope to hold several coordinated events around the state to launch the new site. Freshfully in Birmingham, whose co-founders Sam Brasseale and Jen Barnett are designing the website, will host one of the launch parties. In conjunction with the launch party, Freshfully has pledged to donate 10% of its sales on the day of the launch party directly to ASAN, as part of one of its regular "Share the Harvest" events.

We hope to collaborate with other businesses around the state to do the same. If you would like to host a "Share the Harvest" event at your business, please contact Alice at [alice@asanonline.org](mailto:alice@asanonline.org). Not a business owner? We'd love to have your help as a volunteer!

### Membership Drive

As part of the launch of the new site, ASAN will conduct a coordinated membership drive, including an email campaign, letter campaign, and a member needs and interests survey. Keep an eye on your mailboxes,

and please support the work we do by becoming a member of ASAN!

### Regional Farm and Food Forums

This year, instead of having one statewide Farm and Food Forum, ASAN will be hosting four *regional* Forums around the state, throughout the fall.

The first of these will be September 13 in Thomaston. The next will be in conjunction with the Birmingham Food Summit, Sept 26-28. Two more will follow in North and South Alabama.

What kinds of trainings, demos, and discussions would you like to see at the Forums, and on what topics?

Do you have site suggestions for the North or South Alabama Forums? Would you like to help us plan these events? We'd love your input! Please contact Alice at [alice@asanonline.org](mailto:alice@asanonline.org) if you're interested.

Keep an eye on your mailboxes and your inboxes for more information about these events!



## Grow Bigger Veggies with Better Flavor!

"Our yield has been much higher. We've even had fewer insects and fewer weeds. Everything has just worked a lot better since we changed over to MightyGrow."  
— C.C. Gaiennie, owner of Ole Market Lane Farm

"I've had increased production of the long-standing crops like: tomatoes, peppers, squash and zucchini, and it's lasted longer with less put down."  
— John Bartlett, owner of Bartlett Farm in Louisiana



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## ASAN FARMERS “FLY-IN” TO SPEAK TO CONGRESS

Adapted from a blog post by NSAC’s Shavaun Evans

On March 4 and 5, ASAN members Aliza Cummings and Mark Bowen joined 58 other independent family farmers, ranchers, and sustainable agriculture advocates from 24 states to participate in the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s (NSAC) “Farmer Fly-In.”

Participants shared their stories with legislators and USDA administrators in order to emphasize the importance of pro-

grams that boost rural economic development, leverage local initiatives, and support current and future American farmers. Members of the group collectively met with more than 105 legislative offices and USDA administrators to help them understand how farm bill programs – particularly those left without funding – affect their farms and their communities. They also urged Congress to take immediate action to allow USDA to hold a 2013 enrollment for the Conservation Stewardship Program.

Aliza is the co-operator of the Gathering Place farm in Jacksonville and manages the Jacksonville Farmers Market. Mark is a farm manager at EAT South in Montgomery, and also serves as the Education and Outreach Coordinator. Thanks to the impact he made at the Fly-in, Mark was invited back to Washington in April to speak about similar topics to the Congressional Tri-Caucus (see article below).



Aliza (2nd from right) and Mark (right) training with other Fly-In participants in DC. Photo credit: Shavaun Evans



Farmer Fly-in participants. Photo credit: Shavaun Evans



Mark (left) and Aliza (2nd from left) speak to legislators. Photo credit: Shavaun Evans

## MR. BOWEN GOES (BACK) TO WASHINGTON

By Mark Bowen

On Thursday April 25<sup>th</sup>, Mark Bowen was one of four farmers and food advocates from around the country that were invited to Capitol Hill to be a part of a panel on “Policies that Promote Healthy Food and Healthy Economies”.

The panel was sponsored by the Congressional Tri-Caucus (Asian, Hispanic, and Black Caucuses) as a part of a new partnership between four food advocacy organizations that collectively call themselves the Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative. Each of the four partner organizations -- Food Research and Action Center ([www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)), Fair

Food Network ([www.fairfoodnetwork.org](http://www.fairfoodnetwork.org)), Policy Link ([www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)), and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition ([www.sustainableagriculture.net](http://www.sustainableagriculture.net)) -- chose a single farmer or food advocate to be a part of the panel. Mark was sponsored by NSAC.

