

# Nash County (Ben Byrd)

## Greenhouse Expansion



Ben Byrd grows propagated pecan trees. He is one of two nurseries in the world to use the Hot Calousing method for pecan propagation. It involves heated beds to force the graft union to heal. The process is time consuming and labor intensive. Beginning in mid-March Ben begins grafting 200 trees per day. The grafted trees are placed in heated beds for a specific amount of time and exact temperatures. The first batch of about 2500 trees is completed in 17-18 days. In his current 20 x 48 greenhouse he can produce about 5000 trees per season.



Next, the trees are taken out and potted off in bulk containers of 60 and held in the greenhouse until the fear of frost has passed. This is where the problems begin. When the trees are potted off in bulk, they are growing and developing roots in as little as 5 to 6 days. When April arrives, they are removed and potted off individually. This step stunts the trees causing them to lose valuable growing time.

With the grant funds Ben will expand the greenhouse which will allow him to graft sooner and pot trees individually as soon as they come off the heated beds. The labor for bulk potting would be eliminated and there would be no more stunted growth. Ultimately, the project will allow greater production through increased efficiency and save time, and provide a better quality of plants.



June update: Rock and concrete were purchased and graded by tractor and hand rake prior to construction. Greenhouse supplier was severely delayed and had to postpone several times due to bad weather harming the greenhouses of their customers. Construction took place on May 29 and 30, 2019. Concrete was used to anchor the structure. All that remains is some electrical work, and ground cover installation.

On the morning of February 21, they hosted the Nash Co. Farm School. There were about 30 guests. On the morning of June 1, they hosted the Young Rancher and Farms of NC. There were roughly 40 visitors in attendance. They presented information on the need and purpose of the greenhouse.

Year-end report: The project is complete. Ben was able to produce an additional 2500 trees with an estimated market value of \$250,000. The project created one new position and sustained one position. Ben estimates the first year crop will generate \$50,000 in new income.

# Wilson County (Robert Donald Simpson Jr)

## Simpsons Beef Market Expansion



Roberts great-grandfather, grandfather, and father all grew tobacco but after the buyout the land was converted to pasture for cattle and hay operations. Robert started working with NC Department of Transportation in 1980 where he learned about soil and erosion control. The farm purchased their first registered Angus cattle in 1987 and the knowledge he learned with NCDOT taught him how to grow forages and grasses on the farm. They currently run close to 40 head of registered Angus cattle.

With the grant funds he plans to modify existing cattle facilities to better supply beef cattle to various market opportunities. They will purchase a 4.5 ton feed bin so he can buy feed in bulk, and to pour a concrete pad for concrete feeders. They also plan to add automatic frost-free waterers in several parts of the pastures to help rotational and strip grazing. His marketing plan includes selling premium Angus beef to local people. There is only one large scale freezer beef operation in the county and they do not market Angus beef.



June update: They purchased 2 feed bins and fourteen feed bunks. Last week they finished pouring 40 yards of concrete to put the bunk feeders, mineral feeders, calf creep feeders and automatic water tanks on it. An article about the grant was published in the Wilson Daily Times and Jessica Anderson, Wilson County Extension agent, brought the NC Farm School to tour the farm.

Year-end report: The project is finished. The feed bins will save thousands of dollars in the future by purchasing feed in bulk. Concrete pads help prevent cattle from walking in the mud and prevent erosion. Robert produced 1400 pounds of hanging weight beef and sold three heifers. He estimates that in the first year he earned an additional \$6000 of income.

# Yadkin County (Anne Cain)

## Cain Goat Adventures



Cain farm is a century farm that grew tobacco in the past when Anne Cain was a child. Anne took over the farm in 1997 when her mother's health was declining. She began researching farm options for a single female. She became the 9<sup>th</sup> licensed goat dairy in the state in 2003, making cheese. Her Chevre cheese has been well received at farmers markets, wineries and by local customers.

With the grant funds she plans to develop an agritourism business by opening the farm to visitors for goat watching, children's animal and nature education, bird watching, sky watching, goat therapy, picnicking and foraging.



June update: Ann does not have access to the internet and has been running into problems with deliveries. She purchased a porta john but needs to have rock delivered and the path is not wide enough for a truck. She is struggling to overcome these challenges. Her Agent has been trying to visit her but she is difficult to contact. However, he said he would make a point of visiting the farm to see if he could help her come up with some options to overcome these challenges.



Year-end report: Anne was finally able to get her porta john set up. She came up with a unique idea to kick start her tourism business during the coronavirus quarantine. She is hosting, goat watching tours by family car. Families can make an appointment to drive on the farm and watch the goats.

## Forsyth County (Elliot Seldner)

### Using Caterpillar Tunnels to Mitigate Climate Change Related Risks in Annual Vegetable Production



Elliot and his wife Emma own and operate Fairshare Farm. They grow salad greens and niche vegetables in year-round inexpensive, fast ROI hoop houses on 1.25 acres. In 2017 they invested in ten 1400 square foot tunnels. Using the hoop houses allow them to keep working, planting and harvesting despite the weather. They provide lettuce year-round to restaurants in Winston-Salem and Charlotte. In 2017 they grossed \$185,000 and \$220,000 in 2018.



The NC AgVentures grant will help to fund the rollout of the second phase of a three-year enterprise expansion. They plan to add ten more caterpillar tunnels doubling their production space. This will allow them to add other crops like arugula, baby kale, mesclun and small root vegetables following the same model of planting, cultivating, irrigating and growing under cover that has been successful.

June update: They completed the construction of 10 hundred foot caterpillar tunnels. They experienced damage from straight-line winds in May, but they had insurance in place and were able to get replacement materials.

On May 22 the Seldners hosted CEFS/Extension Office workshop. The Seldners also invited farmers for a tour. About 20 producers attended.

Year-end report: The project is finished, and the Seldners are very pleased. They are able to grow lettuce 52 weeks a year, even in

flood conditions when the fields were unusable. In the first year they produced a half acre of lettuce cropped six times, created three new full-time jobs and generated \$36,000 in new income. The tunnels also saved money as more crops survived to maturity. They estimate saving an additional \$5000.



## Harnett County (Joe Johnston)

### Convert Tobacco Greenhouse to Hemp Greenhouse



Joe Johnson believes that hemp is taking the place of tobacco. In February 2018 Joe received his license from the North Carolina Industrial Hemp Commission and soon after he started growing clones in a converted smoke house which was built by his wife's grandfather in the early 1940's. Soon after he converted a barn into a hemp greenhouse, and the business has continued to expand.

Most of his sales have been to other greenhouse growers who are adding new genetics to their houses or are new start-ups. They also sell to an extraction processor who presses the plants for hemp oil.



With the grant funds he plans to convert a 36 x 300' greenhouse used for tobacco plants into three 36' x 100' hemp greenhouses.

