

the
Southern Region
small fruit consortium



History

- Meeting in 1998 at NC State to discuss regionalization of small fruit efforts-VA, NC, SC,GA
- Research and/or extension directors from VPI, NC State, Clemson and Univ. of GA involved in meeting
- Creation of Regional Small Fruit Center suggested to share expertise and coordinate research and extension activities with small fruits

History

- Memorandum of Understanding signed by NC State Univ., Univ. of GA and Clemson Univ. in 1999 to create the Southeastern Small Fruit Center with an annual dues per institution of \$35,000. This was cash or in-kind in terms of salaries for the web master and coordinator. The MOU was renegotiated in Fall 2004 effective through 2007.
- Mission of the center was to promote the small fruit industry through education, research and outreach through regional collaboration utilizing the expertise of the member institutions

History

- Web site(www.smallfruits.org) established to disseminate info on small fruits
- Web master initially housed at Clemson Univ. and subsequently moved to Univ. of GA
- Center name changed in 2000 to Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium(SRSFC) to be more inclusive for membership
- University of Tennessee joined SRSFC in 2002

History

- SRSFC Coordinator at NC State Univ.-three coordinators since 1999.
- Present coordinator is Tom Monaco(tom_monaco@ncsu.edu)
- Coordinator is responsible for managing SRSFC budget; overseeing web site; managing grant program; facilitating agent training; organizing annual meeting of steering committee; and promoting the consortium

SRSFC Governing Body

- The SRSFC is administered by a Steering Committee(18 members) comprised of:
 - One administrator from each institution-executive committee
 - Two faculty from each institution
 - One grower rep from each of the four member states
 - Executive Director, Southern Assoc. of Agric. Exp. Sta. Directors
 - Coordinator of the SRSFC(non voting member)

SRSFC Steering Committee

- Approves annual budget
- Reviews and ranks grant proposals
- Assists with agent training
- Contribute to the SRSFC web site
- Attend annual meeting held in conjunction with SRASHS meeting.

SRFSC Accomplishments

Sponsored Agent Training

- Goal-to enhance county agent expertise in small fruit production so they can be more effective in providing advice to growers
- Since 1999 the SRSFC has sponsored ten agent training sessions involving a total of 226 agents from the member states and adjacent states
- The SRSFC has provided partial and full scholarships to agents from the member states to attend the trainings. Full scholarships(all expenses paid) are offered to five agents from each member state for a total of 20 per training

SRSFC Accomplishments

Sponsored Agent Training

- **Strawberries**

1999-plasticulture, Raleigh, NC- 10 agents from NC, SC and GA plus nine agents from AR, MD and VA

2000-plasticulture, Columbia, SC-30 agents from NC, SC and GA plus 4 agents from AL and AR

2003-anthracoise, Research Triangle Park, NC-34 agents from NC, SC and GA plus one from VA

SRSFC Accomplishments Sponsored Agent Training

- **Blueberries**

2001-two blueberry production sessions sponsored, one in Wilmington, NC and one in Savannah, GA in conjunction with the Southeast Regional Fruit and Veg. Conference-15 agents from NC, SC and GA

- **Brambles**

2002-bramble production, Research Triangle Park, NC-19 agents from NC, SC and GA

2005-bramble production, Savannah, GA in conjunction with the Southeast Regional Fruit and Veg. Conference-33 agents from NC, SC, GA and TN plus one from AL

SRSFC Accomplishments Sponsored Agent Training

- **Grapes**

- 2001 wine grape production, MHCR&EC, Fletcher, NC-15 agents from NC, SC and GA

- 2002 wine grape and muscadine grape production, Chateau Elan Vineyard, Braselton, GA-30 agents from NC, SC, GA and TN

- **Site Selection for Small Fruits**

- 2004 field site selection, Edgewater Hotel, Gatlinburg, TN-21 agents from NC, SC, GA and TN plus two from KY

- **Methyl Bromide Alternatives**

- 2005 agent training on alternatives to methyl bromide scheduled for Feb. 23-24, 2005, Raleigh, NC-19 agents from the four member states received full scholarships to attend

SRSFC Accomplishments Grants Program

- Goal-to provide funding in support of applied research with small fruits in the member state
- Maximum award is \$5000
- An outreach category was established in 2004
- Awards first made in 2001
- Total amount awarded 2001-05=\$292,300

SRSFC Accomplishments Grants Program

- Totals by year
 - 2001 \$47,000 research
 - 2002 \$40,000 research
 - 2003 \$58,700 research
 - 2004 \$56,600 research*+\$10,000 outreach
 - 2005 \$60,000 research**+\$20,000 outreach**
 - * plus \$9,000 matching from IR-4 performance program
 - ** plus \$9500 matching from IR-4 performance program

SRSFC Accomplishments Grants Program

- Distribution by Institution by year
 - 2004 Research:NC-3; SC-1; GA-4; TN-4.
Outreach:NC-2;TN-1
 - 2003 Research:NC-3; SC-2; GA-3; TN-5
 - 2002 Research:NC-4; SC-1; GA-2
- Most of the grants involve Co-PI's or cooperators in two or more states. Award is credited to the lead PI's institution.

Web Site

- <http://www.smallfruits.org>
- Web Master-Brenda Willis(brendaw@uga.edu) located at the Univ. of GA, Athens, GA
- Web site revamped in 2003 making it easier to navigate
- Number of hits per day-2,059 for the period of Jan 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004

Other SRSFC Activities

- **Sponsorships of Grower Meetings**
 - 2003-2005 Southeast Regional Fruit and Veg Conference, Savannah, GA
 - 2004 Southeastern Strawberry Expo, High Point, NC
 - 2002 North American Strawberry Growers Assoc. and North American Bramble Growers Assoc, Raleigh, NC

Other SRSFC Activities

- 2000-Cosponsored two FQPA pesticide risk assessment reviews at NC State Univ. covering all small fruits. Involved specialists from NC, SC, FL and VA
- The SRSFC has been an advocate and taken leadership roles in pursuing registrations of pesticides for small fruit crops through the IR-4 program and state labels with manufacturers

Challenges

- Equal distribution of research and outreach grant funds among the member institutions
- Continuation of the consortium beyond 2007. A new MOU will need to be renegotiated in 2006
- Continuity in coordinators. Originally envisioned as a rotating position among the member states. Time commitment is about 20% of a full time position. Can be a burden especially for junior faculty. Currently held by a semi retired faculty member at NC State Univ.

Challenges

- Growth of the consortium beyond the four state members. Would like to expand to serve the entire small fruit industry in the south but will require more effort by the coordinator
- Securing funds from granting agencies. The SRSFC submitted major proposals to the IFAFS initiative in 2000 and 2001 which were highly rated but not funded. More effort needs to be devoted to seeking outside support.

Opportunities

- Expand Membership. Other southern states have expressed interest in activities of the consortium. If you or your institution are interested in exploring the possibility of joining the consortium a representative from the consortium would be willing to travel to your institution to visit with your faculty and administration. Twenty five per cent of Hatch and Smith Lever funds are mandated to be expended on regional projects. The SRSFC offers a productive investment of these funds. Contact Tom Monaco at tom_monaco@ncsu.edu or (919)515-6963 to arrange a visit.