Each of the panel participants discussed different topics concerning food policy issues. Though the panelist’s topics may have been different, all topics discussed were intertwined. All of the issues addressed by the panelists depend on one another to ensure success and a better food system.

Mark covered stranded farm bill programs - programs currently unfunded as a result of the extension of the farm bill. The two stranded programs that Mr. Bowen focused on were the Farmer’s Market Promotion Program and the Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program.

Both programs that Mark spoke about are programs that have benefitted

Alabamians. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program funded ASAN to create the capacity for local farmers to gain access to local markets, and to receive the training they need to become farmers. EAT South received a Farmers Market Promotion Program grant through the USDA to good build infrastructure at the Downtown farm, which annually serves thousands of children and adults in Montgomery and throughout Alabama.

Speaking on the Hill is an important component in creating a food system that EAT South and ASAN strive to implement. The speakers who served on this panel are ultimately most effective on a local level. When local food programs and policies are supported by their community and by local and state government, federal laws begin to change. The change begins here in Alabama, and throughout the south.

To learn more about the panel discussion and to read the testimony Mark Bowen gave on the Hill, visit <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/alabama-farmer-on-healthy-food/>.



Mark on the job with EAT South in Montgomery. Photo courtesy of EAT South.

## WHY CARE ABOUT POLICY?

"Policy" is a word that can be a room-clearer. Most folks think that any conversation that starts with "policy" will either set their blood boiling and their fists clenching, or will reduce them to a sleepy puddle on the floor. And sadly, plenty of times, they wouldn't be wrong. Policymakers and those who claim to be policy experts have done a good job of confusing, frustrating, alienating, and suppressing the rest of the citizenry.

But the fact is that people and entities who don't share our best interests are influencing decisions and crafting policies. They are carving out legal, political and economic space in which to continue draining our communities of wealth and health, and keep the scales tipping in their favor.

We have to do a better job of understanding policy at all levels. We need to be prepared and mobilized to respond to legislative and regulatory developments in Washington, Montgomery, and in our own hometowns. But we also need to understand the political nature of things we may not view as such. Policy on paper trickles down into implementation in complicated, sometimes convoluted, and sometimes unintended ways. It incentivizes certain activities and discourages or illegalizes others. It reflects the values and priorities of our elected leaders, and of those who have the power to influence them.

Malcolm X said in April 1964, "We must understand the

politics of our community, and we must know what politics is supposed to produce. We must know what part politics play in our lives. And until we become politically mature we will always be misled, led astray, or deceived or maneuvered into supporting someone politically who doesn't have the good of our community at heart."

If we're to have our voices heard, we're going to have to speak for ourselves. Not only that, but we have to find a way to speak collectively, to speak with more unity and strength than those whose mouths are already to the ears of our policymakers, whose words are backed with years of experience and cash-flush pockets.

### Our Role in Getting Us Where We Are

This of course is an extremely simplistic way of understanding the circumstances. It paints a nice picture of some other – the politicians, the multinational corporations, whoever – who is making life miserable for us, the lowly victims. In reality the interests of big corporations and big-time politicians aren't always bad, just as the intentions of "the little guys" aren't always good. Nor does everyone fall cleanly into one or the other of those two groups. Furthermore, though, the story is simplistic as well as convenient because it ignores the fact that this tangled web we're in, we helped to weave.

Ecologists like to point out that invasive species only become "invasive" when they are introduced (most often by humans, inci-

*(Continued on page 13)*

## UPDATES FROM THE ALABAMA FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

An informal steering committee for the Alabama Food Policy Council has met several times in the past few months in order to craft the group's mission, vision, and organizational structure.

They have also discussed several opportunities for the AFPC's first projects. Some possibilities are related to gleaning (gathering crops either left unharvested in the field, or unsold after the close of market, in order to feed the hungry), cottage food (homemade food intended for sale), and urban agriculture ordinances.

The group plans to make several presentations this fall, outlining the work that's already been done,

plans for moving forward, and how folks can get involved. This will lead up to the 2014 state Legislative Session, which begins in February.

