



## FDA's food safety session brought farmers to table

North Carolina Farm Bureau and state ag leaders offered their perspectives on food safety issues during the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Sept. 28 listening session in Raleigh.

"I applaud FDA for coming here to listen to our farmers," said Larry Wooten, President of NCFB.

Wooten asked FDA officials to remember the uniqueness of North Carolina agriculture, especially its fruit and vegetable production.

"One size doesn't fit all when we talk about food safety," he said.

Most other farmers who testified mentioned their exhaustive measures to ensure food safety.

Faylene Whitaker, of Randolph County Farm Bureau, also said the university system is critical to food safety.

"We need money for the universities to do research," Whitaker said. "When we water out of a pond, we need to know what's in the water."

Whitaker cited her concern that private farm records could make their way into the public domain of an FDA file.

She also said the public needs to be educated on food safety, and there should be grower compensation for recalls and traceability costs.

*(L to R) Orange County Farm Bureau President Howard McAdams discussed his farm during a tour Sept. 28 with Bill Hubbard, Ann Wright and Mike Taylor, all with either the USDA or FDA. The visit also included officials from other agencies and farmers from across the state.*



## Meetings scheduled on \$1M in green grants and loans available to farmers

A series of North Carolina Farm Bureau meetings are designed to help the state's farmers go green by providing \$1 million dollars to help them save energy, while increasing farm profits.

The North Carolina Farm Energy Efficiency Project (FEED) originated from a grant awarded to North Carolina Farm Bureau by the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

The project's goal is to provide educational and technical support for farmers regarding agricultural energy use and efficiency.

Farmers may also apply for low cost energy audits that will evaluate ways to save farm energy costs.

"As farmers continue to face increasing costs, the data from energy audits and implementing energy saving plans can result in substantial, long-term savings," said Paul Sherman, air & energy programs director with North Carolina Farm Bureau.

The USDA's Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) can provide grants and loans on projects that meet the criteria to save energy or implement new energy programs.

FEED will also provide matching funds that will improve a farmer's ability to obtain funds from REAP.

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# Want to farm? Check out these potential resources

To get started in farming, a host of regional, state and federal tools can help potential growers figure out where to go, what to do and how to pay for it.

The first question is often how to pay for an entrance into the field of farming.

Through the Farm Service Agency, beginning farmers can receive assistance with a down payment for purchasing a farm, an offer of first priority on inventory farmland for sale and aid with joint financing.

Farm Credit also makes loans available to young and beginning farmers and seeks to make progress by offering credit enhancements and more flexible underwriting standards.

Furthermore, North Carolina is one of 18 states that offers Aggie Bonds, which let lenders earn federally tax-exempt interest income on loans to eligible beginning farmers and ranchers, and which allows lenders to offer lower interest rates.

The 2008 farm bill also included support for new and beginning farmers. The bill created a 10 percent set-aside for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. And a variety of provisions put money toward improving the needs of rural communities for farming and other business to operate.

And, of course, a number of Web resources exist to direct those taking an interest in farming to a variety of avenues.

USDA has an ag-funding resources guide at [www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/funding.shtml](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/funding.shtml).

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has agribusiness resources listed by topic and agency. This information is listed on its Grower Assistance and Information Network Web site, [www.agr.state](http://www.agr.state).

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems, [www.cefs.ncsu.edu](http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu), offers internships and apprentice programs, puts out an organic production guide and other educational literature, and offers workshops at its research farm in Goldsboro.

Blake Brown, North Carolina State University professor of agricultural economics, has spent the last three years developing the *NCSU University Program for Value Added and Alternative Agriculture*, which offers direction for farmers looking to expand or change their operations.

That program, which can be found online at [www.ncvalueadded.org](http://www.ncvalueadded.org), offers business development information and resources, connections to grants, cost-share opportunities, education and marketing help.

"We have a number of different programs," Brown said. "If you're interested in local foods, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems is a terrific resource."

Brown said the explosion of farmers markets and the local food movement has driven most of the interest and resources into

small farming, part-time or as supplemental income. He warns that niche markets are easily saturated and the crops can be labor intensive.

