2009 Rockingham County Plan of Work

Approved: January 14, 2009

I. County Background

Rockingham County is recognized as rural but has a population of 93,208 which includes six municipalities. The growth rate of 0.2% projects a 2012 population of 93,971. The local economy is depressed as the historical mainstays of tobacco and textiles have faltered in global competition. N.C. Department of Commerce assigns a Tier 1 economically distressed designation to the county allowing enhanced tax credits for job creation and business investment.

Tobacco continues to the leading source of agricultural income, although the number of farmers has declined from peak production years. Low commodity prices and small farms limit production of traditional field crops and livestock. Agricultural production is becoming more diverse with commercial horticulture, increasing demand for local grown food, growth of farmers markets, and expansion of equestrian and agritourism events. Development and investment in profitable farm management plans, selection of new farm enterprises, capital needs, biotechnology, pesticide issues, rural-urban interaction and environmental issues must be addressed by farmers.

Livestock producers must continue to address environmental protection, food quality and safety issues in addition to new developments in production. Commercial and consumer horticulture needs continue to expand with improvements in the regional economy. Extension programs will help all of these producers by providing research based information assisting in developing opportunities for profitability and meeting challenges of economy and public opinion.

Rockingham County families and youth face issues of the economy, quality education and health concerns. Rockingham County 4-H can address these issues through multiple delivery modes; such as clubs, school enrichment, summer adventures and special interest programming. Rockingham County 4-H will impact the future of Rockingham County through the youth that it serves. 4-H teaches life skills, workforce development and community engagement. Within the last year, 4-H reached a total of 3,878 youth. These youth participated in programs that were addressing the issues important to our future.
Safety and Security of our Food and Farm Systems: Food Safety is a growing area of concern throughout the United States. We have the opportunity to educate businesses, schools, government as well as private organizations, and individuals to improve their food handling skills and change behaviors for increased food safety.

Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Chronic Disease Risk Reduction: Sixty-eight percent of adults are overweight or obese, and rates of obesity among youth are rising. Overweight and unhealthy eating behaviors are risk factors for heart disease, diabetes, and other causes of death. The need exists for a stronger awareness of achievable healthy behaviors throughout the county.

Volunteerism offers Cooperative Extension the opportunity to expand efforts. Organized in 1920, North Carolina Extension & Community Association is the state's largest volunteer educational organization. Rockingham County boasts a membership of 155 involved in 14 community clubs. Cooperative Extension works with ECA to provide opportunities and training for volunteers so they become effective multipliers of educational information. In turn, ECA volunteers work at the local level for the progressive improvement of home and community life. Volunteers conduct the programs coordinated through the 4-H county program. With support of United Way, businesses and citizens, 4-H offers opportunities for youth to become future leaders. Additional support by program committees in the Extension Advisory Council assure that our citizens are provided the greatest opportunities for success.

II. Objectives to Address the Cooperative Extension Long Range Plan

Youth and adults will develop and strengthen critical life skills.

With multiple influences in life (technology, media, culture, politics), connecting to create healthy human interaction has led to increased stress and negative relationships in work, school, family and community. By teaching and developing positive interpersonal and social skills, individuals will become better connected to and invested in family and societal relationships. The high school drop out rate in NC continues to rise at an alarming pace. Over 17% of adult North Carolinians are classified as illiterate and 20% of adults have less than a high school graduation. While subject matter content is important, coping and contributory skills provide the social emotional intelligence needed for academic success. North Carolina's plant, animal and food systems will become more profitable and sustainable.
Educational and training programs for producers of agricultural, horticultural and forest products and services will enhance their ability to achieve financial and lifestyle goals and to enhance economic development locally, regionally and statewide. North Carolina's producers produce a wide variety of agricultural, food, fiber, and horticultural products that make major contributions to local communities and the state's economy. In 2006, the estimated farm gate value of agricultural and horticultural production was $8.2 billion, placing NC as the 8th largest in the nation. The total economic impact of these agricultural, horticultural and food industries accounts for approximately one-quarter of the state's economy.