Between now and then, the steering committee will meet again to continue refining the structure of the Council and its organizational documents. They will also begin reaching out to influential stakeholders

to serve on the Council's Advisory Board.

Keep an eye out for the AFPC's website, which will be housed in ASAN's website once the redesign is completed. There you will be able to find information about the Council's work, as well as information and analysis about current policy developments locally, statewide, and on the federal level.

### **AFPC Mission:**

**The Alabama Food Policy Council advocates for policies that promote an accessible, self-reliant, Alabama-based food system.**

*We can no longer pretend that agriculture is a sort of economic machine with interchangeable parts, the same everywhere, determined by market forces and independent of everything else.*

*We are not farming in a specialist capsule or a professionalist department; we are farming in the world, in a webwork of dependences and influences probably more intricate than we will ever understand."*

*~ Wendell Berry ~*



## WHY CARE ABOUT POLICY? (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 12)

dentially) to an already broken ecosystem. Those species aren't invasive, they argue, they're just opportunistic.

I'd contend it's a little bit of both. Kudzu, for example, *does* take opportunistic advantage of the fact our forests are now shot through with highways and abundant direct sunlight. But it is also frighteningly well equipped to take that advantage — it can out-grow any native plant, stretching more than a foot in a single day (but y'all probably don't need me to tell you that).

Sure, plenty of powerful political lobbies and big corporations actively carry out work that undermines the human, environmental, and economic well-being of our local communities. (This is especially true of those communities among us that have *also* been historically exploited, attacked, and underrepresented.)

But most or even all of us have been complacent in their ascent to power. We hand them our power when we stop being engaged in political and civic life, when we cease to challenge, care about, or know anything about the folks who make our policies. We hand them our power when we stop shopping at the mom 'n' pop because the big-box store down the street or the internet offers a slightly lower price.

"When you spend your dollar out of the community in which you live," Malcolm says in the same 1964 speech, "the community in which you spend your money becomes richer and richer, the community out of which you take your money becomes poorer and poorer. [...] The man who's controlling the stores in our community [...] doesn't even live in the community. So you and I, even when we try and spend our money in the block where we live or in the area where we live, we're spending it with a man who when the sun goes

down takes that basket full of money in another part of the town."

So every time you spend a dollar, think of it as a political statement and a charitable act all rolled into one. If dollars are just a placeholder for the time and sweat we spent earning them, then choose to spend those dollars with someone and something that's worth that time and sweat.

*So every time  
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lar, think of it  
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charitable act all  
rolled into one.*

### Our Role in Moving Us Forward

So our stake in policy is about defending the small

farmer, the small business owner, the children, the elderly, the hungry. More than that, it's about defending *our* small farmers, *our* small business owners, *our* children, *our* elderly, *our* hungry. It's about defending the rivers and the land, but even more so it's about defending *our* rivers and *our* land. Defend your interests, but more importantly, defend the interests of your community.

ASAN is the lead organization in the emerging Alabama Food Policy Council, a group that will advocate for policies that promote an accessible, self-reliant, Alabama-based food system. This work needs to be broad-based, both informed by and supported by the grassroots. Stay engaged through local and regional gatherings, the ASAN website and Facebook page, and through this newsletter. Keep an eye out for updates, digests, action items and more, related to local, state, and federal policies and programs that affect our food system. Help move our communities towards being, "politically mature."

There's a saying, "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Very few among us are trained political or legal experts, and the world of policy can be offputtingly complex, but this is a time when we have to rise to the occasion. It's time we got off the menu and took a seat at the table.

## Updates in policy big and small



### Birmingham Urban Ag Ordinance

On April 30 the Birmingham City Council passed an ordinance addressing urban agriculture on a number of fronts. The ordinance deals with community gardens, outdoor markets, urban farms, apiaries, and chicken coops.

"Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities" will be working with city planning staff and other stakeholders to help implement the new ordinance effectively. For more information contact Kadie Whatley at [kwhatley@uwca.org](mailto:kwhatley@uwca.org).

### The 2013 Farm Bill

First, a quick Farm Bill review: generally a new Farm Bill is passed every 5 years. Congress failed to pass a new Farm Bill in 2012, and so on January 1, 2013, the 2008 Farm Bill expired, and for a while we were without a Farm Bill at all — meaning many programs were "stranded," or left without funding.

