

## **SECTION A - ENHANCING AGRICULTURE, FOODS AND FORESTS**

Because of the rapid expansion of confinement animal operations within the county, there is a pressing need to provide assistance to these producers to deal with environmental issues, government regulations, and labor management. All producers are faced with increasing pressure to protect the environment through responsible use of pesticides and best management practices (BMPs). Continuing educational programs and individual assistance are needed to help these producers adopt proven practices and adhere to established regulations.

Tobacco is the major cash crop in the county. With the uncertainty of the continuation of the tobacco program, many producers are looking for suitable ways to diversify their operations. Many producers are choosing more traditional crops for these alternatives such as cotton, swine, poultry, beef, and forages. Other producers, especially limited resource farmers, are considering nontraditional alternatives such as fruits, vegetables or small animals.

There is tremendous potential for expansion of vegetable production within the county. The Southeastern Regional Farmers Market on US-74 just south of Lumberton provides increased opportunities for local producers to market locally produced fruit and vegetable crops as well as homemade items.

More than one-half of the county is made up of forests. Most of this woodlands is along the Lumber River and the major tributaries in the county. However, a large amount of private owned forest land is managed for timber production. Timber is the least managed crop in the county, providing tremendous opportunity for Cooperative Extension to help forest owners learn more about timber production, management, and marketing. Special programming emphasis is given to female and limited resource landowners.