

*Creating our Future*  
**North Carolina Cooperative Extension**  
**Community Listening Session**  
**Schley Grange Hall, Hillsborough**  
**December 10, 2013**

In November and December 2013, NC Cooperative Extension held 12 regional listening sessions and meetings with its employees and stakeholder groups, including county governments, commodity groups, community organizations and others. Approximately 75 people attended the Community Listening Session at Schley Grange Hall in Hillsborough, Orange County to provide input into the visioning initiative, *Creating our Future*. Dr. Joe Zublena, Associate Dean and Director of NC Cooperative Extension Service, welcomed the participants and shared background information on the changes Cooperative Extension is facing. The goals of the visioning initiative are:

1. Define and focus on our most competitive and needed programs
2. Strengthen our impacts and value to citizens, the counties, & North Carolina
3. Create a financial buffer and gain flexibility to stay aligned to priorities
4. Develop a staffing model that aligns to our new fiscal reality and provides competitive salaries and a better quality of life to our employees

Working in small groups at their tables, participants discussed the questions posed to them and recorded their responses onto paper templates. The instructions provided to the participants and the detailed responses to each question are included in this document.

Participants were encouraged to provide additional input and to continue to monitor the progress of the visioning initiative on the website: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/vision-initiative)



## THE BIG PICTURE

**What are the important issues in your community that brought you to this conversation today?**

- We need specialists in wood technology. We need help in the process from cutting, drying and connecting with the woodworkers who want this wood.
- Master Gardener commented she wants Extension to be able to keep the program in order to better serve people.
- Farmer stated that he needs “real time” help because his information needs are directly tied to his livelihood. We need boots on the ground.
- Speaker who works with a non-profit community development organization commented that she is very interested in building local food economies. Extension is a huge asset in that area. She came to get ideas from others.
- I want to help get the word out about the changes in Extension. Youth is a primary focus. I would like to see the schools help push 4-H.
- We need the specialist position that serves the 4-H Dairy program filled following the recent retirement. Dairy is actually growing in North Carolina. The kids need a person to help them in all facets of the program especially dairy judging.
- I am here in support of the Family and Consumer Sciences programs. They have presented wonderful programs. They have done such a good job. We need agents to train us (ECA members) so we can do better in our communities.



## PROGRAMS & ORGANIZATION

**PROGRAMS:** When you think about Extension’s value, where can this organization have the greatest impact in your community and the state? What are the programs/services in your county that Extension must “sow or grow” and tell us why. What are the programs/services in your county that Extension could “prune or plow” and tell us why.

**ORGANIZATION:** Think about how Extension will have to make organizational and staffing changes to thrive in this new reality. (How might it prune back?) Thinking about the best interests of your county/community, how can Extension partner with you in a new and different way to meet your needs? What won’t work as Extension considers new and different ways to partner with your community?

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
Production Agriculture. By County needs. Commercial Horticulture Livestock \$\$ value to County. Better communication and coordination between Counties. Research based info- 4-H/ Agriculture products and activities.	Multi County staffing based on County needs. Emphasize relationship with clients. Area Agriculture events involving several Agents. Relationship with County Governments. Based on County Needs: 1/2 time or ¾ time Agent Positions Agricultural technician positions to fill voids (para professionals) could be part time.
Ideas to Prune & Plow	Ideas that Don’t Work
Prune duplication & reports	Counties with “squeaky wheel” get positions filled whether strategic or not. Not dropping things.

Ideas to Sow & Grow	Ideas that Work
Growing small farms, Processing, marketing, preserving forestry from seeds to finished product. Land protection, including sustainable management. H2O quality 4-H in school system by training teachers to share information in the classroom or with expert on hand. Business of Agricultural, entrepreneurship, family finances, access to small loans, tax	Regional programs, Information on availability of regional experts to share. Master Gardener program Recruit retired experts.

