



THE ALABAMA
SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE
NETWORK

ASAN UPDATE

Spring 2017

Published Quarterly

A NON-SPRAY APPROACH TO SPOTTED WING DROSOPHILA

By Rod Havens, Blueberry Havens Farm

Two seasons ago, spotted wing drosophila (SWD), a fruit fly about half the size of a house fly, infested my blueberries in my 40-acre blueberry farm.

These fruit flies pose more of a threat to growers of blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and other soft fruits than the fruit flies you may be used to. This is because, where common fruit flies only feed on already-rotting fruit, SWDs are able to affect fruit while it's still on the bush.

The female fly "drills" a hole in the blueberry and deposits her egg. Later, a tiny worm about an eighth of an inch long eats its way out of the fruit. I was advised that the only known way to control them was to spray pesticides every week from fruit set until the end of the season.



Illustration of spotted wing drosophila (Drosophila suzukii), by Erik Simmons, via Oregon State University Extension.

No good solution

This solution was a non-solution for me. I have never used pesticides, herbicides, nor fungicides in my 22+ years of growing blueberries. I use Neptune's Harvest, an OMRI approved organic fertilizer. I mulch my bushes and do not irrigate them.

After studying numerous research articles on the pest, I decided to experiment with an alternative to spraying pesticides to control this devastating pest. I used a two-pronged ap-

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THE FOOD TURN UP! GROWING FOOD LITERACY TO REDUCE CHRONIC DISEASE

By Natilee McGruder



THE FOOD
TURN
UP

The Food Turn Up is a community food assessment process and report created by the River Region Food Policy Council (@riverregionfood) for the black populations of Lowndes, Macon and Montgomery Counties of Ala-

bama, which have a higher than average rate and are at a higher than average risk of lifestyle-related and chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Reducing and eliminating these racial and ethnic health disparities are just one of the many benefits we can look forward to as we push to create a community-based food system. EVERYONE should have a chance to be well and eat well, regardless of how much money they have, their race or whether they

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ASAN OUTLOOK FOR 2017—WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Throughout the coming year, we invite you – the members and supporters of ASAN – to be a part of a process of reassessing and realigning with our mission and vision, and defining a sound and strategic plan for how we'll pursue those goals in the next few years.

The sustainable food movement has changed tremendously since 2001, when ASAN was first founded. Alabama has changed as well, as has ASAN. We try to keep pace with the changing landscape, to adapt our programs, outreach, and strategies so that they stay in

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LETTER FROM THE ASAN BOARD PRESIDENT



Fellow Alabamians and fellow supporters of ASAN, does the world seem less certain today than it did a short while ago, or is it just me? I don't know

about you, but I can turn on the news or read an article today and get downright depressed.

When you look at all the work that is before us as a country, as a state or even in our hometowns— it can be overwhelming.

However, it is at times like these, when there are numerous and pressing troubles that our mission becomes the clearer. When we realize there is a problem, only then can we get motivated to tackle it. Motivation is crucial to change. It is crucial to making new friends and challenging old ones.

Motivation is necessary for Alabama farmers and ranchers and to sustainable

agriculture in Alabama in general. Without it, we would not have this great group of people working together to keep momentum for positive change in our state.

As we roll further into the year, what motivates you this year? Do you realize that we have an important job to do? What are you doing now? I encourage you to become more involved in the sustainable agricultural movement in Alabama. Join ASAN, write your congress person, support local farmers and artisans and participate in the many activities that bring the myriad of culture and peoples of Alabama together.

As members of ASAN, we owe a debt of gratitude to numerous people across the state who helped make ASAN a success last year and carried us forward into 2017. Kirk Iversen, our president for 2016, and Myles Wright, our long time treasurer, both roll of the board this year (see page 3), but they are still very much involved in the life of ASAN! They even have helped prepare for this year by setting into motion a strategic planning process for ASAN

(see page 4). Thank you Kirk and Myles!

There are numerous other organizations and people whom we are thankful for in the past year, it truly takes a village. If you have ever been to our potlucks or forums or crop mobs or *Graze*, you know that friendships are formed, ideas are solidified and change happens through the networks made in our circles. Camaraderie is one of the antidotes to making change happen.

So, what are you waiting for? Get involved! Meet up with folks at a forum or tea or potluck in your region, plant that garden, attend that farmers market, make those calls. Our state needs you!

