

AGRICULTURE

continued from page 1.

are only as sustainable as world oil reserves. Between the shipping and the petroleum-based fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, shipped in produce from huge corporate farms simply isn't sustainable compared to the food that's grown on small, local farms.

In Chatham County, as in many other counties across the nation, the number of small, sustainable farms is growing. Last year Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) held its 14th annual Piedmont Farm Tour featuring 30 farms. The year before, there were 25. Chatham County is on the map as a place where people come to find the best tasting, highest quality produce in the southeast. Between 1996 and 2002 Chatham County farm acreage increased from 108,363 acres to 118,752 or 27 percent of Chatham County's 437,171 acres, according to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Along with that increase in farmland, we're seeing continued growth in the support systems for our small farms. Between RAFI (Rural Advancement Foundation International), CFSA (Carolina Farm Stewardship Association), the Abundance Foundation, and Chatham Marketplace, Chatham County is obviously on the map as a place where sustainable agriculture thrives.



Links to more info on sustainable agriculture

- theabundancefoundation.org/
- www.carolinafarmstewards.org/
- www.rafiusa.org/
- www.landincommon.org/
- www.spencesfarm.com/
- www.cccc.edu/curriculum/majors/sustainableagriculture/
- edibleearthscape.wordpress.com/
- www.chathammarketplace.coop
- www.localharvest.org/farms/M25674



Not only are we growing produce, but we're growing farmers through CCCC's (Central Carolina Community College) Sustainable Agriculture program and Piedmont Biofarm and Edible Earthscapes internship programs. All three act as "Farm Incubators" by bringing in students and interns and teaching them to farm.

The Abundance Foundation is a non-profit corporation whose goal is to create programs that model how human beings can harness, use, and benefit from renewable energy sources as well as support the increase of local, sustainable farms. As such, the Abundance Foundation is heavily involved in many farm support programs, including the Whole Foods "Feed the Farm" fund



Rocky River Farm's bounty
PHOTO BY WILL ROBERSON

which supplies aid to small, sustainable North Carolina farms in times of crisis. In 2008, the Abundance Foundation raised over \$75,000 to increase the education of local food consumption and production and to support the local farmers.

South East Eco Diversity (SEED) is another one of the Abundance Foundation's pet projects. Sowing the seeds for change begins with having the actual seeds.

SEED is definitely at the heart of a move towards sustainability because SEED is creating seeds specifically designed to germinate in the southeast.

The Abundance Foundation also raised money to support the Pittsboro Farmer's Market and has initiated The Triangle Food Commons along with Land in Common and Spence's Farm. The Commons is a grassroots community network that identifies and acts upon food security needs in the communities of the Triangle Region. The Commons is composed of a roundtable and five working groups which are involved in initiating a

comprehensive regional food production, marketing and distribution strategy to reduce dependence on fossil fuel based systems currently taxing our economy and environment.

There are many ways to get to know and support the many small farms in Chatham County. Shop at the Farmer's Markets. Sign up for a CSA share from Piedmont Biofarm, Edible Earthscapes, the Star Barn or one of the other local farms. Find out how to get involved with seed saving, etc. by contacting The Abundance Foundation. Putting energy into our small farms will increase our ability to sustain ourselves with delicious, nourishing food, in the times ahead.

Camille Armantrout has joined the "bubble" of Chatham County. She loves horses, works with The Abundance Foundation and is a leader in vegan cooking and co-housing in Pittsboro. Camille is also driving the effort to revitalize the Plenty. She currently lives in community at Oilseed in Moncure.

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