

# Rural Times

*Building Economic Development in Rural Oklahoma*  
A service of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry's  
Market Development Services Division

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As urban dwellers become farther removed from farming heritage, many are seeking a return to their roots.

With this in mind, Emily Oakley and Michael Appel, Tulsa, created Three Springs Farm, a community supported agriculture (CSA) program. The farm focuses on high quality, sustainably grown vegetables, fruits, cut flowers and herbs. Customers pay up front, and in exchange, receive a weekly share of the farm's produce throughout the spring and summer.

Both partners had rich experience in studying and working with sustainable agricultural systems in the United States and abroad. In September 2003, the pair started the small scale diverse vegetable farm in Tulsa, selling first to local farmer's markets and later expanding to a CSA program.

"We had the desire and experience necessary to start such a program here," Oakley said. "We also were convinced of the market demand through the success of the natural grocery store chain, Wild Oats. We conducted a survey with family friends and contacts to assess their interest in joining and found an overwhelmingly positive reaction."

Thirty-five members now subscribe to the Three Springs program, while a waiting list contains more than 40 names. The current members are provided with approximately 10 lbs. of produce per week for at least 20 weeks. The farm generates 7,000 lbs. of produce per season for the farm, in addition to what is sold at the farmer's market.

The CSA provides a regular and guaranteed income to Three Springs that is not subject to weather or customer fluctuations seen at farmer's markets.

It also forms a stronger relationship between farmers and the local community, Oakley said. "Our customers repeatedly express satisfaction with knowing where their food is coming from, who grew it and how, and developing a relationship with their food sources."

The program's successful expansion to a CSA was made possible in part through the

Oklahoma Agriculture Enhancement and Diversification Program. This state legislated program was designed to develop or improve uses for agriculture products, expand the state's production of value-added products and to encourage diversified farming. The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry oversees the program.

Three Springs Farm received a Farm Diversification Grant to allow the owners to expand their operation to a commercial scale and to farm full time.

"This is an extremely crucial program for small scale farmers, and in our case,

and/or market Oklahoma agriculture products. Resulting activities must create rural economic development, jobs and the probability of success.

Interest-free loans and grants are available in four categories: Cooperative Marketing Loan, Marketing and Utilization Loan, Basic and Applied Research Loan/Grant and Farm Diversification Grant.

Loans may not be used to purchase land, buildings or equipment. They may be used for feasibility studies, business plans, legal expenses, consultant fees, product development and marketing.



**Three Springs Farm, owned by Emily Oakley and Michael Appel of Tulsa, Okla., provides a community supported agriculture program to its members. The program has been made possible in part through the Oklahoma Agriculture Enhancement and Diversification Program.**

beginning farmers," Oakley said. "For us, it meant the difference between remaining a hobby business versus advancing to a full time career in farming.

"Without the equipment we were able to purchase with the Ag Enhancement Program, we would not have been able to push our operation to the scale needed to reliably deliver the quantity and diversity of produce required by a CSA."

OAED program funds must be used to produce alternative ag products or to process

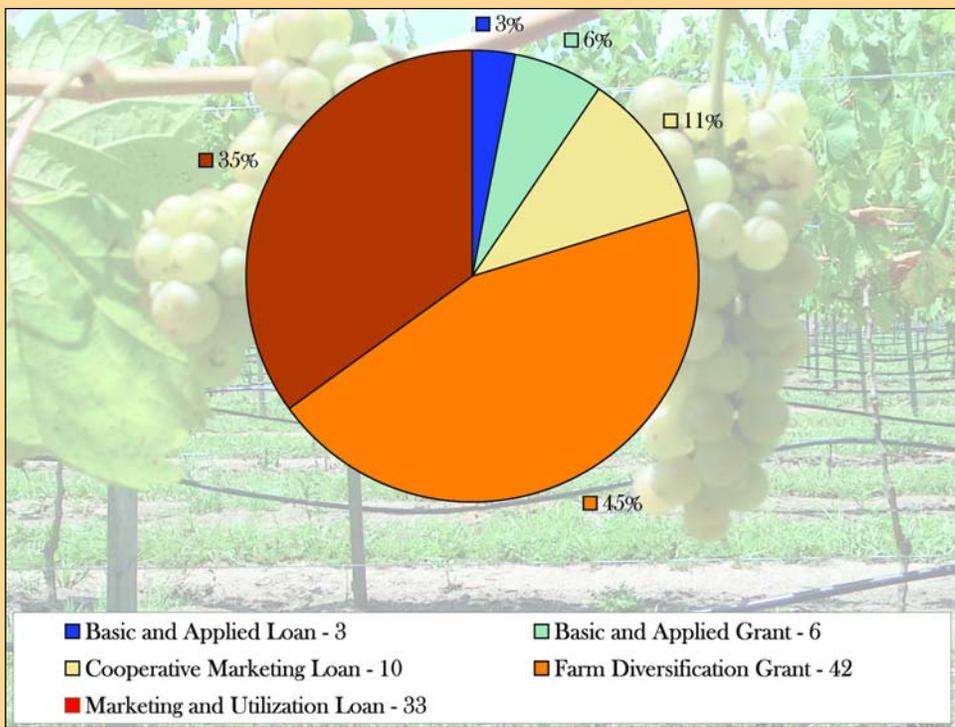
Applications are evaluated quarterly. The next deadline for the OAED program is Monday, April 3, 2006. Applications are available from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry at [www.oda.state.ok.us](http://www.oda.state.ok.us) by clicking on the "Loans" link. For more information, contact Jason Harvey at (405) 522-5563 or [jason.harvey@oda.state.ok.us](mailto:jason.harvey@oda.state.ok.us) or Gary Bledsoe at (405) 830-1341 or [gary.bledsoe@oda.state.ok.us](mailto:gary.bledsoe@oda.state.ok.us).

