Whether you are into health foods or not, you are probably aware that fresh fruits and vegetables are good for you. In fact, for health benefits, the United States Department of Agriculture recommends consumers intake at least 2½ cups of vegetables and fruits every day. Many health groups and professionals cite the need to consume fresh fruits and vegetables to reduce the risk of many chronic diseases including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer.

Even those dealing with obesity urge their clients to consume more fruits and vegetables, because when prepared without added fats and sugars, they are relatively low in calories. Eating them instead of higher calorie foods can help adults and children achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Hopefully, I now have you more interested in eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. If so and you do not have your own garden, I now would like to tell you where you can get all the fresh fruits and vegetables you want.

The Robeson County Farmers Market that operates in downtown Lumberton at the corner of 8th and Elm Streets is now open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. The market consists of Robeson County farmers producing and providing the freshest fruits and vegetables from their fields. Currently, the market has lots of delicious vegetables including beets, cabbage, onions, potatoes, beans, squash, sweet peas, and turnips. Also, the market has vendors selling honey, potted plants, and eggs.

Although the market has been open for a few weeks, June 9 will be the official “grand opening.” The members of the Robeson County Farmers Market Association wanted to celebrate their grand opening when most of the farmers would be able to sell at the market. Along with the opportunity to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, you will be able to watch Janice Fields, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, demonstrate healthy cooking options and provide samples of recipes made from the vendors’ products. Cooperative Extension is partnering with several institutions and organizations to encourage consumers to pledge to spend 10 percent of their food dollars locally to support local farmers, related businesses, and communities. The 10 percent
campaign began as an effort to educate and encourage consumers to buy locally grown food. Purchasing fruits and vegetables at the market is one way to support the campaign and our local economy.

I urge you to come on out to the Robeson County Farmers Market on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. This is a great way to check out the local products, meet with farmers, and spend quality time with family.

For more information, please contact Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at 910-671-3276, by E-mail at Nelson_Brownlee@ncsu.edu, or visit our website at http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu.