



Piedmont Grown Announces Fifth Annual Conference:

Increasing Farm Profitability Through Efficiency, Diversified Markets, & Unique Branding

March 10, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Hunt Library, NC State's Centennial Campus, Raleigh, NC

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Piedmont Grown, a certification program that identifies and promotes farm products grown, raised, and made in North Carolina's Piedmont region, is holding its fifth annual conference on Thursday, March 10 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Hunt Library on NC State's Centennial Campus, Raleigh. Join farmers, buyers, researchers, and eaters to celebrate local food and support farmers in their goal to grow the Piedmont Grown brand, increase efficiency, and expand sales.

This year's theme is ***Increasing Farm Profitability Through Efficiency, Diversified Markets and Unique Branding*** featuring keynote speaker Ben Hartman, author of *The Lean Farm*. Ben's keynote, "***Using the Lean System to Earn a Comfortable Living on a Small Farm***" is based on his years of experience on his farm minimizing waste, increasing efficiency, and maximizing value and profits. Ben and his wife, Rachel Hershberger, own and operate Clay Bottom Farm in Goshen, Indiana, where they make a living growing and selling specialty crops on less than an acre. Their food is sold locally to restaurants and cafeterias, at a farmers' market, and through a community supported agriculture (CSA) program.

"Lean principles" were originally developed by the Japanese automotive industry, and Hartman has applied them to farming. As a result, he's been able to drastically cut waste, increase profit, and make his family farm more environmentally and economically sustainable. Hartman's approach of working smarter, not harder, aims to prevent the kind of burnout that start-up farmers often encounter and enable a new generation of young people – as well as seasoned farmers – to maintain and increase profits in small to medium-scale farming.

The conference will feature nine breakout sessions with a dynamic group of speakers including buyers, crop insurance specialists, marketing professionals, and farmers. Our lunch speaker, Sebastian Wolfrum of Epiphany Craft Malt, will explore the growth of the NC spirits industry and opportunities for market farmers to supply ingredients to local breweries, distilleries, and cideries.

Raleigh is a nationally recognized food city; in August 2015 *USA Today Travel* listed Raleigh as the fifth best "local food scene" city in the United States. The Piedmont Grown team selected Raleigh as a location to draw on the local food artisans and businesses to connect with regional growers.

Deborah Underwood Brown of Standard Foods in Raleigh said, "the very small farmer is our core. I search for the unknown farmer/artisan who has a superior product; has no market; and mentor to take away barriers which have prevented market relationships. The Piedmont Grown Conference gives us the opportunity to

meet these farmers and hear their stories. We want to take their stories and the results of their hard work to our restaurant, grocery shelves and by doing this, connect the farmer and the land with our guests.”

Conference tickets are on sale now and can be purchased online at <http://bit.ly/PiedmontGrown2016Conf>

Piedmont Grown’s mission is to promote local food systems through the certification of food and farm products grown or raised in 37 counties in the North Carolina Piedmont Region. We want to link consumers to local farm fresh foods, build local markets for farmers and food entrepreneurs, and grow healthy and prosperous communities. For more information visit www.piedmontgrown.org.

Sponsored by:



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