In May 2013, the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee each passed their versions of the would-be 2013 Farm Bill. What happens next is that the Committees present their bills "to the floor," ie to the full House or the full Senate, for further debate.

That's the stage we're in now, which will last for another 1-3 weeks or so. Now is a great time to let your lawmakers know what's important to you, and to let them know you're paying attention.

For more about specific provisions up for debate, check out the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's website (<http://sustainableagriculture.net>) or Facebook page.

The next step, once the House and Senate each pass their versions, is for what's called the "conference committee" to meet to synthesize the two bills into one. This will likely happen in July or August, after which the unified bill will return "to the floor," this time for voting by the full Congress.

## Like ASAN on Facebook!

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



## NEWS FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS

Charles and Gillian Walters are moving back to Montgomery after 5 years in Livingston. They are in the process of expanding their small scale vegetable production into a full-fledged sustainable (and eventually certified organic) farm! If you are in the area and want to chat or visit the farm contact Charles at [AlabamaOnionFarmer@gmail.com](mailto:AlabamaOnionFarmer@gmail.com). They look forward to being a part of the sustainable farming community around Montgomery.

Leonard Githinji, a former Asst. Professor and Extension Horticulture Specialist at Tuskegee, has moved to join the Extension team at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Dr. Githinji will be working with small, limited resource farmers in Arkansas and will direct UIAPB's Sweetpotato Foundation Seed Program. We wish Dr. Githinji the best of luck.

Congratulations to Kim Prince, who opened Happy Heart Market in Hartselle in April. The Market sells produce, eggs, dairy, honey, coffee, jams and jellies, baked goods, grains, crafts, and more – "some local, some organic, and all good"! More than 30 people attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 28. The market is located on Highway 31N in Hartselle, across from Corum's Building and Farm Supply – stop by!

Emily Wilt has left her internship at Dragonfly Farm in Blountsville for Ohio, to visit with family, design and make her best friend's wedding dress, and go skydiving. She will return to Dragonfly in mid-July to celebrate her birthday and continue her internship through December. Rebby Midkiff arrived in May and will be there through mid-August, when she departs to pre-

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](mailto:newsletter@asanonline.org) or (256) 743-0742.

pare to go to Peru with the Peace Corps.

Dragonfly is working on infrastructure this year -- building a storage shed, a potting shed with a cob solar-heat-absorbing wall, an attached greenhouse, and water catchment and management for their duck pad-

dock. Anyone wanting a small start of turmeric, contact Sara Rose at [dragonflyfarm@otelco.net](mailto:dragonflyfarm@otelco.net).

Sandra Simone and her farm the Gardens of Huckleberry Hills are profiled in a wonderful article in the May issue of the Alabama Business Journal, featured here: [www.businessalabama.com/Business-Alabama/May-2013/Career-Veer-to-Home-Grown/](http://www.businessalabama.com/Business-Alabama/May-2013/Career-Veer-to-Home-Grown/). Congratulations to Ms Sandra!

Let there be light! Birmingham local food market and ASAN member Freshfully has won \$5,000 for new in-store lighting in Intuit's Love Our Local Business contest. Small businesses were encouraged to submit a wish and have fans and friends vote to make the wish come true. Freshfully will use the money for pendant lighting and fluorescents in their Avondale neighborhood market.

The Bay Area Food Bank welcomes new SNAP Outreach Coordinator Deb Wakefield and new VISTA volunteer Katie Cordell. Deb will be working to develop collaborations with community services organizations and coordinate SNAP outreach events in key underserved areas in central and north Alabama. She is a Birmingham native who graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont. Katie will be working to recruit and connect volunteers to serve at SNAP outreach events. She is from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and graduated from the University of Iowa.

Aliza Cummings has launched "The Learning Garden" and a great new children's program called "Growing in the Garden" at the Jacksonville Farmers Market. Kids of all ages will learn to grow food all the way from soil prep to harvest, all during market hours. Contact Aliza Cummings at 205-393-3510 to learn more.