Small growers will find networks in the areas where the trend is greatest, the rural areas just outside of urban centers. Orange County, for example, has responded to its increase in beginning farmers by starting a mentoring program through *Co-operative Extension*. Getting into commercial-scale agriculture is trickier, Brown said.

"I would seek out an older farmer who maybe in the next 10 years is getting out of farming," he said.

Building a relationship with a farmer nearing retirement could offer the opportunity to learn how to run a sizable operation and offer access to land to buy. Brown also suggests that beginning farmers seek out commodity or general groups that bring them into a community, like NCFB's Young Farmers and Ranchers program.

And with so many resources aimed at small farming, small farming could be a foot in the door on the way to a commercial operation. For those who are serious about a full-time farming life, Brown said the best tool is flexibility.

"If your sole goal is to be a farmer, the more flexible you can be in location, the more successful you will be," he said.

**THE  
VOICE  
OF AGRICULTURE®**

North Carolina Farm Bureau (NCFB) is the unified, statewide Voice of Agriculture®. Working through our grassroots organizations to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural North Carolinians, we strive to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. We are a private, non-profit, grassroots organization that has been actively promoting farm and rural issues since 1936 through legislative and policy initiatives, member services, field representation, agricultural education, public relations and other programs.

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# NCFB's water use message is clear

Farmers are cautious with and concerned about the water they use, and the state already has the regulatory tools it needs to protect waterways.

That's the message North Carolina Farm Bureau shared at the first North Carolina Water Law and Policy Conference, held in early October in Raleigh.

"We feel very strongly that farmers are not wasteful, but are among the leaders of conservation in North Carolina," said Mitch Peele, North Carolina Farm Bureau's Senior Public Policy Director.

As evidence, Peele highlighted the findings of the first statewide survey of agricultural water use, which revealed that agriculture is responsible for less than 1 percent of water use in the state.

Several of the recommendations in a recent Water Allocation Study, moreover, are concerning to farmers as the proposals would encroach on property rights, undermine private control of water and present the most extreme course of action.

There were some positive aspects of the study, however, including an emphasis on research, a focus on building water storage capacity and programs to reward responsible water users.

Peele said Farm Bureau's message on any proposed water use legislation would be clear.

"We feel a better approach in North Carolina at this time is to focus on voluntary types of approaches," he said. "Agriculture is not a big (water) user, but we want to be part of the solution to the water resources challenge of the future."

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The funds will provide technical support needed to analyze proposals, perform energy audits, and prepare competitive applications for REAP loans and grants.

FEEP personnel will offer six total informational meetings about the project, with four scheduled this month.

USDA Rural Development personnel will also be at the meetings to further explain how farmers can benefit from the REAP grant and loan program.

By the end of 2010, the project will have facilitated 200 on-farm energy audits and implemented at least 60 energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Visit FEEP's Web site at [www.ncfarmenergy.org](http://www.ncfarmenergy.org), for more information about this opportunity for farmers.

Farmers are welcome to attend an educational session at any of the following locations:

Thursday, Nov. 5, 7 p.m.  
Robeson County Farm Bureau  
Lumberton

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 7 p.m.  
Martin County Farmers Market  
Williamston

Thursday, Nov. 12, 7 p.m.  
Duplin County Ag Center  
Kenansville

Thursday, Nov. 19, 7 p.m.  
Mountain Horticultural Crops  
Research & Extension Center  
Mills River

Additional contact info:  
Paul Sherman, NCFB  
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## ACTION REQUEST

Become the Voice of Agriculture® in North Carolina and participate in the *Don't Cap Our Future* campaign to help add common sense to climate change legislation in Congress. Contact a county Farm Bureau or state Field Representative for more information.

## Rural representation needed on 2010 Census

The affects of urbanization can be seen all over North Carolina, and it is more difficult and more important than ever to protect farm and rural interests.

