

The Shenandoah RC&D's Educational Contributions to the Development of the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction

Farming communities, especially within Rockingham County and the Central Shenandoah Valley, continue to experience urban and suburban development pressures, rising land prices, parcelization of agricultural lands, and increasing economic and environmental challenges. A produce auction is an agricultural-based enterprise and a way to wholesale market fresh vegetables, fruit, bedded plants, nursery crops, baked goods, and other farm fresh products.

On behalf of the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, Virginia Cooperative Extension obtained a grant of \$6,500 from the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council as an educational contribution to assist in the development of the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction. These funds were used for the following events:

- An educational meeting with Steve Sauder, the Produce Auction Manager of Fairview Produce Auction in Kentucky;
- Participation of 11 produce growers in the Eastern U.S. Truck Patch Connection Conference in western Kentucky in November 2005;
- Three vegetable and ornamental production workshops with Dr. Allan Straw and other resource speakers;
- A bus trip to Pennsylvania as part of an Innovations in Agriculture Tour that included stops at Steve Groff's Cedar Meadow Farm and Dick Waybright's Mason Dixon Farm; and
- A van trip to Gourmet Central Foods in Romney, WV to explore recipe development, product labeling, and potential value-added enterprises.

Impacts and benefits of the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction include:

- A more diverse farm economy for present farmers and new possibilities for women, youth, and children;
- The opening of more roadside stands, new greenhouse facilities on many farms, associated businesses, and additional sale of local produce throughout the area;
- The development of new leadership and marketing skills among area farmers; and
- Promotion of farmland preservation, resource conservation, rural economic development, and the diversification of the local and regional farm economy.

The Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, LLC sincerely thanks the Shenandoah RC&D for its educational support and contributions towards the development of Virginia's first produce auction.



www.ext.vt.edu

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.