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# Person County Farmland Preservation Plan

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June 6, 2016

The well-being of a people is like a tree.  
Agriculture is its root,  
Manufacture and Commerce are its branches and its leaves.  
If the root is injured,  
The leaves fall, the branches break away, and the tree dies.  
~ *Chinese Proverb*



Land is our most precious heritage.  
~ Robert West Howard from *The Vanishing Land*



*\* This plan was made possible with funding by the North Carolina Agriculture Development Trust Fund.*

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# I. Executive Summary

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Since its first meeting, the Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) stakeholder group has focused on the economic impact of agriculture in Person County. This plan reflects that focus and suggests ways to continue to grow the agricultural economy in the county.

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, there were 395 farms encompassing 92,521 acres in Person County. Cash receipts to farms exceeded \$41 million and, according to the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University, the calculated value-added impact of agriculture and forestry on the Person County economy was \$90.7 million. That report also showed that Person County agriculture and agribusiness accounted for 11.2% of employment in the county.<sup>1</sup>

With more than three million potential customers within a 2-hour drive, Person County is positioned to be a major agricultural destination and supplier of agricultural commodities. The county is blessed with good soil, a long tradition of agricultural success, and a strong commitment to the land by farm families. Challenges to ag economic development include start-up costs, competing land uses, labor availability and costs, changing markets, and farm transition. The action items on pages 7-8 are focused on developing home-grown agribusinesses and agritourism enterprises that will build a foundation for a stable and prosperous local economy. Data for this plan was collected through interviews and surveys from over 200 farmers, foresters, agribusiness owners/operators, and agriculture related individuals in the county. Based on the collected data and input from the stakeholder group, the following list details the top priorities for promoting agricultural economic development:

1. Incorporate the FPP Action plan into the regular work of the Person County Agricultural Advisory Board (PCAAB)
2. Hire a full-time Ag Economic Development Officer (grant funded)
3. Present the "State of Person County Agriculture" report to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) annually
4. Offer an annual farm transition workshop, labor issues forum, and networking event for existing farmers
5. Work with Piedmont Community College to offer classes such as sustainable ag, crop diversification, and farm equipment repair for new farmers
6. Plan for expansion of agribusiness and agritourism using planning tools
7. Develop a funding mechanism for new ag business ventures
8. Invest in ag infrastructure, such as a refrigeration facility, value-added processing facility, or a large equipment co-op
9. Launch a "Person County Foods" marketing campaign

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ag-econ.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Person.pdf>

## II. Action Plan

*Note: Action items were obtained from interviews and survey results. Each action item is ranked based on the frequency and urgency of issues identified during the study.*

	Adjacent Counties	Ag. Government Agencies	Ag. Associations	Ag. Businesses	Ag. Youth Clubs	Ag Economic Development Officer	Colleges and Universities	PC Agriculture Advisory Board (PCAAB)	PC Planning Department	PC Economic Development Office	Elected Officials	PC Misc. Departments	PC Tax Office	PC Tourism Board and Chamber	Private Development Community	Regional and Fed. ED and Planning Agencies	FY to be completed
<b>Integrate Ag Economic Development into County Government</b>																	
Request PCAAB to incorporate Action Plan																	2016
Hire Agriculture Economic Development Officer (EDO)																	2018
Present the "The State of Person County Ag" to BOC																	2017
Review FPP annually; revise as needed																	n/a
<b>Educate New Farmers</b>																	
Work with Community College to offer ag classes																	2018
Develop "Beginning Farmer" guide																	2017
Establish new farmer program with adjacent counties																	2019
Develop a funding mechanism for new ag businesses																	2019
Develop a "veteran to farmer" program																	2019
Develop farm internship programs through FFA																	2018
Work with schools to strengthen FFA																	2018
<b>Enable Agriculture-Supportive Planning</b>																	
Adopt land use and design standards to support agriculture																	2018
Produce farmland and land development suitability map																	2017
<b>Economic Development and Ag Infrastructure</b>																	
Establish a farmers cooperative for wholesale product sales																	2019
Build a refrigeration facility for agricultural storage																	2020
Build a livestock facility for cattle and larger animals																	2020



Pursue meat processor for cattle and larger animals																		2022
Pursue access to the South Boston Cannery																		2018
<b>Grow Agritourism</b>																		
Continue to promote the farm tour																		2017
Complete and promote the quilt trail																		2016
Increase the total miles of horse trails in the county																		2020
<b>Promote Land Protection</b>																		
Conduct an annual conservation and cost share workshop																		2017
Increase VAD & NC Century Farm Program participation																		2018
Adopt an EVAD ordinance																		2018
Rollback PUV funds for a PACE program																		2019
<b>Expand Agriculture Outreach and Marketing</b>																		
Establish & promote community gardens																		2018
Work on marketing collaborative with border counties																		2018
Market PC agriculture to attract retirees																		2019
Conduct a local foods marketing & education campaign																		2018
Mazimize outreach of the two current farmers markets																		2018
Establish agriculture booths at arts, parks, festivals and sporting events																		2018
<b>Expand Forestry Opportunities</b>																		
Educate the public on the economic value of forestry																		2018
Evaluate local N.C. Forest Service staffing needs																		2018
Promote PC farm & forestland for military training																		2019
Conduct forestry potential and capacity report																		2017
<b>Provide networking and education to existing farmers</b>																		
Organize an annual farmer appreciation event																		2018
Establish an annual schedule of events around farm-related topics																		2022
Establish an FFA Alumni organization																		2020
Establish a Hobby Farm Association																		2017
Conduct an annual landowner workshop																		2017
Establish a listing system of land and rental properties for farmers																		2017
<b>Facilitate farm transitions</b>																		
Offer an annual farm transition workshop																		2016
Conduct seminars for realtors and attorneys on farmland transactions																		2017



# III. Methodology

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The Person County Commissioners appointed local citizens to the FPP stakeholder group to develop this plan. The stakeholder group provided oversight, identified individuals to be interviewed, and approved the final version of the FPP.

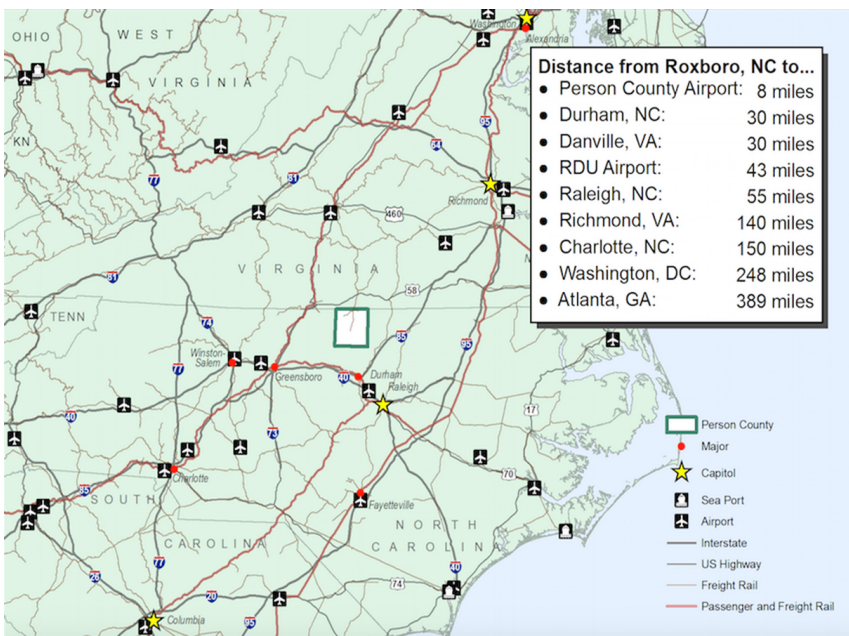
## **Research conducted between January 2015 and June 2016**

- Face-to-face and phone interviews of over 200 groups and individuals. All interviews were recorded and converted into typewritten notes for future reference. A diverse selection of stakeholders were interviewed, including high school FFA students, local government officials, nonprofit representatives, business owners, landowners and land users, foresters, and farmers of all backgrounds: multi-generational, limited resource, new, old and young.
- Five groups totaling 85 participants came together to discuss this plan. These events included an advertised public meeting, discussions with the Roxboro Charter School FFA, the Bushy Fork Grange, the Person Soil and Water Conservation District Board, and multiple meetings with the FPP stakeholder group.
- The Person County Planning and GIS departments worked on maps and data collection.
- Land-use plans, ordinances and regulations were reviewed to identify conflicts and opportunities for forestry and farming.
- Infrastructure needs and marketing opportunities were evaluated.
- Data was quantified and examined to identify opportunities and challenges for agriculture.
- A survey instrument was designed and distributed to receive input on key issues.

## IV. Background and Demographics

### *Location*

Person County is a land of rolling hills located in the extreme north central Piedmont of North Carolina. Person County is a part of the Research Triangle (Durham-Raleigh-Chapel Hill) metropolitan area and within 3 hours driving distance of four major urban areas – Charlotte, Greensboro, Richmond and Norfolk. Access to these densely populated areas is via State Highways 49 and 57, and US Highways 158 and 501. According to NC DOT the most heavily traveled road is Highway 501, with 30,000 vehicles a day traveling to and from Durham.