According to a recent report, the rural voice will be further quieted following the upcoming 2010 Census. Wake, Mecklenburg, Cumberland, Durham and Johnston counties are all expected to gain seats in the N.C. Senate and possibly the N.C. House, and Census numbers dictate how much they'll gain.

Therefore, not a single rural or farm citizen can afford to go uncounted in 2010.

American Farm Bureau is an official partner for the U.S. Census. As such, it is encouraging Farm Bureau members to get involved in order to get the best count possible.

Not only is the Census important, it's easy to do. Questionnaires will start being mailed to homes in March, and they ask only 10 questions about the demographic picture of each home.

Furthermore, all responses are kept safe. It is against the law for the Census Bureau to share an individual's responses with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities.

The Web site, [www.2010.census.gov](http://www.2010.census.gov), is where people can read about the Census and see how they can make a difference.

## Dec. 6-8, NCFB Annual Meeting

An adjustment in the Monday schedule helps open a valuable block of time during North Carolina Farm Bureau's 74th Annual Meeting and Convention.

Volunteer leaders from across the state are being asked to register for and attend Dec. 6-8 at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

"We're going to discuss the current state of agriculture and consider the future in terms of what is here because Farm Bureau fought for it and what would it be like without Farm Bureau," said Larry Wooten, President of North Carolina Farm Bureau.

The state's largest general farm organization will conduct its annual business and organizational meetings with the goal of voting on final 2010 public policy resolutions that guide strategy, activity.

Young farmers competing in the Discussion Meet will be starting the Round Robins at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 6, with the final round at 4 p.m.

The evening's Vespers will take place at 6:30 p.m. and the NCFB Awards Ceremony is at 8 p.m.

On Monday, Dec. 7, Wooten will deliver his Annual Report to members when the General Session starts at 9 a.m.

The Resolutions Committee's opening session will take place at 3 p.m., followed by District Caucuses at 3:30 p.m. After caucusing, members now have more time for county-based activities before the Ice Cream Social starts dishing it out at 9 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 8 will bring the conclusion of business and adjournment after 2010 policy is approved.

## LEAD program develops media skills Collegiate YF&R program new at NCSU

NCFB conducted it's Fall LEAD Conference September 17-19 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Asheville.

The primary focus of this conference was Communicating with the Media. Bob Wilson with AFBF conducted a program entitled "Have I Got a Story for You."

During this program, LEAD participants were trained on techniques that would help them better communicate with the media.

They visited WLOS TV station and the *Asheville Citizen-Times* newspaper. The class also had the opportunity to visit the Asheville Farmers Market.

One participant summed it up best when he said, "I never thought I'd learn as much as I

have in the LEAD Program."

Also, NCFB is starting its first collegiate YF&R chapter at North Carolina State University.

The first organizational meeting was held Aug. 26 in Schaub Hall on the NCSU Campus. There were 32 students present.

Since then, the new program had another full committee meeting with 34 in attendance. During that session, they elected their officers/steering committee for 2009-2010.

The collegiate program has 11 members on its steering committee.

The purpose of the collegiate YF&R program is to help build leaders in the field of farming and agriculture.

# BUREAU BRIEFS

**Agriculture Census 2007** findings revealed the number of U.S. farms has grown by almost 76,000 since 2002, and many of those new farms are smaller, have diversified production and are run by younger operators who might also work off the farm. And 57 percent of farms have sales of less than \$250,000 and are run by operators who have a different primary occupation or are retired. Many of these folks either lack a farm background or have left and come back.

**Animal Confinement** restrictions are now the law in Michigan. The state's governor signed legislation recently that requires farm animals confined in small cages to have enough room to turn around and fully extend their limbs. Michigan is now the second state to ban commonly used cages for egg-laying chickens, the fifth to ban common crates for veal calves and the seventh to ban certain stalls for pregnant pigs. The new law exempts research, veterinary treatment, transportation, at rodeos and state fairs, and during slaughter.

