



2014 Master Farmer University Begins January 16 at West Monroe Convention Center

West Monroe, LA. – The Louisiana Master Farmer program will offer a two-day workshop – called Master Farmer University – beginning January 16 at the West Monroe Convention Center and concluding with a farm tour on January 17, in which participants will be able to complete the first two of three phases of the program. This program is presented in conjunction with, and partially funded by Ag Expo 2014. Registration fee includes Ag Expo admission.

"The Master Farmer program allows producers to implement best management practices for all phases of animal and crop production and become well-educated on environmental issues," said Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter associate vice chancellor, adding that the program stresses adoption of voluntary conservation practices.

The two-day workshop will include the first phase, which is classroom instruction, and the second phase, which is a tour of a farm operation to see conservation practices firsthand.

Leonard said farmers will also be able to start on Phase III of the program as part of the workshop. This phase involves planning and implementing a farm's conservation plan.

Leonard said Master Farmer University, which is a compressed version of the program, resulted from requests by several commodity groups for a concentrated training opportunity.

"Louisiana agriculture has two options for the future: Additional regulations limiting crop production or voluntary action," Leonard said. "We urge farmers to take the opportunities of the Master Farmer University to move forward."

Mike Strain, commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, said he encourages every producer in Louisiana, regardless of size or commodity, to consider attending Master Farmer University.

"You are the best stewards of Louisiana's soil and water resources, and this is your program," he said.

Registration online begins December 5.th at <u>https://www.regonline.com/lmfu2013</u>.. Registration cost will be \$30 and includes admission to the 2014 Ag Expo.

The first day of Master Farmer University begins at the West Monroe Convention Center, January 16, with registration at 8:30 a.m. Presentations will made on water quality standards, best management practices (BMPs) for specific commodities and programs offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Producers will be able to concentrate on conservation practices for their specific operations, with sessions scheduled for row crops, beef cattle and poultry.

The second day, participants will meet to attend a field tour of their choice from 9:00-11:30 a.m. and view best management practices that have been implemented. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit and discuss the benefits, effectiveness and economics of BMP implementation with producers and LSU AgCenter, NRCS and LDAF professionals. Row-crop producers will meet at the Macon Ridge Research Station in Winnsboro. Beef cattle producers will meet at the Ron Richardson Farm in Calhoun and poultry producers will meet at the Hill Farm Research Station in Homer. Participants will have the opportunity to see conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs), including soil and water management, pest management, a VERIS-EC demonstration, zone versus grid soil sampling, residue management calculations, pasture management, poultry litter management, application calibration, poultry house cooling methods and more.

Those already certified as Master Farmers will be able to obtain three hours of continuing education credits for each day they attend.

The Louisiana Master Farmer program began in 2001 with the partnership of the LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Louisiana Farm Bureau, Louisiana Cattlemen's Association and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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