<p>considerations.          Environmental health issues, air quality, sanitation, mold etc.          Animal husbandry support: routine issues to diseases.          More public education of what CES has to offer.          Master Gardner program          Getting young children “in Nature” to learn about Agriculture, more emphasis on native plants.          Habitat improvement and wildlife enhancement.          Use technology better, teleconferences.          Guidance on land use planning.</p>	
<p><b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b></p>	<p><b>Ideas that Don't Work</b></p>
<p>Non Extension relevant program          Grant programs that do not promote the Extension mission or use Extension curriculum.</p>	<p>Giving away teaching programs to other agencies resulting in loss of oversight.</p>

<p><b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b></p>	<p><b>Ideas that Work</b></p>
<p>“Do a soil test” plan has to be tailored to the County.          Good consumers grow the economy.          Increase awareness of Extension          Increase advocacy through marketing of what we do.          Support for wood technology needs to grow; there is a lot of wasted wood that could build local economy. Also linking to other industries like furniture.          Teaching skills in leading, communicating and planning at Community level including youth.          Need more organic Agriculture Agents.</p>	<p>Build on strength of volunteerism.          Other sources in Community for skills like parenting are going away, need is growing and it is very important. Also family resource management.          Need assessments must target and include people not connected to computer and other knowledge resources need to reach out in many ways high and low technology.          Start young; build critical thinking, 4-H and ECA leadership, and community development.          Boost involvement, volunteerism, getting into community.          Agriculture education- kids need to learn about agricultural in school.</p>
<p><b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b></p>	<p><b>Ideas that Don't Work</b></p>
<p>Plow current marketing plan          Ask who is duplicating for whom- we need some duplication with specific twist.          Everything is free- nominal fees or some fee for service.          Are there commodity groups that could sponsor our work and multiply work when an issue is hot? Allows flexibility.</p>	<p>One plan fits all across Counties.          Spreading folks to thin.          Being too rigid and not balanced between generalists and specialists, keep your generalists that can really reach out to the community and help organization stay flexible then pull in the specialized skills as needed.          Excellent Agents are taken up doing everything when folks leave and get burned out.          Being super online makes Agents start being asked to serve beyond County and overburdened.          Keep high touch face to face all online does not work for everyone.          Current level of communications does not work, get rid of boundaries and silos.</p>

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Agriculture \$88.5 million Profitable and sustainable Local food systems Urban and Consumer FCS \$45.6 million Family and \$ Management Healthy eating... Parenting and caregiving education School Volunteerism and Community development \$36.6 million All proven profitable for State	Regionalization Volunteerism Phase out programs not meeting measurable goals. Collaboration other agencies. Integrative programming. Examine programming fee for services. Maximize resources: Extends expertise of specialists thru well organized volunteers. Volunteerism has proven profitable for EMGV.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Anything done by another Agency. (EVID- BASED?) Avoids duplication and free up \$\$\$	Continuing programming the public demands, that is not measureable. County Director overseeing non-essential or non- extension programs and personnel.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Youth Agricultural Programs: Aging population of farmers. Promoting organic and high value sustainable farm products: Farms need to continue to be profitable regardless of size. Food preservation, food safety, health & nutrition. Food entrepreneurship and new food product development: Obesity issues, food safety are ever growing concerns. Reaching out to local economies through market development both on the producer and consumer side: Increased profitability in difficult economy. Reaching out and marketing to newer, diverse audiences within all program areas: Increase economic development. Less unilateral decision making for county positions: Involve County in decisions instead of top down decisions.	Strategic reassessment of resource allocation between campus and county. (50/50 split?) Local food initiative. Strong volunteer base. Changing and adapting to economic needs in County to advance in the future. More creative marketing to all audiences. Stop being the best kept secret. Agents should be encouraged to work together on group events.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Duplication of services: based on individual county assessments because each county is different. Reduce the number of and duplication of reports: need to show impact and justification. Strategic planning with program areas upon completion of assessments, (which programs within each program area should we keep based upon impact and value) Takes away time for client contact and programs.	Campus making top-down decisions without county input. Cookie cutter approach does not work across the board. Decisions have to be made on a case by case basis. Continually changing brands, logos, etc.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Consider 100% County funded positions. Local food coordinator, keep the current and grow more. Win win win economics, nutrition, public health and sense of community. Youth development: Building entrepreneurial and leadership skills. Financial management Connect with schools enrichment helps learners support evidence based development. Summer camps They are our future, This is important. Help with rules and regulations. Food safety and presentation: Business and personal. Use social media	“ I want to pick my soil box up after work” Office hours that work for busy people. Social media Make valid reliable info available on You tube and other outlets. Answer questions via video clips. Asynchronous learning: Tweet about the Kudzu bug. Train the trainer: Volunteers can increase impact and outreach. Recognize urban and rural differences, they may need different structures.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
County fairs: So much time, is it really worth it? Helping Farmers 1 on 1 Less repetition of things every year that helps to get the work done- physical labor.	Regional- Multicounty- Statewide equals more time traveling, less time accomplish the work. Does quantity or quality of work suffer? May need many (or at least multiple) models.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Farmers Markets Programs- Health	4-H ECA Youth These are our future, These children need the knowledge the Extension office offers.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Nothing	Fewer Agents: Agents offer so much for Counties.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Better Marketing: not enough people know who we are and what we do. Stronger partnerships with community (Gov't and local Agencies): they help streamline programming and funds. Increase programs that address community needs: Shared programming/ positions across county lines. Working beyond the office: Mobile, lap top, working in the field. Technology training.	Focus on needs/priorities of the specific County. Every County does not have the same needs. Parenting Programs, 4-H, Master Gardner, Pesticide certification. Publications Volunteers Find new paradigms for partnerships May reduce Admin overhead Ext could support but wouldn't have to control if employed by other agency.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Family Consumer Science Focus more on Agricultural.	Free Programs: people value programs with a cost. Duplicating efforts.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Volunteer recruitment and training: expand reach into the community. Rural/urban leadership development. Research for natural organic production.	Community resource development Youth development/leadership. Food safety where did the problem come from? Identify “common ground: to develop structure.