Sincerely,

Charles Walters, ASAN Board President

CONTRIBUTORS: SPRING 2017

Rod Havens owns Blueberry Havens, a 220-acre blueberry farm in Camp Hill, AL, where he does not use synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides. More at www.blueberryhavens.com.

Natilee McGruder is the Director of the River Region Food Policy Council in Montgomery.

The **National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)** is an alliance of grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities. More at sustainableagriculture.net.

Charles Walters is ASAN's Board President and a farmer at River Oaks Farm in Millbrook. A native of Linden, he currently lives in Montgomery with his wife and daughter.

Alice Evans is the Executive Director of ASAN. She is a native of Huntsville, and now lives in Birmingham.

Note: so that our small staff and devoted all-volunteer board can fully commit to our strategic plan process (see page 4), the next several issues of the ASAN newsletter will be shorter — 12 pages instead of 16. The newsletter will continue to feature news, resources, and perspectives FOR and FROM the full breadth of our wide, diverse network, and we will continue to distribute it in paper and electronically. We still — of course — gladly welcome your feedback, suggestions, story pitches, and other contributions!

ABOUT ASAN:

The mission of the Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network is to support conservation practices, families who grow and consume natural food and fiber, and the communities where they live. ASAN provides peer-to-peer education, training, and networking opportunities to our broad network of farmers, gardeners, food-based businesses, agricultural resource organizations, and community leaders. We are a membership-based organization that seeks to improve the lives of small farmers and rural and urban communities and make a positive impact on the state's environment and health.

We define sustainable agriculture as farming that supports families and communities while conserving natural resources. We embrace the breadth of overlapping ways — ecological, economic, social, historical, etc. — that together, we can build a more sustainable food system. Find out more at <http://asanonline.org>.

2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Majadi Baruti — Dynamite Hill-Smithfield Community Land Trust, Birmingham

Skye Borden (Secretary) — Bozeman, Montana

Gabriel Denton — Jubilee Promise Farm, Vinegar Bend

Alice Love — Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Auburn

Lindsey Lunsford — TULIP Community Garden / Tuskegee Extension, Tuskegee

Frewin Osteen — Prichard Housing Authority, Prichard

Graydon Rust — Alabama Bicentennial Commission, Prattville

Lori Sawyer — Wind Creek Hospitality, Walnut Hill, FL

Charles Walters (President) — River Oaks Farm, Millbrook

Karen Wynne (Vice President/Treasurer) — Rosita's Farm / Crotoquina Consulting, Huntsville

Suzanne Wright — Gaucho Farms, Slocomb

HELP US WELCOME SEVEN NEW MEMBERS TO ASAN'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ASAN welcomed seven fantastic new members to our Board of Directors in January, who will serve the Board for a three-year term. Their meddle was tested right away, by the storm that covered most of Central Alabama in ice and freezing rain, just hours before our annual board retreat was set to begin (January 7-8). Still we persevered, and had near-100% attendance for what ended up to be an enjoyable and productive gathering!

We hope you'll take the opportunity to get to know these folks! Share with them your passion for sustainable food and your vision for ASAN, and learn more about what inspires their leadership as well!

Frewin Osteen is the Service Coordinator for the Housing Authority of Prichard, AL, where he spearheaded the development of a ten-bed community garden project. He is also the Secretary of the Prichard Chamber of Commerce.



Suzanne Wright is the owner and primary operator of Gaucho Farms in Slocomb (Geneva County),

where she raises grassfed beef and lamb, pastured poultry and eggs, honey, fruits and vegetables, preserves, and plant seedlings. She is a Dothan native who lived for a number of years on a Montana ranch before returning to the Wiregrass region to farm.



Lindsey Lunsford recently joined the team at Tuskegee Extension, as the Sustainable Food System Resource Specialist. She is

the founder of the Tuskegee United Leadership and Innovation Program (TULIP) Community Garden in Tuskegee. She is a graduate of Tuskegee University and is currently pursuing her Masters in Environmental Management at Western State Colorado University.



Majadi Baruti helped start the Dynamite Hill-Smithfield Community Land Trust, and is an AmeriCorps service mem-

ber at One Roof, an organization working to end homelessness in the Birmingham area. He is excited to help ASAN better connect to urban farms and urban communities, and to help grow and provide guidance to ASAN's work around food sovereignty.



Alice Love has been employed with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly

the SCS, for over 30 years — her current role there is as the Agricultural Outreach Liaison. A native of Arkansas, she currently lives in Auburn.



