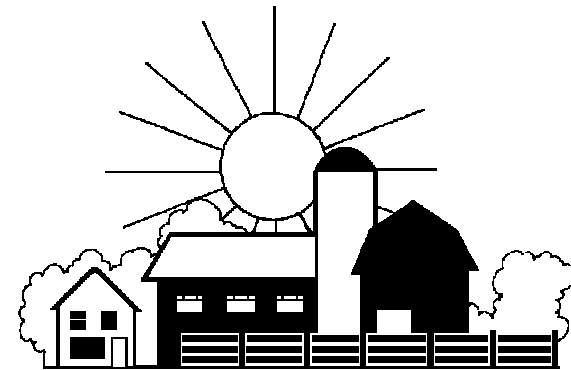




Opportunities for Your Farm

Explore the options for use of your farmland.



Provided by the

**Robeson County Center
of the
North Carolina Cooperative
Extension Service**

October 2004

Distributed in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

The information provided in this leaflet is to inform landowners of potential uses for their land. We receive hundreds of calls each year from individuals searching for new ideas on how to best use their land. Whether you have a few acres or a few hundred, this information should provide you with a general guide for some ideas you can research to see what best fits your particular situation. If you want more detailed information on any of the following topics, please view the websites listed or contact the person listed by calling the Extension Service at 910-671-3276.

IN THIS BULLETIN

- Agritourism
- Tobacco Tourism
- Aquaculture
- Alternative Horticultural Crops
- Grapes, Wines, and Wineries
- Plasticulture
- Peach Production
- Honeybee Production
- Meat Goat Farming
- Small Poultry Flocks
- Forestry Resources
- Tobacco Greenhouse Alternatives
- Farmland Rental

AGRITOURISM



Tourists spend over \$85 million in Robeson County each year. Virtually all expenditures are for motels, gas, meals, and snacks as tourists travel through our county going somewhere else. At the same time, the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry is heritage, cultural, and agritourism. More people want to experience nature, their heritage, and the cultures of various regions. They want to see how their food is produced and experience the quiet and peacefulness of rural areas. There is tremendous potential for local entrepreneurs to determine ways to get the tourists who pass through our county to spend an extra day and, while doing so, to spend extra money while they are here. Tourists don't mind spending money for what they want as long as they receive an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

AGRICULTURAL STAFF

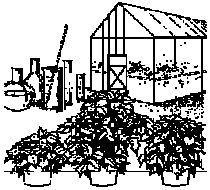
- Everett Davis, County Director -- Pond Management, Wildlife, Forestry, Farm Management and Marketing, Beaver Management, Community and Rural Development
- James Cochran, Area Specialized Poultry Agent -- Poultry
- Nelson Brownlee, Area Farm Management Agent -- Farm Management
- Georgia Love, Field Crops Agent -- Tobacco, Corn, Soybeans, Small Grains, Cotton, Peanuts
- Tiffanee Conrad, Area Livestock Agent -- Swine, Beef, Small Animals, Forages, Water Quality, Animal Waste Management
- Melissa McLean, Horticultural Agent -- Urban and Consumer Horticulture, Downtown Farmers Market, Master Gardeners, Pesticide Education
- Martin Brewington, Agricultural Technician -- Farm Opportunities Program

ROBESON COUNTY WEBSITE ADDRESS

www.ces.ncsu.edu/robeson/



TOBACCO GREENHOUSE ALTERNATIVES



As less tobacco is grown in greenhouses, more space is available for alternative crop production. Viable alternatives for tobacco greenhouses can consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hydroponic tomatoes
- Hydroponic strawberries
- Cucumbers and other vegetables
- Poinsettias
- Horticultural plants/ornamentals
- Leaf lettuce
- Tobacco plants for direct sale



Extension Contacts: Georgia Love, Field Crops Extension Agent, Georgia_Love@ncsu.edu, or Melissa McLean, Horticultural Extension Agent, Missy_McLean@ncsu.edu

FARMLAND RENTAL

Communication is the key for successful landowner and farmer rental agreements. Many situations can be resolved just through the act of communicating the expectations of both parties. Leasing farmland can make good business sense in many situations, both for a farmer wishing to start up or expand operations and for a landowner who wants some current income from the land. We have some very helpful fact sheets which discuss common questions about legal and economic issues that arise in farmland leases. For you first-time renters, we have examples of written lease agreements for farmland and tobacco rental.