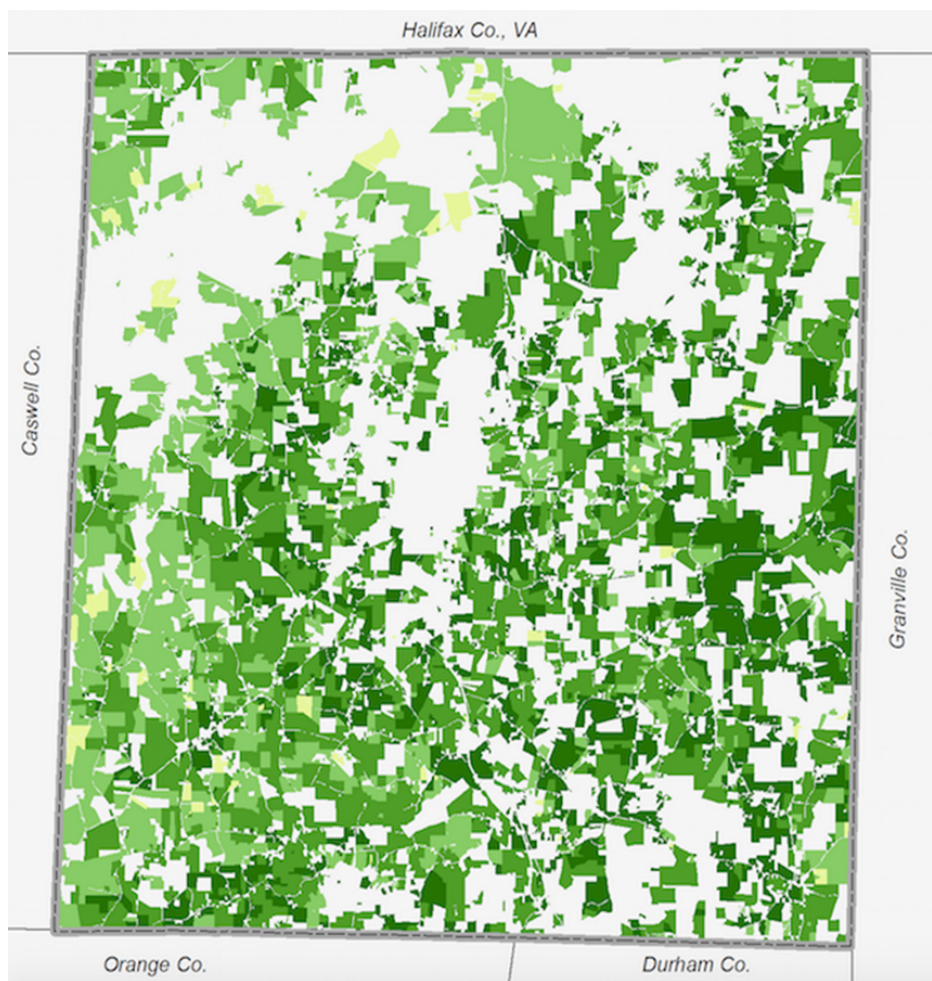


### *Population*

According to the 2014 U.S. Census, the population is estimated at 39,132. The N.C. Office of Management and Budget anticipate that Person County's population will remain essentially flat; reaching almost 40,000 people by the year 2030. Roxboro, with a population of 8,187 residents, is the county seat and center of commerce for the county.

### *Soil and Water*

Person County is divided into three river basins with abundant water in creeks, ponds, lakes and rivers. Sixty percent of the county drains to the Dan River and the remaining waters leave via the Tar, Pamlico, and Neuse River Basins. The largest water bodies are Hyco Lake and Mayo Lake in the northern end of the county, which are primarily used for power generation and recreation. Based on maps from 1995, soil scientists concluded that more than 90% of the county is covered with well-drained soils ideal for agriculture. The map below highlights the abundance of high-quality soil in the county.



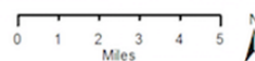
## Person County, NC

### Agriculture Lands Assessment

#### Soil Score

- Tier I
- Tier II
- Tier III
- Tier IV

Aims to award points to parcels with high quality soils. Parcels in Tier 1 are considered to be the highest priority for conservation of working farmland.



#### Data Sources:

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, NC One Map, Person County GIS

## V. Existing Agriculture

As shown below, the percentage of acres that is farmed in Person County decreased significantly over the last 100 years, but less of Person County's total land is dedicated to farming. In addition, Person County farms are much larger than they were in the past and Person County has less farms in total.

### *Person County Agriculture: A Century of Change<sup>1</sup>*

Year	1910	1959	2012
<b>Total Acres</b>	250,787	250,787	250,787
% County Land in Farms	95%	84.8%	38%
Farmland Acres	238,248	212,667	95,299
Number of Farms	2,365	2,330	395
Average Acres per Farm	100	91	241
Cattle Inventory	5,061	6,190	7,673
Swine inventory	7,664	9,777	3,815
Poultry Inventory	46,254	67,494	651 Egg-Laying Chickens <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Direct historical comparisons are difficult given changes in the definition of "farm" over time, but the information above provides helpful trend data.

<sup>2</sup>Poultry inventory not reported other than commercial layer hens due to confidentiality concerns about the low number of producers. The 2012 figures do not capture poultry in non-commercial flocks.

In 1945, total farm sales were approximately \$72 million (2012 dollars). In 2012, total farm sales were approximately \$41 million. Despite decreases in total sales numbers, agriculture remains an important part of Person County's economy, and crop sales still represent the largest share of ag sales.

### ***Farming Economy***

The USDA classifies a "small farm" as a farm that has gross sales less than \$250,000. Between 2007 and 2012, the proportion of farms classified as small farms in Person County decreased and the number of large-scale farms increased, which follows national trends of agriculture production moving to larger farms. Despite growth in the number of large-scale farms, small farms remain important. In 2012, small farms accounted for 16% of total farm sales and represented 89% of farms in Person County.

Number of farms by size	2007	2012
Small Farms	380	354
Large-scale farms	23	41
<b>Total number of farms</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>395</b>

The table below highlights major crops in Person County:

Top ag product by category	#1	#2	#3
Acres	Soybeans (13,978)	Wheat (10,208)	Forage (7,656)
Number of Animals (Inventory)	Cattle (7,673)	Swine (5,258)	Egg-laying Poultry (651)
Sales	Tobacco (\$22.9M)	Grain (\$11.1M)	Soybeans (\$6.02M)

Between 2007 and 2012, farm expenditures doubled to approximately \$35 million. Labor accounted for \$7.8 million of the total expenses. In addition, fertilizer accounted for \$.3 million, \$2.6 million for supplies, \$2.4 million for animal feed, \$964,000 for livestock, and \$1.8 million for plants and seeds.

Between 2007 and 2012, the market value of agricultural products sold in Person County<sup>2</sup> increased at the same rate and totaled \$41 million in 2012. The largest dollar increase in market value occurred in two categories--tobacco and grains. Grains rose from 14.8% (2007) to 27% in 2012. Tobacco's share of total agricultural sales in 2012 increased from 49.9% in 2007 to 56% in 2012.

### ***Tobacco***

In 2002, prior to the Tobacco Transition Payment Plan (TTPP), 172 farms in Person County produced \$12.7 million in sales from 3,232 acres of tobacco. Five years later, the number of tobacco farms

decreased by more than half and sales totaled \$9.6 million. By 2012, 59 farms raised 5,240 acres of tobacco and generated \$22.9 million in sales, a record for Person County. Despite changes in government support, tobacco continues to generate the most revenue of any ag product from Person County.

### Tobacco Sales and Acreage

Year	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012
<b>Farms</b>	403	313	227	126	63	59
<b>Acres</b>	4,211	5,781	6,346	3,232	3,463	5,240
<b>Sales in Millions</b>	\$12	\$19.3	\$21.96	\$12.7	\$9.6	\$22.9
<b>Million Pounds</b>	8.4	12.2	13.5	7.2	6.2	12.1

*Gross market value before taxes and production expenses of all ag products sold or removed from place in 2012 regardless of who received payment.*

### Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas

Within the grain category, the largest increase in “# of Farms” occurred in wheat production, which had an increase of 33 farms. The largest sales increase occurred in soybeans which grew by 664%. Each

	2007		2012	
	# of Farms	Sales (\$)	# of Farms	Sales (\$)
Corn	39	521,000	47	1,669,000
Wheat	41	1,328,000	74	3,205,000
Soybeans	51	906,000	66	6,020,000
Sorghum	1	(Not given)	5	172,000
Barley	3	(not given)	6	53,000
Other grains	7	63,000	9	32,000

category recorded an increase in farms and the only category to see a decrease in sales was in “Other Grains.”

### Farm Employment

When compared to the 2007 Ag Census, the 2012 Ag Census shows a significant increase in the number of farms reporting employment and the number of farm workers. The 2012 Ag Census also provided additional data on farm employment that was not reported in previous ag censuses. Based on the

	1997	2002	2007	2012
Farms reporting employment	177	189	96	138
Number of Workers	1304	904	487	848
Payroll (2012 dollars)	\$2,953,000	\$3,965,543	\$3,167,012	\$6,563,000

available data,  
Person County  
farm



employment grew 74% between 2007 and 2012 and the number of farms reporting employment grew 43%. Person County also had 35 farms reporting migrant employment – which totaled 313 workers – and 164 farms reporting unpaid workers, which totaled 379 workers.

### ***Farm Statistics***

According to Person County's Economic Development office, 1,244 residents live on a farm, which is the highest number of any county in the region, except for Caswell County. The average age of a farmer also continues to rise and is now 57, just behind the state average of 58. In Person County, the typical farmer operates on a second, third, or fourth generation farm.

When compared to other counties, Person County remains a relatively diverse county based on the racial and gender make-up of principal farm operators. African-Americans are the primary operators of 45 farms, or 11% of all farms. Native Americans operate three farms and Latinos operate two farms. Ten percent of the primary farm operators in the county are female, which is an 8% decrease since 2007.

There are 395 farms in the county today, which is a 90% decrease in 50 years. While the farming population has decreased over time, established farms in the county have continued to consolidate – doubling the size of the average farm. Cropland acres have decreased almost 25% in 50 years and cattle remains the only livestock with increasing numbers.

Another noticeable trend in the ag census data was the growth in value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption. This category includes roadside stands, farmer's markets, pick-your-own sites, etc. Between 2007 and 2012, this category nearly doubled in value. As consumer interest in farmer's markets and local produce increase, this category could represent an opportunity for growth in Person County.



## VI. Challenges & Opportunities

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Person County's history of agriculture and forestry has created a culture of appreciation for rural living. Every citizen who was interviewed stated the importance of Person County remaining a good place to raise a family. Support is strong for sustaining agriculture and forestry as the underpinning for this quality of life. However, most interviewees also talked about the need for new jobs. Without exciting, new employment opportunities in agriculture or other sectors, young people will leave the county for greener pastures.

Currently, 46% of Person County residents drive out of the county to work. This figure represents significant revenue leakage, through shopping, eating out, gas purchases and sales tax revenue collected out of county. Recruiting a major agribusiness employer, growing small ag businesses, and marketing local foods could help to reverse this trend and grow the agricultural economy.

Fortunately, there are many opportunities for growing the ag economy in Person County. Below is a list of challenges and opportunities developed from interviews and meetings with stakeholders. The Ag EDO position is key to addressing many of these challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities.