Lori Sawyer lives just over the state line in Walnut Hill, FL, but she works in Poarch, AL, as the Director of Corporate Advertising Media and Production at Wind Creek

Hospitality. She enjoys archeology, gardening, and carrying on her mother's passion for native plants and historic foodways.



Gabriel Denton lives in Deer Park, AL, where he and his family raise eggs, vegetables, blue-

berries, and a variety of livestock, for their farm, Jubilee Promise. He is very involved in other aspects of his community in Deer Park.



We also say a HUGE "thank you!" to two longtime board members whose terms concluded in January: **Kirk Iversen**, soil scientist and ASAN's most recent Board President (pictured at left, with 2015 President Anne Labelle); and **Myles Wright** (right), who has been ASAN's treasurer, bookkeeper, and resident CPA for a number of years.



ASAN OUTLOOK (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

sync with the values, needs, and priorities of those who make us up. But still, every so often this sort of “reset” or “recommitment” is needed, to pan out and take stock from a different, more intentional perspective.

These planning efforts will be spearheaded by a committee of ASAN staff, board members, and our facilitator Lindsey Mullen, but nothing can happen without the participation and thoughtful feedback of our members and constituents – ie, you!

Spring and Summer:

Throughout the spring and summer we'll be holding gatherings to engage deeply with our members and supporters around the state.

The first of these gatherings, in early March, will be specifically for past (and present) board members and staff, and a few other longtime partners. The latter 4-5 gatherings will be open to everyone throughout our network (exact dates and locations still TBD).

The goal of these gatherings is to build a shared understanding of the history, identity, and trajectory, both of ASAN and of sustainable ag in Alabama, more broadly. Who has a stake in ASAN, and what are our shared values and beliefs? What are our most pressing needs and challenges? We want to hear from y'all about where you see are the pressure points and bottlenecks keeping us from having a truly robust, equitable, and ecological food system in Alabama – and how you think we can best tackle those barriers.

These gatherings will help serve a role that has been served by the Regional Food & Farm Forums, the past few years – that is, region by region, they will draw our diverse constituents to-



gether under one roof, helping to better connect neighbors to one another. These gatherings will hopefully be a platform for more interconnectivity, collaboration, and social support, within different regions of the state. They will also allow us to very clearly integrate the roles

and strengths of our partners, into the process of clarifying our own role and strengths. That way, we know we're working WITH our people rather than competing with or duplicating y'all's existing and critical food-systems work.

Fall and Early Winter:

The Strategic Plan Committee will tackle the tough job of synthesizing and organizing all the information gleaned from these gatherings. Once we've crunched and munched everything into a coherent plan, we will

present our work back to you, the ASAN family, at the ASAN Food & Farm Forum, to make sure we got it right.

Notice we said *Forum*, not *Forums* – that's because instead of the one-day regional gatherings we've held for the past few

years, we will revert this year to a single, statewide, multi-day format!

Once we've confirmed dates and locations for the Food & Farm Forum and the regional stakeholder gatherings, we'll send a postcard by mail, and advertise via email and social media as well. Keep an eye out, and then, make plans to join us!

Appreciation

We are so, so grateful for the ongoing and wonderfully thoughtful support of an Alabama-based family foundation, without whom we could not be taking on this much-needed growth work.

In Summary:

- 4-5 regional stakeholder gatherings in spring and summer
- No Regional Forums this year
- Instead, a statewide, multi-day Food & Farm Forum in late fall

ASAN PARTNERS ON FOUR-YEAR ORGANIC INITIATIVE

ASAN is excited to be part of a four-year collaborative project led by Tuskegee University, and funded through the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), a project under the USDA.

The Tuskegee-led project is entitled “Strengthening Organic Farming Infrastructure through Consumer Education, Market Development, and Integrated Extension and Research Programs in the Southeastern Region,” and involves partners from North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, and Mississippi, as well as throughout Alabama.

The total project award was \$2 million, across four years. ASAN will receive around \$20,000 each year, to help provide project publicity, outreach, networking, and information dissemination. You can expect to see news about the project itself, as well as information geared towards organic producers and consumers alike — including in this very newsletter!

Grant partners met for a two-day kickoff meeting on February 27-28, 2017, at Tuskegee University.



Above: Project partners at February kickoff meeting.

Right: ASAN's Alice Evans with project advisors Marty Mesh of Florida Organic Growers (left), and Sagdrina Jalal of the Georgia Farmers Market Association (right). Photos courtesy Sagdrina Jalal.



