Computer Classes Help Farmers Stay Competitive
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In my years as an Extension farm management agent, I have seen personal computers go from being an afterthought for most farmers to a valuable tool used to make farms more profitable and sustainable. They use their computers to keep financial records; provide year-end data analysis of their farm operation; and search the Internet for the latest information on commodity prices, alternative enterprises, weather conditions, and complete applications for farm loans and federal agricultural programs.

Farming has never been more dynamic and competitive than it is today. Each decision a farm manager makes – or fails to make – can have a significant impact on the operation. In this fast-paced, high-risk climate, computers play an important part in helping farm managers make crucial decisions about their farm. Still there are some farmers who lack the knowledge of computer usage to keep and quickly access farm records and manage their farm. They generally rely on notebooks and paper files to keep farm records.

In order to help farmers gain this knowledge, North Carolina Cooperative Extension (Robeson County Center), North Carolina A&T State University Cooperative Extension Program, and the Human Resources Department at Robeson Community College are offering computer classes for farmers in cooperation with the Farmers Adopting Computer Training (FACT) Program. The classes are designed for farm families who have never used a computer or have little experience using them. FACT trains farm families to use computers in their farm operations to become more competitive in the marketplace. These classes start with the basics of operating a computer and progress to providing fundamental instruction on using a computer to improve farm management record keeping. They also learn about word processing, keeping financial records using Excel spreadsheets, how to use the Internet, creating and making PowerPoint presentations, creating business E-mail addresses, and creating individual personal farm business web pages to market their farm products.
The first in a series of four five-week classes will begin Tuesday, September 20, at two locations, which are Robeson Community College and the UNC-Pembroke Regional Center at COMTech in Pembroke. Classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 5:30 to 8:30. The title of the class is Basic Keyboarding Skills. Registration fee for the classes is $65 per person but may be waived for individuals who meet eligibility.

For more information about the classes, including fee-waiver eligibility or to preregister, please contact Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at 671-3276, or E-mail at Nelson_Brownlee@ncsu.edu, or visit our website at http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu/.