### ***Small Ag Business Development and Marketing***

*Challenge:* Agriculture has become a complex profession that is enhanced with knowledge of computers, business planning, environmental regulations, cost share programs and grants. While younger farmers today realize the value in a college education, many farmers who were interviewed expressed the need to know more. Farmers are also looking for county support with new ideas and resources for achieving marketing success and generating more profit.

*Opportunity:* Person County's existing staff (Planning, Soil and Water, Cooperative Extension) has the ability to provide new and existing farmers with information about land use, cost-share programs, and educational opportunities, but lacks the capacity to create a formal new business development process. Person County needs a dedicated Agricultural Economic Development Officer with marketing and small business development experience who can help new farmers develop business plans, evaluate agricultural business proposals, and provide marketing advice.

### ***Industrial Agribusinesses***

Three of the largest agribusinesses in Person County are US Flue Cured Tobacco Growers, Louisiana Pacific, and Boise Cascade. These companies have a combined tax value of more than \$590 million.

*Challenge:* Recruit new industrial agribusiness and expand existing agribusiness in Person County.

*Opportunities:* The Person County Economic Development Office continues to investigate agribusiness opportunities. For example, wood products offer a significant opportunity for agribusiness growth in Person County. The county has the opportunity to work with Louisiana Pacific and Boise Cascade and other wood products manufacturers to grow this business sector. As conservation techniques become more prevalent, there will be opportunities to use the entire tree in harvests. In addition, there is an

opportunity to grow a wood pellet industry as more consumers use specialized wood burning stoves in place of coal and oil furnaces.

The recently announced AgTech Accelerator in RTP could offer opportunities for new industrial agribusinesses in Person County. An Ag EDO could explore opportunities for partnership between new ag enterprises looking to expand. Person County could offer new ag businesses proximity to raw materials and RTP.

Additional uses for tobacco and other crops are being reviewed along with future opportunities for natural hemp in North Carolina. Person County should continue to look at growth opportunities in this sector.

As with all business opportunities, training will continue to be an important factor for attracting new businesses. Greater resources for Future Farmers of America (FFA), community college students, and the general public can provide Person County residents with more sustainable agribusinesses in the future.

### ***Farm Transition***

*Challenge:* Many adults who were interviewed shared concerns about young people moving away due to lack of opportunity and the challenges this creates for farm transition and maintaining profitability. High school students who were interviewed talked about their plans to leave the county for college, the military, and jobs. Only a few students talked about being a farmer and a smaller number of those with a family farm talked about farming here in the future. This has contributed to the ongoing struggle facing farmers in which there are no heirs to take over the farming business.

*Opportunities:* There is an opportunity to host an annual ag conference or workshops to address new types of agriculture, farm transition, present use value taxation, the VAD program, estate planning, and conservation easements. Many of the agribusiness representatives interviewed stated they are willing to offer advisement and financial support for farmer education and events. The Ag EDO would be responsible for organizing and hosting these conferences and workshops.

Person County School's FFA program is an agricultural education program that develops leadership skills. FFA in Person County is strong and emphasizes the link between technology and farming. Person County farmers and agribusiness should evaluate establishing an FFA alumni association that will provide leadership and fundraising activities.

### ***New Farmers and Foresters***

*Challenge:* For most Person County farmers, their primary crop is flue-cured tobacco, beef cattle and/or trees. As traditional agriculture evolves, opportunities for new farmers have developed. These new farmers are moving into the county with limited resources and a desire to own land to make a living. These new residents face many obstacles and some will not survive without information and assistance.

*Opportunity:* Person County's ag departments have a wealth of information for new farmers; however, the information needs to be organized and made available to new farmers. There is an opportunity to create a system for new farmers to learn about Person County's agricultural resources. Workshops and

conferences for new farmers should also be offered. Staff has investigated hosting the “Ag School” program in 2017 where new farmers develop and submit a business plan and receive critical feedback about their ventures. The Ag EDO, with the help of other county departments, would be responsible for organizing and hosting these conferences and workshops.

## ***Tobacco***

*Challenge:* Tobacco still generates the most agricultural revenue of any crop grown in Person County. While the industry-funded Tobacco Buyout Program ended in 2014, tobacco yields and revenues from tobacco have grown even though some farmers chose to retire, sell their land, or switch to other crops or forestry. All but a few acres of tobacco grown are flue-cured varieties being grown under either conventional or organic production protocols. About half the tobacco farmers interviewed either have an organic contract or want one; the other half believe the incentives for growing organic tobacco will fade.

*Opportunity:* There are fewer tobacco farmers in Person County today, but harvest volume and cash receipts continue to reach record levels. It is important to continue educating farmers on new opportunities in tobacco and other agricultural commodities through educational workshops.

## ***Vegetables, Berries and Other Fruit***

*Challenge:* The market for Person County vegetables and fruit is limited to the Piedmont. Some local product is sold in the two farmers’ markets in Roxboro and the rest at markets outside of Person County where prices and customer numbers are higher. The trade off with out-of-county markets is the added costs of transportation and time.

Every vegetable farmer interviewed has experience selling produce at one of the two farmers’ markets in Roxboro. Almost without exception, most farmers – within a couple of years – shift to other markets or stop growing vegetables. General consensus on selling vegetables in Roxboro was described as “a struggle, at best” the local customer demand is not sufficient and prices are artificially low because customers are not willing to pay a premium for locally grown and organic produce. Additionally, many residents of the county either have a garden or know someone who shares from their garden.

Large, multi-generation farm owners were interviewed for this plan, but none expressed an interest in growing produce for the following reasons: vegetables are high risk, have low profit potential, and require marketing. Every one of these farmers stated that they do not understand how to market produce. These farmers also stated that they equate vegetable production with a lower standard of living than what they are accustomed to.

There are several small farms located in southern Person County and its border counties. Over the next decade, the number of small farms in this area is expected to rise. Interviews with these farmers identified several commonalities- most of these farmers are younger, earn less than tobacco and cattle on the same acreage, advertise through web sites, focus on customer relationships, hire interns, use organic practices, raise vegetables and flowers, host events, try out new crops every season, depend on farmer’s markets, and often have a spouse with outside employment.

*Opportunities:* Retail and wholesale outlets normally buy fruits and vegetables in quantities that exceed the production capability of the typical small, produce farmer. Every produce farmer who was interviewed talked about the need for a vegetable cooperative. They also expressed interest in a cold storage facility, a branding label, and cattle sale facility. Grant money is available for this type of infrastructure; however, there are both successful and unsuccessful examples of vegetable cooperatives around the state. Projects that have failed lacked proper research and local commitment, as such, grants should require individual growers to invest some of their money into projects so that there is sufficient commitment from the grower to the project and community.

Several restaurants, store managers, and other businesses were asked about the potential market for selling locally grown and organic produce. Over the years, Person County retailers have made multiple attempts to cash in on this market with little success. Business owners said there are three challenges to overcome in Person County: low wages, lack of understanding about the health benefits of locally grown and organic agriculture, and lack of awareness of the importance of buying local to support the local economy. Helping residents to make better food choices requires a long-term educational effort that promotes buying local and cooking at home. Cooking classes and food demonstrations at farmer markets and public events are a good start, as well as an education campaign on locally grown foods.

The Hillsborough-based Piedmont Food & Agriculture Processing (PFAP) center opened in 2011. State and federal grant funding, along with the contributions of four counties made this facility a reality. When this facility was being planned, an invitation was extended to Person County to provide financing as a founding member, but the offer was declined. This center offers a certified kitchen, commercial grade cooking equipment, and storage facilities (cold, freezer and dry) for use by local businesses on a rental basis. Small-scale food entrepreneurs use the PFAP frequently. Technical assistance and consultation services are also offered through the center. Several farmers have stated that they would like to see Person County join PFAP and county leadership should be encouraged to contact the PFAP board to make an inquiry about joining.

A canning facility is located in South Boston, Virginia. Canning opportunities are available for a small fee June – December on Tuesday and Thursday from June – December. Person County should investigate promoting the facility to local producers.

Several farms in Person County manage Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations. A CSA is a contractual agreement between a grower and a customer who subscribes for a share of a farm's seasonal products. Shares of produce can be picked up at the farm, but most CSA's deliver to a drop off point on a weekly basis for a pre-established number of weeks. The farmer sets the rate and is normally paid before any deliveries are made. This concept has been around for several decades and is a good match for customers with busy lives and disposable income. The CSA is a business model that holds a lot of potential for small farms in the southern end of the Person County.

Another economic bright spot are the half a million potential customers of local agriculture in NC, who live within a one-hour drive of Person County. The growing population in Durham and Orange counties is

County	Population
Person	39,464
Caswell	23,719
Durham	294,460
Granville	59,916
Orange	133,801
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>511,896</b>

increasing the market for local food. An Ag EDO could help educate farmers about marketing their foods and promote Person County agriculture.

### ***Greenhouse, Nursery, Floriculture, and Sod Farming***

*Challenge:* The number of greenhouse and nursery related businesses in Person County increased from 9 to 20 between 2007 and 2012. The 2008 economic recession resulted in a five-year sales drop from \$916,000 to \$581,000. However, as the economy improves, there are new opportunities in niche markets, including weddings and parties.

*Opportunity:* Between late winter and early spring, greenhouses are used to grow tobacco seedlings. During the other seven to nine months of the year, the greenhouses could be used for vegetable and flower production. This is an idea worth further evaluation and possibly a future workshop.

### ***Grains and Beans***

*Challenge:* The 2012 Agriculture Census reported that \$11 million was generated from 24,186 acres of grains and beans. Several agribusinesses in Virginia and North Carolina buy this product once harvested. The largest buyer in this area is Camp Chemical, which is a fertilizer and seed supplier located in the county. However, farmers are reluctant to enter this market while commodity prices are below production costs. Grains earn less per acre than tobacco or cattle, but it is likely that grains and beans will remain economically viable over the long-term.

*Opportunity:* There are economic opportunities for specialty grains such as hard dent corn for corn chips, high oil or high starch corn for processing, livestock, and other entities. However, there are risks with lower yields, if no premium prices exist. In addition, NC State continues to fund research in drought tolerant soybeans, brown stem rot resistant soybeans, and corn emergence studies to improve profitability.

### ***Hay and Forage***

*Challenge:* In 2012, hay was the third largest crop by total acreage in the county, making Person County 31<sup>st</sup> out of 100 counties in the state for hay production. That year, 91 farms grew 17,400 tons, or \$1.1 million worth of hay on 9,200 acres. In 2007, the harvest was the same with a value of \$419,000.