Research/development of value-added markets for farmers and small business: increase local food production. Leverage community partners/volunteers/other agencies.	Promoting innovation for outreach. Meeting needs of community, organizing events and people.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Duplication of services: health dept. local clinics. Leverage community partners/volunteers/other agencies.	Using County silos to structure operations. Rigid/older structure. Communication.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Self-promotion: "Best kept secret" 4-H Youth development: varies delivery mode. Master Gardeners Pesticide Certifications Hands on programs for small farmers, production farmers, livestock and crops. Integrated programming(Agriculture, 4-H, FCS work together) Find our niche (College or other groups) make it strong. *New* Master Cattleman( other species) Increase evening and weekend programs.	Problem Solving/diagnosis quick one on one contact. Unbiased opinion: research based forming partnerships in the community. Similar organizations with similar goals. Providing educational programs. If cross County Agents are a necessity: Agent availability is key. Consider sked Office hours for Agents, not necessarily 8 to 5, Mon. thru Fri. all Agents should have smart phones and laptops and be able to remote work from everywhere.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Programs being done by other agencies: Financial management, parenting etc. Serve safe, nutrient management plans. Different for each County.	Multi Counties- multi offices: With different expectations." being in the Office too much". Giant PR programs- non specific Excessive reporting Title/Promotion process: time consuming and not true indicator of quality.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Family nutrition programs: Obesity, diet linked diseases. Youth programming: Creates a network of change. Local foods initiatives: Connecting growers and consumers Food and safety preservation: Sustainability of food supply. Economic impact. History/ Agricultural history. Economic and resource education: Program is known for research. Resources for restaurants and food safety. Structured internships with : Universities Community Colleges 2 yr. Colleges	Professional Development Keeping breath through intersections of skill/jobs. Partnerships: Local experts and "student" Skills building workshops To decrease duplication, help streamline access and logistical overhead. Community based programs and community inclusion: People feel buy in, in their own community. Sustainable Experts within community Programs that invest in their own community and reinvest: People want to invest in their own community and themselves. Volunteerism/Internship structure.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
	Marketing of Extension Services:

	Not reaching enough people. Large Regional coverage: Too broad No community Funds by County lost. Finding a better way to lobby with Legislators: For money Effective Advocacy.
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<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Expand CES capabilities to the public, sow and grow the visibility: Lack of public knowledge of what CES does. Grow 4-H in the public schools: Some Counties have pushed out the 4-H program. Expand local food markets and farmers: Families need fresher foods. Market the 4-H Alumni for volunteering.	Invest more money and time in developing new and current volunteers: Volunteers are the back bone. Continue to have 4-h positions filled to support programs: 4-H is a proven program. County CES staff needs greater access to specialist. Share Agents where they are under used. Expand technology tools for Field Agents. Turn 4-H camps over for private operation. Agent mentoring.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
	Current systems for creating districts: Commute to District events for 4-H etc. too extensive. Using Facebook as a means of communicating CES activities from NCSU.

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Recruit younger folks in Extension clubs: Need to grow and maintain ECA clubs. Expert help for crops and livestock. (bees) 4-H meets critical needs: Youth 4-H needs leadership skills. Orange Co. needs Food and Nutrition Agents. More partnering with business and Churches. Informational booth at last Friday event in Hillsborough.	Keep up local paper publicity.
<b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b>	<b>Ideas that Don't Work</b>
Plow: New ground with local groups: Form new partnerships.	Reevaluate minimum numbers for events: Review time and place (business? Churches?)

