

# THE POWER OF EXTENSION

**2023**



## AN INSIDE GLANCE INTO COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

North Carolina Cooperative Extension focuses on three main areas: Agriculture, Food Health and Nutrition, and Youth. Locally, that means we have three main departments: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. Providing research-based and relevant educational opportunities for citizens in Robeson County is our highest priority. The Power of Extension Newsletter provides a snapshot of recent educational programs conducted by N.C. Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, which impact the lives of Robeson County citizens. In this edition, you will find highlights and impacts from traditional Extension programs, as well as new and updated programs and activities.



Mac Malloy  
County Extension Director

NC State University and N.C. A&T State University are collectively committed to positive action to secure equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, and veteran status. NC State, N.C. A&T, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.



## Inside This Issue

### Family and Consumer Sciences

2.....Safe Plates for Food Managers in Robeson County

### 4-H Youth Development

3.....Entrepreneurial Businesses at the Fair for Families

### Agriculture

4.....Sustainable Vegetable Gardening .

5.....Developing Personal Risk-Management Workshop

6.....2023 Poultry Processing Demonstration

7.....Success Found in Farm School

8.....Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

9.....Free Soil Sampling

10.....Upcoming Events

### Robeson County Center

O. P. Owens Agriculture Center

P. O. Box 2280

455 Caton Road

Lumberton, NC 28359

Phone - 910-671-3276

Fax-910-671-6278

Website - [robeson.ces.ncsu.edu](http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu)



## FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

**Safe Plates for Food Managers in Robeson County** – Foodborne illness is a serious public health concern within the United States, with a significant impact on the population. Annually, there are approximately 48 million reported cases of foodborne illnesses, leading to around 128,000 individuals requiring hospitalization, and tragically resulting in 3,000 deaths. To address this issue, NC State Extension has developed an evidence-based food safety program called Safe Plates for Food Managers, which is specifically designed to educate and train food managers in implementing measures to mitigate the risks of foodborne illnesses.



Due to the need for food safety practices, the Family and Consumer Sciences agents from North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County and Columbus County Centers partnered together. Their collaboration led to the introduction of the Safe Plates training program in Robeson County. Safe Plates serves as a comprehensive training initiative for food service managers, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to minimize the occurrence of foodborne illnesses in their establishments. By educating managers, the program aims to effectively reduce the risk of contamination and illness caused by unsafe food handling practices.

The introduction of Safe Plates training in Robeson County yielded positive outcomes. Of the participants who took part in the training, a substantial 100 percent successfully passed the certification exam, obtaining their food safety certification. The success rate highlights the effectiveness of the training in conveying crucial food safety knowledge to the participants. Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. All individuals who took part in the training program reported that it effectively addressed their needs and expectations. The Food Safety Managers Certification has a validity period of five years.

**Wendy Maynor, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent**



## 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



**Entrepreneurial Businesses at the Fair for Families** – The number of entrepreneurial businesses in the United States is at 59 percent and growing. Youth often don't realize they have the potential to start their own niche business, or that there is an opportunity available to them.

Working with the Cumberland County 4-H Agent, we gathered home-exhibit items (art, photography, canning, etc.) for entry into the Cumberland County Agricultural Fair. Parents also decided to join their youth in entering items into the fair to see if they might win.

Youth entered more than 80 items into the fair. Corresponding adults also entered another 150 items into the fair. The youth and adults won premium money for their first, second, and third placed items, as determined by a series of judges. The youth won approximately \$150, and the adults won more than \$450 from taking part in the fair. One family alone took home \$200. The families learned doing things they enjoy together can also generate income for them in a fun way. The youth were so excited about their premiums, one is starting her own craft company and learning about marketing so she can make extra money for college and help support herself. We will continue to encourage families to expand their horizons and learn more about entrepreneurial business opportunities available to them.



Shea Ann DeJarnette, Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent



## AGRICULTURE

**Sustainable Vegetable Gardening** – Robeson County leads the state in poverty and health-related issues. Our county only has one farmers market, and several communities in the county are classified as food deserts. After the onset of Covid-related lock downs and food supply instability, many folks showed great interest in growing vegetables at home. Folks were seeking ways to secure healthy food access.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, addressed this community need by presenting “Sustainable Vegetable Gardening.” This two-hour presentation covers sustainable practices of vegetable gardening, including soil testing, soil preparation, crop selection, crop rotation and its importance, most effective ways to water the garden, and integrated pest management.



