

Improved Farm Profit with Farmland Protection and High Value Crops



Jeanine M. Davis
North Carolina State University



Photo from J. Davis program

North Carolina Leads the Nation in Loss of Farmland



North Carolina lost more than 600,000 acres of farmland from 2002 to 2007, according to the latest U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Graphic from J. Davis program

WNC is a Region in Transition



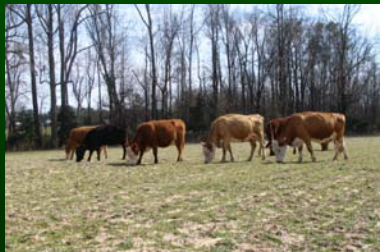
Small mountain farms...

giving way to housing, retail businesses, and offices.



Photos by William Hamilton

Traditional crops often aren't profitable anymore.



Photos from NCSU Communications and J. Davis program



Everyone wants to save farms

Comments from the Etowah, Horse Shoe Small Area Planning Committee Report Meeting last month:

"One thing that we kept hearing was 'maintain the rural character of my area'"

"the county needs to preserve the rural areas of the county where food is grown. The county should look to enhance the green space in the county because it is one of the most valuable resources in the county"

Photo by Jeanine Davis

But a farmer can't stay in farming if it's not profitable!



Photo from NCSU Communications



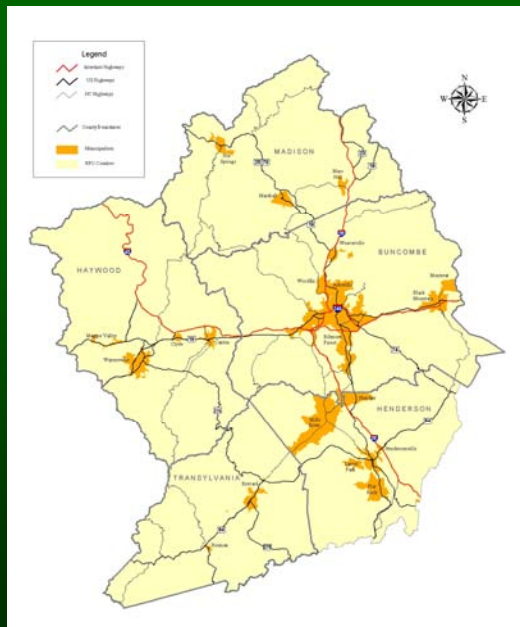
North Carolina State University
Land of Sky Regional Council
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
American Farmland Trust
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Warren Wilson College

Photo from J. Davis program

Our hypothesis: Combining production of high value agricultural crops with farmland protection will make for prosperous farms, protected open spaces, and balanced communities.



Photos from J. Davis program



Five County Study Area

Graphic from Land of Sky Regional Council



Multi-faceted approach

- Develop decision making tools to help farmers assess their situations and choose the best combination of new crops and farm protection methods for their farms.
- Provide educational opportunities for farmers, public officials, and communities.
- Put more staff into farm protection and new crop development.
- Provide resources to keep/make farms viable businesses.

Photo by Jackie Greenfield

Three teams

- Farm protection
- New crops
- Modeling/decision tools



Photos by J. Davis and NCSU Communications



Thirty-Five Farmer Participants

- Served as our touchstone with reality!
- Participated in many surveys, interviews, and focus groups.
- Tested our decision tools.
- In return, they got free admission to many educational programs, help with grant opportunities, and any help we could offer.
- Learned a lot about themselves, their farms, and how to plan for the future.

Photo from J. Davis program



Identified six new crop and agricultural enterprise areas as appropriate for this region

- Specialty fruits and vegetables
- Organic production of fruits and vegetables
- Specialty nursery crops
- Value-added enterprises
- Agritourism
- Specialty meats and cheeses

Photo by Jeanine Davis

Six Protection Methods

- Use value assessments
- Intergenerational transition assistance
- Farmland conservation easement
- Term restrictions
- Conservation development
- Combinations of above



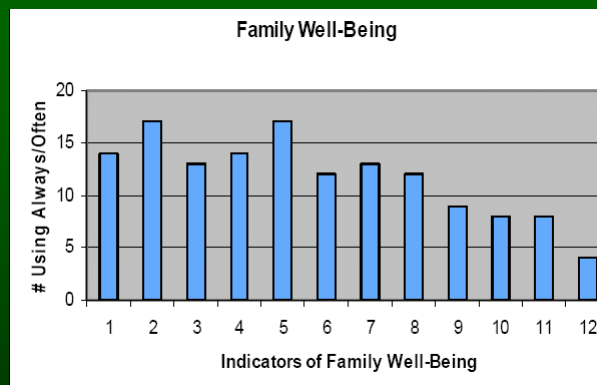
Photo from J. Davis program

Put Farm Protection Staff in Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy



William Hamilton

What did we accomplish?



The modeling/decision tool team developed indicators of farm sustainability.