Extension Contact: Georgia Love, Field Crops Extension Agent, Georgia_Love@ncsu.edu

Possible Tourism Ventures

- Rural Vacations
- Rural Bed and Breakfasts
- Small Town Bed and Breakfasts
- On-Farm Camping
- Accommodations with Horseback Riding
- Accommodations with Nature Trails
- Guided Agricultural Tours
- Farm Tour Trails
- Corn Maze
- Hunting Preserves
- Canoe Outfitters

Rural Tourism Websites

- www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/tourism/opt/
- www.nctourismresources.net/
- www.tourisminsight.com/
- www.eckertagrimarketing.com/
- www.sandhillsagriculture.com/
- www.agr.state.nc.us/agritourism/links.htm
- www.visitnc.com

Extension Contact: Everett Davis, County Extension Director, Everett_Davis@ncsu.edu

TOBACCO TOURISM

Many folks who have never seen a tobacco field travel through Robeson County each year on their way to vacation destinations or just traveling through. There is a great deal of interest by these people in tobacco production and actually viewing a working tobacco farm. Some will even pay to work on a tobacco farm for a day or just to get a view of an actual working farm. Offering your farm for this purpose could be a worthwhile endeavor. For more information, contact our office.



Extension Contact: Georgia Love, Field Crops Extension Agent, Georgia_Love@ncsu.edu

AQUACULTURE



Commercial Catfish Production: There is a major catfish processing company in Ayden, North Carolina, which markets catfish both in the United States and overseas. Carolina

Classic Catfish is seeking contract growers to produce catfish for them. Old farm ponds are not the type of ponds needed for commercial catfish production. For most landowners interested in commercial catfish production, special ponds must be constructed, with a plentiful water supply, that will allow for intensive production and ease of harvest. Contact Carolina Classic Catfish by calling 252-746-2818 or visit their website at:

www.cccatfish.com/

Aquacultural Websites

- Extension Service
www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/aquaculture/index.htm
- NCDA Aquaculture
www.agr.state.nc.us/aquacult/
- Southern Regional Aquaculture Center
www.msstate.edu/dept/srac/

Local Commercial Fish Production: Because of aggressive marketing campaigns, channel catfish have become a favorite fish for many consumers. They can be found on the menu at many restaurants but are hard to find locally. Pond owners can raise large numbers of fish in floating cages, making it possible to have fresh fish available whenever the consumer wants them. With a little local advertising, profitable part-time businesses can be developed to supply catfish to local consumers.

Tank Production of Talapia: Talapia, which is quickly becoming a major product in the commercial market, is a highly desirable fish for the Hispanic population. You can now buy Talapia at many supermarkets and fish markets, and it is beginning to be

from longleaf pines. Some landowners may prefer to lease their pine forests to individuals or to major pine straw companies that will clear out the undesirable undergrowth and then pay a fee on the acre or bale basis. Other landowners may prefer to bale the straw themselves and sell on the local market for the highest returns. For the bulletin entitled Producing Longleaf Pine Straw see this website:

www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/woodland/won-18.html

Firewood: Although the use of open fireplaces and wood-burning stoves has declined in recent years, increases in the cost of heating fuels has caused many homeowners to reconsider this option. This is a way to use off-season farm labor to clear out undesirable trees and make some extra money doing so. Well-publicized operations can sell directly from the farm or can charge extra fees for delivery or for the use of a trailer to haul the firewood. For the bulletin entitled Producing Firewood from Your Woodlot see this website:



www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/woodland/won-14.html

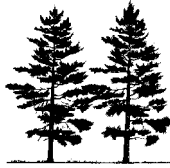
Recreation: Many landowners fail to realize that people will pay for the opportunity to spend time in the woods. The most common recreational use of forestlands is hunting leases. However, many people enjoy bird watching, wildlife watching, hiking, or camping and are willing to pay for the ability to do this. Off-season farm labor can be used to prepare woodlands for these activities. After paying for liability insurance, well-developed and well-maintained sites can be leased on an annual or seasonal basis to provide additional income. The more features and amenities that are added, the greater demand and the greater the fees that can be reasonably charged. For the bulletin entitled Recreational Forest Trails: Plan for Success see this website:

www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/pdf/WON/won29.pdf

Extension Contact: Everett Davis, County Extension Director,
Everett_Davis@ncsu.edu

FORESTRY RESOURCES

Whether you have 10 acres or 1,000 acres of woods on your farm, woodlands offer a great opportunity for landowners to generate additional income from their farms. For many landowners, the portion of their farm that is in trees is the least managed and often most overlooked part of the farm.



There are many acres of open land in the county that are no longer being used to produce crops. Many more acres of very marginal land is used for soybean production and rarely are the yields in these fields high enough to pay the bills. Well-managed timberland on these fields would generate a far greater income over a period of time.

There are several cost-share programs available to assist landowners in replanting recently harvested forestlands or for establishing trees in fields that were previously used for crops. For more information, please contact your Cooperative Extension Service or call the North Carolina Forest Service at their Robeson County office at 910-618-5540.