One hundred percent of the participants improved their knowledge on watering methods, requirements, and timely applications of water. After the training, 88 percent of the participants showed they improved their skill set on pest and disease scouting, site selection, and plant-variety selection for the garden. Eighty percent also improved their knowledge on the importance of soil testing and understanding the report. One hundred percent of the participants said the information was easy to understand and would recommend the program to others. Now, more Robesonians are better equipped at providing their families with sustainably home-grown vegetables, potentially saving hundreds of dollars, and eating healthier.

**Mack Johnson, Extension Horticultural Agent**



**Developing Personal Risk-Management Workshops** - Managing risk continues to be a challenge for small farmers as they face historically high input and energy costs, fewer off-farm employment opportunities, and increased financial and marketing risks. They need the ability to deal with risks that come with attractive farming opportunities.

To address these challenges, a series of Developing Personal Risk Management workshops was held for small farmers. The series consisted of seven Zoom sessions and one in-person workshop held in Robeson County. The workshops were held in partnership with Digital Extension Risk Management Education and National Crop Insurance Services. Participants completed the homework assignments after each workshop, including an inventory assessment of the resources owned and controlled by their farms. Using enterprise budgeting, they were able to calculate their break-even costs and outputs. The goals of the project were to assess how small farmers respond to risk by acquiring the skills and a better understanding of their own operation to develop risk-management plans that provide specific strategies at the enterprise level. After each Zoom workshop, participants were contacted by phone, farm visit, office visit, or e-mail for progress updates or to answer questions regarding homework assignments. After the final workshop, each participant completed a pre- and post-test.

After the workshop, each participant completed risk-management and marketing plans. Several participants stated in their risk-management plan they would actively seek opportunities to apply for financial grants to improve their farm operation to minimize financial risk. Four workshop participants received a total of \$33,400 in financial grants for their farm operations. Three participants received \$7,800 cost share grants through United States Department of Agriculture-National Resources Conservation Services EQUIP Cost Share Program, which helps lower the costs of purchasing a high-tunnel greenhouse. One new farm family applied for and received a \$10,000 AgPrime Grant with University of Mount Olive and the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to start their herb operation. With these risk-management tools, farmers can build the confidence they need to deal with future risks and opportunities.



**Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management Agent**



**2023 Poultry Processing Demonstration** –There has been an increased interest in people who want to learn how to grow their own food and safely process it. North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, hosted a hands-on learning opportunity to demonstrate how to safely process poultry using a mobile processing unit. Participants were given the opportunity to safely practice processing broiler chickens and learn about poultry exemption rules from a North Carolina Department of Agriculture (NCDA) Compliance Officer.

There were 12 participants who attended the training, along with 6 agents and 5 volunteers who helped process 48 broiler chickens. One hundred percent of participants learned new things about chicken processing, poultry exemption rules, and safe handling of poultry from processing to the kitchen. A follow-up survey and plans to conduct a 2024 poultry demonstration class are in place.



**Taylor Chavis, Extension Livestock Agent**



**Success found in Farm School – NC Cooperative** Extension agents across the state receive calls throughout the year from people who are seeking assistance in making good use of inherited or purchased land. Many of these clients are not familiar with the intricacies of agriculture, but possess a growing desire to farm.



Nine NC Cooperative Extension agents from Bladen, Cumberland, Columbus, Hoke, New Hanover, Pender, and Robeson counties promoted, planned, and delivered a “2023 Southeast NC Farm School” program for 22 participants under the leadership of Derek Washburn, NC Farm School Program Associate. The NC Farm School is a unique entrepreneurial program for aspiring, new, or transitioning farmers with the mission of increasing the number of successful farms in North Carolina. Participants gain farm business resources critical for beginning farmers to develop farm business plans, understand crop and livestock production decision-making processes, farm budgeting, liability issues unique to agriculture, and many other topics essential to running a successful farm business by completing 24 hours of classroom educational content and 30 hours of practical on-farm tours delivered by agents.

