

# The Innovative Farmer

Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund

Volume 1, Issue 1

August 2010



## A newsletter for TCRF grant recipients.

Welcome to the first edition of *The Innovative Farmer*. RAFI is pleased to bring this newsletter to our Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund (TCRF) grant recipients. Our goal is to provide information and resources to assist you in diversifying your farm operations.

Some of you may remember an earlier newsletter, the *Tobacco Communities Project*, published by RAFI from 1997 to 2000. That newsletter was part of a four-year effort to help tobacco farmers in North Carolina adjust to the changing agricultural economy. RAFI believed that the innovation necessary to face those challenges could be found on the farm, and with a little support, producers could become the driving force behind new agricultural-based enterprises.

And we were correct! The TCRF program that began in 1997 as a four county pilot project to help farmers replace lost tobacco income has expanded with support from the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to serve family farms in all 100 counties in the state. The funding is helping farmers implement new ideas for earning a living in agriculture and uncovering possible long term solutions to changing markets.

We recently completed the 2010 grant cycle---our biggest yet! With over 400 requests from farmers and farmer groups, we awarded 120 grants, totaling more than \$1.2 million to innovative farmers across the state. To kick off this first newsletter, we have included a special insert where you can read a brief description about each of the 2010 projects. Earlier grant projects can be viewed on our website: [www.ncfarmgrants.org](http://www.ncfarmgrants.org). (*Click on project summaries.*)

Another thing we discovered from our early research is that farmers learn best from other farmers so we hope this newsletter will be a place where you will share your stories and learn from each other's successes and failures. If you have questions or would like additional information about the projects, or any of the articles included in the newsletter, we encourage you to contact your TCRF Field Coordinator.

As a TCRF grant recipient, you are a member of North Carolina's most innovative and creative group of farmers. You are the link that ties our agricultural communities to the future. We salute you. Please let us know how we can best support you in your efforts.

Linda Shaw  
Executive Director  
RAFI-USA

## INSIDE

**WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?**

**GROWING DESSERT PEARS**

**MORE FUNDING FOR FARMERS IN 2011**

**NOTES FROM THE RAFI STAFF**

**SPECIAL INSERT: 2010 GRANT PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS**

## TCRF Staff

**Program Director**  
Joe Schroeder  
919-621-0534

**Program Assistant**  
Jacqueline Murphy Miller  
(Jackie) 919-542-1396 ext. 205

## Field Coordinators:

**Coastal Region:**  
Pat Clark  
919-545-4847

**Central Region:**  
Julius Tillery  
919-259-4101

**Western Piedmont:**  
Francesca Hyatt  
919-323-7587

*Sponsored by The NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission*



## Where does the money come from?

We get that question a lot here! You probably noticed that your check came from the Rural Advancement Institute (RAI). This is just a subsidiary of RAFI. RAFI received a \$4.7 million, 3-year grant from the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to expand the TCRF program statewide. But where does the Tobacco Trust get it? It comes from the Master Settlement.

### Master Settlement

In November of 1998, four of the largest cigarette manufacturers signed an agreement to pay approximately \$206 billion to 46 states over a 25-year period.

### \$4.6 Billion for NC

North Carolina's share is approximately \$4.6 billion. The NC Legislature designated fifty percent for the Golden LEAF Foundation, twenty-five percent for the Health Wellness Fund and twenty-five percent for the NC Tobacco Trust Fund

Commission. The General Assembly can and has tapped the Master Settlement funds for other purposes. For example, the legislature took \$5 million from the NC Tobacco Trust Fund budget in 2010.

### Tobacco Farmers

The NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission was created to assist tobacco farmers, tobacco quota holders, persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses, individuals displaced from tobacco-related employment, and tobacco product component businesses in the State due to the adverse effects of the Master Settlement Agreement.

The Governor, Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tem of the NC Senate appoint eighteen Commission members to guide and monitor the distribution of funds.

*For additional information please visit the website: [www.tobaccotrustfund.org](http://www.tobaccotrustfund.org)*



*TCRF will offer almost \$2 million in grants for North Carolina farmers in the 2011 grant cycle.*

## More Funding for Farmers in 2011!

RAFI received additional funding for the 2011 TCRF grant cycle from Governor Perdue's Family Farm Innovation Fund and the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

"RAFI was able to fund only 25 percent of the over 450 applications received for 2010," said Linda Shaw, RAFI's Executive Director. "We are thrilled that RAFI will be able to help even more farmers as a result of this funding."

Current and past grant recipients are eligible to apply if they have a different innovative project proposal.

Grant applications are available now and may be downloaded from the RAFI website. How-to-Apply workshops will be offered in various locations through November, 2010.

Please help us spread the word by sharing this information with other farmers in your community. For additional information on workshops, deadline dates and application materials please visit our website or contact your field coordinator. [www.ncfarmgrants.org](http://www.ncfarmgrants.org)

## Growing dessert pears in the northern piedmont

Paul Marshall is a true innovator, transforming his tobacco farm into an orchard of several different varieties of European and Asian dessert pear trees.

RAFI's Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund awarded Marshall \$9,760 for the production of a new niche product in Rockingham County.

"My hope," said Marshall, "is to show that the Northern Piedmont can benefit from different ways of thinking about production and marketing, and be able to take advantage of higher-profit specialty items."