North Carolina farm numbers have declined consistently for decades as a result of economies of scale and global competition in traditional agricultural commodities. Producers of traditional commodities have been forced to expand or leave agriculture. There is continual technological change and the relative profitability of individual farm enterprises changes over time; therefore, farmers must respond by modifying their farming operations. Changes in consumer demand create new opportunities for producers unable or unwilling to compete in commodity production. North Carolina's rapidly growing population creates competition for resources and the need for well-informed and well-crafted public policy to resolve conflicts and meet society's goals.

Agricultural producers, workers, and consumers will adopt safer food production, handling, and distribution practices that reduce workplace and home injuries/illnesses, enhance food security, and increase the quality and safety of food that North Carolinians prepare and consume.

Training and educational programs for farmers, food handlers, and consumers will provide research-based information to ensure that good agricultural, handling and HAACP practices protect the safety of agricultural products as they move from farm to table and that an increased number of families and children have a secure food supply. Farm producers will gain access to information to become knowledgeable about and implement quality assurance programs that minimize physical, chemical and biological hazards to people from farm processes and products. Limited-resource, socially-disadvantaged and food-insecure individuals, families and communities will be provided with information and opportunities to enhance household food, diet and nutritional security. The safety of food that North Carolinians prepare and consume is critical to preventing food-borne illness, and farm safety is critical to prevent injury and illness among the farm worker and producer population. The recent foodborne illness outbreaks due to produce, primarily spinach, have brought public acknowledgement of a problem that has been increasing nationally for the last ten years. Because there are currently no processing steps to remove the pathogens from fresh produce, the best measures for controlling fresh produce related illness are to prevent microbes such as Escherichia coli O157:H7 and Salmonella from contaminating the product. These measures are known as Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs). While there is currently no legal requirement for a grower to be GAPs certified, buyers such as Dole, Fresh Express and Wal-Mart have responded to the public's concern by requiring their produce growers to be certified in good agricultural practices (GAPs). For North Carolina growers to be competitive and produce safe product,
it is important that they become GAPs certified as failure to do so may cause a loss of market. Hunger in American households has risen by 43 percent over the last five years, according to an analysis of US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data released in the report "Household Food Security in the United States, 2004." The analysis, completed by the Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University, shows that more than 7 million people have joined the ranks of the hungry since 1999. The USDA report says that 38.2 million Americans live in households that suffer directly from hunger and food insecurity, including nearly 14 million children. That figure is up from 31 million Americans in 1999. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the United States, and is unique in that the work and home place are often the same, exposing both workers and family members to hazards. Farmers and their families are at high risk for fatal and nonfatal injuries, musculo-skeletal conditions, work-related lung diseases, noise-induced hearing loss, skin diseases, and certain cancers associated with chemical use and prolonged sun exposure. The health and safety issues of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in North Carolina include traumatic injury, musculo-skeletal injury, heat stress/heat stroke, pesticide exposure and illness, green tobacco illness, dermatitis, infectious disease, mental health, domestic violence, hypertension, diabetes, and lack of access to health care. Agromedicine is a comprehensive, collaborative approach, involving both agricultural and health scientists, addressing the health and safety issues of the agricultural community through research, education and outreach. Individuals and groups will acquire leadership and decision making capacities needed to guide and actively participate in local and state organizations. Leadership is important to every level of a community sharing in the creation of wealth and well-being. Youth and adult leaders must be capable of motivating groups to achieve common goals that impact North Carolina families and communities. They will need the confidence and skill to guide and support North Carolina community and state organizations. Citizens participating in the 2007 NC Tomorrow survey denoted the importance of leadership by clearly requesting leadership training (54%), social advising, community advising and technical assistance (45%) from their university system. Youth and adults will address community issues and/or challenges through volunteerism. Youth and adult volunteers not only contribute by addressing educational needs in North Carolina Communities, but also develop new skills and aspirations. Cooperative Extension provides interpersonal, leadership skills and content knowledge to citizens who in exchange share that expertise with others across the state and nation. Current research suggest that youth and adult volunteer participation positively impacts civic engagement and contributes to leader development. Involved youth and adults, contributing their knowledge and skills provide for community sustainability. North Carolina has an opportunity to improve its less than stellar rank of 39th nationally in volunteerism. (NC Progress Board, 2003)