Several farmers who were interviewed noted that specialty buyers offer the best prices for hay. Specialty markets include landscapers (erosion control), fire departments (for burns), agritourism events (e.g. fall festivals), and horses. Horse owners pay the most for hay, but require high-quality hay that is delivered and stacked on-site. Many hay buyers do not know how to judge the quality of hay.

*Opportunities:* The markets listed above are fairly strong and will continue to be strong into the near future. With additional time and dollars, hay producers can locate and pursue other markets. This may require thinking outside the box in terms of where and to whom to promote the product. For example new marketing opportunities may include placing "Hay For Sale" signs in strategic locations and listing hay for sale on Craigslist and other online venues.

There is an opportunity to educate producers on the value of having hay tested for quality (\$10 in NC).

## **Horses**

*Challenge:* According to the 2012 Census, there were only eight horse farms in Person County. A 2009 Equine Impact Study by the N.C. Rural Center counted 1,960 horses in Person County with an estimated value of \$11.9 million dollars. It was recently estimated by the Horseman Association that there are more than 2,000 horses in the county today.

Horse owners have the option of participating in two local organizations- the Person County Saddle Club and The Person County Horseman's Association. The Horseman's Association promotes horse ownership, organizes trail rides, and participates in regional events. The Saddle Club hosts six horse events a year.

*Opportunity:* Unfortunately, the increase in horse ownership has been met with an increase in the number of landowners with smaller tracts of land. In recent years this has meant fewer miles of trail in the county, shorter rides, and a limited number of participants. This trend needs to be reversed to help keep Person County's equine industry strong. One action item in this plan is to increase the miles of horse trails in the county.

## **Livestock and Livestock Processing**

*Challenge:* There are 119 beef cattle operations, eight hog farms, one dairy, one bison farm, as well as farms with poultry, llamas and other assorted livestock in the county. Cattle farms represent the third largest source of farm income with a combined market value of \$2.6 million.

Beef cattle are the main source of income on some farms, but for most they are a secondary source of income that keeps the farm profitable. Twenty farms with a combined market value of \$29,000 raise sheep and goats for wool, meat, milk, and offspring. Support for this industry is provided by research at N.C. A&T University's Small Farm Collaborative and Small Ruminant Research Unit.

*Opportunities:* There is not a processing center nearby, so livestock is taken to facilities in Virginia and a half dozen North Carolina locations. There used to be a sale facility south of Roxboro and farmers are once again talking about the need for a facility in the county. This would be a good project to evaluate for an ADFP Trust Fund grant proposal.

Animal processing is heavily regulated with rules that are easy to violate and penalties that are costly to address. This climate of heavy oversight can shut down any facility in this state and is the primary reason that there are no longer any poultry processing facilities near Person County (the closest ones are in Hickory and Marion). However, state law allows producers to slaughter 1,000 birds a year on their farms for direct sale to customers.

Large livestock processing is even more complex and requires a company like Piedmont Custom Meats located in Caswell County. Piedmont can process every kind of meat animal that is raised in Person County. Onsite USDA inspections qualify their meat products to be sold to both retail and wholesale customers. Several Person County farmers do business with Piedmont, but there are limitations. Sunset Ridge Buffalo Farms (SRBF) has used Piedmont, but due to the largeness of buffalo this arrangement has not always worked out. The nearest facilities for processing buffalo are in West



Virginia and Pennsylvania. SRBF would benefit from an upgrade to the facilities at Piedmont and having a second buffalo farm to open in or near Person County. It is not likely that a new meat handling facility will be built anytime soon due to high costs and regulatory hurdles.

One other niche company in livestock processing is Nu Dimensions Nutrition, based in Hurdle Mills. This farm-based company is sourcing all NC ingredients, including organic vegetables, for pet food production. This 18-year-old company operates inside a profitable niche, yet outside the confines of conventional agriculture. This company may offer opportunities for partnering with more farms and demonstrates to other farms in the county how to find a unique place in agriculture.

## ***Beekeeping***

*Challenge:* The 2012 Census of Agriculture reported 23 farms with 117 bee colonies. Three farms are also noted for selling honey, which is a minor part of the county's farm economy. The real importance of honeybees is for fruit and vegetable pollination and a few beekeepers do rent out hives. The Person County Beekeepers Association is an award-winning organization that supports beekeeping as a hobby and for secondary income. This organization has 50 members and should stay strong for a long time.

*Opportunity:* Support the Person County Beekeepers Association as they continue to increase the number of hives in the county.

## ***Agritourism***

*Challenge:* Agritourism is a growth industry and is taking root across Person County. The distance from large urban areas has been a disadvantage in past years, but as Person County becomes more of a bedroom community agritourism is taking hold. Currently, Person County is creating a Quilt Trail designed to encourage residents and tourists to drive the rural countryside and shop the county's various agribusinesses.

*Opportunity:* The NC Department of Agriculture offers staff resources, web advertising, and free advisement on this topic. The N.C. Agritourism Networking Association (NC-ANA) is a membership organization that is a conduit for networking with peers, sharing best practices, finding solutions and it maintains an online directory of agribusinesses. Person County should engage with the Person County Tourism Development Authority to increase agritourism.

## ***Forestry***

*Challenge:* Fifty-one percent of the land area in Person County is in trees. Every consultant and industry professional who was interviewed talked about Person County meeting only half of its production capability and landowners missing out on the profit potential.

*Opportunity:* Person County should work with the Caswell Area Forestry Association, Louisiana Pacific, Cooperative Extension, and the North Carolina Forest Service on forestry education programs for landowners.

## ***Land Use***

*Challenge:* How much farmland is too much farmland to lose to other uses? From 1990 to 2005, North Carolina was a national leader in farmland conversion into other uses. The most recent major land use



changes in Person County were the construction of Mayo and Hyco Lakes, commercial development along Highway 501 South and new homes in the southern end of the county. Before 2008, it appeared that growth was finally coming to the county, but then the economy slowed and most development pressure went away. Furthermore, changes in annexation laws have diminished the opportunity for the City of Roxboro to annex county land. Developers who were interviewed for this plan are optimistic about long-term growth in the county, but frustrated with the short-term outlook.

There are two areas of modest growth in the county– 1) along Highway 501 and 2) in the southern part of the county that borders Durham County. The distance from interstate highways and employment are two factors that make Person County attractive as a bedroom community for residents working in Durham, Orange, and Wake counties.

During interviews, many residents expressed concern about what they view as the loss of too much farmland in the county. There is concern among residents that development pressure will return and catch the county unprepared to protect the best farm and forestland.

There are many examples around the state of communities that have been successful in maintaining control of development, while growing the local economy. There are even more examples of communities where intensive development has degraded the quality of rural living. Polk County and Henderson County are two communities that have grown tourism, land values, and the agricultural economy, while maintaining a high quality of life for residents. Small farms, apple orchards, vegetable farms, and conservation easements have been important elements for enhancing rural living in these mountain counties.

*Opportunities:* Person County could conduct a Development Suitability Study (DSS) to help residents and officials identify lands for development and protection. The DSS will also be used to identify the best zones for agriculture and other uses. A second study will look at development along the Transportation Corridors to identify the condition and needs of the County's primary infrastructure facilities for access and movement of goods and people. This study will also inform the projects submitted to the State and others for funding.

Person County is roughly divided into two zoning districts, Rural Conservation (RC) and Residential (R). Rural Conservation is the County's least restrictive zoning district and is also the location of most agricultural activities. The RC district allowed uses and design standards should be reviewed for compatibility with the goals of this document, and for opportunities to enhance the future success of agriculture in the county. A list of land use tools that can be used for preserving farmland is included in Appendix E.

Person County could also consider budgeting PUV rollback funds to establish a conservation easement program, similar to the one in Alamance County.

### ***Voluntary Ag District***

The Person County VAD Ordinance was adopted by the county commissioners in 2011. Currently, there are 165 landowners with 26,500 acres enrolled in the program. The VAD does not keep land from being developed, but it does create a sense of community among rural landowners and it demonstrates to the County Commissioners that forestry and agriculture are significant to the county. There is also a clause in the ordinance that states that any VAD enrolled property targeted for condemnation will be

given the benefit of a public hearing. Some agencies, including the N.C. Department of Transportation, are obligated to seek out alternate parcels, as opposed to making a VAD property a first choice for any public project.

*Challenge:* The Person County VAD has done well, but there is still a lot of land that remains to be enrolled. Many landowners are unaware of the program or have not taken the time to enroll their land.

*Opportunities:* Greater effectiveness of the VAD can be achieved by getting more land enrolled and by exploring options for the county to enhance program benefits. In addition, the town of Roxboro can adopt their own ordinance, or sign a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to support the VAD within their city limits.

Person County should investigate adopting an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) ordinance. This voluntary program offers landowners additional benefits beyond the VAD program. All respondents to the FPP survey agreed that the county should develop an EVAD program and 94% said they would participate.

## VII. Recommendations

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This plan represents the collaborative input of over 200 people and organizations in Person County. The recommendations below combined with the items listed in the Action Plan provide the ingredients to preserve farmland, increase the economic impact of existing agriculture in the county, attract new agribusinesses, and make Person County an agritourism destination in the Upper Piedmont.