Reading about nature is fine, but if a person walks in the woods and listens carefully, he can learn more than what is in books, for they speak with the voice of God.
—George Washington Carver

DROSOPHILA (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

proach that took advantage of the flies' natural preferences.

Barrel traps

My first attack came from modifying a tip from an article in Farm Show Magazine. The tip was for controlling flies in cattle feed lots. Four holes were drilled in the side of a barrel and PVC pipes were inserted into the holes. An elbow was installed on the pipe end. A rectangular hole was cut in the top of the barrel with Plexiglas covering it. They put rotten meat in the barrel to attract the flies. Once the fly enters the barrel through the pipe, it instinctively goes to the light shining through the Plexiglas. It bumps against this window until it dies. Good riddance!

I used plastic barrels and five gallon pails with lids. I put out 50 of them. I think the dark colored ones work better than the clear ones. I drilled four 1-inch holes about half way up the barrel. I cut four 12-inch lengths of ¾-inch PVC schedule 40 pipe. I pushed and twisted these into the barrel holes for a tight seal. Then I pushed PVC elbows onto the pipes. This keeps the trapped flies from seeing the way back out of the barrel.

A 6 by 8 inch rectangular hole was cut out of the top of the barrel with a 4.5 inch angle grinder. A sabre saw would do it too. I then laid a larger Lexan Plexiglas cover over this hole. I drilled holes through the Plexiglas and barrel and secured it with metal screws. This should seal tight enough so the tiny flies can't escape as they bump against the window. Cheap Plexiglas doesn't

work well because it tends to crack and break too easily.

Instead of rotten meat, I used a quart of water mixed in 4 tablespoons of sugar, then 2 tablespoons of common yeast. I purchased the yeast in large bags from Sam's. You might wait to add the yeast just before adding this attractant to the barrel. The yeast expands and may pop the container you carry it in.

Put the barrels in the field at early fruit set before the flies have attacked your berries. Refresh the attractant about every week to 10 days. Just add the above amount to the barrel. Check the barrels regularly to make sure the wind hasn't knocked them over. You don't want the attractant spilling out. I placed the barrels between the bushes so they would get some shade. More research should be done to identify the best distances between the barrels to get the job done.

Sticky ball traps

The second prong attack used the flies' preference for red and black spheres. They probably see these as large juicy fruits. I purchased hundreds of red and black shatter resistant Christmas tree bulbs from the craft store when they were on sale at 60% off. I installed the wire bulb hangers on the bulb.

Then I coated the entire bulb with Tanglefoot, a very



Left: barrel trap method. Above: Tanglefoot method. Both photos courtesy Rod Havens.

sticky substance that has a consistency of heavy motor oil. I purchased Tangle foot from Amazon, but feed and seed stores or tree product stores may sell it too. I used both the brush-on type and the spray-on type. The spray on is faster to coat the bulb, but I believe the brushed on is thicker and better for holding the flies when they bump against the bulb.

I hung these sticky bulbs randomly about the fields. After some time, they were loaded with stuck flies. I was tickled! More research should be done to recommend the minimum spacing to be completely effective.

I won't guarantee this will work in your blueberry or other soft

fruit patch as it did for my blueberries. But I and my customers were quite pleased with the results. The benefits are that it worked. It was less expensive in time, money, and health concerns associated with pesticide use. My customers didn't want me to spray. I didn't believe it would be healthy for me to be the sprayer. I didn't want to double my prices to pay for the pesticide, spray equipment, and extra labor costs. No pollinators, beneficial insects, soil life, or wild life were injured or killed.

And finally, my customers were curious about the Christmas tree bulbs and barrels in the field. I used this opportunity to explain my growing strategies. They know I go to great efforts to provide them with healthy, excellent blueberries while being a good steward of the environment.





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ASAN HELPS 17 FARMERS ATTEND 2017 SSAWG CONFERENCE 2018 CONFERENCE MOVES TO CHATTANOOGA

Over 1,200 enthusiastic farmers, market managers, researchers, service providers, and community food activists from all over the country – including about 100 from Alabama! – flocked to Lexington, Kentucky for Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group's 26th annual conference!

With the generous support from Southern SARE, ASAN was able to help 17 farmers and aspiring farmers from Alabama to attend the conference. Separate SARE funding through Auburn University covered additional conference scholarships as well as a charter bus. The bus departed out of Atmore, AL, with a crew of South Alabama farmers (many of whom met for the first time at the ASAN Poarch Forum this past September!), and picked up several others along the way to Kentucky. Big thanks to Brennan Washington and SSARE for helping make all this possible!