Two of the houses would be for in-ground clone vegetation and the third house would be for hydro floats. In the houses set up for in-ground vegetation they would plant the hemp seeds in a tray and at 2 weeks transplant the "mother" plants directly into the ground inside the greenhouse. The plants would remain in the greenhouse while they take clippings off the mother plants, for new plants to sell.

Year-end report: Instead of converting the 300 foot greenhouse, into 3-100 foot greenhouses they determined 2-150 foot houses would be better. In the 150 foot houses they plant in pots and use water lines. What they did not realize when designing the original plan was that it would be harder to monitor the water intake and they did not take into consideration the potential contamination or absorption of chemicals previously used when growing tobacco.

All of the pots sit on top of pallets so no pot ever sits on the ground. The grant was to purchase a light deprivation conversion kit so that we could control plant growth by controlling the light with greenhouse blackout fabric. Instead of purchasing an automated system for light control, described in the proposal, they decided to purchase individual blackout fabrics at two different blackout percentages. *(See photo)* This allows them more flexibility to control light and temperature in the greenhouse. Another advantage was that the fabric would not remain on the greenhouses all year long and be worn by the elements. They could put them on the greenhouses when needed and when not needed they could be folded and stored away.

# Duplin County (Hugh Gerald Miller Jr.)

## H&H Farms Non-GMO Project



Hugh Gerald Miller grew up on the family farm and in 2014 he was selected to participate in the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Agricultural Leadership Program. He said the opportunity renewed his passion, and he is working to make H&H Farms more diversified, to bring in more revenue streams that will offset the low commodity prices from wheat, corn and soybeans.

H&H Farms manages approximately 120 acres of land. They grow wheat, corn, soybeans and pasture-raised pork. They are an Animal Welfare Approved and Non-GMO Project Verified. They are selling their pork through the NC Natural Hog Growers Association to various markets in NC and VA.

With the grant funds they plan to construct a meat storage and farm store from a 20 foot by 40 foot metal car shelter, and purchase freezing equipment.

June update: Hugh cleared and repaired the cement floor in the shelter and called in a contractor to close in the outside of the building.



Year-end report: The contractor originally lined up to complete the project backed out, and Hugh decided to do the work himself. Working a full-time job, he has struggled to find the time to do all the labor, but it is coming along nicely.



Also, his butcher had health problems, and had to scale back his processing, so the hogs Hugh was planning to use for this project have not been slaughtered yet. Hugh has been in touch with another

processor and hopes to get that lined up in the next week.

Aside from the set-backs Hugh remains positive that this new direction will be successful. He has discussed his project with members of the farming cooperative to which he belongs and at church events and other community meetings he attends. Once the project is complete he will host an event on the farm to promote his new venture with meat cuts.

## Wilson County (Tim Webb) Agriculture Education Facility



Tim was raised on a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation tobacco farm. Throughout high school and college he worked at the Raleigh Road Garden Center. After graduation, the opportunity arose for Tim to purchase the business in 2006. During the past 13 years he has transformed the business from solely plant sales to an Agritourism establishment with a selection of livestock on the premises. The store offers local honey, house plants, trees, shrubs and seasonal décor. His family is a big part of the business. His Mom is employed full time while his wife and children help out during peak seasons.



With the grant funds they plan to construct a picnic style shelter on the back of the property for instructional classes. The shelter has a concrete base with overhead lighting and fans for warmer months. They plan to offer hands on classes such as container gardening, bee keeping and wreath making. They plan to install a handwashing station and proper signage to educate customers on germ safety. Tim hopes the classes will help to grow their customer base and increase revenue.

June update: Spring is the peak season for Raleigh Road Garden Center, and now that they are closed for business they plan to build the shelter. The site has been flagged, shelter has been purchased. They plan to host a bee seminar in September by a local bee keeper.

Year-end report: The shelter provided great space for groups coming to visit including a local 4-H group. In addition to the classes, the shelter also provided extra space to leave out their fall inventory for a sale space. Tim estimates that in the first year they made \$19,000 in new income. They gained numerous new customers and were able to make 60 Christmas wreaths in house instead of buying them.



## Wayne County (Jody Britt and Charles E. “Tom” Britt)

### Trash 2 Cash



Tobacco was the backbone of the Britt farm for more than 85 years. In 1993 they took the tobacco settlement offer but still grow tobacco seedling plants in the greenhouse for other farmers. That same year they planted pecan trees and started the Carolina Nut Cracker operation. With the NC AgVentures grant they purchased equipment and made modifications to a tobacco barn to house a pellet machine and hammer mill so that they can grind the pecan hulls and make pellets out of the shells that can be used for heating or grilling.



To create the pellets they run the hulls through the hammer mill and reduce the hulls to a finer material, and then it goes into the pellet machine where a roller wheel forces the material through a die that creates a pellet. After cooling they are packaged into 5 or 25 pound bags.

Jody has researched the market for pellets and found there is big demand especially for pecan pellets. The reason pecan shells are preferred is the higher BTU's it produces when burned. The pellets are marketed through their retail store on the farm and through their website. They are also marketing through the vendors that carry their pecans. *(Photo shows*

*pellets from pecan shells.)*

Year-end update: Jody and Tom Britt had to rethink the process from beginning to end. They did not realize the process would require a cool down area. And, they ran into a problem with the product name, it was already taken. However, there were good surprises too! They were contacted about producing other type of pellets and two of those products have been successful and they will start producing them as soon as the system is up and running.

In this first year they produced 1200 pounds of pellets, this was test product, and they estimate a market value of \$20,000. They have been giving walk-throughs to other growers who come to get pecans processed or sold, and have been giving away samples. They have been in communication with several vendors who are eager to try out the pellets. They plan to have product ready before the “Grilling Season.”

# Nash County (Peyton McDaniel)

## Seeds for the Southeast



The McDaniel family has been farming since the mid 1700's when they were granted a parcel of land from the King of England. On that same land, Peyton, his brother Billy and Cousin Phillip formed Hickory Meadows Organics in 2012. They started growing organic tobacco, soybeans, corn and sweet potatoes. With the downward trend of tobacco they decided to replace the tobacco acreage with soybeans and corn.

Four years ago, Hickory Meadows Organics started working on a project with NCSU and RAFI-USA doing on-farm research to help identify varieties of soybeans and corn that not only worked well in the Southeast but also performed well in organic conditions. This led to the release of three new non-GMO varieties of soybeans and a famer bred double-cross corn variety by NCSU. In order to be certified organic seed, it needs to be cleaned at a certified organic facility. *(Top photo of seed machine.)*



June update: With the grant funds Hickory Meadows Organics purchased a seed cleaner and new cleaning screens to produce these lines of corn and soybean seed for other farmers in the Southeast.

