



Carolina Farm Stewardship Association STEWARDSHIP NEWS

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Farmer Profile

Thicketty Mountain Farms, Cowpens, South Carolina

by Amy Moxley, CFSA Member

It's been almost four years since I first met Sallie, "the Chicken Lady." It was an overcast and muggy July day in 2011 when I walked the two blocks from my downtown apartment to the Hub City Farmers' Market. Amidst the checkered tablecloths and collard greens and thick southern accents popped a bold red head of hair over a face graced with a pair of funky glasses and an infectious grin.

Although I have come to adore the South Carolina way of life, at the time I was a brand new transplant and desperate for a connection to home. That conversation with Sallie Hambright-Belue, of Thicketty Mountain Farms, launched me into a local food infatuation from which I have never recovered. I bought my first whole chicken and the next day followed her directions for how to clean, prepare, and roast it. (I even filmed myself!) I return to the market each week to talk with Sallie and buy my weekly supply of meat and produce. Sallie continues to be a friend and a mentor in all that is wonderful about local, healthy and delicious!

What Sallie Has Taught Me

"It is very important that land is developed in a thoughtful and intelligent way. I believe we have to leave the earth better than how we found it," Sallie told me. For her, sustainability comes down to that connection between people and the place they call home.



Brent, Sallie, and Everette of Thicketty Mountain Farms

"I see the land as a kind of older parent or grandparent that needs to be looked after. It has sustained us and supported us, watched us grow up, and now it's our turn to be the caregivers."

For Sallie, caring for the land is connected to caring for the community as well. Their customers are their best friends and they believe that strong, healthy community relationships, contributing to the local economy, and providing nutritious, chemical-free food is important to creating a world they want their son, Everette, and all children, to grow up in. It's a legacy they want to leave for future generations.

Organic and sustainable, and the ethical treatment of animals, are not

just words or slogans for Sallie and Brent. These values are embedded in their way of life and in all of their practices on the farm. Eric Solderhelm, CFSA Organic Production Coordinator, is currently consulting with them to complete the process for Organic Certification.

"Somewhere along the way, people became convinced that what was most important was that food should be cheap and convenient instead of highly nutritious, chemical-free, and grown locally and sustainably," Sallie says. "Eating is the most important thing we do everyday! The food we eat affects everything about our lives from our own health to the health of the earth."

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**CFSA is on a mission to bring local, organic food to your table
from a farmer who shares your values**

CAROLINA FARM STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION

CFSA is a membership-based organization of thousands of farmers, consumers, foodies, businesses and organizations in North and South Carolina. Our mission is to advocate for fair farm and food policies, build the systems that organic family farms need to thrive, and educate communities about local, organic farming.

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From the Director

Giving Life to a Vision of Agriculture that Values People and the Planet

Strengthening relationships is at the heart of sustainable agriculture —relationships between microbes and plants, between farmers and the land, between farmers and communities that together form an interdependent and resilient web that nourishes people and the earth.

This is part of the inherent appeal of local, organic food and farming, and part of why corporate agribusiness attempts to claim that toxins, GMOs, and global commodity market manipulation are ‘sustainable’ fall so flat with most folks who think about it. Industrial agriculture and its methods weaken the web of relationships, isolate farmers from consumers, and increase dependence on corporate agri-food behemoths, and people can tell the difference.

We can thank the early generations of organic farmers across the country for awakening our society to the importance of relationships in agriculture. These pioneers not only modeled new, innovative farming practices, but took it upon themselves to educate the public and other farmers about how to shift course. In the Carolinas, they launched farmers markets, built coops, and joined together to create CFSA as an instrument for farmer-to-farmer and farmer-to-community education.

A wonderful example of that educational spirit was Azeez Mustafa, founder, with his wife Fathiyyah, of SCF Organic Farms in Sumter, South Carolina. Azeez turned to farming when his land was the only thing he and Fathiyyah had left to sustain their family after he lost a good-paying manufacturing job during the economic tumult of the late 1970s.

Using low-cost technology, dry farming techniques, and determination, they first learned to survive, then thrive, by working in harmony with nature. And they shared their experience, knowledge and positive message with neighbors, selling healthy organic food to the community with the slogan “Organic - You’re Worth It,” and helping other farmers adopt organic practices and join their cooperative.