General Forest Management: The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service offers a variety of very informative bulletins that address many of the major issues related to establishing and managing forestlands. Visit our office for free copies of these bulletins or download them yourself at:

www.ces.ncsu.edu/forestry/marketingpubs.htm

For those with little experience in forest management, the best bulletin for you is Timber Sales – A Planning Guide for Landowners.



Pine Straw Production: Pine straw is a highly desirable mulching material for homeowners. The most common and least expensive is from loblolly pines, and the most expensive and most desirable is

offered at some restaurants. However, it is difficult to find fresh Talapia locally. These fish will not live through the winter in our climate, so they must be produced in tanks inside buildings. Landowners with unused buildings on their farm may want to consider Talapia production by first supplying to the local markets and then growing into the large scale commercial markets.

Fee Fishing: Many people like to fish, but it is getting more and more difficult to find a convenient and safe place to fish where you can easily catch enough to eat. Simply trying to charge someone to fish in an old farm pond is not going to attract much interest. However, there is a great need in this county for several well-stocked, well-managed, sizable ponds established as fee fishing operations. Convenient parking, picnic benches, shady areas to fish, rest room facilities (port-a-johns), and attractive landscape would be especially attractive to city folks, senior citizens, and adults wishing to give their children an opportunity to fish. Refreshment stands, bait and tackle stores, and fish cleaning services can greatly add to the income potential. Properly marketed with special promotions for company picnics, family reunions, youth outings, et cetera, would provide far greater income than the cost of liability insurance.



Tournament Ponds: Fishing tournaments are increasing in popularity throughout the nation. If properly advertised, one or two well-managed tournament ponds in the county could provide significant income for the owners and operators. Tournament ponds are well established and highly used in other regions of North Carolina. Those fishing the tournaments pay a fee to fish in the pond but compete among themselves for the prize money. The owner/operator gains income from fees, bait and tackle sales, and food and refreshment sales. Special promotions to attract additional business would include buddy, father/son, company, and family reunion tournaments.

Extension Contact: Everett Davis, County Extension Director, Everett_Davis@ncsu.edu

ALTERNATIVE HORTICULTURAL CROPS

Specialty Vegetables

- Gourds
- Garlic
- Onions
- Herbs (Culinary and Medicinal)
- Organically Grown Vegetables
- Greenhouse Production for Out-of-Season Crops
- Oriental Vegetables



Fruits and Nuts

- Paw Paws
- Persimmons
- Melons
- Grapes
- Strawberries
- Apples
- Peaches
- Pears
- Blueberries
- Brambles (Blackberries, Raspberries, et cetera)

Horticultural and Nursery Crops

- Bedding Plants
- Greenhouse-Grown Cut Flowers and Potted Plants
- Native Plants and Wildflowers
- Field Grown Cut Flowers

Website Resources

www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/altlist.htm#toc4

Extension Contact: Melissa McLean, Horticultural Extension Agent, Missy_McLean@ncsu.edu

SMALL POULTRY FLOCKS



Small poultry flocks can be a profitable alternative endeavor or an addition to other crop or animal production enterprises. Low to medium inputs along with corresponding labor requirements to ensure production success can be matched with local market demand for high-quality, farm-fresh poultry and eggs. Below is a quick summary of regulations affecting production and marketing.

You can avoid major on-farm poultry related inspections if you:

- sell less than 30 dozen eggs per week off your premises
- slaughter, process, and market no more than 1,000 birds per year directly off your premises

From 1,001 to 20,000 birds processed per year requires inspection and monitoring by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Over 20,000 birds requires a full time inspector on-site.

Website Resources

Poultry and egg processing and marketing regulatory requirements can be found at:

- www.ncagr.com/gradnreg/reglator/egglaw.htm
- www.ncagr.com/vet/meat_poultry/packets.htm

Examples of others' experience with alternative poultry production, such as pasture pen-raised poultry, is featured in a 15-page publication at:

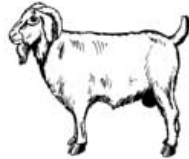
www.sare.org/publications/poultry.htm

For printed copies of the above information contact the Cooperative Extension Service at 910-671-3276.

Extension Contact: James Cochran, Area Specialized Poultry Extension Agent, James_Cochran@ncsu.edu

Robeson County certified producers now have a market for their meat goats. Producers who take a one-day certification class and pay annual dues to be in the North Carolina Meat Goat Cooperative can sell their goats monthly to the Robeson County buying station and receive at least \$1 per pound live weight. As the market price increases, producers will receive more than \$1 per pound, but never less.