They were able to get seed cleaned, bagged, marketed, and sold for the 2019 crop year. At this point in the project, they consider the project to be a success. *(Lower photo of the first shipment of seed for Helena Agri-Enterprises.)*

In the spring Peyton was able to get an intern from the NCSU Ag Institute who has worked on seed delivery and starting trials, visiting farms where the seed was sold, and taking the lead on the corn seed production project.

There are four other farms in North Carolina that are also working with Hickory Meadows Organics producing corn and soybeans and will benefit from the seed cleaner.

Year-end report: Normally there is a major shortage of certified organic soybean seed but, with the cleaner and supporting equipment, he was able to sell the seed and not only make a \$36,900 profit in the first year, but helped other growers in need as well. With last year being such a success, Hickory Meadows has presold a large volume of seed for the upcoming year. Peyton gave a couple of presentations for a workshop he was leading at the Carolina Farm Stewardship Sustainable Agriculture Conference about the cleaning operation and the business he was able to create. He also hired the intern from the Agricultural Institute at North Carolina State University to work on the seed project.

## Nash County (Kelvin Bass)

### Construction of an On Farm Cold Storage Facility

After graduation from NC State, Kelvin returned to the farm to work alongside of his father. At the time they grew tobacco and wheat. But, as time passed Kelvin began to see the need to diversify. In the mid 80's Kelvin built a greenhouse to grow vegetable transplants for the hardware store in Rockymount. That project grew into the Bass Plant Farm, a retail garden center on the farm that operates year round.

They transitioned to an organic operation in 2012. They grow tobacco, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, soybeans and wheat organically. With the grant funds they want to construct a cold storage facility that will enable them to further diversify and fill the market demand for locally grown organic produce.

June update: One of the biggest road blocks for Kelvin is trying to find the best way to connect the farm production possibilities with the market needs. Being a small farm and with only seasonal labor to assist, any additional ventures have to be worked in as weather and time allows. Because of the weather this Spring Kelvin has been really limited with the time to get much done on the building. He is still researching the exact size and capacity he feels is best for his situation. They are also doing more market research to determine some of the best crops to add to their current production.

Year-end update: Kelvin decided he was not ready to start his project this year and returned the first payment to NC AgVentures. The funds will be returned to NCTTFC.

# Johnston County (Doris Kidd)

## Garlic Drying Barn



Doris and Donald Kidd dreamed of owning a farm to grow food and to raise their son. They purchased 15 acres of tobacco farm land in 1989 in the Shoe Heel district of northern Johnston County. They moved onto the farm in 1993. They are one of a handful of garlic farms in North Carolina and of a select few that grow elephant garlic which is a cross between leeks and garlic.

They are the only garlic growers and sellers at the State Farmers' Market in Raleigh. The garlic selling season begins around Easter with the sale of green garlic and ends in mid-July. They sell the entire crop each year but are not able to increase the amount of garlic because they need a larger facility for drying and storage.



With the grant funds they built a 24 x 25 foot metal garlic barn on a concrete pad. The barn will house all of their crops. It will be used to dry green garlic from the field in the spring, to process the dried garlic for sale in the summer, for garlic braiding in summer, and to store seed garlic for planting in the fall. A barn this size will allow them to increase production, and will reduce losses during rainy periods.



June update: They building is finished. It includes a racking system for hanging garlic for drying along with an exhaust fan. They plan to put in insulation this fall. Doris and Donald are mentoring a family they met at Small Farm Day at NCA&T in March. The family is reclaiming their family farm in Hertford County. One of the sisters lives in Smithfield and the other in NYC. These two sisters along with other family members are exploring crops to grow. They toured the Kidd farm to see if growing garlic is a viable crop.

Year-end report: This year's garlic was in such great condition they were able to increase their customer base without extending the number of days at the market. They have increased their planting of traditional garlic. In the first year with the new building, their sales brought in another \$4800. The NC State magazine is writing a story about the Kidds and their farm. *(Photo of Doris and Donald Kidd, photo credit Mark Hall with NC State University).*



# Johnston County (Donald Garrett Lee)

## Integrate Automated Weighing and Bagging Equipment for Wildflower and Native Grass Seed Operation



Garret Wildflower Seed Farm, LLC has started transitioning a former tobacco farm into native wildflower and grass seed business. This includes repurposing tobacco curing barns for seed drying and using former tobacco crop land for native seed production fields. With the grant funds Don purchased automated weighing and bagging equipment.



Don graduated from NCSU with degrees in Agricultural education and Agriculture Engineering Technology. Upon graduation Don started a 33 year career at NCDOT developing an Erosion and Sediment Control, and Stormwater programs for highway construction and maintenance activities.

The farm has drastically reduced the tobacco acreage and has been transitioning to native seed for projects such as wetland mitigation, oil and gas pipeland reclamation, CRP lands, wildlife plantations and land trusts.

Don has been selling native seed in wholesale markets for over 10 years. He retired last in April, 2018 and launched the seed business website for direct marketing. His vision is to increase direct marketing to landowners, contractors, utility companies, and land management firms. Don offers land management consultant services and this opens up opportunities for seed sales. As the volume of sales increases the new equipment will allow the process to be as efficient as possible.

June update: Equipment has been received and is being uncrated for assembly. Twenty visitors from NC Pollinator Conservation Alliance toured the farm on July 25. (Photo: Weighing and bagging equipment just delivered.)

Year-end report: It cost \$10, 600 to complete the project. The automated system saves \$107 per pallet. In the first year Don added 25 new acres of product and earned an additional \$7500 but estimates the market value at \$650000.



## Guilford County (Poe Family Farm) On Farm poultry Processing Area



Robert and Lindsey Poe bought the farm in the spring of 2014. Their vision for the farm was to create a place where they could grow their own food for their family and the surrounding community. The farm had been vacant for 6 years. After much discussion they decided to start with pasture raised chicken. They amended the soil, put up fences, built moveable chicken tractors, built shelters and obtained Great Pyrenees Livestock Guardian Dogs to protect their flocks.

The Poe's plan to build a permanent processing and packaging area for their pastured poultry farm business. This building would make the operation more efficient

and would increase sales by at least 50%. They would use the funding to have the ground graded, a concrete slab poured and a metal building with an overhang constructed.

The birds would be processed on stainless steel tables outside under the overhang on  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the slab. The remaining  $\frac{3}{4}$  of slab would house a newly constructed metal building. This building would allow a space to package the birds on stainless tables and would allow a bag sealing area. They plan to house the freezers and refrigerators for finished products in the building as well. The building will have electricity and water lines run to it, as well as a waste drainage system. This would allow them to process birds, regardless of the weather.



June update: The permanent on-farm processing building has been constructed and is now in use. They are able to process multiple times each week, regardless of the weather. They added one more market day per week and their sales are doubling.