Youth and adult program participants will make healthy food choices, achieve the recommended amount of physical activity and reduce risk factors for chronic diseases.
Many North Carolinians are affected by chronic disease and conditions that compromise their quality of life and well-being. Heart disease, stroke and cancer continue to be leading causes of death in our state. In addition, obesity and obesity related chronic diseases such as diabetes continue to rise at alarming rates. Healthy eating and physical activity are critical to achieve optimal health. Many North Carolinians have diets that are too high in calories and too low in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Portion sizes, foods eaten away-from-home and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages continue to rise. In addition, most North Carolinians do not engage in regular physical activity. The prevalence of overweight and obesity has nearly doubled in the past 10 years. If the trend of overweight is not slowed, it will eliminate the progress we have made in reducing the burden of weight-related chronic disease. One in every three US children born after 2000 will become diabetic unless many more people start eating less and exercising more. The cost of obesity in North Carolina in health care costs alone is over 2 billion dollars. There are many proposed reasons for the obesity epidemic, however unhealthy eating and physical inactivity are widely recognizes as primary contributors to the problem. Those who make healthy food choices and are physically active are more likely to achieve and maintain a healthy weight as well reduce chronic diseases. Ultimately, this will lead to reduction in health care costs, increased longevity, greater productivity and improved quality of life.

III. Relationship to County Government Objectives

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Long Range Objectives and Rockingham County Cooperative Extension Plan Of Work reflect the Rockingham County Strategic Priorities through programming in both youth and adult education; economic development opportunities; and enhancement of the quality of life for all citizens. Current, relevant issues are addressed through education programs for youth, families, and businesses. The economy is promoted through research based information available to citizens regarding agriculture, health, life skills, and quality environments.

Specific items include, but are not limited, to the following:

Priority 1: K-12 Education

4-H programs are designed to support the NC school curriculum requirements and enhance the hands-on learning opportunities of students. Summer activities extend the learning environment beyond the school year requirements. Cooperative Extension partnerships with schools provide extra opportunities for students and their families to receive enhanced education.
Priority 2: Workforce Development

4-H programs develop entrepreneurial skills. Informal adult education programs provide citizens with the latest research based information to enhance employment skills.

Priority 3: Orderly Growth

Cooperative Extension encourages environmental awareness and use of Best Management Practices in agricultural production. Information is provided for farmer participation in voluntary Ag Districts. Farmers are updated on requirements for watershed protection programs and how their participation enhances environmental quality.

Priority 4: Economic Development

Community Kitchen promotion and coordination helps entrepreneurs in the food industry to develop business opportunities and initiate growth. CES supports profitable farm enterprises including expanding local grown foods demand, increasing equestrian opportunities and new farm enterprises

Priority 5: Public Safety

Food safety education includes growers and consumers from the field to the school cafeteria and local restaurants. Extension volunteers assist with community training to older citizens on identity theft. Playground safety training is provided for child care facility workers as required by statute.
Priority 6: Government Efficiency and Effectiveness

Through cooperation with other county departments, Extension resources are much more economical than consultants or contractors. Partnerships like the Community Kitchen that maximize the strengths of multiple agencies provide citizens with diverse services not available otherwise.

Priority 7: Human services

4-H programs are promoted through Youth services to appropriate participants. Training for Head Start parents and workers in the areas of health, nutrition, and safety is provided.

IV. Diversity Plan

Cooperative Extension programs in Rockingham County provide research based information assisting citizens improving environmental protection, agricultural production and income, live healthy lifestyles, and enhance educational opportunities for youth and adults. The County Extension Advisory Council and Specialized Committees representing each program area identify issues and help design educational opportunities that will be appropriate and available to all county citizens. These efforts are expanded with a force of volunteers who deliver programs in community groups and recruit participants to Extension programs. Strong efforts to advertise programs, events, and activities continue with publicity through direct mailing, e-mail, website, radio and newspapers. Appropriate youth events are included in Rockingham County Schools classrooms which are inclusive to all students. Food Safety programs are offered to all restaurants including ethnic restaurants and testing for certification is offered in appropriate language. Some school programming is targeted to schools with high rates of free and reduced lunches increasing participation of low income and minority citizen groups.

