

## Congressional farm bill hearing held in Fayetteville

Three of the state's 13 members of the U.S. House of Representatives were in Fayetteville recently to listen to farm bill reports from those farmers who live with the reality of working under the law.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 is the most recent omnibus farm bill. The farm bill governs federal farm and food policy and covers a wide range of programs and provisions. It undergoes review and renewal roughly every five years.

The 2008 farm bill contains 15 titles, which include these, in order: commodity programs, conservation, trade, nutrition, credit, rural development, research, forestry, energy, horticulture and organic agriculture, livestock, crop insurance and disaster as-



*Inset photo, l to r, U.S. Reps. Bob Etheridge, Larry Kissell and Mike McIntyre listen to Stanly County Farmer Frank Lee, right, discuss the farm bill.*

sistance programs, commodity Dist., chaired the June 28 hearings, miscellaneous and trade ing on behalf of the U.S. House and tax provisions.

U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre, 7th **Hearing page 3.....**

## General Assembly's ag committees chug milk for charity



*Members of the North Carolina Senate, on right in photo, nudged out the team of legislators from the North Carolina House when the state lawmakers competed in the annual milk-chugging contest to celebrate dairy month and raise awareness about North Carolina's dairy industry. N.C. Rep. Dewey Hill and N.C. Sen. Bob Atwater, who chair the General Assembly's agriculture committees, led their teams in the June 30 competition. The first-place team received \$200 for a charity of its choice; the second-place team received \$100 for its selected charity. North Carolina is home to 290 dairy farms. The state's 45,000 milk cows produced 107 million gallons of milk during 2008. The state leads the Southeast for most milk production per cow—a total value of more than \$191 million. In addition, the N.C. dairy industry produces 15.9 million gallons of ice cream annually.*

# Farmers, Marines, state join forces to defend farmland

A June 29 meeting at Farm Bureau headquarters in Raleigh focused on developing a framework for market-based conservation of the forest and farmlands surrounding Camp Lejeune and its off-base transportation routes.

Forty plus attendees listened to North Carolina Farm Bureau President Larry Wooten, Marine Major General Carl Jensen, and Assistant Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources David Knight.

“We know how important the military presence in this state is to the economic engine that moves North Carolina. We know also that agriculture, forestry and working lands are a good neighbor to the military,” Wooten said. “We believe we can work out some things that would be a win for the military and certainly a win for farmers and private landowners when it comes to the challenges that face our ecosystems in this state.”

A variety of reports were presented by other individuals concerning the continuing need for ecosystems services, as well as other issues.

In addition, there was detailed discussion about the opportunities to develop a North Carolina system that would reward private landowners who provide ecosystem services.

An example of a conservation service that could be the basis for a contract would be maintain-



***U.S. Marine Major General Carl Jensen discussed market-based conservation with attendees at North Carolina Farm Bureau headquarters.***

ing wildlife habitats for an endangered species like the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, which prefers Longleaf Pine forests.

“What this involves at the end of the day is partnering and trust,” Jensen said. “My responsibility as a United States Marine is to the marines and sailors who we train to go overseas. I need to ensure in perpetuity that they have places to train. This is a means toward that end.”

Attendees agreed to move forward with developing a framework for providing market-based incentives that address high-priority conservation needs.

Eastern North Carolina represents an ideal place to establish a prototype that demonstrates how market-based incentives

can create significant region-wide conservation benefits from private lands.

“The governor is very interested in keeping working lands working. She obviously is very interested in doing what she can to protect our military installations, so we are ready to sit down and figure out a way to move forward and see how DENR fits in,” Knight said.

Also during the meeting, results from the NCFB and North Carolina State University supported landowner survey were presented to attendees.

The survey results provided background to the group on what private landowners are willing to

***Conservation page 3.....***

**THE  
VOICE  
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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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## **Hearing continued.....**

Agriculture Committee. McIntyre is chairman of its subcommittee on Rural Development, Biotechnology, Specialty Crops, and Foreign Agriculture.

“We want to keep North Carolina moving forward as a national, positive example,” McIntyre said. “What we hear from our witnesses today will be invaluable as we work to achieve that goal—making sure that this new farm bill will be something that will continue to make positive inroads for rural economic development, for biotechnology, and for of course, doing the right thing by our agribusinesses, and definitely by our farmers and rural communities.”

As evidence of its importance as one of the major rural states in America, North Carolina’s U.S. Rep. Larry Kissell, 8th Dist., also holds a seat on the U.S. House Agriculture Committee.

“Aside from the protection of traditional farms and ranches, the farm bill also greatly affects renewable energy, rural development and federal nutrition programs,” Kissell said.

Because the farm bill has such a rural element to many of its 15 titles, it is important that North Carolina’s agricultural community has a seat at the table when the next version is written by law-

makers in Washington, D.C.