Year-end report: The building was completed in late summer and they were able to process 1000 birds valued at \$5.99 each. They are in the process of adding electricity. The new building will serve as a packaging area and will house freezers to hold product for customer pick-up.

# Harnett County (William Byrd)

## Silvopasture



The William E. Byrd Family Limited Partnership is owned by 13 members of the family. It's a tree farm set up to generate income from timber sales. All the members love the farm and support efforts to make it more productive while keeping it visually pleasing. They enjoy the farm in different ways: fishing, hunting, bird watching, walking and riding four wheelers. Tobacco was once grown on the farm and there are still old stick tobacco barns and curing barns on the property.

William Jeffrey Byrd grew up on the farm. He recently retired from an off farm career and is now farming full time. With the grant funds William and his son will be creating a 10 acre silvopasture, which is an innovative way of thinning trees in existing forest land so that both grass and trees can be grown at the same time.

First the trees will be thinned to a 60 percent canopy; second fescue grass will be seeded for forage production under the trees. Third, both the silvopasture section and an adjoining Bermuda grass section (previously established) will be fenced for cattle production. Once the forage grass under the trees is well established, cattle will be allowed to rotationally graze the established pastures. Cattle production will be a new enterprise for the farm.

William is always looking for ways to do things better, and to become a better steward of the land. That is how he learned about silvopasture. He attends monthly forestry trainings in Harnett County. He continued to research the silvopasture through other farms and education videos. They plan to sell the cattle at the local stockyard as they establish their operation, and eventually obtain a meat handlers license.

June update: Timber has been harvested for Silvopasture development. The area to be developed has been mulched and soil samples taken. William will be purchasing water line supplies in the next week followed by lime, fertilizer and grass seed. Fencing around the Silvopasture will be last phase of protect.

Year-end report: The Silvo pasture is 80% complete. Waterlines have been installed. Eighteen acres of fenced divided rotational grazing pasture has been developed. This pasture design will allow simplified rotational grazing with minimum labor.



## Harnett County (Brian Cameron)

### Barbecue Creek Berry Company Cooler & Trailer



The Cameron family came to North Carolina from Scotland and have been farming in the Barbecue Creek community for more than 200 years. In addition to tobacco, the farm operation includes Bermuda hay, broiler chickens, and Black Angus cattle. In 2017 Brian was recognized as Harnett County Farm Family of the Year. He and his wife Melissa have four children, all of whom help on the farm.

With tobacco contracts being cut shorter each year, they opted to convert some tobacco land to strawberries. They planted 1.5 acres of four different varieties. They hope to establish a U-pick operation and mobile stand. That will open the door to more agritourism opportunities for the farm and eventually move them away from tobacco. With the grant funds they purchased a 7 x 12 foot refrigerator mobile trailer with generator.

June update: The trailer is being built in Crystal River Florida and is taking a bit longer than expected.

Year-end project: They picked up the trailer in Florida. Brian said the trailer is a huge success. They love the design and appearance; and are looking forward to putting it to use this spring with strawberries and having an extra method of cooling berries from the field. Also they are looking into other opportunities where the mobile cold storage would be a benefit.

Brian added  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres of strawberries this year plus 2 acres of produce for the summer. He estimates the market price will bring in \$20000.



## Harnett County (Curtis Honeycutt Jr.)

### Honeycutt's Prime Cuts – Farm Raised Beef



The family farm was established in 1932 with tobacco being the main crop. It was grown on the farm until the buyout in early 2000's. Curt's farm operation includes 500 acres of row crops, 100 acres of pasture land, with approximately 55 brood cows. Curt is working to expand his cattle operation with locally grown beef. With the grant funds he is building a BQA low stress cattle handling facility, a feed bin, portable creep feeder to feed the steers and a waterer to provide clean water. With these additions the operation will save time and money while keeping the animals safe.

June update: The calving season is finished. Curt purchased a 150 bushel creep feeder and 3 tons of feed. He moved the creep feeder to pasture. The feeder helps to ease the transition of weaning calves. He also purchased some temporary fencing supplies to section feed cattle from the calves that will be sold at auction.



Year-end update: They were able to grow better, heavier, less stressed calves. By having the creep feeder in the pasture with calves prior to weaning they are more familiar with feed which makes the weaning transition easier. They are not as stressed without their mom since they already know where and how to eat. They also gained more weight pre and post weaning. They saw a gain increase of 100lbs at weaning and calves gained an additional 200lbs more than the previous year's calves who did not have access to feed/creep feeder.



Curt saved money and time because he purchased the feed in bulk. The creep feeder was filled 4 times in 2019 and each fill up costs \$500 less than the equivalent in bagged feed, saving \$2000. It takes a lot more labor to unload 50lb bags by hand and hand feed into troughs.

They raised two grass fed, grain finished beef steers successfully and have the second group on corn feed. They hope to take them to be processed within the next 60 days (They weigh approximately 900 pounds as of a week ago.) They purchased all items needed and

noted. With all of the wet weather this fall/winter they were not able to pour the concrete to install the bin but are excited to get it setup in soon. They also modified their original plan to include temporary fencing and corral panels which were less expensive and portable (versus the large, permanent corral) to catch, work, and sort calves.

# Rockingham County (David Stewart)

## Stewart Farm Forage Storage Facility



The Stewart Farm has been in production for ninety years and the newest member, currently 2.5 years old is just as excited about the cows as the rest of the family. From 1970 until 2000 David's father raised tobacco along with wheat, oats, corn and hay. The entire family helped to plant, chop, top and harvest tobacco. Each child was gifted a cow when they were born. When they were old enough the children took over the responsibility of caring for their cow including helping to raise the hay they needed for food.



David graduated from NC State with a Bachelor's of Science in Animal Science. David came up with the idea to build a hay storage shed after observing weathered hay and how animals react to it. Weathered hay has quality degradation, and the animals will not eat all of it. David says that all livestock producers would benefit from the improved quality of sheltered hay but most are put off by the cost.

With his grant funds David will erect a hay storage facility. Reducing or eliminating food contamination is the primary objective. The hay savings from the installation of this shelter could lead to a surplus, and he could market the extra hay.

June update: David has been working on site preparation. He demolished an old house on the building site, removed trees and graded the site. He purchased and picked up materials. The trusses come in two sections, they have been put together. The posts have been planted.

Year-end report: David is in the process of putting walls on the west and north ends of the barn to prevent rain from blowing in. Gutters will also be installed this year. Next winter he plans to build a lean-to on the east side of the barn to increase capacity. A group of folks from Rockingham and Guilford County's toured the farm. David explained the hay storage methods, and ways to minimize spoilage of hay. The project has also been discussed with fellow cattlemen in the area and hay customers. At least one applied for this year's NC AgVentures grant, also for a hay barn. Another is applying for funding for a horticulture project.