1. **Adopt land use and design standards to support agriculture.** Conversion of farm and forestland is much more likely to occur in areas to the south and east of Person County (the areas closest to the center of the Research Triangle and Durham) and around Hyco and Mayo Lakes. While the growth rate in Person County is slower than in locations closest to the center of the Triangle, the potential for a rapid uptick in development is real and presents the greatest threat to farm and forestland. Now is the best time to start planning to protect our existing and potential agricultural economy. Conducting a Development Suitability Study will provide a roadmap for future growth.
2. **Investigate implementing more farmland preservation tools.** Other than the VAD program, Person County has not implemented any farmland preservation tools. However, local landowners have expressed a great deal of interest in the ongoing preservation efforts that our bordering counties have taken and are interested in establishing some of these same opportunities in Person County. The Federal and State governments have funds set-aside for farmland preservation; however, accessing these dollars requires matching funds. Durham, Orange, and Alamance counties set aside money each year to provide the matching funds necessary to leverage the State and Federal programs.
3. **Provide new and existing farmers with educational opportunities about farmland preservation, farm transfer, and crop diversification.** Farmers, foresters, and landowners with an interest in the future are faced with a range of challenges and opportunities. Landowners expressed interest in learning about new ideas from trusted sources. A new generation of farmers and foresters are emerging with new ideas that will benefit Person County agricultural production. In the not-to-distant future, not only will existing farms compete for new markets, but they will see more competition for the land they farm. The county Ag EDO would play a key role in implementing this recommendation.
4. **Create an environment where agriculture and agritourism can be profitable.** A marketing campaign and continuous public education is needed to promote Person County agriculture. Farmers are asking for help with marketing and some have talked about county branding and establishing a vegetable cooperative. For example, small businesses and restaurants with the potential to purchase locally grown farm products continue to locate in Person County. Client numbers in these establishments are good, but the demand for local and organic foods has not been cultivated. In addition, the surrounding counties are a huge market for locally grown agriculture and agritourism. The county Ag EDO would play a key role in implementing this recommendation.
5. **Research and encourage new industrial agriculture opportunities.** The growth of Person County's agricultural economy requires additional research on new and developing agricultural

uses, expanded outreach to, and linkages with, regional partners and cooperative engagement with private and public interests. One objective of this effort would be to learn more about new markets for agricultural products and production that includes:

- a. Pharmaceuticals
- b. Textiles
- c. Building supplies
- d. Value-added food processing

# Appendix A: Action Plan Supplement

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## 1. Integrate Agriculture Economic Development into County Government

- A. Incorporate the FPP Action plan into the regular work of the Person County Agricultural Advisory Board (PCAAB). *This objective expands the duties of the PCAAB. The Board will take on the responsibility of the administration of this plan with the support of county departments and the Ag EDO.*
- B. Hire an Ag. Economic Development Officer. *This position would be a full time county employee and follow the direction of the PCAAB. The position would be responsible for implementing many of the items in the Action Plan. Below is an excerpt from Durham County's Ag EDO job description:*

*"The incumbent will be responsible for the coordination of the Agriculture Economic Development programs that provide continuation and expansion of agricultural businesses within Durham County. The primary duties and responsibilities of the position will include; to develop, implement and manage the programs as outlined in the Durham County Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Plan; serve as a liaison to the Durham Food Policy Council; assist agriculture producers with regulatory compliance efforts as required by The Food Modernization & Safety Act (FMSA); educate the Durham community on the benefits of local products; expand local marketing and branding opportunities for Durham products; promote the Voluntary Agriculture District (VAD) program and assist farms that are in permanent easements with regulatory compliance and transition efforts; and coordinate efforts between local nonprofit organizations and Durham county to promote agriculture as an integral part of the economy."*

- C. Annually present the "State of Person County Agriculture" report to the County Commissioners. *The Ag EDO and the PCAAB Chairman will present at a county commissioner meeting the "State of Person County Agriculture" annual report. This report will be posted and archived on the county web site and a copy, or summary will be posted in a media outlet, such as the newspaper.*
- D. Annually review the Farmland Preservation Plan. *The Ag EDO along with the PCAAB will review the FPP on an annual basis. During this review process, any revisions or recommended changes shall be adopted by the PCAAB and implemented by the Ag EDO, if approved.*

## 2. Educate New Farmers

- A. Work with Community Colleges & Universities on agriculture course offerings. *Courses in farming should be made available to students in and out of high school and to new farmers of all ages. The Piedmont Community College (PCC) President has stated that he is willing to establish a new agricultural program, only if sufficient interest can be demonstrated. PCC currently offers a horticulture program to prisoners and it experiences good enrollment numbers. Community colleges have established service areas and PCC should be the first point of contact for setting up a farm course, but if that does not work out, Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) has a successful track record and is the next best point of contact. **Model Program:** CCCC is located in Pittsboro, which is a two-hour drive from southern Person County, where many of the new farms in the county are locating. CCCC offers a successful and*

*innovative program of agriculture courses in new, organic and traditional agriculture. PCC leadership will be contacted about offering courses that are needed by Person County farmers.*

- B. Develop a beginning farmer resource guide for purchasing farmland and other information that every new farmer needs to know about farming in Person Co. *During the past decade, more than ten new farms have been started in southern Person County. New farmers that were interviewed talked about the many challenges they have faced. Making information available to new farmers will encourage success, it will also connect these farmers with agencies (e.g., Soil & Water, Cooperative Extension, Tax Office etc.), other farmers, educational opportunities, grant funding, and cost share programs.*
- C. Establish new farmer program with adjacent counties. *This objective is a cooperative effort to offer the NC State University Farm School Program on a rotational basis in this three county region.*
- D. Develop a funding mechanism for new agriculture based businesses. *There are no monies allocated to get a person started in farming other than farm loans. Farm loans can be obtained through the USDA Farm Service Agency, Farm Credit or local banks. For special projects there may be grants available but very rarely for startup costs. Offer a grant program or a new venture funding award program.*
- E. Develop a “veteran to farmer” program. *Recognizing the value of introducing (or reintroducing) veterans to agricultural jobs will strengthen Person County as a rural community and expand economic development.*
- F. Establish a Farm Internship Program for FFA students. *When there were more farms in Person County and more farm kids in the classroom, there were plenty of opportunities for students to work on a farm after school and during the summer. As the number of farms has decreased, so have internship opportunities. There are students who are interested in working on a farm. FFA teachers in the county will champion this program, but they cannot do it on their own. Farm associations in the county will be able to find farmers who will allow students to do an internship. Forms will need to be designed to formalize the process and to make certain that participating farmers do not incur extra liability. The NC Future Farmers of America organization will be able to offer guidance for establishing this program.  
**Model Program:** Durham and Johnston County FFA programs.*
- G. Work with schools to strengthen FFA. *FFA teachers in the county regularly invite speakers into their classroom. It would help to have a formal speaker bureau for farming and forestry. The PCAAB will work with the forestry and different agriculture associations to identify speakers for the bureau.*

### **3. Enable Agriculture-Supportive Planning**

- A. Adopt land use and design standards that focus on land preservation and agriculture sustainability. *The Planning and Zoning Department provides a broad range of current and long-range data and tools including land design, land use, transportation, open space and environmental planning that can be utilized to facilitate farmland preservation and enhance the environment for farm-related economic development. They include:*
  - *Developing a discrete set of criteria to map locations of lands that are most suitable for farming and most threatened to be lost*

- Reviewing and modifying the County Ordinance to ensure that land uses and dimensional requirements are not in conflict with the goals and objectives of the FPP
- Educating farmers about environmental and land use rules and how to comply with these proactively
- Introducing farmers and others associated with building our local agriculture and value-added agricultural economy, about the resources available to them from planning-related sources for funding and technical assistance

B. Produce a farmland and land development suitability map. A Development Suitability Study (DSS) will help residents and officials to identify lands for development and preservation. The DSS will also be used to identify the best zones for agriculture and other uses. The data and maps produced by the Study will help us to administer a land parcel ranking system, which is recommended for any easement program that distributes funds. Setting priorities helps to ensure that every applicant is evaluated in a consistent manner. This approach can also be used to satisfy eligibility requirements for state and federal matching funds.

#### **4. Economic Development and Agriculture Infrastructure**

*Each idea listed below has had at least one successful launch in North Carolina. Many of these ideas were also attempted in other locations where they failed. Any facility for food such as a processing center requires an engineered design, permits, high costs and a long timeline from start to finish.*

*The track record for vegetable cooperatives in this state has been one of inconsistencies. For every successful vegetable cooperative, several others have failed. Every good cooperative has a strong board and paid director. On a year-to-year basis the numbers of farmers who grow and sell annual crops of vegetables and flowers, changes frequently. These factors equate to a crop that can be very profitable one year and result in a loss the next. These factors point to the fact that in a given year many farmers are willing to participate in a vegetable cooperative and one to two years later the numbers can be greater, or nonexistent. If a planned facility is based just on vegetables, the participating farmers need to have "skin in the game," in the form of personal cash investment. This approach will encourage participation for the long term, and minimize individuals who can easily abandon the operation following one season of bad crops and low prices.*

**Model Project #1:** Eastern Carolina Organics (ECO) is a whole distributor of Carolina organic farm produce to retailers, restaurants and buying clubs. As a farmer-owned organization, eighty percent of sales go right back to the growers. By aggregating produce from several farmers, ECO is able to meet the demand of larger buyers. ECO was started in 2004 by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association with funding from a Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Grant.

**Model Project #2:** The Piedmont Food & Agriculture Processing Center (PFAPC) in Hillsborough was built in 2010. Funding for this facility came from the three sources listed in the next paragraph. The PFAPC proved to be complex and expensive. The facility director at that time was Dr. Noah Ranells, and he would be a good contact for project advisement. Dr. Ranells can be reached at the North Carolina A&T State University, Small Farm Agribusiness & Marketing Center.

A. Establish a farmer's cooperative for wholesale product sales. Many farmers who were interviewed talked about the need for a vegetable cooperative in the county. Large wholesale buyers including grocery stores make purchase based upon meeting minimum volume standards that most individual farmers



cannot meet. A cooperative enhanced with county branding and marketing would create increased supply capability and demand for Person County farm products.

- B. Build a refrigeration facility for vegetable and meat storage. The farm cooperative will need product storage. **Model Project:** Contact staff of the NC ADFP to find out the latest on funding and construction of these types of facilities in North Carolina.
- C. Build a livestock sale facility. There used to be a livestock facility near Roxboro, but it closed down several years ago. This facility was used for sorting groups of market hogs onto truckloads. The facility closed due to decreasing animal numbers. A feasibility study may be warranted to determine the need for such a facility in the county. The level of interest of both livestock producers and buyers would determine the successfulness of such a project. Because of the diversity of livestock species in Person County, a facility would need to be able to handle multiple species. Any facility built should be able to handle multiple uses, such as educational programs and livestock shows. **Model Program:** The Duplin County Livestock Facility in Kenansville, N.C.
- D. Seek a meat processor to locate in or near Person County for cattle and larger animals. Today there are more than 7,000 cattle, a bison farm and other livestock operations in Person County. Many of these animals are taken to meat processing facilities in Caswell and other counties, which means a lot of farm economy is leaving Person County. The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project based out of Asheville, NC did a study, which led to construction of a modern livestock facility. A copy of that study can be found on their web site at: <http://asapconnections.org/downloads/asap-large-animal-meat-processing-feasibility-in-wnc.pdf>. Any facility built in Person County needs to include the capability of handling large animals including bison and be able to produce value-added products such as hot dogs and smoked meats. Due to the costs this type of project will only be attempted with the support of other counties in the region. A representative of each type of livestock operation in the county will be included in the planning process. **Model Program:** The Cruse Meat Handling Facility in Cabarrus County.
- E. Obtain access for Person County farmers to the South Boston Cannery. The Tri-County Community Action Agency, Inc., of South Boston, Virginia will be contacted to ask about use by Person County farmers and food processors.