Congratulations to EAT South, who raised more than \$20,000 at the May 4 Southern Makers festival in Montgomery. The event featured 90 of Alabama's top chefs, artists, and other "makers," and attracted more than 1500 guests!

## CLASSIFIEDS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Bessemer Farmers Market, in its inaugural year, is looking for more vendors! If you would like to sell your produce, eggs, meat, or other farm products at the market, contact Joe Openshaw at [205-907-4099](tel:205-907-4099) or [metrocat10@aol.com](mailto:metrocat10@aol.com). Bessemer is about 20 minutes SW of downtown Birmingham.

ACES is alerting fruit growers throughout the state to look out for a very damaging invasive pest called the Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD). SWD, unlike nearly all other Drosophila (fruit fly) species, can lay eggs in ripe and ripening fruit, rather than just overripe or decaying fruit. The resulting larvae feed on the fruit, causing direct damage, and may also be present at harvest, contaminating the product, risking the sale of "wormy" fruit and potentially devastating crop losses. More information by searching "Spotted Wing Drosophila" on the ACES website ([www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)) or Google, or by contacting Gary Gray at [graygar@aces.edu](mailto:graygar@aces.edu).

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), probably best known for its ATTRA publications on everything from pastured poultry to soil amendments to starting a small business, has opened a new regional office in Jackson, MS. The new office will serve the Gulf States Region – Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.

ASAN was recently named the State Lead Agency for the National Farm to School Network, and as such will be gathering information on Farm to School activity happening around the state. If you have any information to contribute, please contact Alice at [alice@asanonline.org](mailto:alice@asanonline.org).

To contribute contact (256) 743-0742 or [newsletter@asanonline.org](mailto:newsletter@asanonline.org).



Help us build a better Alabama.

## Join ASAN or renew your membership today!

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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

June 13 — Agricultural Estate Planning Workshop, Cullman. 6-8pm at Cullman Chamber of Commerce [www.aces.edu/counties/Cullman/documents/EstateWorkshopFlyer2013.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/counties/Cullman/documents/EstateWorkshopFlyer2013.pdf)

June 15 — Weston A. Price Foundation Monthly Gathering, Birmingham. 1pm at Pilates on Highland in Birmingham. Featured speaker: Jen Barnett, owner of Freshfully in Avondale. More info: [nourishingtraditionsbhm@gmail.com](mailto:nourishingtraditionsbhm@gmail.com).

June 20 — Farming 101, Small Scale Poultry and Egg Production Workshop, Cullman. 6-9 pm at Cullman Agriplex, \$5 per class, Registration: 256-737-9386 or [cullmancounty@auburn.edu](mailto:cullmancounty@auburn.edu). More info: [www.aces.edu/counties/Cullman/documents/PoultryBeginningFarmerFlyer.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/counties/Cullman/documents/PoultryBeginningFarmerFlyer.pdf).

June 22 — 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Community Garden Open House, Huntsville area. Visit 15 different community gardens in Huntsville, Madison and surrounding area. More info: [www.nafoodpolicycouncil.org](http://www.nafoodpolicycouncil.org) or [tennesseevalleycga@gmail.com](mailto:tennesseevalleycga@gmail.com). Map available at <http://goo.gl/maps/G3mSa>.

June 25 — "Growing Organically: Personally, Publicly or For Profit" Workshop, Grove Hill. 9am-12pm at Grove Hill Town Hall. More info: Clarke County Extension Office (251-275-3121) or Ellen Huckabay ([ellen@auburn.edu](mailto:ellen@auburn.edu))

June 27 — Grassfed Beef Workshop, Selma. More info: see page 7.

June 28 — Alabama Water Policy Symposium, Huntsville. Learn why Alabama needs a comprehensive water management plan, and voice your opinions to help shape one. 9:30am-3:30pm at UAH. Free, must register by June 20. More info: [www.alabamarivers.org/events/alabama-water-policy-symposia/huntsville-water-policy-symposium](http://www.alabamarivers.org/events/alabama-water-policy-symposia/huntsville-water-policy-symposium)

July 11 — Sunbelt Ag Expo Field Day, Moultrie, GA. More info: <http://sunbeltexpo.com>.

