

# **RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOLAR ENERGY**

**Outline Of Need:** Fresh, locally grown, organic food is the focus of

Red Bud Farm. Their location in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, close to the Baltimore – Washington market, assures plenty of demand for their products. Owners Haroun Hallack and Clarissa Mathews grow over fifteen (15) acres of produce each year for local consumption.

The need to move toward producing vegetables year around led to the addition of a greenhouse. The initial goal was to extend the growing season by starting plants sooner. However, the cost of propane to heat the greenhouse during the early spring months cut into the profit of having an earlier crop. A lower cost heat source was needed. Solar heat seemed like the perfect solution.

**How Rural Development Helped:** Through the

Internet, the owners discovered USDA-Rural Development's Section 9006 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Grant program. They applied for a 25% grant toward the cost of installing a solar hot water system. The application was successful and the project began in 2007. Installation of the system took longer than expected, due to the lack of certified installers in West Virginia. Haroun Hallack took the initiative and attended training through North Carolina State University to become a certified installer.

## The Results:

The new system is now in operation and was utilized during the spring of 2008. Initial savings, even though we had a mild spring, were \$250 per month. During a typical year, the savings would be much greater.

The propane tank has been removed and future plans are to expand the greenhouse to grow crops during the winter months. USDA-Rural Development congratulates Haroun Hallack and Dr. Clarissa Mathews on the successful completion of the first Section 9006 Renewable Energy project in West Virginia.



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