

Ohio Cooperative Development Center Report

Quarterly Report – Second Quarter (January, February, March) 2003

Outreach

Muskingum River Woodland Interest Group (MRWIG)

Center staff spoke at a quarterly meeting of the MRWIG group in Cambridge. This is one of many woodland interest groups throughout the state that promotes education among landowners. Staff spoke about their work with the Ohio Premium Pine Cooperative and the opportunities that it provides for landowners with pine stands. They talked about what it took to get this far and the interest from buyers in dealing with a cooperative of small landowners rather than lots of small landowners.

Amish Value Added and Marketing Initiative

OCDC has provided outreach to a group of Amish producers in North East Ohio on forming a cooperative. The group steering committee is in Holmes County, but has plans to include Amish producers from other surrounding counties. The group has plans to process their production into value added products and market them under one brand name. Information on feasibility studies, marketing plans, and by-laws and articles of incorporation has been passed on to the group and a follow-up meeting with OCDC personnel is being organized. The group has decided that they need more time and marketing experience before forming a cooperative and to form farmers' markets to get that experience. Information on how to form a farmers' market, and examples of farmers' market association by-laws and market regulations were provided for the group.

Technical Assistance

Southern Ohio Meat Goat Task Force

OCDC participates in the monthly Southern Ohio Meat Goat Task Force meetings and represents the marketing aspect of the meat goat industry. The Task Force has been successful in conducting seminars and field days to educate producers on the production issues of raising goats as well as developing a fact sheet. OCDC has conducted two focus groups with the Somalian community in Columbus to determine their interest in locally grown product and their role in making that connection between the consumers and producers. OCDC attended a meeting with the Kentucky Goat Producers Association along with several Task Force members to discuss a collaborative marketing project. The group agreed to meet again on May 22 to present the results from the market research OCDC and Kentucky Department of Agriculture are currently conducting. OCDC is presently gathering notes from the focus groups, producer experiences and a trip to a halal processing plant in Detroit to compile a market analysis of the demand and supply of goat meat in Ohio. The group had initiated the development of a meat goat marketing association.

Ohio Premium Pine Cooperative (OPPC)

OCDC have been working with a Steering Committee of white pine landowners to incorporate a marketing cooperative. USDA Cooperative Specialist, Debbie Rausch, has assisted OCDC as the group drafted and submitted by-laws and articles of incorporation. The group voted to form a cooperative under the name, Ohio Premium Pine Cooperative. OCDC assisted the cooperative in organized and developing a program for two membership meetings in Athens and Cambridge. The membership meetings were held to determine how the interest from the landowner surveys matched the real interest of the landowners to put up some money and participate in the cooperative. The meetings were very successful and the cooperative will hold their next meeting on April 24. The members are involved in discussions that could lead to two sales of trees from members' lands through the cooperative.

Roots of Appalachia Growers Association

OCDC attended the annual meeting of RAGA in January to discuss their progress with the seed monies they were allocated from the Center. They are making great strides in developing a database of interested practitioners that would use their local, sustainably grown herbs in practice. RAGA is distributing sample packets to these practitioners and getting to know them personally. They mailed a questionnaire to the large list of practitioners and have identified the ones that are potential markets. They continue to talk about forming a marketing cooperative to deal with this issue of marketing herbs as a group. The association is a non-profit so they cannot take in money from selling their members' herbs.

Hydroponic Growers Marketing Cooperative

OCDC personnel have been working with a group of hydroponic vegetable growers to form a marketing cooperative. USDA Cooperative Specialist, Debbie Rausch assisted OCDC by meeting with the group and providing materials to assist in the development of by-laws and articles of incorporation. The group has completed a draft of bylaws and a business plan.

Hydroponic Growers Association

OCDC personnel have assisted in the development of the Great Lakes Hydroponics Association. The association will provide educational assistance on production and marketing to hydroponic producers. By-laws have been drafted and are being reviewed by a lawyer.

Organic Soybean Marketing Cooperative

OCDC personnel have been working with a group of organic soybean producers who have established a market with a consumer cooperative in Japan. With assistance from Debbie Rausch, they have decided to form as a cooperative and are in the process of drafting articles of incorporation and by-laws. The group has plans to further develop this market and has long term plans to add value to their product by processing it onto tofu and other soy products. They also want to further develop relationships with consumer cooperatives in Japan. This group is also looking at the feasibility of expanding to a food distribution cooperative and have linked up with the Farm to College project below.

Farm to College Project

OCDC personnel have been working with a group of agriculture producers and Ohio State University Food Services to establish an institutional framework to pool and market products directly from the farm to OSU. After three organizational meetings, a group of producers were brought together with OSU Food Services Staff to discuss product availability, delivery, and payment procedures. It was concluded that a mechanism has to be put into place to coordinate supply, delivery, and payment. A follow-up meeting for producers has occurred to discuss options, which range from hiring a market agent to forming a cooperative. This project is significant because it brings two of the above groups (Hydroponic Growers and Organic Soybean Producers) in the process of formation, and the Madison County Growers Association and the Ohio Aquaculture Association (groups OCDC have worked with in the past) into a substantial and stable market. It also includes a partnership with the Greater Columbus Foodshed Project and the start of the development of a community food network in the Columbus Metropolitan Area. Since the group has decided to connect with the Organic Soybean producers to form a distribution cooperative. The group has also hosted a booth at the NC College and University Food Service Show hosted by OSU.