According to the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, “There are five states that account for 25 percent of the rural population. North Carolina is one of those five, and in fact, is generally ranked second behind Texas.”

U.S. Rep. Bob Etheridge, 2nd Dist., is a former member of the U.S. House Ag Committee, but now serves on the powerful Committee on Ways and Means, as well as the Committee on Budget.

Etheridge described how the legislation has changed to better address the country’s current and future agricultural needs.

“Actually, the last farm bill was the first one that we called the nutrition and energy bill simply because that better states what we’re about,” Etheridge said. “The people who utilize agriculture can really be a part of the answer for America’s energy needs for the future.”

Stanly County Farmer Frank Lee, who raises a diverse mix of commodities, presented testimony on behalf of North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation.

Lee said that the state’s farmers are generally pleased with the current farm bill.

“However, as Congress begins to focus on writing the next version of this important law, it is more vital than ever that you all craft a bill that will continue to give us the market based tools we need to succeed and provide an effective financial safety net so the American public continues to have a safe and abundant food supply,” Lee said.

Continuing the tradition of including a direct and counter-cyclical payment program is supported by farmers, Lee said.

“I cannot stress to you enough how vital it is that the overall bill provide an adequate safety net for producers who will continue to provide food, feed and fiber to the world,” he added.

Lee also addressed the ACRE program, as well as cotton, conservation, the dairy industry, energy, trade, marketing programs and a few other issues.

“The farm bill is not just about a price support program for farmers, it’s about an investment in rural America as a whole. The authorities in the farm bill, particularly in the rural development title, are crucial to economic development and help address rural community needs such as schools, hospitals, housing and local infrastructure.”

## **Conservation continued.....**

do with regards to ecosystems services in North Carolina.

The survey of 3,000 random landowners was also given to members of county Farm Bureau boards.

Shari Rodriguez, with the Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences Program at NCSU, outlined the survey’s following study objectives:

- To better understand private

landowners in Eastern North Carolina.

- To gauge landowner interest in six hypothetical conservation programs.

- To compare levels of interest based on the program type—(a) a contract or an easement, (b) on the duration of the agreement, (c) on the number of acres willing to potentially enter into a pro-

gram, (d) and on the organization they’d prefer to manage the programs.

“When we asked if they were interested in placing property in a conservation easement, more than one-third of respondents indicated they were interested in placing nearly two-thirds of their land in an easement,” Rodriguez said.

# Food safety legislation a priority of Sen. Hagan's office

U.S. Senator visited Farm Bureau member's farm for food safety information



*U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, center, examined his grape fields and listened to farmer Ervin Lineberger, right, during a recent tour of his Kings Mountain operation.*

want to make sure they stay in business, and that they're not impacted by recordkeeping they don't have the staff to do," Hagan said.

Lineberger gave Hagan, Congressional staffers and other guests a tour of Killdeer Farm—his blackberry and muscadine grape farm that is certified by the state as a Good Agricultural Practice operation.

Along the way, Lineberger demonstrated the safety processes that go into growing, picking and packaging his crops.

He also showed Hagan and some of her staff that handwashing stations that allow pickers to keep their hands sterile, and talked about the recent employee handwashing training exercise.

Hagan asked about the numbered fields that allow Lineberger to know which field berries or grapes come from, and what makes a good berry or grape worth picking.

"It's a great opportunity to have Sen. Hagan here and let her see our operations in full swing," Lineberger said. "We wish more legislators would come to farms and see them firsthand."

Lineberger also showed Hagan all of his recordkeeping and manuals that outline procedures and practices.

"Everything you do, you make sure you write it down," Lineberger said as Hagan looked over his documents. "We're all after the same thing—a good, safe product."

U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, a Greensboro Democrat, is the co-sponsor of two amendments to major food-safety legislation under consideration in the U.S. Senate.

As part of her ongoing research, she recently visited the Kings Mountain farm of Gaston County Farm Bureau Members Ervin Lineberger and his wife, Debbie.

Hagan is co-sponsor of amendments offered by Sen. Jon Tester, D-MT, to Senate Bill 510, the Food Safety Modernization Act.

According to a news release from the senator's office, the first legislative amendment would exempt facilities with gross income of less than \$500,000 from certain performance and record-keeping requirements that could overburden a small producer.

The second amendment to the bill would protect small producers that primarily sell directly to restaurants and consumers from new FDA performance requirements.

"We need a robust prevention and response system to handle outbreaks of foodborne illnesses," Hagan said. "But we have many hardworking small producers and family farms in North Carolina, and it is unnecessary for these producers to be saddled with new regulations and paperwork."

However, Hagan said it's still to be determined if income level will ultimately define who is a "small producer," or if a small producer will be defined by production quantity.