## 5. Grow Agritourism

- A. Continue to promote the annual farm tour of Person County. The Person County Museum of History and Person County Cooperative Extension organized three farm tours in 2012-2014. These tours have been loosely based on the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) model with the tours being self-guided and offered on Saturday and Sunday afternoons; an average of 15 sites participated. Now may be the time to evaluate the design of the farm tour for effectiveness on promoting farms while trying to reduce work, stress, and time requirements on the farmers. Furthermore, incorporating locally grown products into a meal for participants may need to be studied. **Model Program:** High Country Farm Tour in Watauga and Caldwell Counties. The web site on that tour is: <http://farmtour.brwia.org/>.
- B. Complete and promote the quilt trail. Collaborate with adjacent counties to expand the quilt trail as a regional trail. Additional funding for marketing can be sought through grants and the TDA. **Model**

**Program:** Tar River Quilt Trail in Counties along the Tar River. The web site is: [http://www.fcacarts.org/quilt\\_trails\\_of\\_the\\_tar\\_river.aspx](http://www.fcacarts.org/quilt_trails_of_the_tar_river.aspx). **Model Program:** Quilt Trails of Western NC covers areas from Asheville up the Blue Ridge Mountains. For more information on this trail the web site is: <http://www.quilttrailswnc.org/>.

- C. Increase the total miles of horse trails in the county. There are an estimated 2,000 horses in Person County. There are several training and boarding facilities and a show facility located in the northern part of the county. Many horse enthusiasts are concerned about the decreasing amount of land on which to ride horses. Additionally, many horse enthusiasts currently trailer horses just over the line into Durham County to ride at Hill Forest. Developing horse trails may be beneficial to keep current horseback riders in the county while drawing new riders to Person County. Increasing the horseback riders in the county could also help the local economy. Support would need to come from a large interested group of enthusiasts, not limited to horseback riders, in order to maintain trails throughout the county.

## 6. Promote Land Protection

- A. Conduct an annual conservation and cost share workshop for all landowners. Workshops such as these can help educate farmers to different programs available and various conservation methods. **Model Program:** Wake Soil & Water Conservation District, Lee Soil & Water Conservation District and Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District.
- B. Increase VAD and NC Century Farm Program participation. These programs help to unify farmers and foresters. In addition, these programs build community, increase pride in these professions and demonstrate their impact to the County Commissioners. In every county one agency provides administrative support to the VAD and normally works on sign-ups for the Century Farm Program. Often this one agency handles all recruitment and sign-ups. Employees of agricultural agencies that do not work with these programs may not be aware of them. Conducting a meeting once a year with all agriculture and forestry agency personnel to talk about these programs, will increase landowner recruitment. **Model Program:** Buncombe, Cabarrus, Franklin and Moore Counties.
- C. Adopt an EVAD ordinance. Person County adopted a Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Ordinance on February 7, 2011. The EVAD can also be adopted by county ordinance and offers additional benefits as a stepped-up version of the VAD. The EVAD offers landowners extra protection with a ten-year renewable commitment that includes additional benefits to the landowner, such as higher cost share rates for installing best management practices. Adopting a Person County EVAD ordinance would simply give landowners an additional choice for protecting their land. **Model Programs:** Gaston and Polk counties.
- D. Work with Co. Commissioners on establishing a PACE program supported by PUV rollback funds. Rollback funds are paid to the county by landowners who remove land from farming and forestry, so that it can be developed. **Model Program:** The Alamance County commissioners on an annual basis have committed rollback funds into a county account used as a match for state and federal easement matching funds. Each year applications are accepted and several landowners have been paid to leave their farm in agriculture on a permanent basis. These funds provide those farmers working capital to pay down debt and expand for profitability.

## 7. Expand Agriculture Outreach and Marketing

- A. Establish & promote community gardens. *The average American is five to seven generations removed from the farm and many have never raised a garden. Community gardens can also be used as an educational tool for students. Currently, Person County has one established community garden that is operated by the non-profit organization Special Populations Enrichment, Education and Employment Department (SPEEED). **Model Programs:** Polk County, NC Office of Agricultural Economic Development and the Forsyth County, NC Community Gardener Program.*
- B. Work on a county agricultural marketing collaboration with border counties to promote Person County agriculture that is organic and locally grown. *Border counties with large urban areas are home to many businesses that place a premium on the purchase of local and organic agriculture. This objective is designed to increase access to those markets.*
- A billboard to promote Person County agriculture & forestry. *A billboard on a primary road in the county will communicate to the masses, the value of these industries to the county. Public officials and citizens need to be reminded of the dollars and employment generated by agriculture.*
  - County agritourism web site. *Orange County, NC has a model web site for promoting agriculture and agritourism.*
  - Person County Farm Products Booth. *Multiple Person County farmers have sold product at farmers' markets, both in and out of the county. Having one booth manned by multiple individuals, can benefit multiple farms through economy of scale. **Model Program:** Polk County has successfully operated an out of county farm products booth in Asheville, NC.*
  - A brochure on Person County amenities *in hard copy, on the web and as a smart phone app, is needed to maximize marketing of Person County agriculture and agritourism. **Model Programs:** Orange County, NC has excelled at promoting local agriculture online. State of Virginia Welcome Centers distribute brochures that promote local agriculture.*
  - Annual food theme festival. *A food themed festival would be a good way to market Person County agriculture and to educate the public on its value to the local economy.*
  - Agriculture marketing campaign. *Many high earning, urban residents are willing to pay a premium for value-added agriculture, in the form of organic and locally grown agriculture. These same residents are exposed to lots of marketing, which means that Person County farmers can benefit by making an investment in advertising.*
- C. Market Person County agriculture to attract retirees. *Every year there are new retirees looking to relocate, many of them are seeking a slower pace of life, they have money to spend, are highly educated and are consumers who place a high value on locally grown agriculture. Convincing retirees to move here will grow the agribusiness economy.*
- D. Conduct a marketing & education campaign on benefits of buying local agriculture products targeting Person County residents. *Many citizens do not understand the benefits of supporting the economy through buying local or the benefits of eating fresh products. In addition, farmers' market customers do not place a high value on buying organic. A marketing campaign would help out in both of these areas.*
- E. Maximize the profitability and outreach of the two farmers' markets in Roxboro. *If leadership of the two farmers' markets in Roxboro could work together, it would benefit Person County agriculture.*

*These markets were established at different times, with different rules and each serves a unique client base. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to establish a working relationship between the two markets in the past. This approach that is being recommended is to bring in a neutral party to chair a committee, or contract for a study with emphasis on:*

- *shared marketing*
- *enhancing market events*
- *using SNAP*

*The customer base in Person County can be increased with two marketing campaigns, one targeting county residents and the other to bordering counties. Additionally, the two farmers' markets could run an education campaign on supporting the economy by buying local agriculture. A work group, or a study could identify new components to enhance the experience at each farmers' market that will make each of them a destination worth repeating on a regular basis. These components could include cooking classes, music and EBT.*

*Roxboro City Market. This is the older of the two farmers' markets in Roxboro, it operates on a city parking lot along Depot Street. This market was estimated by city staff to have been started over 30 years ago. This market falls under authority of the Roxboro City Council. Two key council members to contact for additional information and to initiate a dialogue, are Henry Daniels who helped to start the market and William Davis, Mayor Pro Tem.*

*Person County Market. The Person County Farmers Market at 601 N. Madison Blvd. was started in 2009 with grant funding. This market is under the direction of an elected board and hired manager.*

- F. Pursue selling farm products & setting-up an agriculture education booth at arts, parks, festivals & sporting events. *Other communities are seeing success of farmers selling product at county sponsored events. **Model Program:** Farm produce sales at baseball games of the Thomasville, N.C. Copperheads. A grant from the NC Department of Agriculture ADFP Trust Fund was used to pay for the necessary infrastructure.*

## **8. Forestry Opportunities**

- A. Educate the public on the economic value of forestry and proper forestry management. *Forestry is not recognized for its economic contribution, employment numbers and environmental stewardship. The Caswell County Area Forestry Association conducts several educational trainings each year. Forestry businesses, the NC Forestry Association and NC Forest Service are willing to provide technical assistance and support for educational efforts. NC Forest Service personnel could write a monthly newspaper article on forestry related topics.*
- B. Evaluate local N.C. Forest Service staffing needs. *The county is only meeting half of its forestry production capability with heavy demand for technical services by consultants and the NC Forest Service staff. Currently there are two employees in the Forest Service Office in Roxboro. The NC Forestry Service and Person County share the cost of maintaining the county forestry office. The NC Forest Service District Office should be contacted with a request to do a personnel study on Person County.*

- C. Contact military representatives to promote Person County farm & forestland for training. Every branch of the military has a base in North Carolina. Urban encroachment limits training space for soldiers and they are always seeking rural lands to rent and lease for training. NC Farm Bureau has a long track record of working with the military on these types of issues in North Carolina. Chester Lowder who works at FB Headquarters in Raleigh is a good point of contact. Once details are worked out, landowner workshops will be conducted to educate them on options to consider and how the process works.
- D. Conduct a forestry potential and capacity report. Forestry consultants stated during the interview process that many Person County landowners are guilty of poor tree stand management. Everett Titus is a Forestry Procurement Officer who works at the Louisiana Pacific OSB plant in Roxboro. During the interview process Mr. Titus talked about the fact that Person County forestry production has the potential to be doubled with better management. Increased production will increase revenues, employment and generate additional tax revenue. A work group with Everett Titus, agency professionals and NCSU forestry staff should be asked to set-up a work group that will prepare a report with recommendations that will be presented to the PCAAB and the Person County Commissioners.