Post-program evaluations revealed 80 percent of the participants completed a business plan and 60 percent completed a farm-marketing plan. Also, 94 percent changed their original ideas by either adding a new venture or focusing on fewer enterprises as a result of knowledge gained that should make their business more successful. Lastly, 54 percent were confident that their participation in NC Farm School will save them money in the future. As a result of the program, participants reported an estimated 64 acres of land will remain in agricultural production; \$177,500 potential savings in startup expenses and mistakes; \$80,000 in potential farm income in the first year; and a projected job creation of 11 full time, 14 part time, and 5 seasonal workers combined.

**Mac Malloy, Extension Field Crops Agent**



For information on the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program click [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov)



## Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

### Have you experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending?

Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act authorized \$2.2 billion in financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who experienced discrimination in USDA Farm Loan Programs prior to January 1, 2021.

#### Application Deadline

- October 31, 2023
- The application is free
- Free technical assistance is available



*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*

### How to Apply

#### Online

Visit [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov) to access the application, e-file, and to find resources near you.

#### In-person

USDA DFAP local offices are a network of brick-and-mortar locations where you can connect with in-person agents for help with applications, and where you can drop off a complete application. Office hours and locations can be found at [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov).

### Get Assistance

#### Call Center

Telephone assistance is available. Live agents are available and eager to help with questions about applications at 1-800-721-0970, from 8 a.m. ET to 8 p.m. PT seven days a week, except for federal holidays.

#### Partner Organizations

USDA has ensured that groups with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#). Applicants may also reach out to these groups for further information and assistance.







# Take Advantage of Free Soil Testing

As we begin this year's planting season, it is important to consider good management practices. One of these practices is collecting soil samples. Soil testing is a service provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at their Agronomic Division in Raleigh. Collect samples three to six months before planting time. Taking good samples, filling out paperwork properly, and packaging samples for delivery in a well-organized manner are important. A soil test will assess the present levels of major plant nutrients, soil pH, and micronutrients. Recommendations will include the amounts of lime and fertilizer, if necessary, to meet the requirements of the specific plant or crop being grown. Soil sample boxes and forms can be picked up at the Extension Center. There is no fee for soil samples submitted from April through November. They are \$4 per sample from December 1 through March 31. Samples can be mailed to the lab in Raleigh or dropped off at the Extension Center, where they will be delivered when Extension employees travel to Raleigh. Extension agents can also assist you in interpreting the soil test results or developing a soil treatment plan. Remember, having your soil tested before planting gives you the opportunity to increase your yields on the farm or improve your landscape around the house.



# 2023 Upcoming Events

| When  | What  | Where                                  | Call to Register                |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
| October 4 – November 9<br>10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.                         | Lift (Lifelong Improvements Through Fitness Together) | 455 Caton Road,<br>Lumberton           | Wendy Maynor<br>910-671-3276    |
| October 17, 18, and 19<br>9:00 a.m.– 11:00 a.m.<br>11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. | Robeson County Agricultural Awareness Days            | 1027 US-74 ALT,<br>Lumberton, NC 28358 | Taylor Chavis<br>910-671-3276   |
| October 20<br>6:00 p.m. – 8:00p.m.  | Meat the Rabbit                                       | 455 Caton Road,<br>Lumberton           | Taylor Chavis<br>910-671-3276   |
| October 28<br>9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.                                      | Homegrown Mushrooms                                   | 455 Caton Road,<br>Lumberton           | Mack Johnson<br>910-671-3276    |
| November 28<br>9:00 a.m.  | Beef Repo   | 55 Agriculture Place,<br>Clinton, NC   | Taylor Chavis<br>910-671-3276   |
| November 30<br>9:00 a.m. – 4:00p.m.                                       | Animal Waste Management Operators                     | 455 Caton Road,<br>Lumberton           | Taylor Chavis<br>910-671-3276   |
| December 12<br>6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.                                      | Appreciation Night                                    | 455 Caton Road,<br>Lumberton           | Shea DeJarnette<br>910-671-3276 |

For more information, please check the Events Section on our website at <http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu> and our Facebook page NC Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center at <https://www.facebook.com/RobesonCooperativeExtension/> for added new events.



ABOUT N.C. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION N.C. Cooperative Extension is a strategic partnership of NC State Extension, The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T State University, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), and local governments statewide. Extension professionals in all 100 counties and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians connect millions of North Carolinians with research-based information and technology from NC State and N.C. A&T. Educational programs specialize in agriculture, food and nutrition, 4-H youth development, community development and the environment.

