



The Leader Newsletter

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Agricultural Sciences Center and Plant Sciences Initiative making progress in Raleigh

North Carolina Farm Bureau volunteer leaders threw their strong support behind the Connect NC bond effort in March 2016 to advance funding for two key projects, a new N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA & CS) laboratory complex and a Plant Sciences Initiative research center at N.C. State University.

Both projects are now in development, and when completed, they will give farmers important tools for meeting the world's agricultural needs, and doing so in

better ways.

Kent Yelverton is now the N.C. State Fair Manager, but until recently he was the NCDA & CS Director of Property and Construction overseeing the Agricultural Sciences Center, which will be the name of the new co-located laboratory complex. The 220,000 square-foot building planned for Reedy Creek and Edwards Mill roads in Raleigh (near the fairgrounds) will be home to offices and labs serving the Food and Drug Protection, Standards, Structural Pest Control and Pesticides

Labs, PSI cont. pg. 2.....



Chatham FB hosts Rep. Walker

Chatham County Farm Bureau hosted U.S. House Rep. Mark Walker, R-6, for farm visits and tours at the end of April. Also attending were county volunteer leaders from Alamance, Guilford and Randolph counties. Rep. Walker, left, is pictured talking with Larry Lemons after touring Lemons' beef and poultry farm.

Labs, PSI continued from front.....

and Veterinary divisions. Currently, those labs are spread among five buildings that are each about 40 years old.

“This is going to be great for the agricultural industry, which depends on it,” Yelverton said.

Yelverton said planning and programming for the facility are underway, and the project is on track to break ground later this summer. The projected opening date is fall 2020. HH Architecture in Raleigh has been hired as the architect, and construction managers are JE Dunn Construction of Kansas City, Mo. and T.A. Loving Co. of Goldsboro.

Not only are the laboratory buildings currently in use 40 years old, the technology and equipment in use are past their expiration dates, too.

“We’re replacing 40-year-old

buildings in 40-year-old environments with 40-year-old systems that make it very difficult to do today’s modern testing,” Yelverton said. “We need good power in a clean and controlled environment. This will give us that, with space to do things more efficiently.”

In addition to the new testing facilities, the Agricultural Sciences Center will have meeting and training rooms for things like pesticide licensing.

As the current labs are in heavy use, project leaders are planning now to ensure the move from old spaces to new causes minimal disruption. Toward that end, they’ve already hired Brenda Jackson, a Food and Drug Development employee, to be the facility’s Quality Assurance Manager, and Paul Hutter, who works in the Veterinary Division, to be the

safety manager.

The proposed Plant Sciences Initiative (PSI) at N.C. State University’s Centennial Campus is also coming along on schedule, according to the project’s launch director, Stephen Briggs. Briggs updated County Presidents’ Conference attendees on the project during a dinner event at Reynolds Coliseum at N.C. State University in Raleigh.

While the prospect of feeding a growing world population more efficiently and with fewer resources is daunting, research conducted at the center will lead the way toward that imperative, Briggs said.

“We face a grand challenge in agriculture, and how are we going to meet that challenge? Science and technology are the only answers,” Briggs said.

Starling delivered Washington, career update

North Carolina native Ray Starling has served as Special Assistant to the President for Agriculture, Trade and Food Assistance for about 14 months, and recently shared an informal update and tips with a group of Farm Bureau communications professionals. His visit came just after he announced a job change—he assumed the role of Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as of June 1.

Starling said he credits his upbringing on a Sampson County farm, which his family still operates, for the opportunities he’s had. Starling thanked Farm Bureau for nurturing a close relationship with him that helped secure President Trump’s visit to the American Farm Bureau Annual Convention and IDEAg Trade Show in January. At the event, the country saw the importance of Farm Bureau that day, as the President spoke and signed two executive orders on funding and expanding rural broadband, a Farm Bureau priority issue. Starling said a photo from the event has remained hanging in the White House West Wing, even as other photos have come and gone from the walls.



“You are in our thoughts and on our minds as we do our work in the White House,” Starling said.

Starling said the Administration understands farmers know how to do their jobs the best, and that they contribute so much more than just what their farms produce and the economic value their work generates. He said farmers do have clout in the White House, and the President wants outcomes in trade, labor, regulatory reform and infrastructure that benefit farmers and rural communities.

2018 NC Farm Act unveiled

Wednesday, May 16, state lawmakers kicked off the short session of the 2017-18 biennium, when the focus is on making revisions to the two-year budget adopted in 2017. The first day also brought the release of a new Farm Act for 2018.