## 9. Provide Networking and Education to Existing Farmers

- A. Organize an annual farmer appreciation event. It is important to recognize agriculture as a viable economic contributor to the county. One way is by honoring farmers at an annual appreciation event. This event will give commissioners, local agricultural leaders, agribusinesses and farmers a chance to network and discuss agriculture related topics. **Model Programs:** Stokes County Farmer Appreciation Night, Rowan County Farmer Appreciation Breakfast, Orange County Agricultural Summit.
- B. Establish an annual schedule of farmer educational forums. During interviews farmers and foresters talked about topics that they would like to know more about. Below is a list of those topics.
- Agritourism Opportunities in North Carolina
  - Cost Share Programs For Farms and Forestry
  - Crop Insurance Opportunities
  - DMV Regulation for Agriculture and Forestry
  - Effective Marketing of Agriculture
  - Estate Planning
  - Farmland Preservation and Conservation Easements
  - Farm Transition To The Next Generation
  - Good Agriculture Practices training
  - Managing and Selling Forestry Tracts For Maximum Profit
  - New Farmer Training
  - New Opportunities in Agriculture
  - Networking With Famers, Agencies and Organizations To Increase Profits
  - Organic Certification
  - Operating a CSA, Community Support Agriculture
  - Opportunities for Leasing Land To Farm
  - Opportunities in Agriculture That Support the Horse Industry
  - Product Liability Concerns and Solutions
  - Profiting From A Hunting Lease

- *Selling and Marketing Firewood*
  - *The Impacts of Environmental Regulations For Farming and Forestry*
  - *The Pros and Cons of Solar Farms*
  - *Using Tobacco Greenhouses To Generate Additional Income*
  - *Value Added Agriculture*
- C. Establish FFA Alumni organization. *A National FFA Alumni Affiliate helps to rally the local community around agricultural education and FFA activities. FFA alumni affiliates also provide a helping hand to FFA advisors in coordinating activities for the local FFA chapters.*
- D. Establish the Person County Area Hobby Farm Association. *The managers of Southern States and Tractor Supply stated that a large and growing customer base are the owners of hobby farms. Many of these are first time farmers, some are young and have limited resources, others are retired professionals who left a career and have money to spend. All of these individuals have questions and need assistance. An association would grow this market and help hobby farms to be successful.*
- E. Conduct an annual Landowner Workshop. *An annual workshop will be conducted by government agency personnel to educate landowners on grants, the VAD, EVAD, PUV, NC Century Farm Program and cost share programs. **Model Programs:** Cabarrus Soil & Water Conservation District, Moore Soil & Water Conservation District and Wake County, NC.*
- F. Evaluate land lease options and the number of rental properties available to farmers in the county. *New and existing farmers need land to lease for their operations and housing for their workers. The number of properties available is scarce or farmers are unaware of opportunities. Efforts to establish a unified listing of available land/rental properties would be beneficial.*

## 10. Facilitate Farm Transitions

- A. Conduct an annual farm transitions workshop. *An annual workshop will be conducted by government agency personnel to educate landowners on estate planning, taxation, conservation easements and planning for the future of their land. **Model Programs:** Cabarrus Soil & Water Conservation District, Moore Soil & Water Conservation District and Wake County, NC.*
- B. Conduct seminars for realtors, attorneys, and paralegals on farmland transactions. *Most land transactions involved an attorney and a real estate agent. Some attorneys and real estate agents have minimal knowledge of PUV, the VAD and the available conservation programs. Not knowing about these programs can result in landowners purchasing land with limitations and added costs. The goal of this objective will be to educate attorney and real estate agents from all of the NC boundary counties of Person County. These workshops will present information about programs that will help their clients and in turn help new landowners and these programs successful. The Office of the State Bar and NC Realtors Association will be contacted to see if participating in this course can include continuing education credits.*

# Appendix B: FPP Survey Instrument

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A survey instrument was designed by the FPP Leadership team with nine questions about Peron County agriculture. This survey was distributed at several events and below is a summary of the results.

How important is **agriculture** to the Person County economy?

**77% responded “extremely”** and 23% responded “very”

How important is **forestry** to the Person County economy?

**70% responded “extremely”** and 26% responded “very”

How concerned are you about the loss of farmland in the county?

**61% responded “extremely”** and 31% responded “very”

You feel that Agriculture and Forestry will continue to make significant contributions to the Person County economy over the next:

**5 & 10 years? 100% responded “Yes”**

**20 years or long? 96% responded “Yes”**

What are the three biggest challenges that you face as a farmer, or landowner?

**60% responded “Farm Transfer - One Generation to The Next”**

**50% responded “Production Costs”**

**48% responded “Residential/Commercial Development” & “Cost of Farmland”**

Rank the top three reasons you are interested in preserving farmland in Person County.

**58% responded “Quality of Life”**

**50% responded “Food Security”**

**33% responded “Tourism/Attractiveness of The County”**

If Person County were to receive grant money to preserve farmland, how would you like to see that money spent?

**50% responded “Creating a Person County Brand, or Other Marketing Strategy”**

**50% responded “Educating Youth About Farming”**

**36% responded “Incorporating Ag/Forestry Into Economic Development”**

**35% responded “Incorporate the Farmland Preservation Plan Into Co. Master Plan”**

Are you interested in learning about conservation easements & tax credits? **96% - Yes**

Should there be an Enhanced Voluntary Ag. District program in by Person Co.?

**100% responded “Yes” there should be an EVAD and 94% “Yes” I will participate.**

General question, one response was **“FFA needs to focus more on vocational education to develop young farmers for working with livestock.”**



# **Person County Farmland Preservation Survey** **9.15.15**

1.

Question	Extremely	Very	Neutral	Somewhat	Not At All
How important is Agriculture to the Person County economy?					
How important is Forestry to the Person County economy?					
How concerned are you about the loss of farmland in the county?					

2. Do you feel that Agriculture and Forestry will continue to make significant contributions to the Person County economy over the next:

- |              |     |    |
|--------------|-----|----|
| a. 5 years?  | Yes | No |
| b. 10 years? | Yes | No |
| c. 20 years? | Yes | No |

Why or Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the three (3) biggest challenges that you face as a farmer? Only circle three (3).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Cost of inputs                               | • Finding the next generation to farm        |
| • Cost of land                                 | • Recruiting and hiring qualified staff      |
| • Identifying business expansion opportunities | • Marketing products                         |
| • Residential/Commercial development           | • Farm transfer (one generation to the next) |
| • Changes in consumer demand                   | • Other _____                                |

4. Why are you interested in preserving farmland in Person County? Choose all that apply.

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| a. Quality of life                    | f. Tourism/attractiveness of county      |
| b. Wildlife habitat                   | g. Maintaining rural heritage            |
| c. Environment                        | h. Reducing sprawl                       |
| d. Economic Development opportunities | i. Not interested in preserving farmland |
| e. Food security                      | j. Other _____                           |

## FPP Survey Instrument *continued*

5. Other counties have used State grant money to create value-added processing centers, marketing programs, and livestock showcase facilities. If the county were to receive grant money (no more than \$100,000) for a project to preserve farmland, how would you like to see that money spent? Choose one (1).
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. Encouraging development of new markets                                 | f. Educating youth about farming  |
| b. Connecting retiring farmers to new farmers                             | g. Creating a Person County ag brand or other marketing strategies          |
| c. Incorporating the Farmland Protection Plan into the County Master Plan | h. Promoting agri-tourism activities  |
| d. Marketing/business plan classes for farmers                            | i. Constructing a canning facility or other value-added processing facility |
| e. Incorporating ag/forestry into economic development programming        | j. Other_____   |
6. Do you have suggestions of how Person County government can help our ag/forestry businesses be more competitive and promote agricultural economic development?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you interested in learning more about conservation easement and the associated grant program and tax credits? Yes No
8. An Enhanced Voluntary Ag District (EVAD) allows farmers to voluntarily preserve their farmland for 10 years.
- Do you think an Enhanced Voluntary Ag District (EVAD) should be offered in Person County? Yes No
  - Would you participate in an Enhanced Voluntary Ag District program in Person County? Yes No
9. Do you have any questions, concerns, or comments about farmland preservation in Person County?

# Appendix C: Key Points from Interviews

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More than 200 people were interviewed during the course of pulling this plan together and each one was asked what is needed to enhance future sustainability of Person County farming and forestry. Many farmers expressed praise for ongoing agency efforts and shared individual success stories. Almost all of the residents who were interviewed stated they place high value on the rural lifestyle, which is a byproduct of successful agriculture. Below are the most common concerns and ideas expressed.

- Agriculture is one of the main economic engines in Person County.
- What kind of agriculture is best suited for Person County?
- How will the majority of our farmers prepare for future success?
- Why are so many new farming operations coming into the south end of the county?
- How many of the new farms that come into the county are profitable within five years?
- What do these new farms need most of all to be successful?
- What is the most effective way to introduce new ideas for farming into the county?
- Person County vegetable farmers need a vegetable cooperative.
- It is a proven fact that selling vegetables at baseball games can generate income.
- Income from the average Person County forestry tract will double with better management.
- How many farmers will continue raising tobacco?
- There are two competing and very different farmer markets in Roxboro.
- More income is generated by local farm product sold at farm markets outside the county, then at the two markets in Roxboro. What can be done to increase Person County sales?
- What is the best and highest use of each land tract in the county?
- More than 2,000 horses are in Person County today, what does that mean for the future?
- Will the next generation supply enough farmers and foresters to keep Person County's largest economic engine running, or will this part of the economy diminish over time?
- Farming and forestry are no longer a blue-collar professions. It is important for a farmer to be educated, networking and constantly aware of market changes.
- How many Person County landowners are interested in conservation easements?
- What is the best solution to farm labor shortages?
- What is being done to integrate bike trails, sporting events, bed and breakfast establishments and signage into growing the Person County market for agriculture?
- What impact are environmental regulations having on Person County agriculture?
- Access to affordable land is a challenge for most farmers.
- Will more Person County agriculture be local grown and organic in the future?
- How many landowners are enrolled in the VAD and Present Use Value taxation?
- Is every 100-year-old farm in the county enrolled in the NC Century Farm Program?
- Who benefits most from the clean water that is leaving Person County farms and forests?
- Will conventional farms keep getting bigger over time?
- Are solar farms a good, or bad long-term use of the land?
- How can a young person who does not grow-up on a family farm, learn the trade?
- The FFA program in Person County has declined, how can it be improved?

- What is the best option for transitioning my farm to the next generation, so that it remains both profitable and not lost due to taxes owed?
- CES and NRCS are losing employees through budget cuts and new program priorities, is there anything that we can do at the local level to slow, or stop this loss?
- Agribusinesses depend heavily upon the technical advice and expertise of farm agencies.
- How much longer will there be an adequate labor force for Person County farms?
- I have farmed all of my life, with today's lower profit margins and higher input costs, it would be impossible for me to start over in farming again and achieve what I have today.