**Don't Cap Our Future** is the slogan for American Farm Bureau's new campaign to defeat climate change legislation. North Carolina Farm Bureau policy favors sensible climate change legislation—this is one of those occasions where the state and federal outlooks don't exactly match. But at the same time, they align because the bill that passed the U.S. House earlier this year was a disappointment to farm groups,

including North Carolina and American Farm Bureaus. Unfortunately, the U.S. Senate companion bill offered in early October shows even less promise for agriculture. The new bill, co-sponsored by Sen. Barbara Boxer and Sen. John Kerry, was widely panned among farm groups as soon as it was released on Sept. 30. The Senate bill would raise the requirement for greenhouse gas emissions cuts to 20 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels, from 17 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels in the House bill. Furthermore, the Senate bill, as presented, would ultimately lead to higher input costs for farmers and put the U.S. at a competitive disadvantage with growers from countries that do not regulate carbon.

**Tobacco Associates, Inc.** recently hosted its U.S. Tobacco Leaf Study Mission featuring guests from several tobacco importing countries. This year, seven representatives from four different countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, Egypt and Vietnam, spent almost two weeks traveling through North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky learning about American tobacco growth, production, marketing, standards, history and culture. "Basically, they have seen all facets of the U.S. tobacco industry," said Charlie King, Tobacco Associates, Inc. secretary-treasurer. During a trip-closing appreciation dinner, Kirk Wayne, Tobacco Associates President, said that all attendees had shown a sincere interest in learning about U.S. tobacco. "The knowledge and friendship gained will benefit U.S. companies and their companies for years to come," Wayne said.

**Tobacco Producers**, on Nov. 19, will have the opportunity to vote on the continuation of a \$0.10/cwt check-off to fund tobacco research. Those who share directly in the production of the crop or in the proceeds of the sale of leaf grown in North Carolina will vote. The Tobacco Research Check-off generates approximately \$300,000 a year for tobacco research and education efforts in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University. Allocations from the check-off funds are made by the members of the North Carolina Tobacco Research Commission. NCFB policy supports funding this research. Polling places and their hours of operation will be announced in each county prior to the referendum. For more information, contact Keith Oakley, NCSU, (919) 515-9262.

**Tobacco Quota** holders and producers not currently enrolled in the Tobacco Transition Payment Program (TTPP) have until Nov. 2 to sign-up for 2010 payments. The TTPP, also known as the tobacco buy-out, provides approximately \$10 billion in ten annual installments to eligible tobacco quota holders and producers from 2005 through 2014. Payments for 2010 through 2014 will be issued annually in January. USDA is also reminding tobacco quota holders and producers they have until Nov. 2 to sell the remaining five annual payments to a successor to receive a lump-sum payment. Certain requirements must be met to qualify for lump-sum payments. More information is available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/tobacco](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/tobacco) or by calling the USDA Farm Service Agency at (202) 720-7901.

There are many trends important both now and in the future that I see having tremendous repercussions for agriculture. But four areas in particular are also receiving tremendous public attention.

1. **Food safety** is important to farmers as well as consumers.

I testified this summer before the U.S. House Ag Committee, which approved legislation in large part due to recent food safety scares with peppers, tomatoes (alleged), spinach, peanut butter, and E coli in meats.

2. **Animal care** continues to easily grab headlines that impact agriculture.

It is important to North Carolina because of the state's economic depen-

dence on the livestock and poultry industries. The state's farmers are ranked #2 nationally in the production of hogs and turkeys.

Producers are the ones who are best qualified to make decisions regarding how to care for their farm animals.

3. **Water resources** have an impact on agriculture that has steadily increased in importance since the drought of 2007.

For example, there were 2,765 bills introduced in the General Assembly this year, with 269 bills related to water in general. Fifteen bills dealt specifically with water resources or water use issues.

Water is rapidly becoming the determining factor in where and how fast agriculture grows in N.C.

4. **New energy sources** must continue to receive an infusion of research in the lab and in the field. There are tremendous opportunities for agriculture in biofuels and cellulosic material. In addition, the state could benefit from offshore drilling and wind energy exploration.



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NCFB is serving on the Legislative Advisory Subcommittee on Offshore Energy Exploration.

## NORTH CAROLINA FARM BUREAU LEADER

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