NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

N.C. A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

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SMALL FARMS ON THE MOVE NEWSLETTER

Inside This Issue

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOIL TESTING

Soil testing is a service provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) at their Agronomic Division in Raleigh that will assess the present levels of major plant nutrients, soil pH, and micronutrients. You can pick up free kits at your local Extension Center. Soil samples are currently free through November. For more info, visit https://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/

If you are interested in learning more about any information in this newsletter, contact the Extension Center at 910-671-3276 or visit our website at robeson.ces.ncsu.edu. For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Cooperative Extension not later than ten (10) business days before event.

Nelson Brownlee
Extension Agent
Agriculture - Small Farms
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A word from Nelson Brownlee

The "Small Farms on the Move Newsletter" has returned to provide small farmers in Southeastern North Carolina with important information on timely topics and upcoming events. Please do not hesitate to call North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson Center, if you need any assistance.

Thanks,
Nelson Brownlee

Robeson County Center
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center
P. O. Box 2280
455 Caton Road
Lumberton, NC 28359

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Disaster Risk Management Training for Farmers
By Nelson Brownlee

In 2014, 2017, and 2022, farmers in Southeastern North Carolina had the opportunity to learn about risks in farming and develop their personal risk management plan by attending a series of risk management workshops. This fall, farmers will have another opportunity to strengthen their operations by attending a two-part Disaster Risk Management Training which will be held on November 4 and December 2, at the O.P. Owens Agriculture Center, located at 455 Caton Road in Lumberton. The workshops will be held from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Space is limited to 25 participants. Lunch will be provided. Attendance at both sessions is strongly encouraged.

Topics will include:

- Introduction to Risk Management Basics
- Farm Business Planning Strategies
- Best Practices for Disaster Risk Management
- In-Depth Study of Various Types of Disasters and Strategies for Preparation and Advance
- Developing Personal Disaster Risk Management Plans

Registration deadline is October 31.
Please click DRMTFF or https://go.ncsu.edu/drmtff to register.

What Keeps You Up at Night? Understanding Stress and Risk in Production Agriculture

By Gracen Bridges, Kelli Russell, and Mykel Taylor
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

Do you ever think you might be the only one who worries about their farm? It might be useful to recognize other people have worries too and they can be strikingly like your concerns. Over the past several months, we have been collecting data from farmers and ranchers in four states spread across the country to better understand the factors that cause stress and how they view risk in their operations. The data was gathered from one-on-one interviews where producers were asked to characterize their daily lives on the farm, goals for themselves and their business, and how they perceive the stressors and risks they face. The key question asked of all producers was, "What keeps you up at night?" The answers differed based on the commodity produced and the area where they lived, but there were several themes that arose, revealing common stressors:

1. Uncertainties regarding farm-succession and the farm/family balance – the future of the farmland and farm-operation passing from one generation to the next, plus the health and well-being of the family.
2. Concerns over the reputation of agriculture and their specific farm, both in the local community, the broader industry, and society at large.
3. Unpredictable events – this includes weather changes, extreme weather, natural disasters, crop failures, herd or flock problems, excessive market fluctuations, etc.
4. Difficult farm management choices – making the daily and long-term strategic decisions that impact the financial viability of their farming operation.

Rising costs necessitate producers making new farm management choices, resulting in new stressors related to finances and viability. These include, but aren't limited to, management choices related to labor, interest rates, maintaining production contracts, or losing or expanding landholdings. Many farms, no matter their size or stage of life, deal with tough management choices related to financial viability, sometimes many at one time.

Of note is that these four key stressors are both daily and long-term. Recognizing that farmers and ranchers often have these stressors in common helps to put in perspective the everyday challenges of agriculture. For those supporting the farming industry through education and policy making, it prioritizes the need to help farmers understand and use risk-mitigation products and programs to help manage stress on the farm.