Several additional farmers were able to attend thanks to funds provided through a Beginning Farmer Rancher Development

Program (BFRDP) project, on which ASAN is a collaborator.

SSAWG's annual conference is beloved and appreciated by many, as an opportunity for top-notch learning opportunities from expert farmers and other practitioners "in the field," as well as relationship-building and broader community-building within the Southeast region.

One scholarship recipient said, "It's amazing to think that there are hundreds of farmers out there doing inspiring things, and to be able to have the chance to listen to their stories and have the opportunity to learn from their experience and tie that back in to your own situation, can be life changing."

In January 2018 the conference moves to Chattanooga, TN, for its 27th annual event. Another recipient of ASAN scholarship support, urged peers to make plans early to attend in Chattanooga: "SSAWG can be so rejuvenating and overwhelming and ex-

citing all at the same time. It's a great place to commune and network and chill out with amazing farmers and farm laborers from all over the southeast. go Go GO!!!!"

Special thanks also to Katie Willis for helping to coordinate these scholarships, both before and during the conference.



Clockwise from top left: Kristin Woods and Barbara Shipman prepare for a food safety presentation (photo credit Darrell McGuire); Natilee McGruder speaking as part of a workshop on food-systems collaborations (photo courtesy Natilee McGruder); Alabamians who rode to SSAWG together on SARE-funded bus (photo courtesy Darlene Baker).



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FOOD TURN UP! (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 1)

see themselves as a part of a “farm to table”, organic, whole food movement or not.

Our **Food Turn Up Report** (@foodturnup) is an educational tool that shares practical ways to prevent and reduce chronic disease by creating a stronger and more local food system. We spent time in the communities of Ft. Deposit, Tuskegee and Montgomery: listening to and learning about our most pressing community needs and current relationship to food and health.

The differences in health disparities by race are huge. Black people have the highest rate of obesity at 48%, AND are 77% more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes compared to white people. These statistics are directly related to outside stressors, historic, economic and social inequities that have been endured by Black people in the South since enslaved people were pressed into agricultural bondage. Earning potential, generational wealth, access to health education, and living in a community that reflects health and monetary success, are all related to the physical health of a person.

To learn more about what these statistics look and feel like in real life, the River Region Food Policy Council (“RRFPC”) held over 15 Food Turn Up classes, piloted a youth component of Food Turn Up with the YES Montgomery high school after school program of West Montgomery as well as with Tuskegee Youth Safe Haven, interviewed over 10 stakeholders in the food system and surveyed over



Above and lower right: YES Montgomery students learned about raising chickens and rabbits at River Oaks Farm. Above right: Food Turn Up table at the Calico Arts Festival in Ft. Deposit. All photos credit: Natilee McGruder



250 people in Ft. Deposit (Lowndes County), Tuskegee (Macon County) and Montgomery (Montgomery County) about their connection to food.

We found the biggest issues to be around hunger and waste, barriers to accessing locally grown, fresh and healthy food and lost skills around growing, preparing and preserving fresh and local food.

Hunger & Waste

Hunger and food waste are our biggest problems. Over a third of our Food Turn Up survey participants said that being hungry and not having enough food to eat is the largest food related problem in their communities. Meanwhile, 40% of food in the United States is wasted, with the average household throwing away 300 pounds of food per year.

Barriers To Access

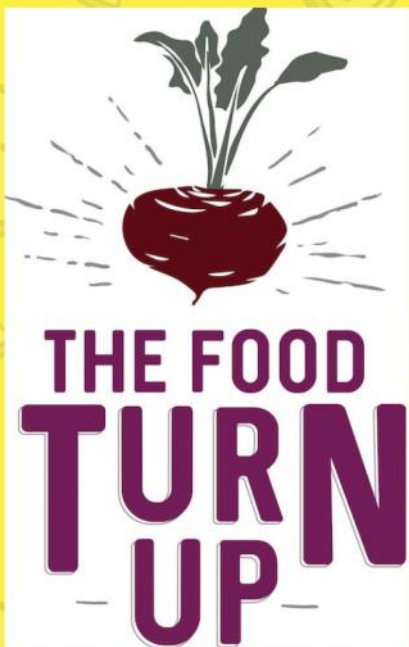
There is limited access to fresh food, particularly in Macon and Lowndes counties, but the solution to building a healthy community food system is not just building more grocery stores! Communities need regular cooking and meal planning classes, incentives to build a consumer relationship between local farmers and people with food benefits, reliable transportation in addition to grocery stores, and local markets in their communities that promote cooking fresh and healthy food.

