

## New Grants Target Ohio Cooperative Development

PIKETON, Ohio — Several Ohio cooperative groups are getting a boost in promotion and marketing with the help of new Ohio Cooperative Development Center grants.

The center, housed within Ohio State University's South Centers at Piketon, has made \$50,000 available to groups interested in forming cooperatives and to assist existing cooperatives in developing new marketing opportunities.

Members of the established Ohio Pro-Beef Alliance and Farm Fresh Growers Association and groups interested in forming a Southern Ohio Meat Goat Task Force and an Organic Grain Marketing Alliance were the first to be awarded funds to assist in their organizational efforts. The groups were recognized recently during a luncheon in Waverly, Ohio.

"The main goal of the grants is to assist in the development of agricultural-related cooperatives and help those cooperatives get through some of the hurdles in their development process," said John Ellerman, coordinator of the Ohio Cooperative Development Center and an Ohio State Extension agent. "Cooperative development is quite different than business development."

Ellerman said such characteristics as voluntary and open membership, equal representation among members, participation in education and training and an overall concern for the community distinguish cooperatives from most other forms of business.

"Our focus for developing new cooperatives is mainly smaller groups of producers — those that want to create a berry marketing or organic grains cooperative. Cooperatives are usually made up of 10 to 20 people

who come together to try to solve a problem or achieve a goal."

The Ohio Pro-Beef Alliance, a small group of cattle producers throughout southern Ohio who work together to produce and market high-quality beef, received a grant to create an informational brochure to enhance community awareness.

"The brochure creates a story of ourselves and identifies our goals," said Dave Kohli, of the Ohio Pro-Beef Alliance. "We needed that help in trying to figure out how to take our group to the next level and move into marketing to appeal to other producers who may have an interest in our cooperative."

Henry Cawley, a Bainbridge, Ohio, cattle producer and Ohio Pro-Beef Alliance member, said the development of the brochure gives the cooperative a more professional edge. "It shows that goals behind the cooperative are backed by experienced, good beef producers who have a legitimate reason for taking part," he said. "People take you more seriously and have more of an interest when they've got something in their hands to look at. It's the first step toward developing a good working relationship."

A group of Ohio goat producers was also awarded funds to develop the Southern Ohio Meat Goat Task Force. The cooperative is designed to increase opportunities for goat producers to market goat meat in Ohio, mainly to ethnic communities. With the help of the grant, cooperative members will be touring ethnic markets along the East Coast and similar cooperatives out east that market goat meat.

"We've seen an increase in the number of people raising goats in the region. Most of these people have 10 to 30 acres of

land and want something they can make a profit with in such a small area," said Jeff Fisher, an Ohio State Extension agent and a member of the Southern Ohio Meat Goat Task Force. "There are 10 to 20 goat producers in Pike County alone."

In a recent Ohio Cooperative Development Center study, it was found that 80 percent of Ohio's ethnic population lives in metro areas, including Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, Colum-

bus and Athens. Ethnic groups like Muslims and the Spanish incorporate goat meat into their diet on a daily basis.

"There is an untapped market that producers in Ohio could be a part of. Already demand exceeds supply for what goat producers in Ohio can provide," said Fisher. "It's definitely a value-added commodity."

Another fledgling cooperative that received a grant is the Organic Grain Marketing Alliance, a small group of Ohio producers who are striving to increase organic grain production in the state. Through the grant, the group will be working with other nationwide cooperatives to de-

velop a framework that fits their own objectives.

Farm Fresh Growers Marketing Association, based in Winchester, Ohio, also received a grant to enhance marketing and distribution of their products through a product logo, box labels and packaging materials.

For more information on the Ohio Cooperative Development Center and the grants it offers, contact the center at (740) 289-2071 or (614) 292-4900 or log on to <http://aede.osu.edu/programs/ocdc>. The Ohio Cooperative Development Center is partially funded by U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and Ohio State University.

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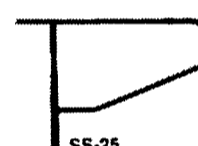
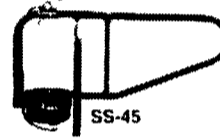
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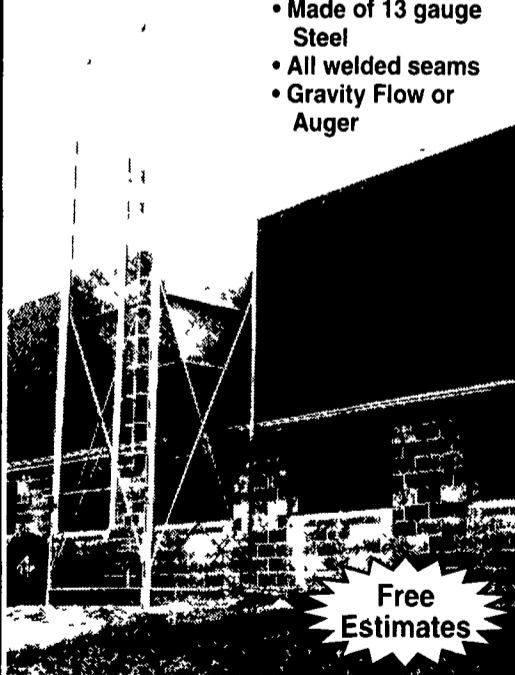
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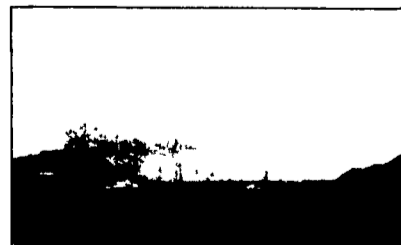
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