TEST NOW TO AVIOD PEAK-SEASON TESTING FEE
BY NELSON BROWNLEE

In today's economy, consumers are always looking for ways to save money. One of the most practical ways to save money is to have your soil tested. Soil testing is a service provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at their Agronomic Division in Raleigh. This year, as in previous years, a $4 fee will be charged for all soil samples processed by the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division during its busiest season: December through March. There will still be no fee from April through November. Fees for other specific tests including plant tissue analysis, solution analysis, and nematodes will remain the same.These fees are being implemented to encourage more growers to sample early and for improvements to the agronomic lab such as new equipment, additional peak-season personnel and computer-programming enhancements. So, it is very important to get your samples to Raleigh by November 25, to avoid the fees.

For farmers, soil testing is the first step in planning an economical and environmentally sound fertilization program. The efficient use of nutrients can help reduce fertilizer costs and environmental concerns without reducing yield or quality. This requires a well-planned fertilization program based on soil sampling, wise selection of nutrients based on needs and costs and proper application of fertilizers.For homeowners, soil testing takes the guesswork out of maintaining the soil in optimum condition for plant growth and development

Collect samples three to six months before planting time. Taking good samples, filling out paperwork properly, and packaging samples for delivery in a well-organized manner are important. In the coastal plain region, it is best to test the soil every two to three years. A soil test will access the present levels of major plant nutrients, soil pH, and micronutrients. Recommendations will include the amounts of lime and fertilizer, if necessary, to meet the requirements of the specific plant or crop being grown.

FARMERS DEPEND ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH TO MAKE FARMING MORE PROFITABLE
By Nelson Brownlee

Approximately 125 farmers attended the 21st Annual North Carolina A&T Small Farms Field Day, held in June at the NC A&T University Farm in Greensboro. They received information on the latest research and new technologies to help farmers become more profitable and sustainable. Some of the demonstrations included: Small-Scale Pecan Production, Pasture Pork Production and management, and Converting Agricultural and Food Wastes Into Energy.

Agriculture research in North Carolina dates to 1877, when state legislation established the North Carolina Department of Agriculture along with “Experiment Stations” as a division of the department. Since that time, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) Research Services Division in partnership with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University and the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at NC A&T State University, has established 18 statewide locations.

Each facility has unique climate and soil conditions, giving researchers a living laboratory in which to investigate a variety of regional crops, forestry concerns, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture. The Division supports these studies by providing land, water, equipment, buildings, and staff who work around the clock to help build a stronger foundation for the future of agriculture.

We invite you to explore our webpage and learn how agricultural research in North Carolina continues to improve your life, no matter where you live.

Upcoming Events

2026 Beginning Beekeeper School
January 27, February 3, 10, 24, March 3, and 10
O.P. Owens Ag Center, 455 Caton Road, Lumberton, NC
Two topics will be taught each night by experienced beekeepers. A fee of $45 (due the first night of the class) will be charged which covers registration, textbook, handouts, and first year's registration in the Robeson Area Beekeepers Association (please make checks payable to **Robeson Area Beekeepers Association). Class is limited to the first 30 to register**, so call immediately to reserve your space. For more information, or to register, please contact Nelson Brownlee, Extension Area Farm Management at 671-3276 or by email at nelson_brownlee@ncsu.edu

Robeson Regional Agricultural Fair
September 26 – October 6, 2025

Robeson County Agricultural Awareness Days
October 14-16

Disaster Risk Management Training for Farmers
November 4 & December 2
10: 00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
O.P. Owens Ag Center, 455 Caton Road, Lumberton, NC
Registration deadline is October 31.
Please click DRMTFF or https://go.ncsu.edu/drmtff to register.

2026 North Carolina Small Farms Week
March 22-28, 2026,
The North Carolina A&T Cooperative Extension Program will coordinate various programs honoring small farmers. The theme for the week is "Deep Roots, Strong Future: "40 years of Strong Impacts." The kickoff for the week will be held on Monday March 23, in Vance County. Educational Sessions will be held in Greensboro on Tuesday March 24, and Wednesday March 25, On Tuesday Evening, the Small Farms Week Dinner announcing the 2026 North Carolina Small Farmer of the Year will be held in Greensboro. Look for more updates later.