Lost Skills

We have lost some serious knowledge over a generation (or two or three): how to make a weekly budget meal plan for the household; how to grow food; and how to prepare and preserve fresh food. There is a lack of opportunity, resources and programs to regularly practice these food survival skills within the community and that are taught by people in the community.

To read our full report and follow our body of work, which will include fun food videos and infographic content, please visit us and sign up for our mailing list at foodturnup.org or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @foodturnup.

The Food Turn Up is made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The Wellness Coalition.



FoodTurnUp.org
"Growing food literacy"

REFORMATTED COST SHARE PROGRAM MAKES ORGANIC CERTIFICATION EASIER

Adapted from a blog post by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)

The USDA has shifted administration of the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) from the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to the Farm Service Agency (FSA). NOCCSP, which is available in all states, helps organic producers and handlers access organic certification, by providing cost share reimbursement covering 75 percent of an individual applicant's certification costs, up to a maximum of \$750 annually.

In making this change, USDA has expanded the means by which interested producers can apply to the program, ask questions, or get more information – FSA has over 2,100 offices, covering nearly every rural county nationwide. Applicants will also have the option to apply via mail.

State Departments of Agriculture will



retain the option of offering the program, and in states where they do so, organic certification cost share will be available through the state Department of Agriculture as well as all county FSA offices. Though funds have not been awarded yet, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI) has applied for funds to continue offering the program.

According to USDA, currently only half of the nation's organic operations participate in the certification cost share program. By expanding their access and outreach, USDA will be able to reach many growers and producers who may have never connected with the Agency in the past.

"USDA's organic certification cost share program makes it more affordable for organic producers and handlers across the country to get certified, allowing them to tap into new and expanding markets to meet growing consumer demand," said Alyssa Charney, NSAC Policy Specialist. "By expanding the

options for application, USDA is providing farmers, ranchers, and handlers with a convenient new option, increasing access to these funds through the 2,100 FSA county offices across the country. In order to ensure that producers and handlers have as many options to participate in the cost share as possible as possible, we also strongly urge state departments agriculture to continue to offer the program."

Beginning on March 20, producers and handlers can apply for funds to reimburse their certification costs. For more information contact your county FSA office (Find yours at <http://bit.ly/AlabamaFSA>). If ADAI receives their requested funds, the ADAI contact will be Johnny Blackmon (334-240-7257, Johnny.Blackmon@agi.alabama.gov).

Like our member organization ASAN, NSAC looks forward to partnering with FSA as they work to increase the number of eligible organic operations that participate in the certification cost share and other valuable USDA assistance programs.



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HOW SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE ADVOCATES CAN TAKE ACTION IN 2017

Adapted from a blog post by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)

How does having a new Administration and Congress in office affect the outlook for agriculture and food policy? How can we most effectively advocate and continue to make change on the issues that we care about?

In order to support the work of farmers and grassroots advocates in the coming years, NSAC has prepared a roadmap blog post, which we have summarized below (Go to <http://bit.ly/NSACroadmap> for the full blog post). The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is dedicated to policy that supports the next generation of farmers and ranchers, invests in rural economic development, fosters cleaner air and water, and increases access to healthy food for everyone.

Leadership Changes in DC: Get to Know the New Faces

Sonny Perdue – former Georgia Governor with a long history in agriculture – is President Trump's nominee for Secretary of Agriculture. Once a new Secretary of Agriculture is confirmed by Congress, the Administration will name heads of agencies like the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who will have tremendous leverage over the USDA's direction for the next 4 years.

In Congress, a handful of congressional committees have the lion's share of responsibility for making changes to policy and allocating resources when it comes to agriculture and food issues. Alabama legislators sit on a number of those committees.

Luther Strange – who was appointed to fill Jeff Sessions' vacated Senate seat – is now a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Richard Shelby is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Everyone in Alabama is a constituent of these two Senators.

On the House side: Mike Rogers (District 3, East Alabama) is a member of the House Agriculture Committee. Robert Aderholt (District 4, North Central Alabama) and Martha Roby (District 2, Montgomery and Wiregrass) are both members of the House Appropriations Committee. Robert Aderholt has an especially important role here, as the *Chair* of the Ag Subcommittee.