In 2003, they became South Carolina’s first farm to be certified organic under the National Organic Program, and in 2006, Azeez was the first African-American to receive CFSA’s Sustainable



Roland McReynolds, Executive Director

Farmer of the Year Award. All this in a limited resource, predominantly African-American community, turning on its head the conventional wisdom that organic food is only for privileged whites.

Building community relationships through education was a responsibility Azeez took seriously, whether the subject was organic dry farming, traditional medicinals, or healthy diets. Just before this newsletter went to press, he was spreading the word about an upcoming workshop on ‘The Art of Dry Farming.’ It came as quite a shock to learn, just a week before the workshop was scheduled, that Azeez had died of a heart attack, at the age of 67.

The loss of another of our region’s early organic heroes saddens me and others who were touched by him. But it is also an occasion to reflect on the progress that relationship-based agriculture has made and the positive impact it is having on our lives and our environment. According to the last USDA Census of Agriculture, farmers’ direct market sales in South Carolina increased 116 percent between 2007 and 2012, a robust measure of the strong connections between farmers and communities in the state.

CFSA and our members are building on the legacy of organic farming trailblazers to make sustainable agriculture more accessible to farmers and eaters alike. Through local organizing around good food issues, assisting the new organic farmers to get started, opening our farms to the public for farm tours, and countless other ways, we are building relationships across generations and giving life to a vision of agriculture that values people and the planet.

Roland McReynolds

Association News

Welcome New Board Members

Tony Gaddis is a co-owner of Terra Stay Farm in Saxapahaw, NC. With over 35 years experience as an engineer in the technology business arena, Tony is fascinated by the opportunity to contribute to the engineering of a sustainable food system. In 2014 Tony and business partner Mike Ortosky founded Terra Stay Farm with a focus on four-season production and a triple bottom line: provide profitable value to customers, a great environment for employees and partners, and give back to the people and businesses in our communities.

Roddy Pick is the co-owner of Greenbrier Farms in Easley, near Greenville, SC. Greenbrier Farms is a 300 acre organic and sustainable farm which produces grass fed/grass finished beef, pastured poultry, pastured pork, and market vegetables. Greenbrier is the pastured pork provider for all Whole Foods Markets in South Carolina. Roddy has a strong passion for forage-based grazing systems and focuses heavily on soil ecology and stewardship of the land.

Recommend a Board Member

Do you know someone who would be a good candidate for the CDSA Board of Directors? Would you like to know more about serving on the Board? Contact Elizabeth Read, Communications & Development Director, elizabeth@carolinafarmstewards.org. Candidate suggestions will be provided to the Board of Directors.

SAVE THE DATE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

The Food and Farm Event
of the Year!

November 6-8, 2015
Durham, NC



Ross Pickens of Open Door Farm in Cedar Grove, NC, gives a tour to visitors of all ages during a rainy Piedmont Farm Tour

Piedmont Farm Tour

The 20th Annual Piedmont Farm Tour took place April 25-26 with 40 local farms participating. Four new farms joined the tour this year: Sweet Pea Farm, Open Door Farm, Down 2 Earth Farms, and Peaceful River Farm.

Although the weather was cold and rainy, attendees enjoyed meeting their local farmers and learning about the farms. They got a glimpse of real farm life – rain or shine.

Many thanks to co-sponsor, Weaver Street Market, and all the volunteers who make the farm tour a success year after year. The biggest thanks goes out to the farmers for making the Piedmont a vibrant example of what sustainable agriculture looks like for the rest of the country.



**Tickets are on Sale NOW for the
UPSTATE FARM TOUR
South Carolina
June 6-7
1:00 - 6:00 pm**

One ticket is good for a carload of folks! There are 23 farms featured on the tour this year with 7 new farms.

Along with hundreds of varieties of vegetables and animals including poultry, goats, pigs, cattle, and rabbits, you can also see aquaponics, hydroponics, mushrooms, bees, orchards, worms, composting, and the making of artisanal cheeses, dairy products, soap and even corn grits.

For an interactive map and descriptions of the farms go to:
carolinafarmstewards.org/uft/

SAVE THE DATE

Eastern Triangle Farm Tour September 19-20, 2015

The 10th annual tour will feature over 25 farms from across the Eastern, Northern and Southern sections of the Triangle.

