

# NC AgVentures Grant Projects (2014)

## INNOVATIVE EQUIPMENT (New or Repurposed)

### Cover Crop Roller Crimper for Organic No-Till: Forsyth County, Agent Mary Jac Brennan



The Hutchison's purchased a Cover Crop Roller Crimper for Organic No-Till, to transition a tobacco farm into an organic farm raising heirloom vegetables, herbs and flowers. The Hutchison's keep meticulous notes, and the data from this project will be of interest to any farmer looking to transition to organic farming.

### Adapted Mechanical Pea Harvester: Wilson County, Agent Norman Harrell



Spencer Davis, a third generation tobacco farmer is diversifying his income by expanding his pea crop. He purchased a used Pixall picker and adapted the picker to fit his needs. To make the process more efficient, he removed the conveyor and had a local welding shop fabricate a funnel (the bright yellow piece) for the beans to fall down into plastic crates for handling. Using scrap metal from an old tobacco baler he made a platform for a rider and grates.

### Cardinal Pine Farm Hops Growing on 20-foot Vertical Structure: Wilson County, Agent Norman Harrell



The Leggett's are working on a pilot project to grow beer hops on a 20-foot vertical structure made of poles and cables on less than an acre of land. The Leggett's market their hops to micro-brewers in nearby counties. They purchased materials and a hammer mill and pelletizer to freeze hops when they are harvested. Webpage: <http://www.cardinalpinefarm.com/>

### First On-Farm Peanut Drying System: Wilson County, Agent Norman Harrell



Richard is the first farmer, in his region, to own an on-farm peanut dryer. He grows 450 acres of peanuts. This system will enable the operation to be more productive, efficient and reduce expenses. Richard's experience with this investment will provide useful information to Extension and other peanut farmers in the region.

## NEW OR ADAPTED TECHNOLOGY

### Sand Filter to Save Water: Wilson County, County Director Walter Earle



Scott Sullivan started selling corn and potatoes in his front yard at the age of 5. The Sullivan Family Farm grows tobacco, cotton, corn, wheat and soybeans. Scott wanted to expand and diversify the produce garden and purchased a sand filter to save water. Low rain fall makes this an ideal year to test the system.

## **Using Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID) to Manage Sweet Potato Inventory: Wilson County, Agent Billy Little**



Sweet potato harvest begins in early September, the bins start coming back anywhere from one week of harvest until 12 months depending on when the potatoes are cured, and packed. The RFID tracking tags that are placed on each bin are like grocery store bar codes. Todd Glover believes the tracking technology will not only reduce the number of lost bins, but may reduce the number of man hours required to monitor the distribution process. The technology would be useful to any grower using bins.

## **INNOVATIVE REPURPOSING**

### **Repurpose Discarded Fleece: Forsyth County, Agent Mary Jac Brennan**



Laura Frazier has built a cottage industry around discarded fleece. She collects the waste wool from her farm and from two commercial sheep operations and re-purposes the wool into art supplies for artists and for clothing. She markets the wool at local markets and through the internet. Frazier purchased fencing to reduce the time and labor required for the rotational sheep grazing process. She also purchased wool processing equipment. See

Laura's blog page: <http://farmgirlarts.com/2015/06/agventures-grant-helps-farmgirl-arts-process-bounty-sheep-wool/>

### **Repurpose Bushels of Grain into Pounds of Beef: Pitt County, Agent Andy Burlingham**



With grain prices on the down swing, Robert James decided to convert bushels of grain into pounds of beef. He has set aside acreage to be planted in a variety of small grains suitable for cattle, pigs and poultry feed. Next year, they plan to offer livestock feed to local farmers and meat producers. The grant funds were used to purchase equipment and to renovate a shelter for feed storage.

### **Niche Market for Corn and Poultry Litter: Surry County, Agent Joanna Radford**

Chad Bullington farms the same land his parents, grandparents and great-grandparents farmed. He believes that change is a necessary part of farming. He has implemented a two-year tobacco/corn rotation for soil and water compliance. He has developed a niche market of buyers who want small bags of corn for personal use. This market pays almost double what the mill pays. With the grant funds he purchased equipment to establish a bagging operation to sell bags of corn and poultry litter.

### **Eliminate Waste from Over Production: Wilson County, Agent Billy Little**



James Sharp, who grew up on his family's tobacco farm turned a backyard garden into a major wholesale produce company. He grows 80 acres of fruits and vegetables. In 2001 James became the operator of Dean's Farm Market, a community market with a strong customer base. He has purchased equipment to flash freeze and vacuum pack surplus crops from his farm, as well as surplus purchased from other farms. This will eliminate waste and expand the out-of-season selections for Dean's Market customers. Webpage: <http://deansfarmmarket.com/>

## **Repurpose Surplus Produce: Stokes County Director Debbie Cox**



The Fergusons are working on a certified kitchen for the production and development of value-added products from their farm. The Fergusons will rent the kitchen to other local farmers and small food-based businesses. (Plum Granny's Farm Community Kitchen)

## **Producing Dried Moringa Leaf Capsules: Forsyth County, Agent Mary Jac Brennan**



Livingstone Flowmeh-Mawutor has been growing Moringa, an herbal supplement on a small demonstration site in an urban setting. He mentored 5 young people working in the garden. Moringa is an important food source in some parts of the world because it can be grown cheaply and easily, and the leaves retain lots of vitamins and minerals. After three years of testing, Livingstone is preparing to begin production of dried Moringa leaf capsules.

