

# The Seedling

## Cultivating Agricultural Sustainability

Agriculture Newsletter of the Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District

Volume 2, Number 1

### Farmers' Market Participation Leads to Fulltime Production, A Case History by Bill Hudson

He was fed up! Busting his case to produce corn and soybeans he fed to produce quality hogs and then to sell them for little or no profit. There had to be a better way!

After many years of producing a commodity he chose to begin selling pork at retail from his farm. Oh, the maze of regulations he had to wade through, but wade through them he did. Retail sales from the farm netted much more profit per hog. Retail sale was not without its own problems. He continued to persevere because he knew there was more profit in retail than wholesale.

He was a founding member



Photo by Amalie Lipstreu

A sample of farm fresh produce available at numerous farmers' markets throughout northeast Ohio. Make sure to sample you locally grown "home grown goodness!"

of a new farmers' market which opened up a whole new customer base. Customers that welcomed his products with enthusiasm! This is more like it! He set, and soon exceeded, weekly sales goals which lead to

setting higher sales goals which were likewise exceeded. Success at last!

Ah, but success brings its own set of problems. How do I manage planting and

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#### Special points of interest:

- Opportunities through Farmers' Markets
- Grants to study new production techniques
- Change is necessary
- Growth is coming

### New Agricultural Programs Technician on Board by Bill Hudson

The newest member of the Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District staff is William E. "Bill" Hudson, PhD. Bill (he prefers that), promotes agricultural sustainability by working with agricultural

producers and landowners on programs in farmland preservation, income enhancement, farmers' markets and expanding the grape industry in the tri-county region. He is interested in agricultural pro-

ducers achieving and maintaining farm income at profitable levels. Bill believes that Don Rogers was right when he said that "A farm run as a 'way of life' is a poor business, but a

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#### Hold the date:

November 2, 2006—seventh annual Ohio Farmland Preservation Summit at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Reynoldsburg, Ohio. More information to follow

## Producer \$\$ Grants Available by Bill Hudson

Have you got an idea of a way to improve your farm profitability or your marketing but lack the funds to try it? Then a NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher (Producer) Grant may be just what you need! Farmers and ranchers in the 12-state North Central Region have received over \$3 million to research/develop ideas on their farms and ranches. There is absolutely no reason that you cannot participate as well.

Grants are for a maximum of \$6,000 for an individual or \$18,000 for a

group and the timeline for applying is terrific. Applications are due December 1 — after the busy harvest season. The call for proposals will be out August 1 or shortly after — plenty of time to think through what you would like to do and prepare the application before it is due. Approved proposals will be funded in April or May — in plenty of time to implement your proposal. Finally, you have 21 months to complete your project and evaluate the results.

If the call for proposals will not be out until August, why inform you now? So you can think about possibilities, seek out advice, review past projects, and basically get a jump on others who might consider preparing an application. Rest assured that the call for proposals will be publicized shortly after it is announced.

Folks, get your mind working on possibilities. This is like ‘finding money on the street!’ Yes, I will be delighted to assist you in any way I can. That is what I am here for!



## “How do I increase farm income?” by Bill Hudson

In my previous career as an Extension Educator the question I was most often asked was “How do I increase farm income?” A question that

**“If you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get what you have always got!”**

appears simple enough on the surface, but after a discussion (often short) of possible alternatives, such as: increase output, decrease costs, diversify into other crops/livestock, develop a marketing plan, and nu-

merous other alternatives, the farmer often left frustrated. Why? Because the question the farmer really wanted to ask was “How do I increase farm income, without changing a thing?”

The answer to that question is simple and straightforward. **You don’t.** A wise old sage is credited with saying “If you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get what you have always got!” Truer words have never been spoken. Change is difficult! People do not like change! Therefore we are more comfortable (and often less profitable) with the known, than with the fear (and quite possibly more profitable) of the unknown.

A recent study by The Farmland Center titled “Entrepreneurial Farming”

profiles farmers in the region who have made the transition to retail farming from wholesale agriculture. I am fortunate to know two of those farmers profiled personally. Both are accomplished producers, producers that can compete with the best in the business on units of output per unit of input. Both are dedicated to ‘crunching the numbers’ and can tell you the cost of production to 4 decimal places and it is real, not a guess! Both chose to change direction and increase their profit margin on the products they sell. Are they happy, more profitable? You betcha!!

Copies of the “Entrepreneurial Farming” report are available at the Lake SWCD office.

