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La. Master Farmer Program field days planned

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The LSU AgCenter has scheduled a variety of model farm field tours this spring and summer for producers who need to complete the second phase of the [Louisiana Master Farmer Program](#) and learn about specific conservation practices.

The Louisiana Master Farmer initiative is an environmental education program designed to help farmers and ranchers identify and adopt best management practices, LSU AgCenter officials say. The program's focus is on addressing environmental concerns, such as water quality, while maximizing agricultural productivity.

Model farm visits are required for the 2,300 participating farmers to complete the program's second phase and move toward Louisiana Master Farmer certification. The field days also allow participants to earn continuing education credits.

"It is critical to offer these tours so farmers can observe how selected 'model farm' producers implement best management practices on commodity-specific farms in their watershed," said LSU AgCenter model farm coordinator Donna Morgan.

Model farms have been selected across the state based on the watersheds and the crops and livestock produced in those areas. By offering the variety of different model farms, the program provides Master Farmer participants a chance to see how various practices are implemented on farms similar to theirs, Morgan said.

The commodity-specific field days planned for spring and summer 2008 will be offered as follows:

- April 24, 1 p.m., for poultry and cattle producers at the LSU AgCenter's Hill Farm Research Station in Homer.
- May 9, 8:30 a.m., for row crop producers at Robert Thevis' farm in Simmesport.
- May 23, 9 a.m., for cattle producers at Edgar Raymond's farm in Oak Grove.

- June 6, 9 a.m., for rice and crawfish producers at Jeff Durand's farm in St. Martinville.
- June 20, 9 a.m., for row crop producers at Jay Hardwick's farm in Newellton.
- July 8, 2:30 p.m., for rice and crawfish producers at Kent Lounsberry's farm in Lake Arthur (held in conjunction with the Vermilion Parish Rice School).
- July 11, 9 a.m., for rice and cattle producers at Kenneth LaHaye's farm in Ville Platte (held in conjunction with the RiceTec variety tour).
- July 24, time to be announced, for sugarcane producers at Ronald Hebert's farm in Jeanerette (held in conjunction with the Iberia/St. Mary Sugarcane Field Day).

"These field days are to help producers who have completed the first phase of the Master Farmer Program and need to complete the second phase of observing conservation practices being implemented on a farm," Morgan said.

The Louisiana Master Farmer Program involves three phases. The first is an intensive classroom-style educational program on a variety of topics. The second is a field tour of a farm where conservation practices have been implemented. Finally, Master Farmer candidates are required to develop and implement comprehensive conservation plans on their own farms.

Producers enrolled in the Master Farmer Program will receive credit for attending one of these field days, Morgan said. Certified producers and certified crop advisors also will receive three hours of continuing educational credit for attending a field day.

More information on the Louisiana Master Farmer Program is available from Morgan at (318) 613-9278 or dsmorgan@agcenter.lsu.edu or the Web site www.lsuagcenter.com/masterfarmer.

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