Alabama farmers Aliza Cummings (center) and Mark Bowen (right) participated in NSAC's 2013 Farmer Fly-In, where farmers engage directly with their legislators in Washington about sustainable-ag and food-related policy. Photo courtesy NSAC.

If you're a constituent of one or more of these legislators, it's especially important that they hear from you! If not, you can still call and ask them to pass your request on to the relevant House or Senate committee.

Budget and Appropriations

One of the first priorities for the new Congress will be to begin making funding decisions for the next fiscal year (FY). Appropriations may sound dry, but there is plenty at stake for farmers and sustainable agriculture advocates. Broadly speaking, dozens of programs that directly invest in sustainable agriculture (e.g., on-farm research, hands-on farmer training, incentive programs for land and resource stewardship) depend on appropriators' support every single year. This includes, among many others:

- Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG)
- Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (known as 2501)
- Food Safety Outreach and Training Program (FSOP)

- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Farm Bill Preparations

While appropriations is moving *now*, there's a bit more time before major movement starts on our nation's biggest agriculture and food bill: the farm bill. Technically, Congress won't start writing a new farm bill until 2018, but legislators will use this year to begin taking stock of constituents' needs and concerns, and to begin staking out positions on big issues.

Legislators on the House or Senate Agriculture Committee – in Alabama, Senator Luther Strange and Representative Mike Rogers – are likely to begin holding town halls in their home states/districts this year. It is critical that farmers and sustainable agriculture advocates show up and speak up at these events!

NSAC will also be watching the White House and Congress closely to see if either will attempt to roll back regulations and rules issued by the previous administration to help farmers and rural communities, including the Farmer Fair Practices Rules (FFPR), issued by USDA in December 2016.

What you can do NOW to get involved and stay involved

Sign up for NSAC action alerts at www.sustainableagriculture.net. Stay tuned there for analysis, policy updates, and action opportunities as they become available.

Learn who your legislators are, and which committees they sit on. Subscribe to their email lists, and follow them on Facebook and Twitter. This way you can see where they stand on important issues, and learn

about town hall meetings and other opportunities to share your opinion with them.



Programs in need of annual Appropriations support include: VAPG, which helped Working Cows Dairy, the only certified organic dairy in Alabama, get their product into retail markets around the state (L); and EQIP, which has enabled many small farmers to purchase season-extending high tunnels (R). Photos: Alice Evans.

NEWS FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS

Congratulations to Anne and Franklin **Randle** of Randle Farms in Auburn, on the birth of their first baby. **Irvin Cumbie Randle**, born February 18, is already beefing up to help with spring shearing season!

Congratulations to ASAN Board Secretary **Skye Borden**, who is the new director of Environment Montana. Skye, her husband **James Walter**, and their two small children **Roan** and **Sage**, moved to Missoula in late February. Her new role will have her working in the state to protect public lands and to promote clean air, clean water, and clean energy sources. We're so sad to see them go, but are thrilled for all the adventures this next phase holds. Skye will serve remotely on the ASAN board, and will resign once we have filled her position.

ASAN's longtime treasurer and favorite beekeeper **Myles Wright** underwent a liver transplant in early January. After a prolonged hospital stay and several weeks of rehab in Birmingham, Myles and his wife **Debra** finally returned home to Montgomery in early March! Also, please note that the need for transplants is growing faster than the pool of willing donors. We encourage our readers to visit www.alabamaorgancenter.org to find out more about becoming organ donors — help save a life!

We send condolences to the loved ones of **Tom Hendrix**, who built an elaborate stone wall in Lauderdale County to honor his great-great-grandmother Te-Lah-Nay, and who died in late February. Though not an ASAN member, Mr Hendrix was much beloved by many in our community. Learn more about the wall that was his life's work, at <http://www.ifthelegendsfade.com/>.

These sections appear in every newsletter and feature updates both personal and professional, on ASAN members and friends: anything from a new farm, to a new baby.

