

## *FROM BLUEGRASS TO BLUE CHEESE*

**Outline of Need:** Kenny Mattingly did not grow up on a farm but that didn't prevent farming from being in his blood. In 1976, at age 19, he moved with his family from Indianapolis to rural Austin, Kentucky. After helping his parents operate their farm for 6 years he moved back to Indianapolis. Four years later the "call of the land" beckoned him back to Austin, where he has remained.

During the 1980's he struggled, as did all small farmers, with the uncertain farm economy. As a member of the Community Farm Alliance he took part in an agricultural tour of Europe. During this trip he was struck by two things, the effect of the fall of communism and the ability of the smaller European farms to add value to their products for the local markets.

Upon returning home to Austin he realized that he would have to adapt to changing market conditions here in the United States as well. This revelation led him down the path to Kenny's Cheese.

**How Rural Development Helped:** Mr. Mattingly's operation has evolved from purely a tobacco and dairy farm to one in which approximately 40% of his dairy production is further processed into a variety of cheeses. After being referred to USDA Rural Development by U.S. Congressman Ron Lewis' office, he was approved for a Value Added Grant to



conduct a feasibility study for improved marketing techniques, including internet sales which he hopes will enable him to increase his production to the point that he uses not only 100% of his dairy output but also the dairy output of other local farmers.



**The Results:** Currently he markets 25 varieties of cheddars, colbys and blue cheeses from his home in Austin. Most of his current sales take place either at farmer's markets or in-store demonstrations.