"This is their livelihood and I

## POLICYREVIEWDAY

*The process that leads to North Carolina Farm Bureau's 2011 Policy kicks off with Policy Review Day at 9:30 a.m., Aug. 5 at NCFB headquarters in Raleigh. Event speakers include U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, U.S. Rep. Bob Etheridge, N.C. Secretary of State Elaine Marshall, N.C. Ag Commissioner Steve Troxler, and North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean Johnny Wynne.*

# North Carolina GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010

## WATER LEGISLATION

The General Assembly has given the go ahead for a North Carolina water plan that protects agricultural water use and preserves resources for the future through voluntary practices.

House Bill 1748 directs the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to work with agriculture leaders on a regularly updated, strategic plan for agriculture to conserve water and increase water efficiency.

It was approved as a combination of a few water bills and follows the recommendations of an agricultural water plan, drafted by the Legislative Study Commission on Water and Wastewater Infrastructure. North Carolina Farm Bureau participated on the commission and in drafting the recommendation.

"We wanted people to consider that a credible plan, saying 'These are what our needs are and we're going to need some help,'" said Mitch Peele, NCFB senior policy director.

The two agencies will also jointly design a cost-share program to provide technical and financial support to farmers and other landowners who want to implement best-management practices to protect water resources related to agricultural use.

The proactive legislation protects water users against involuntary water mandates. The two agencies will report to the study commission by Nov. 1 with their progress on designing a plan.

The legislative action backs up NCFB Policy, which recommends

that the economic impact upon agriculture be considered prior to adopting any type of management plan or standards for water and air quality that go beyond the voluntary approach.

***North Carolina's  
General Assembly  
reconvenes at  
noon, Jan. 26, 2011***

## BUDGET PASSED

During the North Carolina General Assembly's 2010 short session, state lawmakers passed an \$18.9 billion budget, ethics reform and a ban on video sweepstakes parlors, but they also approved some funding and studies that could benefit agriculture and rural communities.

At 5:33 a.m. on Saturday, July 10, they voted to adjourn. For the first time in a long time, state lawmakers had approved a revised budget prior to the end of the fiscal year, June 30, which is also the day it passed.

The spending plan had to be adjusted to make up for the expected loss of \$500 million in federal Medicaid money that would have arrived later this year.

Spending was cut across the board by about 3.3 percent, but more deficits loom, as tax delinquencies as of mid-July added up to \$841 million.

To offset \$70 million cuts to the UNC system, the Board of Governors moved ahead with allowing a maximum \$750 increase in tuition at UNC campuses.

Also, community colleges

across North Carolina are authorized to raise the cost of a credit hour by \$6.50.

Some agricultural and related areas in the budget shifted money to help make ends meet. The state transferred \$3 million from the Wildlife Resources Commission to the General Fund.

Overall, the revised appropriation for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services was set at about \$60.38 million, down from the \$60.56 million approved previously.

The savings were realized partially through the closing of the Rose Hill Vet Lab, cuts to the North Carolina Egg Law Program and the elimination of nine vacant positions.

Despite the state and the legislature's increasingly urban makeup, lawmakers did set aside money for programs to benefit rural and farming communities.

The N.C. Rural Center, for example, was provided \$1 million for a Family Farm Opportunity and Innovation Fund, which will allow it to issue grants of up to \$20,000 for improving energy efficiency on the farm, developing new markets and developing new products.

The state's Biofuels Center was given \$5 million in recurring funds to continue its work advancing alternate energy sources.

Among many other actions and events, the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund was approved for up to \$2 million.

The North Carolina General Assembly reconvenes at noon on January 26, 2011.

# FIELDNOTES

by Larry Wooten, NCFB President

## Research eases warming

A current science-based study is now showing the cheapest way to slow global warming may be through the sustained and increased funding of agricultural research.



Today's farmers are under intense pressure to grow more on fewer acres, reduce their impact on the environment under more expensive-to-implement regulations, and satisfy consumers needs—all while trying to earn a living.

This is on top of the uncertainty of weather and market conditions that are inherent to the farm industry.

California's Stanford University released research recently, in part, stating that "advances in

high-yield agriculture during the latter part of the 20th century prevented massive amounts of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere—the equivalent of 590 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide."

Basically, this research shows what many in the agricultural industry already knew—by reducing the need to convert forests to farmland, such carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases are never formed.

Without research focused on improving agricultural yields, the study estimates there would have been an 18 to 34 percent increase in the total amount of greenhouse gases created over the past 155 years.

Modern North Carolina farmers have become more efficient producers while still keeping their commitment to protecting not only the air, but the water and land.

Farm Bureau is committed to helping members enhance environmental quality, while also looking out for the economic viability of agriculture.

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\$74.3 billion of the \$400 billion gross state product is contributed by food, fiber and forestry industries.  
Dr. Mike Walden, North Carolina State University.

## NORTH CAROLINA FARM BUREAU LEADER

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