The Tool Shed

Combatting a New Pest to Bring the Blueberries You Love From the Field to Your Family

Imagine tossing a handful of fresh-picked, sweet, firm blueberries into your mouth. Imagine your favorite blueberry cobbler, muffins, and pancakes; blueberries in your power smoothie; blueberries on your toddler's cereal; serving a red, white and blueberry dessert on the 4th of July.

Compact, tasty, and packed with nutrients, blueberries rank as one of nature's super foods. Blueberries have a rockstar reputation among fruits as research studies continue to confirm blueberries as a healthy source of antioxidant compounds and to report on their ability to protect the body from stress, lower the risk of cancer and of type 2 diabetes, and improve the immune system, heart health, and memory function.

For more than 70 years, North Carolina's blueberries have been a favorite of people everywhere. The North Carolina Blueberry Industry generates an estimated \$72.1 million in farm income with 6,400 acres harvested. North Carolina ranks 7th in the nation in blueberry production with 48.5 million pounds annually. Blueberries have economic and cultural significance for both farmers and eaters alike.

Recently, though, a small insect pest arrived in the U.S. and is posing a serious threat to the blueberries we love. Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) is a tiny, winged demon – native to Asia – which lays its eggs in ripening fruit. SWD is different from other vinegar fruit flies that infest overripe, rotting and decaying fruits. SWD cuts into ripening berries and lays its eggs, which develop into a larvae inside the berry.

Herndon Hills Farm, in Durham, NC, had been growing you-pick blueberries for 25 years when SWD arrived in 2013. The over 200-year-old farm is the only operating



*A summer delight -
fresh-picked blueberries at the
local Farmers' Market*



*Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD)
- photo courtesy of Hannah Burrack
North Carolina State University*

farm still bordering the city limits of Durham and is just minutes from South Point Mall. Families from the community surrounding the farm come to pick blueberries, blackberries, and muscadine grapes in season and this connection to neighbors and community is a treasure in an area overtaken by development.

"Like many small blueberry growers, we had never sprayed our crop or bushes," Nancy Herndon explained. "When the threat of SWD arrived, I felt so adverse to any kind of spraying that I considered stopping growing blueberries altogether. But our family has made a commitment to keep our farm, and we are fortunate to have loyal and enthusiastic customers. Quitting wouldn't help anyone."

Conventionally-grown blueberries have been on the "Dirty Dozen" list for years for containing some of the highest numbers of pesticide residues. Pesticides have been linked to cancer, hormone disruption and abnormal brain and nervous system development, among other health problems.

Nancy, though, is committed to fighting SWD organically and as she faced the threat of the SWD, she decided to "give the customers and myself what we really wanted – completely organic blueberries. Our transition to Certified Organic began."

Nancy first called on a fellow CFSA member, the late John Vollmer of Vollmer Farm in Bunn, NC. John was well-known for generously sharing his techniques and wisdom with other farmers and as a mentor to many. "There is no magic bullet," he told Nancy. "You use all the organic tools you've got and just keep trying."

Because SWD is new in the U.S., a proven, standardized Insect Pest Management strategy has yet to be established. Nancy turned to Hannah Burrack, NC extension entomologist and professor of entomology at NCSU. Hannah provided Nancy with a SWD trapping and identification kit, pointed her to several videos online demonstrating how to use the kit and how to tell SWD from similar fruit flies, and offered the use of her scientific microscope to provide positive ID for the samples.

In addition, Nancy learned about available organic inputs and how to use them, how to sample ripe fruit for possible infestation, and strategies to reduce the risk to the crop and to the beneficial insects and habitat on the farm. Melinda Fitzgerald of Pittsboro Country Farm and Home store was a welcome source of organic inputs, encyclopedic knowledge, and unfailing help.

"But, I still needed help with the transition to organic certification

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and that's where CFSA came in again," says Nancy. She contacted Eric Soderholm, CFSA's Organic Production Coordinator. CFSA provides free consultations to farmer members in preparing for and navigating the process necessary for USDA Organic Certification.

Eric pointed Nancy to CFSA's online Organic Production Handbook, as well as to an organic certification workshop at the Sustainable Agriculture Conference. She set up a recordkeeping system, established a relationship with a certifier, and began establishing organic procedures to meet National Organic Program (NOP) requirements. Eric made a site visit at the farm to review each step of Nancy's transition plan to ensure it was in compliance with NOP regulations.