<b>Ideas to Sow &amp; Grow</b>	<b>Ideas that Work</b>
Profitable Agriculture: Training focus on small ruminants New producers, poultry, fruit and vegetable for farmers Market. \$77 billion in North Carolina jobs. Continuing education, workshops, and seminars for current and new producers. Classes for recertification on pesticide training. Research	Agents: In offices real help to problems, best resource for real time solutions. Workshops : Education of growers 4-H youth programs Gets youth and parents involved. Business and CES programs and research partnerships.



<p>Incorporate technology training:          How to implement technology into all facets of Agriculture.          Website availability:          Expand client base and focus          Information collaboration and coordination among County offices.          Disseminate knowledge          Get funding budget out of UNC budget and into NCDA.</p>	<p>Use industry partners to sponsor workshops.          Lack of communication between Counties:          Information needs to be shared</p>
<p><b>Ideas to Prune &amp; Plow</b></p>	<p><b>Ideas that Don't Work</b></p>
<p>Useless surveys and reports:          Administrative paperwork, takes time away from helping people with problems.          Reduce Administration to lowest sustainable level:          Put money in Counties where it helps people.</p>	<p>Lack of communication between Counties:          Information needs to be shared among counties.          Cross County agents for high demand crops in livestock:          Some areas multiple Counties too much activity for one Agent to handle effectively.</p>



## HEADLINES

We want you to envision a hugely successful partnership between Extension and you and your community. Imagine it is 20 years from now, and someone is writing an article about Extension. What is the headline of that story?

### **Extension of University Research changes lives.**

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1. Research gives direction.
2. Goals, Values and Children's choices standards clarify.
3. Volunteers make change possible.

### **The Citizens save Extension**

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1. ECA volunteers donate 10,000 hours of volunteer time per County to save Extension, hundreds of thousands of dollars.
2. The farmers band together and fight for the future of Agriculture and Extension.

### **North Carolina farm economy most sustainable and economically viable in United States.**

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1. Small and local NC Farms contribute large percentage of State GOP, Thanks to Extension.
2. Average age of farmers in NC falls below 40.
3. Organic farms surpass traditional farms in terms of profitability in the state.

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1. “Growing Local” workshop experienced farmers and consumers together.
  2. New farmers find affordable farmland in Piedmont.
  3. Extension finds relevance through local food production and preservation.

### **Impactful Government programs that work**

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1. Focused/ Targeted
2. Address high priority needs.
3. Result/impact driven

Other Comments:

High quality programs will need resources to develop and deliver less staff means remaining staff will need to specialize and work larger geographic areas.

Extension can offer specialized training, special certifications and pay for training.

### **Cooperative Extension reaches out to families with timely resource management information.**

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1. Workshops on better nutrition for families throughout the life cycle.
2. Ways to maximize resources for more efficient household operations.
3. Food safety information for households, restaurants and churches.

### **North Carolina ranked best place to live.**

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1. NC youth are thriving: record high graduation, rates attributed to secondary education focused on hands on learning and community.

### **State # 1 in Food Security.**

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1. North Carolina produces 80% of its own food.
2. Extension teaches farmers develop supply chains to benefit all State residents.
3. Other States look to North Carolina as a leader in Agriculture economy.

### **Agriculture SHINES**

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1. New programs on food & nutrition
2. Several people groups get evolved.
3. Farmers meet quotas.

### **What is happening today!**

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1. What the weight program is doing for the youth.
2. Small farms are thriving.
3. Dairy productions at the highest level.

### **USDA announces that the safest food is what you grow yourself.**

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1. There is more value in people than there is in stuff.

### **Governor says “Thank You Cooperative Extension, 4-H made me what I am today”**

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1. 4-H, ECA and other Cooperative Extension programs build families and communities.

### **Central Piedmont Jr. livestock show celebrates 85 years of training young farmers.**

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1. Cooperative Extension continues to help and train the farmers of the future thru 4-H.

### **Organic farmers credit Cooperative Extension support for helping propel NC**

**to top 10 in organic acreage.**

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**North Carolina leads Nation in Quality of Life!**

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**Extension has the resources for ALL your NEEDS.**

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**Extension keeps Farmers intact.**

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1. Extension has something for kids, teens, adults and elderly learning how to grow, sow, harvest, preserve and prepare your own food.