Goats also complement current cattle operations. It is estimated that most beef cattle farmers would have enough excess feed in cattle pastures to feed one to two goats per cow at no additional cost. There are more than 500,000 beef cows in North Carolina, suggesting that beef pastures could support around one million goats.



Successful goat raising must be forage and browse-based. The complementary effects of grazing cattle and goats on the same farm, therefore, provide an opportunity to enhance North Carolina's existing beef cattle industry by improving pasture condition and feed quality.

The role of goats as biological control agents is becoming increasingly important due to environmental concerns and elevated costs of other control methods such as mechanical cutting and herbicide application. Goats are also being used to control noxious vegetation growing along drainage ditch banks to reduce herbicide and fuel use. Goats also successfully control the growth of kudzu as an alternative to current weed management and control practices that rely heavily on herbicides.

Website Resources

www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension/animal/meatgoat/ahgoats_index.html

Extension Contact: Tiffanee Conrad, Livestock Extension Agent, Tiff_Conrad@ncsu.edu

GRAPES, WINES, AND WINERIES

Robeson County offers an ideal climate for the production of muscadine grapes. Although bunch grapes do not do very well in this area, muscadine grapes are native to the coastal areas of North Carolina and are proclaimed to have the greatest health benefits.



There has always been a demand for fresh market grapes in this area, but the supply never seems to meet the demand. There is potential to establish small vineyards and supply to consumers through on-farm sales, roadside stands, or farmers markets.

There is increasing demand for commercial production of muscadine grapes for the wine and juice industry. More serious producers are encouraged to consider producing grapes for one of the many wineries or juice companies that are currently operating or that are in the planning stages.

For the really serious, there is tremendous potential for the development of a winery in Robeson County, specifically along the I-95 corridor in order to capitalize on the tourist traffic. Since large capital investments will be necessary, this may require a group effort of producers and investors. A winery along the interstate offering wine sampling, a gift shop, and a specialty deli would attract both local and tourist business and would provide the diversity needed for profitability.

Website Resources

- Grape Production
pestdata.ncsu.edu/cropprofiles/docs/ncgrapes.html
- Wines and Wineries
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8203.html
www.ncwine.org

Extension Contact: Everett Davis, County Extension Director, Everett_Davis@ncsu.edu

PRODUCING COMMERCIAL VEGETABLES

USING PLASTICULTURE



Today's vegetable growers are looking for new ways to achieve higher-quality produce, superior yields, and early spring markets. The plasticulture system has helped an increasing number of producers reach these goals. Growers using the plasticulture system have doubled and tripled yields and harvested their crops two to three weeks earlier than is possible with traditional growing practices. Plasticulture is a management-intensive system that requires careful planning and close attention. Its benefits, however, can be many. Before you invest in plasticulture, you should carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of plasticulture versus traditional practices. North Carolina A&T State University through the Tobacco Trust Fund has purchased plastic-laying equipment for farmers to use in Southeastern North Carolina.

Extension Contacts: Nelson Brownlee, Area Farm Management Extension Agent, Nelson_Brownlee@ncsu.edu, or Martin Brewington, Agricultural Technician, Martin_Brewington@ncsu.edu

PEACH PRODUCTION

North Carolina ranks seventh in the nation in the production of peaches. Robeson County offers a wide range of soil types suitable for peach production. Small orchards of 20 to 600 trees strategically located around the county can provide for the local fresh market. More serious producers may consider starting small and then expanding to include wholesale and specialty marketing. Peaches require intensive management and marketing but can provide a profitable supplemental business for certain individuals.



Website Resources

- Growing Peaches in North Carolina
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/ag30.html
- NCDA Information on Peaches
www.agr.state.nc.us/markets/commodit/horticult/peaches/index.htm

Extension Contact: Martin Brewington, Agricultural Technician, Martin_Brewington@ncsu.edu

HONEYBEE PRODUCTION



Honeybees are important throughout Robeson County for pollination of food crops for human, livestock, and wildlife consumption. Without adequate pollination, many crops grown in the county could not be produced on a commercial basis. Honeybees are the most important insect in the process of pollination in the world. Bees can be rented for the pollination of fruit, vegetable, and other agricultural crops, creating a source of income for beekeepers.

Folks interested in beekeeping as a hobby or small business can obtain more information by attending the Robeson County Area Beekeepers Association meetings, which are held the third Tuesday night of each month at 7 p.m. at the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center in Lumberton.

Extension Contact: Martin Brewington, Agricultural Technician and Local Bee Coordinator, Martin_Brewington@ncsu.edu

MEAT GOAT FARMING

Small, part-time farmers with only a few acres can raise enough meat goats to provide an income supplement. On the other hand, very large farms can efficiently integrate a meat goat enterprise to aid in diversification of the farm.