"Eric's consultations helped me identify documentation issues and deal with them sooner, rather than later," Nancy said. "Now, two years into organic management of our blueberries, I can say that our field has never been healthier or more productive. Blueberries love the extra mulch, vigilant weed control, and slow-release organic fertilizers."



"You-pick" blueberry fields at Herndon Hills Farm, Durham, NC
- photo courtesy of Nancy Herndon

As spring brings wild bees buzzing among the flowering blueberry plants at Herndon Hills Farm, this year promises to yield a bumper crop of healthy and delicious blueberries for the families and children who come to pick them – and another wonderful example of farming in harmony with nature.

The 200-year-old Herndon Hills family farm is a Durham historical treasure. In the early years the farm produced corn, tobacco and cattle. Part of the land is still used for cattle production and 8 acres are in cultivation for the you-pick blueberries, blackberries and muscadine grapes.
facebook.com/HerndonHillsFarm

For more information or to submit an application for free CFSA consulting services, contact Eric Soderholm, Organic Production Coordinator, at: eric@carolinafarmstewards.org

Nominate a Food Systems Leader for a CFSA Award!

Each year at our Sustainable Agriculture Conference (scheduled for November 6-8, 2015 in Durham, NC) CFSA gives awards to honor leaders in the sustainable food movement:

Beginning Farmer of the Year
Farmer of the Year
Activist of the Year
Career Achievement
Institution of the Year
Business of the Year
(NC and SC Extension Agent of the year awards are also given through a separate awards process).

Please help us in honoring heroes in the Carolina food system by nominating a sustainability leader for a CFSA award. Learn more at carolinafarmstewards.org/awards

Grow a Better Future - Become a Monthly Sustainer



Every farmer understands the need for sustainability in their agricultural practices and their care for the soil, seeds, livestock and land. They know that good practices sustained day after day and month by month directly impact the outcomes and the future of their farm.

What makes the organization of CFSA sustainable?

It's people like you who have a vision, a passion, and a commitment to our mission. People who put their commitment into action through their monthly support.

If the work that CFSA does is important to you, if you want CFSA to continue to ensure a safe, healthy and sustainable food system – now and for future generations – become a Monthly Sustainer today.

Your monthly gift, of any amount, makes a difference.

Go to carolinafarmstewards.org/supportcfsa/ to set up your monthly gift today.

New Bill Makes it More Difficult for Consumers to Know What Is In Their Food

By Jared Cates, Community Mobilizer

A bill was recently introduced in the US Congress that will make it more difficult for consumers to know what is in their food. The bill, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, is co-sponsored by two Representatives from North Carolina – Congressman G.K. Butterfield (D-1) and Congresswoman Alma Adams (D-12).

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are found in almost all processed foods and this act would eliminate state laws that require

these products be labeled for consumers who want to avoid them. This bill would make it so difficult for consumers to understand what is in their food that opponents call it the DARK Act (Deny Americans the Right to Know Act).

CFSA has been working with our food council allies across the state to send the message to our Congresspeople that, if passed, this bill will only further confuse consumers and negatively impact the USDA Certified Organic brand.



For more information on this harmful legislation, visit our website or contact CFSA Community Mobilizer Jared Cates at: jared@carolinafarmstewards.org.

Farmers in Training (FIT) Program at the Lomax Incubator Farm

**Application Deadline
July 1st**

For more information and the application, go to carolinafarmstewards.org/lomax-farm/.



When CFSA took over management of the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm in September of 2014, the fundraising needs were urgent. Since then, CFSA has generated support for the farm from many corners: Cabarrus County, individuals, corporations, and from musician Scott Avett of The Avett Brothers.

Scott's support for Lomax included an appearance at a benefit dinner for the Farm, featuring Chef Vivian Howard of *Chef & the Farmer* restaurant in Kinston, NC and *A Chef's Life* television program on PBS. Guests at the dinner on May 15, 2015 enjoyed a surprise musical performance by Scott, bass player Bob Crawford, and cellist Joe Kwon.

Produce for the dinner was provided by Lomax Farm farmers and included

Chef Vivian Howard and Roland McReynolds at Lomax Benefit Dinner

the featured ingredient for the evening: onions. Television production crews from *A Chef's Life* filmed Lomax Farm and the dinner. Look for CFSA and Lomax on television in the fall of 2016.