## How're We Gonna Keep'em Happy by Bill Hudson

The Brookings Institution released *Toward a New Metropolis: The Opportunity to Rebuild America* in December 2004. Authored by Arthur C. Nelson of the Urban Affairs and Planning, National Capital Region, this report has much to say about our future in the United States and particularly here in Northeast Ohio. According to Nelson, the 8 northeast Ohio counties comprising the Cleveland Combined Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) will need 309,000 new housing units and 951,195,000 square feet of new commercial and institutional space between 2000 to 2030.

This means, according to Nelson, that "In 2030, about half of the build-

ings in which Americans live, work, and shop will have been built after 2000."

This certainly bodes well for the development and construction businesses, however, what does this mean for society as a whole? This begs the question of 'where are we going to put all of those new buildings?' Not an easy question to answer, but one that communities are beginning to address in a comprehensive planned way. A way that provides long-term planned systematic growth designed to include the provisions for efficient public services, quality neighborhoods, environmental stewardship, economic viability, quality-of-life needs, and a whole host of other con-

siderations. Not everyone will like the results of this planning, but it must be done and then followed so as to provide the best possible alternatives for ourselves and our offspring. We owe to them to be responsible now so they will have a brighter future.

If you are interested in the Brookings report, you will find the executive summary and other links at:

<http://www.brookings.edu/rios/data/sources/re-port/078d36d46fe4ff3e7fff4c960a1415cb.xml>

## Farmers' Market Participation Leads to Fulltime Production—continued

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harvesting corn and soybeans while attending to the growing (and profitable) pork retailing business? After careful consideration of all the facts, he decided to rent the farmland and buy his corn and soybean needs on the open market. The result? An immediate increase in net farm income

because he could buy his feed cheaper than he could raise it himself!

He now spends all his time producing hogs and marketing his production through on farm sales, multiple farmers' markets, **AND** through the meat case at a regional grocery

chain.

Plans are being made to build both a retail store in a better location and a new home. Not bad in 6 years!

Yes, this is a real farmer's story and not a figment of my imagination. I agreed not to use his name.

## New Agricultural Programs Technician on Board—continued

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farm run as a business is a great 'way of life!'"

Bill is from northeast Ohio – almost in Pennsylvania – and his roots go deep into Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Trumbull counties. He was reared on a small dairy farm in Pierpont Township in Ashtabula County and currently owns the home farm with his family. He has taught farm

management at the Trumbull County Career Center and has numerous professional contacts throughout the multi-county area. His broad background in agricultural education goes from the high school through Land Grant Universities. Bill retired, after 12½ years, as an Extension Educator with Ohio State University Extension. After more than a year of retirement, Bill found that he had grown 'tired of being retired' and sought to

get back into productive employment.

Bill and his wife Jo live in Madison, midway between their two children, ideally located to allow them to dote on their three grandchildren. During his spare time, Bill likes to photograph landscapes and people, fix things, restore antique tractors and collect tools, believing that "There is no tool you don't need."

**LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**125 E. Erie St., Painesville, OH 44077**

**•440-350-2730 (main number) •FAX 440-350-2601**

**Toll-free •428-4348 ext. 2730 Madison/Perry**

**•918-2730 Cleveland/Western Lake County**

**•1-800-899-LAKE outside Lake County only**

**Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:30 am-4:00 pm**

**E-mail: [soil@lakecountyohio.org](mailto:soil@lakecountyohio.org)**

**Web site: [www.lakecountyohio.org/soil](http://www.lakecountyohio.org/soil)**

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DAN DONALDSON, District Administrator	350-2030
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BILL HUDSON, Agricultural Program Tech	350-5863
BETH LANDERS, Education/Info Coordinator	350-2033
MATTHEW SCHARVER, Res Protection Tech	350-2031
AL BONNIS, District Conservationist, NRCS	350-2730
JOHN NIEDZIALEK, WR RC&D Coordinator	350-2034

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**AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

All Lake SWCD and USDA programs and services are available without regard to race, age, gender, national origin, political beliefs, color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

The public is invited to attend Lake SWCD's monthly Board meetings, held the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm at 125 East Erie St., Painesville. Meeting announcements appear under the public agenda in the News-Herald and on the District website. Please call in advance to let us know you will be attending.

Lake County Soil & Water  
Conservation District  
125 E. Erie Street  
Painesville, Ohio 44077

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