July 11 — Broadband Internet, Quickbooks, Tax and Farm Record Keeping Tools Workshop, Cullman. 6-9 pm at Cullman Agriplex. More info: [cullmancounty@auburn.edu](mailto:cullmancounty@auburn.edu).

July 14 — 2nd Sunday Potlucks at Rosita's

Farm, Hartselle. Potluck dinner 5-7pm, optional learning session at 4pm. More info: Facebook "Rosita's Farm" or [rositasfarm@gmail.com](mailto:rositasfarm@gmail.com).

July 17 — 3rd Annual Small Farm & Organic Vegetable Production Field Day, Muscle Shoals. More info: [www.aces.edu/counties/Lauderdale/documents/2013FieldDay.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/counties/Lauderdale/documents/2013FieldDay.pdf)

July 18 — Farming 101, Small Scale Hog Production for Meat and Profit, Cullman. 6-9pm at Cullman Agriplex. More info: [cullmancounty@auburn.edu](mailto:cullmancounty@auburn.edu).

July 18-20 — Southern Peanut Growers Conference, Panama City, FL. More info: [www.southernpeanutfarmers.org/spgc.asp](http://www.southernpeanutfarmers.org/spgc.asp)

July 20 — Weston A. Price Foundation Monthly Gathering, Birmingham. 1pm at Pilates on Highland. Featured speaker: John Nee of the McDowell Farm School. More info: [nourishingtraditionsbhm@gmail.com](mailto:nourishingtraditionsbhm@gmail.com).

July 20 — Alys Stephens Center Nite Market, Birmingham. Farmers market, live

(Continued on page 16)

## ASAN

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

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Mailing Address Line 5

## UPCOMING EVENTS (CONTINUED)

*(Continued from page 15)*

music, local beer and prepared foods. Free, open from 4-7:30pm. More info: [www.alystephens.uab.edu/events/?id=398](http://www.alystephens.uab.edu/events/?id=398).

July 22 — Farm to Table Dinner, Decatur. Inaugural Farm-to-Table dinner at Simp McGhee's in Decatur, featuring produce from Rosita's Farm, Tune Farm, and Champion Farms. More info: [www.simpmcghees.com](http://www.simpmcghees.com).

July 25 — Vegetable Production Field Day, Montgomery. More info to be posted at aces.edu.

July 25 — Broadband Internet, Quickbooks, Tax and Farm Record Keeping Tools Workshop, Cullman. 6-9pm at Cullman Agriplex. More info: [cullmancounty@auburn.edu](mailto:cullmancounty@auburn.edu).

July 27 — Farming 101, Goat Health and Nutrition Workshop, Cullman. 6-9pm at Cullman Agriplex. More info: [cullmancounty@auburn.edu](mailto:cullmancounty@auburn.edu).

Aug 11 — 2nd Sunday Potlucks at Rosita's Farm, Hartselle. Potluck dinner 5-7pm, optional learning session at 4pm. More info: Facebook "Rosita's Farm" or [rositasfarm@gmail.com](mailto:rositasfarm@gmail.com).

Aug 17 — Weston A. Price Foundation Monthly Gathering, Birmingham. 1pm at Pilates on Highland. Featured speaker: John Obert, Jr., of J3 Organics (compost maker). More info: [nourishingtraditionsbhm@gmail.com](mailto:nourishingtraditionsbhm@gmail.com).

Aug 21-23 — Risk Management and Business Development

Workshop, Mobile. Farm field day Aug 21, training sessions Aug 22-23 at Jon Archer Extension Office. For more info or to register contact E'licia Chaverest at 256-372-4970 or [elicia.chaverest@aamu.edu](mailto:elicia.chaverest@aamu.edu).

Aug 11 — 2nd Sunday Potlucks at Rosita's Farm, Hartselle. Potluck dinner 5-7pm, optional learning session at 4pm. More info: Facebook "Rosita's Farm" or [rositasfarm@gmail.com](mailto:rositasfarm@gmail.com).

Sept 13 — ASAN Regional Food and Farm Forum, Thomaston. To be held at the Rural Heritage Center. More details to follow.

Sept 26-28 — Birmingham Food Summit and ASAN Regional Food and Farm Forum, Birmingham. More details to follow.