# Rockingham County (Stesha Warren)

## Mushroom Preservation Project



Stesha and her husband Jeremy purchased 17.5 acres ten years ago and began planting the forests with long-term crops such as ginseng, ramps and other specialty plants. They planted the field with a variety of fruit and nut trees. But they have reached a point where they want to focus more extensively on mushrooms as they have found them to be one of their best sellers.

Stesha Warren received a BS from NCA&T in Agricultural education with a minor in Agriscience. She is certified in 7 states for the sale of wild mushrooms and was recently hired as a Wild Mushroom Safety and Certification Instructor. They want to produce a more reliable and consistent product. The home style refrigerators they are using now are not equipped to handle their current needs.



With the grant funds they purchased two Weston 28 dehydration units and materials to construct a coolbot space. They currently sell mushrooms at four farmers markets and a few local restaurants. They have a waiting list of restaurants wanting to carry their mushroom varieties, and hope that the larger and faster dehydrators and the Coolbot for temperature control will provide the product consistency and reliability needed to expand their production.

June update: Both of the dehydrators have been purchased and one is regularly used for herbs and mushrooms. The cooler room now has 4 inches of insulation board applied to the walls and ceilings with the exception of the window wall which will soon be completed. The window prepped for the AC unit by removing glass, busting through cinder blocks, grinding metal frame and framing out a holding area for the unit. The AC unit is also in place and the surround exposed area is insulated and boarded up. We are in the process of sealing the joints with expandable foam and metal tape.



Year-end report: The dehydrator has been used for ramps, ginseng, hot peppers and mushrooms. All of which have been utilized in the making value added products to sell. They are moving into indoor mushroom production which will increase the use of both the Cool bot and dehydrator. They estimate the project generated about \$3000 this first year, and saved another \$1500 in reduced loss from food going to waste.

## Stokes County (April Robertson)

### Diversification Away from Tobacco



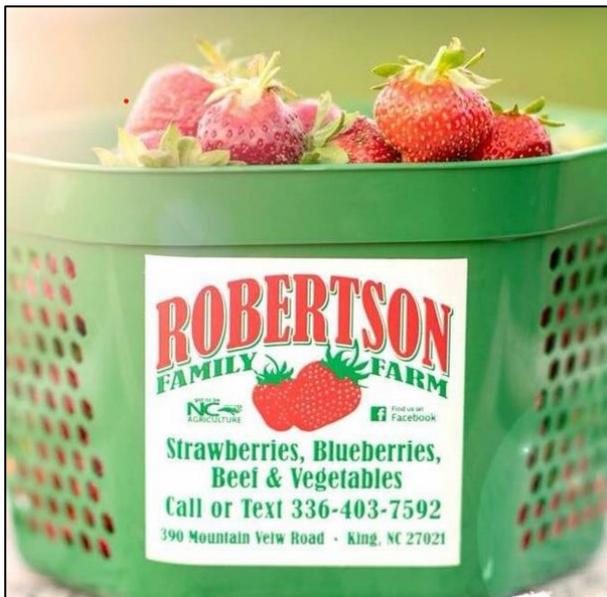
April married into a farming family, and after the birth of their son she decided to stay home and work on the farm.

The farm had been a tobacco farm for generations, but two years ago, they saw that tobacco was rapidly declining, and they added strawberries and then expanded to include vegetables and hemp. They sell to the public on a roadside certified farm stand.

With the grant award they will purchase irrigation equipment to provide good quality vegetable and hems crops. Secondly, they will add exhaust fans and trellis support inside the greenhouse where they grow tomatoes. The three-year vision is to expand the farm stand into a retail store.

June update: They purchased two water pumps to provide irrigation to their 70,000 strawberry plants, vegetables and hemp crops. They hosted a homeschool day at their strawberry patch with over 200 in attendance on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Year-end report: With the additional equipment they were able to produce 20 acres of hemp, 5 acres of vegetables and 5 acres of sweet corn. April estimates they earned an additional \$25,000 in the first year



The N.C. Department of Labor presented special awards to four North Carolina growers during the 26th Annual Gold Star Growers Meeting held Feb. 7, including the Robertson Family Farm in Stokes County. They received the award for Best Maintained Housing (for migrant workers.)

## Surry County (Renee Westmoreland)

### Lambing Barn and Fence for Sheep Rotational Grazing



The Westmorland family purchased 50 acres 14 years ago and built a cattle operation. They were selling at market, but after their son completed an FFA project on “Growing and marketing beef cattle” they worked to obtain the NC Meat Handlers Certification and the USDA Grass Fed certification. Five years ago they diversified the operation to include sheep.

With the grant award they built a lambing barn and fenced in a pasture for rotational grazing, on the farmland near the house. The entire family works together to properly care for the animals. They grow and bale their own forage.

They hosted a Parasite Resistance seminar and brought Dr. Holly Schram from Virginia Tech to give lessons on parasites in small ruminants. They currently have a buyer for all of the ram lambs and they sell the female ewes to other farmers or at market. Their goal is to provide a high quality meat product to sell with the beef.



June update: The barn is finished and the pastures have been fenced. The electrical cost was much higher than they expected due to the tariff's that were put into place.

Year-end report: The project has been extremely successful! They cut down on lambing mortality rates and were able to reduce travel expenses to the other farm. By having the lambing barn at their home pasture, they were able to check on the ewes several times per day and once lambed, they graduated to larger paddocks before putting them out on pasture. Renee estimates, in the first year they saved \$5000, and generated an additional 10,000 in income.

Dr. Emily Cope from NC A&T University visited the farm in September. She gave advice on the expansion they hope to accomplish in the next year with added pastures. Dr. Cope also met with their son Reece who is starting his own flock, but is going to be farming in a different style, in an open air barn at a different location. About 14 kids, plus parents from the foothills Agricultural Club visited the farm. Renee had is set-up for them to see how they work the sheep and prepare for the lambs.

## Rockingham (Stephen Rivers) Blackberry Installation



Steve has sold blueberries at the Greensboro Farmers' Curb Market since approximately 2000. His children grew up picking and packing blueberries and helping with pruning and planting. In 2016, Steve retired from ITG (formerly Lorillard Tobacco Company) after working as a packing equipment adjuster for 35 years. Steve's wife, Terri, retired in 2018 after 34 years in local government administration. They are striving to maximize production on this small farm in a systematic way.

During 2018, Stephen and his wife Terri participated in the Kitchen Connects GSO program to begin producing value-added products using fruits and vegetables raised on the farm. They currently produce jams, jellies, marmalades, preserves as well as pepper relish, pickled asparagus and salsa. They use their blueberries in several of their products. They planted asparagus in the spring of 2018 to make pickled asparagus. In the fall of 2018, they planted strawberries to be harvested in 2019 for making strawberry jam. They have had a lot of customer interest in blackberry jam at the markets where they sell their products.