## **INNOVATIVE MARKETING**

### **Boost Productivity for Small Independent Swine Producers in North Carolina, Wilson County: County Director Walter Earle**



The "Got to be NC Show Pig Sale" was held in the Wilson County Livestock Arena on June 20th. An auctioneer took bids from the stage, while another person took online bids. They offered 80 *show quality* piglets for sale, and sold 46; the average price was \$295 per pig. One piglet sold for \$1000. Sales like this are popular in the mid-west, but new to North Carolina. The auction not only provides a marketing opportunity; it gives these farms statewide recognition that can lead to sales throughout the year.

### **Scott Show Pigs: Wilson County, County Director Walter Earle**



Joey Scott and his children have built a reputation and niche market for breeding show quality piglets. They used the grant funds to build a facility for housing sows and farrowing these highly prized piglets. Ben and his sister Sarah work together caring for the pigs and preparing them for show. Eight litters of pigs have been delivered since the building was completed. At the *Got to be NC Show Pig Sale*, June 20<sup>th</sup>, Ben sold the high selling pig at \$1000.

### **Marketing through Education: Forsyth County, Stokes County Director Debbie Cox**



Mark Nicholson and his family operate NOMAD Farm, an educational farm that incorporates rotational grazing techniques they learned while living in the Tibetan Plateau of Western China. With the grant funds they expanded their educational farm tours, added a youth summer camp and offered a semester long farm internship for students and young adults. They sell pasture-raised poultry and grass-fed beef, hogs, lamb, veggies and flowers.  
Webpage: <http://www.nomadfarms.org/>.

## **INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Rebuilding the Cut Green Industry, a Partnership between Extension, Local Growers and the Master Gardeners: Surry County Community Grant, Agent Joanna Radford**



Surry County has a strong heritage of tobacco farming but over time many farms, especially those in the higher elevations transitioned to nursery stock, boxwoods, and Christmas trees. Boxwood blight came into the region about 3 years ago.

Present estimates suggest over a 7 million dollar loss to growers and processors with no remedy in sight. The grant funds are being used to locate and research plant materials that would serve as substitutes for the loss of the boxwood industry. A local farm offered a portion of their land to be used for research and the project will be managed by NCSU College of Agriculture.

### **Sanders Ridge Farm is Partnering with Local Chef to Create Recipes for Kitchen Dried and Frozen Prepared Foods: Yadkin County, County Director Colleen Church**



Cindy Shore purchased a commercial Dehydrator and Vacuum-Sealer to produce a product line of dried and frozen packaged ready to prepare soup mixes, vegetable side dishes, vegetable chips, teas, herb/spice seasonings from the vegetables and herbs produced on her organic farm. Her project will repurpose surplus fruits and vegetables, provide extended employment opportunities to seasonal labor and offer drying and packaging services to local growers.

## **DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGIES (These grants support ongoing diversification projects)**

### **Extend Production Season and Create Part-time Employment: Stokes County Director Debbie Cox**



Jess Scott of Danbury bought his farm with flue-cured tobacco quota many years ago and has grown tobacco most of his life. Scott installed a high-tunnel structure that will allow him to extend the vegetable production season, diversify the farm operation and create part-time employment opportunities.

### **Transitioning from Tobacco to Grains and Agri-Tourism: Surry County, Agent Joanna Radford**



The Slate family has owned and operated Riverside Farm for five generations. The family transitioned from growing tobacco to producing grains in 2010; and last year they added a corn maze. They plan to enhance their agri-tourism business with a corn crib and a small admission/concession building.

### **Corn Maze Located on Land Where Tobacco was Once Grown: Yadkin County Director Colleen Church**



After the tobacco buy-out, the Hemric family of Hamptonville was searching for ways to diversify their farm operation. In 2013, they added an agri-tourism component and opened the Alpha and Omega Corn Maze. In addition to the maze, visitors can go for a hayride, hop aboard the barrel train or watch a pumpkin canon shoot off. The grant funds were used to build permanent restroom facilities and a concession stand. Webpage: [http://yadkinvalleycornmaze.com/?page\\_id=287](http://yadkinvalleycornmaze.com/?page_id=287)

## **Raised Bed Mulch Layer Helps Growers Diversify: Yadkin County Community Grant: County Director Colleen Church**

Yadkin County is a predominantly rural county with agriculture leading as the top employer and number one industry in the county. Fruit and vegetable production are viable alternatives to tobacco production, and bring a higher return than traditional row crops. The goal of this community project is to purchase a raised bed mulch layer and water wheel transplanter that will be available for producers to rent; making it easier to expand a small garden and or to transition away from tobacco.

## **Experimenting with Plasticulture: Nash County, Agent Billy Little**



Patrick Owens has been farming with a local farmer for 10 years. In 2014 he made an arrangement to rent land from the same farmer. He split his efforts between the proven techniques of raising tobacco and the newer technique of growing produce in plastic mulch framing. Patrick learned a lot and wanted to continue his research. With the award funds he purchased the equipment to install plasticulture and drip irrigation equipment. Owens is working on a degree in agriculture and plans to own his farm.

## **Rebuilding After a Catastrophic Loss: Pitt County, Agent Andy Burlingham**



Jonathan White farms with his father on land that has passed down through several generations. They transitioned from tobacco to soybeans, cotton, wheat, corn and livestock in 2011. The tornado that came through last year destroyed their hay storage facilities, farm equipment, and equipment barns. Jonathan says you cannot take out enough insurance to cover catastrophic losses. They used the funds to rebuild the hay storage barn.