Study Tour Focusing on Specialty Crop Production and Marketing

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Producers of traditional agronomic crops are struggling economically as production costs continue to rise while commodity prices decline. Santa Rosa County, like other areas in Florida, is experiencing the need for crop diversification. The specialty horticultural crops provide the potential for higher income per acre, although the establishment of these as replacement crops is challenging.

An IFAS Professional Development Leave is providing me with an opportunity to study horticultural production and marketing techniques being employed throughout the Southeast. The Leave began on June 2, 2006 and will continue through November. The goal of the Leave is to obtain information that will allow for a successful transition to horticultural crops where needed, in our County, state and region.

The Leave consists of a hosted study tour, gathering information from producers, research and Extension faculty and market managers. The tour will provide an opportunity to observe crop selection, cultural practices, harvesting techniques and methods of marketing the produce. All sizes of operations are being visited. Crops or commodity areas included are specialty vegetables, fruits, woody ornamental nurseries, cut flowers and herbs.

A questionnaire has been prepared in order to ensure that all required information is obtained at each site during the Tour. Following is a copy of the form that is being used.
Alternative Crops Study Tour
Production and Marketing
Daniel E. Mullins

Date: ________

Site or Farm
________________________________________________________________
____________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Phone: _________________________
E-Mail: ________________________________ Web Site: ____________________________

Contact
Person: ______________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

State: ___________________ Region or County _____________________________

Size of Operation: Acres ________ Sq. Ft. Greenhouse: ________ Number of Employees: _______

Crops Produced: __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________, __________

Crop Selection (Reasons)
________________________________________________________________

Method of Production: Field: Bare Ground ____, Plasticulture ____,
Trickle/Drip ____ , Fertilizer Injection ____
Ghs: Container ____, Hydroponics ____ , Beds ____ ,
Benches ______

Marketing Method (s) Direct Sales ____ , U-Pick ____ , Farmers’ Market ____ ,
Roadside Stand ____ , Processed ____ ,
Value Added ____, Co-op ____ , Brokered ____,
Institutional Sales _____, “Big Box” Stores _____,
Community Based Agriculture _____, Agri-tourism ____,
Eco-tourism ____, Other ____

Vertically Integrated ? How?

Comments:

Method of Advertising

_____ % Spent _____

Copious notes and digital photographs are being made at each stop during the
study tour. Notes, photos and questionnaires will
be used to prepare information for providing to producers, co-workers and other
interested groups in the future. Methods of sharing this information include
power point presentations, trade publications and individual consultation.