For this reason, they would like to increase the number of blackberry plants on the farm. They are striving to raise as many of their product ingredients as possible in order to satisfy the customers' desires for food that is grown locally under conditions that minimize the exposure to potentially harmful chemicals. Due to customer interest, blackberries is the next logical expansion.

June update: The blackberry plants have been planted. The posts for the trellis system are in place. The high-tensile wire for the lower level of the trellis system is almost complete. Fertilizer and lime have been applied and straw mulch is in place. They hosted Bill Cline, NC State Extension researcher and Extension Specialist in Entomology and Plant Pathology and Kathryn Holmes, Extension Agent for a blueberry pruning demonstration. Approximately 40 people attended.

Year-end update: They completed the project but as the plants grow, they will be adding another strand of trellis wire to support the plants. At this time they believe the project was a success and expect to harvest their first crop this summer.

In August, 2019 a Value-added Workshop sponsored by NC A&T and NC Extension was offered in Hillsborough. Rivers' Finest was on the program and they presented a slide show about the farm and included the AgVentures grant project. Throughout 2019, they have discussed this project at meetings of the Caswell County Beekeepers Association where they are members.

# Surry County (Kyle Montgomery)

## Energy Efficient Focused Nursery



This marks Kyle Montgomery's fourth official year of farming on land that his great-grandfather purchased for tobacco production over a century ago. Kyle's grandfather moved to Beulah from Winston-Salem on doctor's orders as he suffered from respiratory issues aggravated from working in the tobacco warehouses. Like many in his generation he maintained a large vegetable garden and kept chickens, cows, mules and horses but made his living from tobacco production. In the 1990's family members moved off the land which was leased until the 2015 when Kyle began his revitalization project.

Kyle graduated from the University of North Carolina with a BS in Biology, during which time he volunteered at the community garden and realized how much he enjoyed learning about and practicing sustainable agricultural methods. York Farm today, aims to honor the traditions of the family-run farm. The goal is to provide the community with nutritious food through sustainable cultivation of fruits, vegetables and eggs. The farm is Certified Naturally Grown, which is grassroots certification that meets the standards of USDA Organic but is community operated. They run a CSA program that sells wholesale to restaurants and stores and opens the farm on Saturdays for an on-farm store in the barn.

With the grant funds Kyle will build a 30 x 50 nursery with energy-efficient features, which will allow him to grow healthier seedlings and maintain an emphasis on sustainable production methods. The nursery would incorporate a double layer of inflated plastic, greenhouse-grade airflow fans, a propane heater, vents, shutters, and fans with roll-down sides for even air flow and shade cloths for the hot months. The nursery will allow them to have a greater focus on growing microgreens for local chefs.

Year-end report: The project is halfway done. Progress was very slow due to additional funds required to purchase all of the materials. Since November, however, steady progress has been made. The greenhouse frame has been built so the remaining work consists of the electrical, plumbing, and interior finishing.

The greenhouse should be fully operational by mid-February; seeding for the 2020 growing season has already begun. They start seeds for transplanting throughout the entire year, so the greenhouse will be used continuously once it's finished. While housing seedlings will be its primary function, they hope that it will be a center piece for the vegetable growing operation of York Farm, and will provide an educational space for anyone who visits.



## Wilson County (Frank Scott)

### Sweet Potato Vine Shredder

As a ninth generation farmer, sustainability is very important to the Scott Brothers. The family relies on tobacco production but felt it was vital to find a partner crop that will sustain the future.

They planted the first crop of sweet potatoes in 2016, the year that Frank Scott graduated from NC State. With his academic work and experience he looks for ways to make the farm more efficient and push the production yield.

With the grant funds he plans to purchase a vine shredder. According to Frank's research, shredding the sweet potato vines before harvest forces the potato skins to tighten making them easier to flip when harvesting and reduces losses from packing and sorting.

June update: The machine has been designed by Strickland Bros. Enterprises. A deposit has been made and construction began 6-10-19. Extension and agribusiness personnel have been on site weekly to view sweet potato trial projects in cooperation with NCSU. St. Mary's 4-H club will visit in September.

Year-end report: The sweet potato vine shredder was a great success. Built in conjunction with Strickland Bros. Enterprises in Spring Hope, NC, this machine increased yield, sweet potato quality, and all around harvest efficiency as the workers were able to ultimately harvest more potatoes per day. This machine performed so well that Strickland Brothers is using pictures and videos of the machine for advertisements.

The machine was used to harvest NCSU sweet potato test plots, a yield contest entry, and was exhibited to the members of the Wilson County Sweet Potato Advisory Council. Frank estimates the project added an additional \$84,000 this first year.



## Guilford County (Bobby J. Roberts Jr.)

### In-field Hemp Decorticator



Bobby J. Roberts (BJ) is a fifth generation farmer. Tobacco has supported the Roberts family for many years. He has two daughters working outside the farm but they would like to come back and work with Dad on the land. To generate additional income BJ is adding hemp production. With the grant funds BJ will build a hemp decorticator to decorticate green hemp in the field. (Photo: Hemp field)

There are currently no machines that will decorticate green industrial hemp in the field. BJ has mechanical skills and plans on building a decorticator. With this machine, growers will not have to bale the fiber in the field and transport it to the processing plant. Instead they be able to strip the fiber from the inner stalk of the plant (decorticate) as they are going through the field and transport hemp fibers to the processing facility.

The hemp fiber will be sold directly to Michael Long where it is currently being spun into fiber to be used to make clothing. Once the machine process is finalized and potential machine issues are addressed, the machine will be manufactured on a larger scale and available to additional hemp fiber growers.

June update: The decorticator required some work. The metal rollers that were built to separate the fiber from the hemp stalk weren't doing the job as envisioned. Too much stalk was being left in the fiber. Correcting that problem has turned into a tremendous undertaking as the rollers are the main part of the decorticator and removing them resulted in taking the entire machine apart. BJ hopes to have the machine ready to harvest the hemp he has planted. He is also trying to come up with shields to protect the user from the gears that run the rollers. (Photo: Rollers for the decorticator)



Year-end report: The decorticator was ready but the hemp growing on Bobby's farm died and so he was not able to put his equipment into use.

# Guilford County (Charles Williamson)

## Produce Refrigeration



Charles Williamson's grandfather was the first African American to receive the first land purchase loan to a member of his race in the nation. His grandfather, Nat Williamson proceeded to purchase a 97 acres farm during the depression era. Everything was grown or made on the farm. His grandfather sold butter, eggs, apple cider, vegetable, watermelons and peaches at his farm stand. He also raised pigs and chickens and tobacco. In the winter months he would share the produce and livestock that he collected and froze with surrounding families who needed it.