The most memorable quote of the evening came from Chef Howard as she introduced the food that night, "*We need more farmer worship and less chef worship.*" Such a strong demonstration of support coming from a celebrated chef is a welcome sign of commitment from those leading the farm-to-table movement in kitchens across the Carolinas. With this kind of support for the Carolina farm community, we can train a new generation of farmers.

Individuals interested in starting a farm-based business can enroll in the FIT program which provides classroom instruction on the business of farming in Cabarrus County as well as hands-on experience on the farm.

Participants in the program develop and manage their own agricultural business while receiving guidance from staff and seasoned farmers.

Farmers-in-training have a 3 to 5 year participation period at the farm and the Lomax Farm staff assist the new farmers find land of their own.

Farmer Profile
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The Next Generation of Farmers

Although Sallie and Brent both come from farming families, their journey into sustainable agriculture was not direct. Sallie has a graduate degree in architecture from Yale University and was working in New York City when she began to consider the impact of landscapes on the environment. Brent is a musician and after college at Winthrop University, worked selling musical instruments. They had known each other since they were 12 but once they started dating in 2010, farming seemed like what they were meant to do together.

Brent's family history was in conventional farming and he admits he didn't know anything about organic and sustainable farming. They joke that in the beginning Sallie was going to make Brent farm with mules and horses. "Next thing I know you're going to be talking about me not having a tractor," Brent recalls saying. Now Brent is the one talking about using a horse or mule instead of a tractor and he even built his own row crimper (see photo) which is quite a feat!

The farm, now in its fifth year, is in Cowpens, SC and includes several sites. Their family farmhouse sits on about four acres of land and includes vegetables, a greenhouse, fruit trees, and chickens. On an additional 35 acres on the other side of Thicketty Mountain they raise free-range chickens pastured hogs, and cattle. They hope to expand this part of the farm eventually.

All of their produce is organically grown from non-GMO, organic seeds and includes over 35 vegetables including beets, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupe, cauliflower, collards, lettuces, micro-greens, mustard greens, radishes, squash, zucchini, tomatoes, and watermelon. They also sell pasture-raised chicken and grass-fed beef, and plan to add pastured pork this coming year.

The CFSA network of fellow farmers, along with the Sustainable Ag



Brent Belue of Thicketty Mountain Farms with the crimper he built himself

Conference and workshops, has helped them learn about mob grazing cattle, raising heritage breed chickens, and building rich, healthy soil through incorporating no-till methods, cover cropping, mulching, intensive planting, and beneficial insects/pollinator habitat planting. "We have goals each year but it's a process," says Sallie. "We don't have it all figured out, we just start somewhere and keep getting better and better."

Sallie and Brent market their goods almost exclusively direct-to-consumer at the farm, through their CSA program (Community Supported Agriculture), and at the Hub City and TD Downtown Greenville Farmers' Markets. The Swamp Rabbit Cafe and Grocery also carries their pastured meats and organic produce.

Thicketty Mountain Farms will be on Upcountry Farm Tour, June 6-7, along with 22 other farms. You can meet Sallie and Brent and see this farm committed to producing fresh, local, healthy and sustainable food for their family and yours.

Amy Moxley is the Produce Manager for Swamp Rabbit Cafe & Grocery in Greenville, South Carolina. Amy is a member of CFSA and a staunch advocate for local food and farmers.

Association News
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Staff Retreat Enhances Team Building and Strategic Planning

Thank you to Ramble Rill Farm for hosting the CFSA staff for a two-day retreat in early April. Bringing together staff who work across two states and in four program areas leads to greater collaboration, improved communications, and stronger outcomes for our farmers and members.

Staff Transitions

Two CFSA staff members have left for new challenges. We are grateful for their service, counting on their continued commitment to our cause as members of CFSA, and wish them well.

Anna MacDonald Dobbs started at CFSA as an intern, and then joined our staff as our first full-time Membership Coordinator. She moves on to a position with a social service non-profit.

Ben Filippo joined the CFSA staff as our first NC Food Systems Coordinator and helped develop the process for our food business consulting services. He moves on to Foster-Caviness where he will be working on their local sourcing.

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going to <http://bit.ly/cfsarenewals>
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Thanks for supporting local, organic farms!

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UPSTATE
farm tour  

June 6 & 7, 2015 from 1-6 P.M.