



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS AND MANAGER

500 N. Main St., Room 921 • Monroe, NC 28112 • Phone (704)283-3810 • Fax (704)282-0121

Staff Contact:

Dustin Adcock 704-283-3830

News Release

Farmer's Market to Get Facelift

February 4, 2014, Monroe, NC – The Union County Board of Commissioners has approved a plan to turn the Union County Farmer's Market on Skyway Drive in Monroe into a market that focuses on locally produced foods. The Board also approved a part-time Local Foods Market Coordinator position in Union County Cooperative Extension to manage the market.

In 1989 the Union County Farmer's Market was established at its current location to serve as a "grower's market," providing a county facility to serve as a selling location for farmers, artisans, and value-added entrepreneurs that needed a market for their crops and products.

"This principle is what encourages the protection of open land and green space, promotes small businesses and entrepreneurship, and brings healthier food options to the county's citizens all while supporting a local economy," said Local Food Agent Dustin Adcock.

In recent years, the Union County Farmer's Market has evolved into an "open market" that allows foreign produce with no food safety precautions, product resale and inequitable pricing. Although the Board of County Commissioners placed oversight of the Union County Farmer's Market under the Cooperative Extension Service in 2011, no real change occurred. Currently an unofficial Farmer's Market Board consisting of vendors determines the daily functions of the market. The result has been a lack of support for local growers' use of the market, and a lack of quality control over goods being sold.

"It is a concern to many of our citizens that the Union County Farmer's Market does not currently meet the needs of our farmers or of consumers seeking local foods," Adcock said. "An additional concern is that there are no protections regarding the safety of the food sold at our market."

Adcock has identified the issues that need to be corrected at the Farmer's Market and developed a plan for addressing them. Essential steps in the plan include establishing an advisory committee to replace the standing board of vendors; establish guidelines and rules for selling at the market; implement minor upgrades to the facility; hire a Local Foods Market Coordinator to implement rules, facilitate and promote use of the market, and comply with state and federal requirements for accepting Health and DSS benefits from customers; brand local foods so that consumers can trust the source of the products they purchase at the market; better serving low-income residents with reliable high-quality fresh food.

Implementing these steps will allow the “new” market to open by early April 2014. The Farmer’s Market will close for approximately four weeks while improvements are made to the facility.

“This effort by Dustin and the growers will expand markets for our local producers, and it will also improve the nutrition and health of our community,” said Board of County Commissioners Vice Chairman Jerry Simpson.

###