When his grandfather passed the land was divided between his children, one being Charles father who farmed the land similar to his father. He later purchased more land in Guilford and Caswell Counties to expand his farm. Charles grew up farming and says he had no choice but to fall in love with it.

After the tobacco buyout the farm slowed down and Charles went to college to become a Diesel Mechanic. About 10 years later Charles and his father decided to start a commercial tree and shrub nursery on the tobacco land. He then enrolled in Alamance Community College Horticulture Program and went on to get licenses for pesticide management, landscape contractor and irrigation installation. With the grant funds Charles will purchase and install an 8 x12 CoolBot Walk-in Cooler to expand the shelf life of their produce that is still grown on the farm.

June update: The area where the walk-in cooler will be installed has been cleared, but rainy weather has delayed progress.

Year-end report: The roof is finished and the AC unit and the Cool Bot have been purchased. The cooler is functional using a generator. He is working to get permanent power. Plants and seed have been ordered. His future plans are to add front sales porch, loading dock, gravel drive and a greenhouse!

# Wilson County (Scott Sullivan)

## Sullivan Farms Beef LLC



Sullivan Farms is a family owned business that has been growing tobacco for over 30 years. They currently produce tobacco, sweet potatoes, cotton, soybeans, corn, wheat and beef cattle. The farm employs five year-round staff and approximately 50 seasonal employees. They have been selling cattle for slaughter to customers for more than 15 years.

In 2018 they received their meat handlers' license and began to sell retail cuts of beef at the local farmers market. With the grant funds they will purchase two glass fronted display freezers and expand their marketing t-shirts and brochures. *(Photo: Scott's children enjoy showing cattle.)*

June update: They purchased the glass front freezer. They needed to do rewiring in the building so as not to blow fuses. They are selling their own beef along with summer produce.



Year-end report: They used the freezer at their produce stand and saw an increase in sales and returning customers. Two new jobs were created and 60 jobs were sustained. They produced 2000 pounds of beef and generated an additional \$5000. They hope to double that amount next year.



## Wayne County (John Tart III)

### Pecan Processing Barn



The Tart farm has been around for many generations. John Tart III was fortunate to inherit the Pecan grove which sits on 100 acres and is one of the largest in North Carolina. In the past, the land was used to grow row crops and tobacco.

With the grant funds John plans to build a barn to sort, process and store pecans and pecan products. The new sealed, concrete flooring will enable John to meet or exceed safe food standards throughout the country. John also owns a honey bee business, and the new facility will provide a place to process honey.

June update: John has surveyed and plotted the area where the facility will go. They secured contracts with the concrete provider, and construction team as well as submitted plans for official blueprints. They will begin pouring concrete the first week of July, weather permitting.

Year-end report: They had a hard time getting the area dry enough for construction or being able to coordinate with those doing the work because of setbacks due to the Hurricane which wreaked havoc on their trees, and the land they are using for the facility. They lost their entire pecan crop to the hurricane and had to resort to crop insurance in addition to bringing pecans from other states in to try to make up the difference in revenue.

They hope to finalize the building structure adding electric, and water so they can do all the prep work and processing of the pecans in that one facility. They will continue to use what they already have in place for the time being till those items are completed.

They have already started using the facility to help with sanitary preparation of pecans and related by-products. When the new structure is finished John estimates he will generate \$50,000 income or more.



## Lenoir County (Gregory Rouse)

### RNS Waste Spreading



Gregory Rouse is a fifth generation farmer in the Rouse family. He and his wife farm 600 acres of land. They grow tobacco, corn, wheat, soybeans, cotton and rye. In addition they raise 4000 head of pigs, and 50 cows. Throughout his farming career Gregory operated waste, lime and fertilizer applicators for other farms, and he understands the importance of making sure spreading patterns are correct as well as applying the appropriate rate per acre. With the grant funds, Gregory purchased a spreader to distribute poultry and animal waste.

Livestock production serves as the backbone of the agricultural economy in eastern North Carolina. Numerous farm families have diversified their farming operations by constructing poultry houses in hopes of providing a steady source of income. As a result, poultry growers are in need of assistance in disposing of waste in a timely and environmentally friendly manner.

With the increased cost of commercial fertilizer, growers can benefit from the additional use of animal waste. Laboratory results have indicated that this organic fertilizer supplies both macro and micronutrients necessary for maximum crop yield.

June update: They have purchased the spreader and have begun to use it. Several local people have approached them about spreading for them as well. They are very happy with the spreader and the grant. They had two additional magnetic sponsor signs made to display on the spreader.

Year-end report: Two new jobs were created and 5 jobs were sustained. They were able to reduce cost by not having to buy fertilizer which provided a \$12000 increase in income.



# Forsyth County (Claire Parrish)

## NC Natural Beekeeper Hive Health & Honey Expansion



According to Claire Parrish of Heritage Harvest Farms, bees are experiencing an unsustainable drop in populations, causing alarm for crop farmers and local honey producers. Heritage Harvest Farm is a 7<sup>th</sup> generation restored NC Century Farm. They practice natural beekeeping methods with honey production being a key cornerstone of the farm. They sell their products at Cobblestone Farmer's Market, Pfafftown Farmer's Market, and New Philly Farmer's Market and in several local retail stores.

They are using the grant funds to purchase newly developed equipment that uses natural heat technology to disrupt the varroa mite destroyer's & hive beetles life cycle. Bees can survive at higher temperatures than mites and beetles. In trial, the equipment has reduced losses for natural beekeepers to 0-5% per season. They will also use the equipment to warm weak hives during the winter; those hives bounce back and have a better chance of survival as they are not draining all resources to stay warm.



June update: Claire purchased the Bee Thermal heating units/sensors for the apiary. The inventor of the technology visited the farm to provide training during the first treatment session.

They offered a virtual tour via Instagram and Facebook of the

apiary and & flower fields through the Northern Triad Farm Tour.

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/ByNzusngPHv/?igshid=rf6nv21kha9>

Year-end report: The extraction equipment is helping them to take the next step in being profitable as honey producers. They can jar directly from holding tanks versus hand-filling jars, and also a larger extraction machine reduces labor & effort from their prior hand-crank models.

They conducted heat treatments, and the real tell will be the hive numbers going into spring. There was a period where they had to pause treatments as there were new concerns that the heat may be reducing the viability of the queen. Bee Thermal conducted studies and reported that with proper ventilation in the hive, that viability should not be reduced. They decided, however, to continue in a treatment pause until the hive test group reports out viability in Spring. Once they validate with the larger test group, they will continue treatments.