Alpha Gamma Epsilon Housing Cooperative

Center personnel met with Alpha Gamma Epsilon, a women's agricultural sorority that plans to form a cooperative for a university housing facility and living center. Center personnel are working with the AGE officers to develop a business plan for a housing cooperative that will address funding, zoning, existing market, existing competition and potential structures of the cooperative. This document is essential to approaching other groups for funding and support of the initiative.

Strategic Planning-Champaign Landmark

OCDC personnel have had three strategic planning meetings with Champaign Landmark focusing on resource use and exploring opportunities for niche marketing.

Education and Training

Ohio River Valley Farm Marketing Conference

OCDC has been participating on the planning committee for a three state marketing conference with Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio. The conference was held February 25-26 in Clarksville, IN and attracted over 160 producers and professionals from a six state area. The conference was well attended with enthusiasm from the participants to holding another conference next year. Kentucky Farm Bureau will take the lead for next year's marketing conference, but will keep the same Planning Committee members. OCDC personnel conducted one of the break out sessions on developing and sustaining wholesale produce auctions. This presentation focused on the legal structures that can be used and the success of the Mt Hope Produce Auction and the Bainbridge Produce Auction. Bainbridge Produce Auction is structured as an LLC because of religious beliefs, but operates like a marketing cooperative.

Economic Shifts, Trends and Impacts: An Appalachian Agenda

OCDC co-sponsored “The Economic Shifts, Trends and Impacts: An Appalachian Agenda” conference that was held March 20 at OSU South Centers at Jackson. Sixty-seven economic development, community leaders and government officials from across the region attended the conference. The day included presentations on shifting business trends in the region, changing consumer demographics’ effect on food demand, land use issues, tourism, economic development tools, and alternative business structures. Joy Padgett, Director of the Ohio Governor’s Office of Appalachia served as the luncheon speaker addressing “Are we committed to Economic Development in Appalachia?”. The conference provided a valuable opportunity for the participants to meet and interact with economic development professionals from across the region. The knowledge provided by the speakers at the conference will be a valuable enhancement to the participants’ skill sets as they work within the Appalachian communities. OCDC personnel presented two sessions at the conference: Alternative Business Structures for Agriculture Groups and Changing Demographics in Today’s Economy.

ESOP Training

OCDC personnel have been working with OCC and Kent State to provide training for cooperatives in Ohio.

Networks

OCC Annual Meeting

OCDC personnel have attended and participated in the OCC Annual Meeting. A report was given on OCDC Technical Assistance projects and educational projects. OCC presented an award to Anne Groves for her assistance in developing the Cooperative Training CD that OCDC developed last year.

Regional Centers Conference Call

OCDC is holding monthly conference calls for cooperative development professionals in Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Michigan, Illinois, New York, Maryland, New Jersey and the New England states. The calls provide an opportunity to share experiences, discuss current issues and disseminate information about the cooperative development activities in each state. This is a great networking opportunity that provides a chance to share with other cooperative development professionals in the Midwest and gain knowledge from their experiences. The call participants have shared RCDG proposals from the previous year and have agreed to provide feedback for the grant proposals this year.

OCC/ COOL Youth Tour

OCDC personnel are planning a Youth Tour of Cooperatives in Ohio in partnership with the OCC Education Committee. The tour will be a three and a half day tour of cooperatives in Southern and Eastern Ohio culminating with an awards banquet in Columbus to close the tour. OCDC has played a critical role in identifying and contacting cooperatives that will be stops on the tour. A goal of the tour has been to offer a wide array of cooperatives outside of the agriculture sector. The youth will be touring a bakery co-op, housing co-op and a credit union along with several other stops. The educational tour will serve as a way to educate

youth about cooperatives and showcase the diverse and successful cooperatives that exist in Ohio. OCDC has arranged the first day of the tour with wool marketing, food, bakery, housing and worker owned cooperative visits for the youth as they tour Southeast Ohio cooperatives.

Woodworks

OCDC personnel participated in a 2-day Woodworks retreat in Morrilton, Arkansas. Woodworks is an initiative of Cooperation Works! that is addressing the need for technical assistance to forestry cooperatives and assistance for the development of new forestry cooperatives. The Center personnel are exploring opportunities to increase the access centers have to technical assistance for forestry cooperatives. Members discussed a strategy for the next three years and funding plans for the initiative. The strategy is to develop more forestry cooperative across the US and for Centers to have access to resources and sample documents for the development of such cooperatives. Winrock in Arkansas is the frontrunner on carbon sequestration involving selling carbon credits from the landowners existing trees. OCDC will continue to participate in Woodworks events and share their thoughts and experiences about developing forestry cooperatives.

Cooperation Works!

OCDC participates in various topic focused conference calls with “Cooperation Works!” member centers. In January, the call was with Gary McDavid and Bill Patrie discussing the differences between LLCs and cooperatives and their views on the use and effectiveness of the business structures. OCDC personnel have been instrumental in developing the agenda for the CW Annual meeting and Strategic Planning session in Washington DC in April.

Other

OCDC Seed Monies

OCDC personnel continue to provide financial assistance to groups and cooperatives through the seed grant program. We work with the groups to submit reimbursements and develop reports as part of their funded project. OCDC works with the groups and cooperatives to develop an application and provide technical assistance as they progress through the timeline of their proposed project over the course of a year.