# Appendix D: Grant Resources

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The [N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services](#) (NCDA&CS) houses the N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation and NC Forest Service, with staff in every county. Programs administered through NCDA&CS are in place to protect farmland and assist with sustainable farming, agritourism, marketing, soils analysis, fertilization, crops and limiting liability. Following is a listing of several program areas:

- Agriculture Cost Share Programs to fund water quantity and water quality initiatives on farmland. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund provides funding for agricultural infrastructure, planning for agriculture at the county level, and purchase of conservation easements on farms and forestland. The Fund develops purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) programs and offers matching funds for PACE easements, with preference to any county that has adopted a countywide farmland preservation plan.
- Agritourism Networking Association
- Agronomic Services (crop management, soil testing, nutrient advisement and animal waste analysis)
- Forestry Cost Share Programs
- Marketing Assistance, including listings in a statewide Agricultural Directory
- Regulatory Authority for pesticides, livestock and crop disease management, food recalls, weights and scales
- State Farmer Markets and State Fairs
- Technical Assistance as it relates to farming and forestry
- Voluntary Agriculture District and Century Farm program over sight

The [Tobacco Trust Fund](#) (TTF) provides grant funding to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and governmental entities across the state, to facilitate transiting farms from tobacco to other types of agriculture. TTF publishes an annual report of all projects that have been approved. Agencies that are listed in this report are a good resource for advisement with the TTF grant application process. A list of projects funded and current application guidelines can be found on their web page.

The [Golden Leaf Foundation](#) (GLF) awards grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and governmental entities across North Carolina. Grant funding focuses on farms and communities that have been impacted by the loss of tobacco. County agencies listed in this report can assist with any grant application to the TTF. A list of projects funded and current application guidelines can be found on their web page.

The [Tar River Land Conservancy](#) (TLC) is based in Louisburg. TLC is the primary non-profit land stewardship organization in an eight county region that includes Person County. TLC works to preserve land in the Tar River Basin. This work is accomplished by working with landowners and agencies who are interested in a conservation easement.

# Appendix E: Planning Tools for Farm & Forestland Preservation

<i>Protection Tool</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Drawbacks</i>	<i>Applicability/Status Person County</i>
<b>Comprehensive Plan</b>	Guiding vision of what a community wants to be in the future and a strategy for achieving that.	An organized way to identify productive farmland and set growth and preservation goals. Serves as basis for land use regulations.	Not legally binding may be changed or ignored by officials as they rule on development proposals.	Person County does not have a plan and currently is using the "Land Use Plan" model from the 1990's.
<b>Differential Assessment</b>	Taxation of farmland based on its agricultural use rather than its development value.	Modest incentive to keep land in commercial farming.	Also benefits land speculators waiting to develop land.	Tax benefits through Present Use Tax Valuation are available to farmers and must be applied for. Additional tax benefits are available to stimulate farm level investment through income tax credits.
<b>Right-to- Farm Laws</b>	According to NC General Statute 106-701:  1. Definition of agriculture 2. One-Year of Operation 3. Sound ag practices determination	Strengthens the ability of farmers to defend themselves against nuisance suits. Shields farmers from excessively restrictive local laws and unwanted public infrastructure. Available to all farms in the State.	Not meant to shield from all legal disputes with neighbors. Does not stop complaints from non-farm neighbors. May not protect major changes in farm operations or new operations.	These protections are afforded to farmland to all farms in the State under North Carolina State Law.  Person County, with State authorization, may adopt a more stringent Right-To-Farm Ordinance to protect against specious nuisance claims.

<i>Protection Tool</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Drawbacks</i>	<i>Applicability/Status Person County</i>
<b>Agricultural Districts (VAD, EVAD)</b>	Designation of an area of viable agricultural land. Initiated and self-selected by landowners, adopted by county. Eligibility, minimum acreage is determined by each county. Land can go in and out at any time. Not tied to agricultural assessment.	Farmed land within district is provided a minimum level of protection from nuisance claims and public condemnation processes.  Enhanced districts allow for additional benefits including a higher level of protection.	Area defined by willing landowners and has no real longevity as a protection tool.	Person County has enrolled 26,500 acres in the VAD Program.  Enrolled properties can be identified as targets for permanent preservation due to their productive soils and operating characteristics.
<b>Agricultural Zoning</b>	Zoning that allows residential development at a rate of one unit per 20 acres or lower in a predominantly farming area. Ideally, the allowed density can be built on much smaller lots rather than large lots with each residence.	Limits non-farm development in areas intended for agricultural use. Can protect large areas of farmland at low public cost.	Local government can rezone land. Landowners may complain about loss of 'equity value' if land values have begun to escalate due to development pressure.	Unincorporated areas of the County are zoned RC, which is the least restrictive available. This provides no specific protection for commercial farming operations. As land use changes to include more suburban homes, this may become a serious challenge to agricultural operations.

<i>Protection Tool</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Drawbacks</i>	<i>Applicability/Status Person County</i>
<b>Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)</b>	Voluntary separation and sale of the development rights from land in exchange for a permanent conservation easement. Typically paid difference between restricted value and fair market value. Land remains in private ownership and on tax rolls.	Provides permanent protection of farmland and puts cash into farm and farm economy.	Public cost may be high. Combined with being voluntary, it may be difficult to protect a critical mass of farmland.	Person County does not have a Purchase of Development Rights program. Funding would need to be set-aside in the annual budget to implement a program.
<b>Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)</b>	Voluntary separation and sale of development rights from land in one part of a jurisdiction to be used to increase density in another part.  Conservation easement placed on sending parcel.	Developers compensate farmland owners. Creates permanent protection of farmland and shifts some costs to private sector.	Difficult to establish and administer. Opposition by landowners in receiving areas.  Needs to be an integral part of a jurisdiction's growth management strategy at a time that sending area resources are relatively intact and intensification of receiving areas is feasible.	Land values, development regulations and congestion in the Triangle and Triad along with changing consumer preferences and workplace requirements, make Person County increasingly attractive to developers. One tool to help balance our goals would be the creation of a county-wide TDR.  Currently no real means to utilize development rights as an incentive exists. A county-wide TDR program would be enhanced by agreements with Roxboro and Durham and Orange counties.



<i>Protection Tool</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Drawbacks</i>	<i>Applicability/Status Person County</i>
<b>Private Land Trusts</b>	Local non-profit 501.c (3) corporations designed to identify resources to be protected, accept permanent conservation easements from landowners, and monitor their provisions through time.	Can provide permanent land protection. Can forge public-private partnerships. Greatly facilitate the donation of conservation easements from landowners able to benefit from income tax benefits.	Private land trusts rarely have funds to buy easements. Conservation deals sometimes based on allowing limited development. May create islands of protection rather than a critical mass of contiguous lands. Unless specifically designed for agricultural protection, farming may be virtually impossible on conservation easements designed for other purposes.	Land Trusts that may be utilized are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Trust for North Carolina</li> <li>• Black Family Land Trust</li> <li>• Tar River Land Conservancy</li> <li>• Piedmont Land Conservancy</li> </ul>

### ***Conservation Easements***

A conservation easement is a voluntary recorded legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or governmental agency. Depending upon how an easement is written, it is a temporary or permanent development restriction on the land. Ownership is maintained and the land may be sold or passed to heirs; however, future owners must abide by the easement. The landowner retains all rights allowing them to continue to farm and practice forestry on their land.

A landowner can simply donate development rights with no compensation or they can be compensated based on the value of the land minus its restricted value. Whether rights are purchased or donated, most landowners get a combination of tax benefits and payment. A bargain sale occurs when the landowner is paid for a partial valuing of the easement and the remaining value is used for favorable tax treatment for any permanent easement. These are known as Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) or Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). Funding comes from the Federal government's program, but requires a match that can be met with a combination of State program funds and local or the landowner's in-kind donation. Currently, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services are the primary funding sources. The Tar River Land Conservancy and partnering agencies have protected many acres of farmland through the use of easements.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides matching funds for the purchase of conservation easements. Some farms in the state have already benefited from this program, which changes with each update of the Federal Farm Bill. Application for this program is made through the NRCS field office in Roxboro.

The Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFP) was established within the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in 1985. Funding is available through the ADFP for three purposes: purchase of temporary and permanent easements on farms and forestland, agricultural infrastructure projects, and military projects. Having the County Farmland Preservation Plan in place (this document) gives farmers and the county a lower match requirement and more favorable points ranking in seeking grant funds.

Any easement program that distributes funds should be administered with a land parcel ranking system. Setting priorities helps ensure that every applicant is evaluated in a consistent manner. This approach can also be used to satisfy eligibility requirements for state and federal matching funds. All North Carolina counties that have secured outside easement funding have a ranking system in place. Alamance, Buncombe and Orange are three examples of counties that can share their form with Person County.

Any landowner, who chooses to place a conservation easement on their property, is the grantor. The grantor must find a stewardship organization, such as the Soil and Water Conservation District or a land trust such as the Tar River Land Conservancy, to inspect their property on an annual basis. The stewardship organization is known as the easement holder.

**In every situation, the landowners should consult a qualified attorney or accountant for legal advice on taxes, estate planning and future restrictions of the land.**

# Appendix F: Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to the landowners, farmers, foresters, organizations, agencies, businesses, and citizens who generously shared their time and knowledge for this project.

Person County Farmland Preservation Plan Leadership Team:

Claudia Berryhill, DVM  
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Nancy McCormick  
James Pentecost  
George O'Neal  
Jimmy Clayton  
Jack Pleasant  
Tina Vernon  
Kim Woods  
Sybil Tate

Organizations:

Roxboro Community School FFA  
Piedmont Conservation Council  
Person County Farmers Market  
Person County Farm Bureau  
Beulah Baptist Association  
Carolina Farm Credit  
Kerr-Tar COG

County Beekeepers Association  
Long Memorial United Methodist Church  
Tar River Land Conservancy  
The Christian Help Center  
Roxboro Farmers Market  
Bushy Fork Grange

Government Agencies:

Person Soil and Water Conservation District  
Person County Recreation, Arts and Parks  
Person County Cooperative Extension  
Person County Planning Department  
Person County Health Department  
Person County Tax Office  
Person County Schools  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Person County Community College  
Person County Health Department  
Person County Economic Development  
Voluntary Agricultural District  
Person County Public Library  
USDA Farm Service Agency  
NC Forest Service