N.C. Sens. Brent Jackson, Bill Cook and Norman Sanderson are the primary sponsors of SB 711, the NC Farm Act of 2018, which contains two provisions recommended by the N.C. Ag & Forestry Awareness Study Commission. The commission met several times following the close of the 2017 long session. The first provision deals with changes to the N.C. Handlers Act. The N.C. Handlers Act currently provides certain protections to producers of fruits and vegetables when dealing with handlers of their produce, provided they have a written contract. The bill would amend the Act to require more persons and businesses that buy, receive, process for resale and engage in certain other parts of commerce to comply with the Act regardless of whether or not a written contract exists. The second provision would make certain confidential information generated by federal agencies and collected by the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Soil and Water Division confidential under state law. Additional agriculture-related provisions will likely be added to the bill as it moves through the legislative process.

Budget revisions are expected later in the session. According to revenue forecasts, appropriators expect to have about \$350 million in revenue surplus

to allocate as they adjust the spending plan.

Effective Engagement Tips

1. PREPARE

Frequently, a bill or regulatory proposal calls for swift action from volunteer leaders. When this happens, it helps to be prepared by being informed. Follow the news regularly (not just the outlets that skew toward your politics), keep track of the legislative calendar at ncleg.net and keep up with NCFB newsletters and social media to stay up-to-date. Also, as we stressed in the last issue of *The Leader*, establishing trust-based relationships with your legislators is a key preparation tool.

As issues unfold, learn where your representative stands and the factors in your district that impact their stance. When you understand both sides of an issue, you can better make your own case.

2. POWER HAS LIMITS

The most effective advocates are those who understand the limitations under which elected officials operate. For example, legislators have little control over federal issues, but they have the ability to make changes to state laws. Likewise, county commissioners should be contacted regarding zoning ordinances and property tax concerns.

Knowing the appropriate elected official to contact at the appropriate time with the appropriate message often leads to positive results and helps build those all-important trust relationships between constituents and their representatives.

NCFB JOINS INSTAGRAM

If it's been a while since you checked out NC Farm Bureau on social media, take another look! We've expanded our platform to include not only Facebook and Twitter, but now you'll find photos and video on Instagram. We're posting more videos straight from the farm and ag events around the state, by using the Facebook Live video-streaming feature.

We are also using social media to address consumer ag issues that come up in the news, such as the release of the Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen, the activist group's annual list targeting the produce they say has the most pesticide residue. In response, we went to an N.C. State scientist for the facts and shared that conversation with you on Facebook.

Also new is the weekly NC Farm Bureau Report. It's posted every Friday and highlights national and local news. Look for NC Farm Bureau on Facebook [@northcarolinafarmbureau](https://www.facebook.com/northcarolinafarmbureau), Twitter [@NCFarmBureau](https://twitter.com/NCFarmBureau), YouTube "ncfarmbureau" and Instagram [@ncfarmbureau](https://www.instagram.com/ncfarmbureau).

HOUSE FARM BILL VOTED DOWN

The U.S. House failed to pass the proposed farm bill in its first attempt on May 18. NCFB anticipates additional consideration of H.R.2, The Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, possibly this month.

NCFB continues to advocate for the 115th Congress to pass a farm bill offering farmers the stability and certainty they need to do their work. The current farm bill expires at the end of September.



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Field Notes by Larry Wooten

Farming is NOT a nuisance

In late April, a federal jury awarded \$50 million in damages against Smithfield Foods to 10 neighbors of a Bladen County hog operation who claimed the farm next door was a nuisance. The presiding judge later reduced the payouts to \$3.25 million total. The state's agriculture community has been united in expressing its disappointment in the verdict and its concern over the decision's impact on all of agriculture.

However, the case is not closed. Smithfield Foods has announced it is appealing the decision, and North Carolina Farm Bureau will remain engaged in defending the state's farmers and keeping them in business. Another lawsuit is set for court on May 29, and eight more will follow.

In the meantime, we urge farmers in North Carolina to continue carrying out the noble work of producing food, fiber and fuel. Continue your good work in your communities. You contribute heavily to the economy of North Carolina.

We know the outcome of this lawsuit is troubling and has created uncertainty. However, we believe there is still a long way to go, and we urge you to remain patient as these lawsuits play out through the sometimes slow-moving legal system.

Please keep doing what you do best, which is meeting the essential needs of your neighbors next door and across the world. In the meantime, we will continue to do our best to preserve your right to continue your business.

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