They make existing resources known to others, and help spread the word for those looking to connect. 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 something you want us to publish? Send it to alice@asanonline.org or (256) 743-0742.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DETAILS FOR THESE EVENTS
AND MORE, AT
[WWW.ASANONLINE.ORG/
EVENTS](http://WWW.ASANONLINE.ORG/EVENTS)

March 10-11 – Birmingham
Art of Fermentation

March 11 – Gadsden
Water Chemistry Monitoring
Workshop

March 11 – Jacksonville
Water Chemistry Monitoring
Workshop

March 14 – Fairhope
Mobile Bay Green Drinks – Fair-
hope

March 15 – Mobile
Mobile Bay Green Drinks – Mobile

March 16 – Ashville
Farming 101 (St Clair Co)

March 17 – Carriere, MS
Alliance Field Day

March 17-19 – Nauvoo
Alabama Water Rally

March 23 – Opelika
Connect to Your Coast: Opelika

March 23 – Fairhope
Farming 101 (Baldwin Co)

March 23 – Ashville
Farming 101 (St Clair Co)

March 23 – Cullman
Farmer 201: Vegetable Production

March 25 – Birmingham
AirWave Block Party & Riverkeeper Benefit

March 30 – Cullman
Farmer 201: Vegetable Production

March 31 – Tuskegee
Training on Pasture Improvement and Graz-
ing Management

April 1 – Jacksonville
Bacteriological Monitoring Workshop

April 1 – Mentone
Lookout Mountain Ferment Festival

April 4 – Epes
Produce Growers Training

April 4 – Crystal Springs, MS
Alliance Follow-on Workshop and Field Day

April 4 – Mobile
Farming 101 (Mobile Co)

April 4 – Spanish Fort
Mobile Bay Sierra Club Meeting

April 5 – Fort Payne
Water Chemistry Monitoring Workshop

April 6 – Fairhope
Farming 101 (Baldwin Co)

(Continued on page 11)

Advertise in the ASAN Newsletter!

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Diverse, informed readership of farmers, foodies, community leaders, and more
Support ASAN's ongoing work to unify and amplify statewide efforts in sustaina-
ble agriculture and local food systems

Contact alice@asanonline.org for details

Easier on the eyes?

This newsletter was printed in a different font than past issues, which used this font — which do you prefer?

Let us know! info@asanonline.org

Help us build a better Alabama.

Join ASAN or renew your membership today!

Name _____

Business _____

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City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

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Email _____

Please send me: ☐ monthly e-updates

☐ 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 or Household: \$50

☐ Business or Organization: \$200

\$_____ Additional donation

\$_____ **TOTAL enclosed**

_____ Date submitted

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 10)

April 6 – Ashville
Farming 101 (St Clair Co)

April 7 – Auburn
Bacteriological Monitoring
Workshop

April 8 – Auburn
Water Chemistry Monitoring
Workshop

April 11 – Fairhope
Mobile Bay Green Drinks –
Fairhope

April 13 – Ashville
Farming 101 (St Clair Co)

April 13 – Gadsden
Coosa Valley Sierra Club
Meeting

April 13 – Birmingham
Cahaba Group of the Sierra
Club Meeting

April 19 – Mobile
Mobile Bay Green Drinks –
Mobile

April 20 – Ashville
Farming 101 (St Clair Co)

April 22 – Fairhope
Earth Day Mobile Bay

April 29 – Wedowee
Bacteriological Monitoring
Workshop

April 29 – Selma
Sustainable Pasture-Based
Livestock Production & Bee-
keeping Field Day

May 2 – Pell City
Fermentation 101 Workshop

May 2 – Spanish Fort
Mobile Bay Sierra Club
Meeting

May 9 – Fairhope
Mobile Bay Green Drinks –
Fairhope

May 11 – Gadsden
Coosa Valley Sierra Club
Meeting

May 11 – Birmingham
Cahaba Group of the Sierra
Club Meeting

May 17 – Mobile
Mobile Bay Green Drinks –
Mobile

May 19 – Montevallo
Alabama Water Watch 25th
Anniversary Celebration

June 6 – Spanish Fort
Mobile Bay Sierra Club
Meeting

Submit your event to our events calendar!

Email alice@asanonline.org,
and be sure to include:

- Name of event
- Host group and contact info
- Location (including full address)
- Date/time
- Price
- Link to event website, Facebook event page, and/or flyer, if there is one.
- Short (3-4 sentences) description of the event written in "third person" (ie "XYZ Club invites you to join them for their annual meeting" vs "join us for our annual meeting")
- Please send information in the body of the email, not simply a flyer or attachment. We can link to something already online but can't upload a PDF flyer.

ASAN

P.O. Box 2127
Montgomery, AL 36102

Coming to the wrong
person? Email
alice@asanonline.org
to unsubscribe your
address. Thanks!



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

*healthy farms,
healthy foods,
healthy communities.*