**Local organic farmer makes a living farming.**

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1. Using free County resources, organic farmer learn how to produce organic crops effectively and profitably.
2. Throughout the years she learned new / innovative production techniques from County Extension Agents and other local services.(CFSA)
3. She trains future farmers on her own farm with the support of local extension.

**Orange County celebrates 100% Food sourcing within North Carolina!**

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1. Cooperation among restaurant and grocery leadership pays big dividends
2. Community comes together to embrace local food production.

**US production Agriculture still feeding the world.**

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1. With help from Cooperative Extension Service and Universities.

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1. Smith Lever Act of 1914 is still relevant in 2034 120 years later!

### **Cooperative Extension still going strong!**

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1. After 120 years Extension still has foundations in the past but focus on the future.

### **Extension no longer a big secret**

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1. Extension helps farmers increase food production, profitability, underprivileged families eat better, builds tomorrow's leaders by working with youth.

### **Cooperative Extension is OUT OF Business**

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1. Lack of funding, there was not proper planning for the future in 2013 to sell the importance of Extension to obtain proper funding on State and Federal level to match the County money that is available.

### **NC Extension program is model for United States.**

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1. Local community comes together for good of all.

### **Champions Extension Community re-investment by catalyzing local resource partnerships.**

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1. Revolutionizes NC economy, youth program, family resource strategic planning.
2. Practical education, skills building workshops, DIY sufficiency tools.

**Extension programs collaborate with local and National youth committees, experts to**

**advance thriving local communities.**

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1. Partnering intergeneration ally.
2. Taking advantage of the tools and technology to pool ideas and resources.
3. Capitalize on existing resources, including land, social capital, expertise, money and time.

**NC Extension Service models Efficiency and Impacts**

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1. NC Farmers feed their communities and the world, credit knowledge and technology. Transfer made possible through Extension programs.
2. NC 4-H members and alumni lead communities and the Country.
3. Families are healthier and stronger, credit Extension FCS programs.

**NC Cooperative Extension major force in solving the obesity problem.**

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1. Extension has offered healthy eating programs to families, youth, industry and business.
2. Extension has been a leader in forming partnerships to combat obesity.

**Vance/ Warren consumers get 50% of food from local producers.**

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1. Chronic disease rates down due to improved diets.
2. Farmers market is a hub of community.
3. Small farm businesses thriving.

**North Carolina becomes net energy exporter**

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1. Solar farms provide 85% state electrical power,

**Family and Consumer sciences Empower families to become financially secure.**

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1. Through FCS education families learn financial strategies to gain control of their fiscal decisions.
2. FCS programs challenge youth to plan their futures.

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1. NC Cooperative Service leads the nation in youth empowerment.
  2. NC #1 in County in Agriculture.
  3. NC Cooperative Service #1 in Country in obtaining its goals.

**Extension leads in Community and Family success**

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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local economies thrive</li> <li>2. Families and individuals from all walks of life find knowledge resources to succeed</li> </ol>
<p><b>NC Agriculture experiences another growth spurt</b></p> <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stream lining resources credited with better cattle health and reproduction yields.</li> <li>2. NC Extension: No longer the best kept secret.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Sharing the Wealth</b></p> <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10 year olds in neighboring Counties teach other students and their parents about budgeting and family relationships.</li> </ol>
<p><b>NC communities THRIVE because of NC Cooperative Extension</b></p> <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Folks in Mebane have thrown their TV's out the window and are volunteering at the shelter making dinner, says Bonita- "I don't know why I used to watch that thing", this is fun, I have joined an Extension Community Club and I am learning how to lead and make Mebane better.</li> </ol>
<p><b>North Carolina becomes a GMO- free State</b></p> <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State legislators unite across party lines to protect consumers.</li> <li>2. NC Pesticide Board outlaws non-organic herbicides and pesticides.</li> <li>3. North Carolina is #1 in the "most desirable" State to live in.</li> </ol>
<p><b>NC Agricultural Production and exports match world population growth of past decade.</b></p> <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased production efficiency cited encouraged by Cooperative Extension engagement.</li> <li>2. Reorganizations of Services to NC popularity was streamlined and updated.</li> <li>3. Family and youth programs continue to expand among popularity.</li> </ol>
<p><b>EMG Volunteers Honored</b></p> <hr/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The EMGV system received the most outstanding program award as the most productive volunteer program in the United States.</li> </ol>