Working closely with NC Cooperative Extension, Marshall is testing the survival rate, blight resistance, and marketability of these specialty pears.

The TCRF review board was excited by the potential success of this project. Farmer and review board member Alan Souther explained, "If we can support farmers who are opening doors to new product and markets in our state, the entire agricultural community will benefit from what they learn and are able to teach."



Paul Marshall received a grant to grow dessert pears.

*Notes from the RAFI staff...*

### **Leasing your mineral rights**

Farmers and rural landowners in North Carolina are being approached to lease mineral rights to companies that want to tap the natural gas deposits that may lie in the shale below their land. The potential gas-bearing deposit extends north-south through approximately 10 counties in central North Carolina, stretching from South Carolina to Virginia.

According to an article in the Raleigh News and Observer (June 26, 2010), companies are moving fast to sign up these mineral rights. Based on initial analysis of some of the contracts, responsibility for costs incurred for environmental damage, repair of land or existing facilities, and any title issues on the land may fall to the owner rather than the company. As we receive more information, we will post it on our web site.

For now, if you are approached about leasing the mineral rights to your land, consult with a lawyer before signing the contract. Ask questions, get things in writing, and realize that you have the right to negotiate. The following resources listed on the RAFI website offer some good tips for North Carolina landowners as well:

For additional information on Gas Rights and Right-of-Way Leasing Considerations for Farms and Woodlands: [www.rafiusa.org/blog/?tag=natural-gas](http://www.rafiusa.org/blog/?tag=natural-gas)

Website links to stories in the Raleigh News and Observer on drilling for natural gas deposits:

- [www.newsobserver.com/2010/06/26/552175/gas-rights-going-fast-in-lee.html#storylink=misearch](http://www.newsobserver.com/2010/06/26/552175/gas-rights-going-fast-in-lee.html#storylink=misearch) >/Newsand Observer

---

### **Save the Date! 2011 Come to the Table Conferences**

Join us for a conference series on how people of faith can support local farms and relieve hunger in their communities. Choose from three regional events, each with Friday workshops and lectures and Saturday visits to regional ministries.:

- Piedmont: February 18-19, Winston-Salem, NC
- East: February 25-26, Southeastern NC
- West: March 11-12, Black Mountain, NC

For additional information please visit the website: <http://www.cometothetablenc.org/>  
Contact: Claire Hermann at 919-542-1396 ext. 207

---

### **Breeding for Organic Production Systems (BOPS)**

The need for organically adapted varieties is an important production issue among NC organic farmers and advisors. In the spring of 2009 RAFI and NCSU began collaboration on a project for the development of field crop varieties specifically selected for organic production. This project will accomplish three things:

- 1 Involve farmers in identifying traits (such as disease resistance) that are advantageous in organic systems, and screen lines of wheat, peanuts, soybeans and corn for those traits to incorporate them into breeding programs.
- 2 Identify the most successful lines in organic systems. Utilize on-farm testing to integrate organic producers into the process of testing and sharing these lines, as well as releasing the results.
- 3 Develop a new coalition of organic farmers and public plant breeders to identify the needs of southeastern organic farmers and to create a support network.

In 2010 BOPS conducted a preliminary survey of 650 organic growers in the southeast to better understand their experience using organic seed. Their input will be used to steer the research of the NCSU breeders who are testing varieties of wheat, peanuts, soybeans and corn. We need your input to make this project a success! For additional information please visit: <http://www.organicbreeding.ncsu.edu>.



RAFI's website offers tips to landowners on gas rights and leasing considerations.

*If you are approached about leasing the mineral rights to your land, consult with a lawyer before signing the contract!*





Working to Preserve Family Farms and Rural Communities

## Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund

### Our Vision

RAFI is creating a movement among farm, environmental and consumer groups to ensure that:

- family farmers have the power to earn a fair and dependable income.
- everyone who labors in agriculture is respected, protected, and valued by society;
- air, water and soil are preserved for future generations;
- the land yields healthy and abundant food and fiber that is accessible to all members of society;
- the full diversity of seeds and breeds, the building blocks of agriculture, are reinvested and publicly protected.

---

[www.rafiusa.org](http://www.rafiusa.org)

---



Publication made possible by a grant from the  
NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission

## Have you talked to your local USDA office recently?

In the 2008 farm bill, Congress created or expanded a series of programs aimed at smaller and mid-sized farms that support conservation efforts in new ways. Over the last year, USDA has expanded its outreach to farmers who sell into local and other higher value markets through the *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* effort. This program focuses on USDA efforts to make its existing programs more accessible to small and mid-scale farmers.

The busy summer season is not the time to sign up for existing programs. (Most-sign up periods are in the winter and spring.) But it is a good time to create a relationship with the people who work in your local office. A rainy afternoon is a good time to meet the folks in the office, and summer is a good time to invite them out to your farm so that they can see what you are doing and get excited about what you are building. Then even though the sign up period may not be until next year, you can work with your local Farm Service Agency or Natural Resource Conservation Service office to anticipate which programs might work for you, and to use existing application materials to lay the ground work for a quick sign up window.

*RAFI-USA is a private non-profit organization based in Pittsboro, N.C., dedicated to cultivating markets, policies and communities that support thriving, socially just and environmentally sound family farms.*