They produced an additional 962 jars of honey and estimate an \$8000 increase in profit. With their expanded capacity, and growing demand, for honey products, they are moving the process into a shared commercial kitchen space in Winston-Salem, and plan to add larger retail accounts

## Community Grant: Forsyth, Davidson, Davie. Stokes, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin Counties (Agent Tim Hambrick)

Agriculture in this 7 county region has deeply depended on tobacco dollars for many years. Sadly, tobacco continues its decline, adversely affecting a large number of farm families and communities. As tobacco declines, many growers move to grain, yet they are often not prepared for all that grain demands. The project goal is to purchase a small corn planter which will help Extension agent Tim install pilot tests in multiple counties. Not only will farmers get to see the positive effects of an up-to-date piece of equipment, but he and the participating Agents from the seven counties can also quickly build a regional database of information to help expedite the learning curve(s).

June update: A 2 row corn planter was purchased from Pequea Planter out of Pennsylvania and shipped to North Carolina on April 9, 2019.

Year-end report: Tim planted one test plot in Yadkin. He is also helping the Yadkin horticulture Agent to put in a small sweet corn trial, and putting in a small herbicide mode of action trial in a Palmer pigweed infested field. He currently has 7 farmers in two counties involved in the pilot program. The goal is to test and introduce new equipment to farmers looking to diversify their farm operation. The program is too new to estimate potential income.



# Edgecombe County (Chauncey Leggett)

## Irrigation, poultry, and produce storage improvements



Chauncey and wife Catherine started farming on family land 5 years ago. The land was once in cultivation but his grandfather transitioned much of it into a golf course. That business closed in the late seventies and the land remained vacant until Chauncey and his then girlfriend, transitioned the land back to farmland.

Chauncey and Catherine are currently growing organic produce for two restaurants, their CSA program that encompasses forty families in Nash, Edgecombe, and Pitt counties, the local farmer's market, a few craft breweries at Rocky Mount Mills, and Alimentaire bakery.



They would like to expand the operation enough to eventually feed 60 families with their CSA programs and one day expand the wholesale market. Chauncey and Catherine have three project goals, a new irrigation system, build a chicken tractor and construct a cold room.



June update: They laid 480 feet of pipe, installed irrigation boxes, a hydrant, and drip tape to the largest plot. The Blount-Bridgers Arboretum 2019 Spring Garden Symposium gardeners toured the farm on June 1st with 60 plus visitors, and the Albemarle Regional Health Services Health Education and Prevention Dept. visited the farm on June 14<sup>th</sup> with 25 visitors in attendance.

Year-end report: Chauncey and Catherine are very pleased with their project success. They now have a deep water well and drip tape that provides irrigation for  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre of organic produce. They estimate the market value at \$18000. They sustained 3 farm jobs and earned \$10000 in new income. They estimate the project saved over \$5000 in reduced energy cost and 400 hours labor in hand watering.



## Sampson County (Krystal Tyndall)

### Pepper Packing Refurbishment



Krystal and her husband operate an 800 acre family farm. They are fourth generation farmers. The farm originally produced tobacco, cotton, and a few small grains; now they have incorporated sweet potatoes, squash, watermelons, peppers, corn, wheat, soybeans and are also contract growers with Smithfield foods.

June update: Krystal is in charge of the produce side of the operation. She calls it her baby. She takes care of the planting, cultivating, spraying, inspections, certification and food safety requirements. She found an old mobile packing line. She plans to use the grant funds to purchase, repair and set-up a permanent packing line to use for bell peppers. She will need to make modifications to the line and some repairs to get it in working order; and will set it up under the tobacco barn for shelter.



Year-end update: The packing line has worked well. Krystal, however is planning a few improvements. She had issues with the dump station and plans to install a dump tank that will allow more product flow and decrease damages from product falls.

Krystal spent \$18,500 on the project. With that investment she added 12 new acres of crop production and created 15 new jobs. In the past she would pay someone else to pack the peppers and the packing line saved about 27,000, but increased her labor cost. Still in the first year, she was able to sustain 33 workers and estimates an additional 42,000 in new income with the addition of the packing line.



## Community Grant (Pitt, Johnston and Wilson Counties) Got to Be NC Livestock Producer Marketing



The Got to Be NC Livestock Producer Marketing project is designed to be a new marketing outlet for show animals born and raised in North Carolina. The project team includes Extension Agents, Dan Wells from Johnston County, Jessica Anderson, from Wilson, and Andy Burlingham from Pitt County. This project would entail special auction sales on heifers, lambs, and goats raised for exhibition at the NC State Fair.



The farms that raise show animals also farm full-time, raising other crops and livestock. This auction would provide a different avenue of marketing, to create more interest and potentially raise profits for farmers. Currently, many farms are selling animals one at a time off the farm. Selling in an auction setting has the potential of increasing profits on the high quality animals. Additionally, these sales provides an easier access point for young people interested in livestock exhibition and where to purchase quality animals.



Right now in North Carolina, to find a project animal, you must call and visit each breeder individually to see what they have to offer. This project aims at making it easier to find quality animals for show. Also at the State Fair, incentives are given to youth showmen who exhibit "Got to Be NC" animals, that are, those who are born and raised in North Carolina. These include a separate "Got to Be NC" Champion Market Animal that sells at the Sale of Champions, as well as monetary prizes for highest "Got to Be NC" animal in a class.

*(Photos starting at the top, Dan Wells, Jessica Anderson and Andy Burlingham)*

Unfortunately the sale in March 2020 was cancelled due to the corona virus. They had 10 sheep and 15 goats lined up for the sale. The Agents will be looking for future opportunities.

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# Community Grant (Pitt County)

## Leroy James Farmers Market



The Leroy James Farmers Market is operated by Pitt County Government. In the past 4 years, it has experienced a renewal with upgrades to the building including an expansion funded through county government and a local foundation grants. With a new manager in place, the market serves vendors and the public from April through December, 4 mornings a week during the peak season. The market accepts SNAP/EBT and many vendors accept WIC vouchers.

The manager and vendors are seeing more opportunities to expand into a market box subscription service for customers. This service would appeal to customers who want local produce but need the convenience of a pre-order, drive through pick up service. The market neighbors the senior center, an elementary and middle school, and a large public park with ball fields. They are currently working on the electronic payment and computer capacity to enable online orders and payment. Coolers are needed to hold the market boxes, and store products from one market day to another.

June update: The project committee is on the hunt for practical but economical refrigerator coolers. The buildings and grounds electrician is looking into electrical updates for the new equipment.

Year-end report: The market manager had hoped to introduce the new service this spring but customer volume has been impacted by the COVID 19 Stay Home Order. Although the farmers market is open many of the vendors are selling directly from their farm. It has been a challenge to get the producers to accept electronic payment or publicize pre-ordering. Pitt County Extension and the market manager plan to offer local training to interested farm vendors.