# A CLOSER LOOK:

## Oklahoma Agriculture Enhancement & Diversification Program

### OAED PROGRAM APPLICATIONS FUNDED

(Since program inception in 1999)

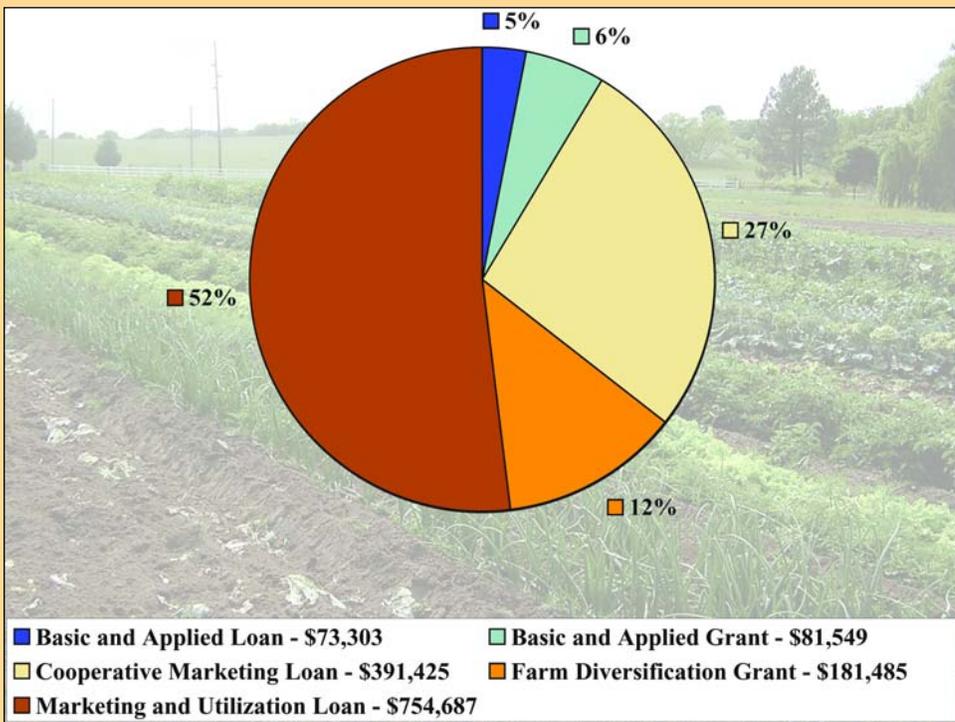


|                                       |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ■ Basic and Applied Loan - 3          | ■ Basic and Applied Grant - 6     |
| ■ Cooperative Marketing Loan - 10     | ■ Farm Diversification Grant - 42 |
| ■ Marketing and Utilization Loan - 33 |                                   |

Total applications funded: 94

### OAED PROGRAM FUNDING DISBURSEMENTS

(Since program inception in 1999)



|  |  |
|--|--|
| ■ Basic and Applied Loan - \$73,303          | ■ Basic and Applied Grant - \$81,549     |
| ■ Cooperative Marketing Loan - \$391,425     | ■ Farm Diversification Grant - \$181,485 |
| ■ Marketing and Utilization Loan - \$754,687 |  |

Total disbursements: \$1,482,449

### OAED CATEGORIES

Cooperative Marketing Loan  
Basic and Applied Research  
Loan/Grant  
Marketing and Utilization Loan  
Farm Diversification Grant

### OAED 2006 APPLICATION DEADLINES

Tuesday, January 3  
Monday, April 3  
Monday, July 3  
Monday, October 2

Visit [www.oda.state.ok.us](http://www.oda.state.ok.us)  
for more information.



The Oklahoma Agriculture Enhancement & Diversification Program is overseen by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. For more information and applications, contact:

Oklahoma Department of  
Agriculture Food and Forestry  
Market Development Services  
P.O. Box 528804  
Oklahoma City, OK 73152  
(405) 522-5509  
[www.oda.state.ok.us](http://www.oda.state.ok.us)

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