V. Primary Delivery and Evaluation Methods

Delivering timely, relevant educational programs that meet critical local needs is the cornerstone of Extension’s mission. Extension educational programs are designed to equip the citizens of Rockingham County with the knowledge, skills and tools to improve their economic prosperity, environmental stewardship and quality of life. An Extension program delivery system is a planned and organized eclectic mix of educational methods used during an educational program. Extension educational methods are the specific ways
by which research-based information is shared with targeted learners. Extension educators in our county employ a wide variety of hands-on, experiential educational methods, such as interactive workshops and classes, demonstrations, field days and tours, that allow learners to fully engage in the learning process, test new knowledge and/or practice new skills during the educational session. Equally important, this plan will also include educational methods such as seminars, client visits, fact sheets, newsletters, and home study kits that serve to support and reinforce learning as well as provide motivation for continued learning. Armed with the most current literature on effective teaching and learning, Extension educators also skillfully select educational methods based on the learning style preferences and special needs of the targeted learners. These client-focused methods afford learners the opportunity to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to change their lives in meaningful ways. Another key feature of Extension program delivery that is evident in this plan is our commitment to being customer driven and customer focus. As such, in addition to the County Extension Center, Extension educational programs are delivered online, in community centers, on farms, and other locations in order for our programs to be available and accessible to, and fully utilized by, the citizens of Rockingham County.

In Extension, success is defined as the extent to which our educational programs have made a difference in the lives of the citizens of Rockingham County. Evaluation methods are the way we make those observations about first and foremost whether any changes occurred as a result our educational programs, and subsequently the significance of those changes. As an educational organization, the changes we seek focus on key outcomes such as the knowledge and skills participants gain from our programs. More specifically, in this plan, we are using quantitative research methods such as retrospective testing, pre and post tests and/or surveys to measure change in knowledge gained, the application of that knowledge, number of new skills developed, and types of new skills developed. Extension, as a results-oriented organization, is committed to also assessing the social, economic and/or environmental impact that our programs have on the individuals who participate, their families and communities and ultimately the county as a whole (i.e. true significance of the changes stemming from our programs). We plan to measure these impacts in both the long and short-term. In this annual plan (short-term), we have outlined financial impact and cost benefit analysis as our primary evaluation methods. Another value held in Extension is actively listening to and dialoguing with targeted learners. Therefore, this plan also includes qualitative evaluation methods such as testimonials from program participants, and interviews and focus groups with participants.

VI. Membership of Advisory Leadership System

Field Crops
  John Ashe, Jr.
  Bobby Baker
  Harden Brown
Charlie Carter
Curtis Corum
Janice Corum
Darryl Dunagan
Tommy Early
Emma Early
James Huffman
Monroe Isley
Brenda Isley
Donald Jones
Pat Jones
Jerry Keck
Kevin Knight
Miranda Knight
Dennis McAlister
Diane McAlister
Mike McKinney
John Moore
Jean Moore
Robert Smothers
Tommy Strader
Nancy Strader
Tommy Webster

Horticulture
Garland Crumpton
Joan Crumpton
Sam Crumpton
Allen Fulp
Tom Johnstone
Barbara Joyce
Richard Lindsey
Paul Marshall
Bob Mitchell
Mark Wells

Greens Industry
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Tammy French
Stephen Gibson
Patrick Jones
Mark Martin
Michael Philpott
Ed Shelton
Lester Stanley

Rockingham County Advisory Council
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Perry Graves
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Mark Robertson
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Lula Bass
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Wilma Brown
Joe French
Lester Stanley
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Sharon Troxler

4-H
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Nancy Norwood
John Norwood
Pam Holland
Pam Drews
Shelby Bivins
Deborah Stone
Nancy Gordon
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Beef Cattle
VII. Staff Membership

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