

# 25Farmer Network Begins Accepting Applications

**MEMPHIS, TENN.**

**T**he 25Farmer Network has begun taking applications from farmers in Tennessee. The goal of the Network is to connect farmers to new bioindustries. Sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the 25Farmer Network is a key component of the AgBio Project recently announced by the Memphis Bioworks Foundation.

The 25Farmer Network is a business-oriented group of entrepreneurial farmers located in 21 West Tennessee counties who will be building the skills required to produce alternative crops, to add value to those crops through processing, and to participate in new business opportunities.

“Our goal is to recruit entrepreneurial farmers who are interested in exploring future business opportunities with minimal risk. Alternative farm crops are being used in a wide variety of biobased products and we are well suited for the production and transportation of the feedstocks needed to produce those products,” said Hillary Spain, Project Coordinator. “We will examine a wide range of new crops including oilseed, biomass, sugars and starches,” she added.

Participating farmers will sign a one-year contract and will commit up to 5 acres of land. They will be compensated at the rate of \$500 per acre in addition to seed being provided at no charge. In addition, these farmers will have the opportunity to attend a national conference and will participate in three business development workshops during the winter months. Some topics for these workshops include: navigating the

new farm bill, new agricultural crop opportunities, business development and crop production issues.

Demonstration plots have already been planted at Agricenter International in Memphis this year. Next year, demonstration plots will be added in Jackson and Milan, Tennessee. Ultimately, this small plot research will be scaled-up to larger plots on the farms of the 25Farmer Network. This will provide sufficient samples for evaluation by local industries.

“We encourage interested farmers to visit our exhibit booth at the Field Day in Milan, TN on Thursday, July 24th and at additional meetings planned throughout West Tennessee. These informational sessions will provide details of the program, answer any questions, and take applications for the network,” said Ms. Spain. The 25Farmer Network will be presented at:

July 24, 2008 – Exhibit Booth at Milan No-Till Field Day, Milan, TN

July 29, 2008 – West TN Research & Education Center, Jackson, TN 8:30-11:30 AM

Aug 6, 2008 – Field Day at Agricenter International, Memphis, TN 8:30 AM

Aug 12, 2008 – Dyer County Extension Office, Dyersburg, TN 8:30-11:30 AM

The face of agriculture is changing and farmers in the 25Farmer Network will play a key role in the emerging bioeconomy.

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