Jeanine Davis

The Process: Five Steps to a Sustainability Profile for Your Farm



Photo provided by ASAP

The Farm Protection Team Developed Decision Tools and Resources

Local Land Trust Organizations

American Farmland Trust
American Farmland Trust ensures to help conservation implement effective solutions to keep farming its existing value, limit the impact of new development, and strategically protect the best farmland.
Coverage Area: National, with Southeast Regional office in Graham, NC.
Contact: Garry Cohen
336-221-0707
www.farmland.org

Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
provides services to help families meet their conservation and financial goals while preserving their forest, farm, and natural land for future generations.
Coverage Area: Henderson, Transylvania, and parts of Brunswick, Jackson, and Rutherford counties.
Contact: Tom Fendler
828-697-3777
www.carolinamountain.org

Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Conservancy works to conserve the unique plant & animal habitat, clean water, farmland, & scenic beauty of the mountains of western North Carolina and east Tennessee for the benefit of present & future generations.
Coverage Area: Avery, Brunswick, Haywood, Jackson, Madison, Mitchell, & Vance counties in WNC; Carter, Johnson, & Union counties in east TN.
Contact: William Hamilton
828-253-0095
www.appalachian.org

The Facts about Protecting Your Farmland

- Farmland protection is not zoning. It is your decision about your land.
- There is a wide range of tools that can help you achieve your goals.
- Farmland protection can result in State and Federal tax benefits or direct payments, depending on the program.
- The land can still be used for agriculture.
- You do not have to move off the property.
- Farmland protection tools can be tailored to suit your needs, often allowing additional houses or farm structures.
- The property can be passed on to heirs or sold to another party, with the knowledge that the land will remain a farm.

Keeping the Farm in the Family

Farmland Protection Tools for North Carolina Landowners

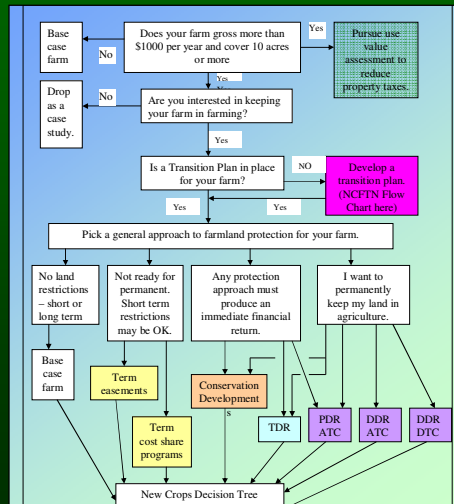
A publication of the
FARM PROSPERITY PROJECT

The Farm Prosperity Project partners include:
North Carolina Farm Community
Land of My Ancestors Council
Appalachian Landmarks-Agriculture Project
Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy
American Farmland Trust
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Western Piedmont College

With funding by the project provided by:
A Farm Trust

The more information on the project, visit www.farmprosperity.org

A Decision Tree was created



Thousands of acres of farmland have been preserved over the course of this study



Photo from SAHC website

The New Crops Team has also developed decision tools

New Crops and Agricultural Enterprises Decision Assistance Tool

Agribusiness	Specialty Nurseries	Value-Added Products	Specialty Values & Charities	Organics	Specialty Fruits & Vegetables
Are you okay with having people on your farm?	Do you have greenhouses?	Do you know what your customers want?	Do you have the facilities needed?	Are you certified organic or willing to become so?	Do you have a market for your products?
Are you in a good location for a public activity?	Do you have access to good water?	Do you have good organization and business skills?	Will there be customers for your products?	Are you willing to do paperwork and abide by the rules?	Is it legal to grow the crop of interest?
Do you enjoy working with the public?	Do you have capital to start a nursery?	Do you have capital to start a new enterprise?	Do you know the state regulations?	Could you make a profit without a price premium?	Do you have a source of seeds or planting stock?
Are you creative?	Do you have a good knowledge of the plants?	Are you creative and entrepreneurial?	Are you willing to do paperwork and abide by the rules?	Do you have the labor resources for seed cleanup?	Do you have good fields to grow in?
Do you have good social skills?	Are you willing to attend trade shows?	Are you willing to do paperwork and abide by the rules?	Do you have adequate pasture?	Do you have a market for your products?	Do you have the ability to irrigate?
Can your roads accommodate additional traffic?	Can you handle the stress?	Do you like to cook or follow a detailed process?	Are you willing to take on a 365 day a year operation?	Do you have good fields to grow in?	Do you have post harvest facilities?
Do you have parking, restrooms, and shelter?	Do you have entrepreneurial skills?	Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Do you have an entrepreneurial spirit?	Do you have the ability to irrigate?	Do you have labor to harvest your crop?
Are you willing to take on the liability risks?	Do you have organizational skills?	Do you have the means to store and distribute?	Do you know where to get assistance?	Do you have post harvest facilities?	Do you have greenhouses or high tunnels?
Are you able to promote your farm?	Do you have the basic technical skills?	Do you have a marketing plan?	Will you have adequate labor?	Do you have greenhouses or high tunnels?	Do you have an entrepreneurial spirit?
Does local zoning permit the activity you want to do?	Are you willing to run a year round business?	Do you have family members or employees to help?	Can you find affordable sources of supplies?	Do you have access to organic supplies?	Do you know where to get assistance?
Agribusiness	Specialty Nurseries	Value-Added Products	Specialty Values & Charities	Organics	Specialty Fruits & Vegetables

Instructions: Working in columns, put a check mark next to each question that you can answer "yes" to. If you answer "yes" to every item in the column, put a star in the box at the bottom. Those categories that receive a star are enterprises that you are probably well suited for right now. If you have most of the boxes checked, you might want to consider that enterprise. If you have few boxes checked, that enterprise is probably not a good fit for you.

We asked participating farmers what they needed, and then found or created materials for them

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Fall Opportunities for Direct Marketing Produce

FARM PROSPERITY PROJECT

APRIL 2009

Introduction

Across the nation, the growing season is limited by the weather. It is a challenge of the farmer to produce a variety of crops for the winter months. Many growers produce winter produce, but it is a challenge to get it to market. The winter months are a time of low demand for many crops, and the weather is often harsh. The winter months are a time of low demand for many crops, and the weather is often harsh.

In growing produce, the farmer must consider the weather. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer.

You should consider the weather when you plan to grow in the fall. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer. The weather is a major factor in the success of the farmer.

Here are some traditional and some novel products that you can grow and sell next fall!

Pumpkins - Pumpkins are a traditional crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall.

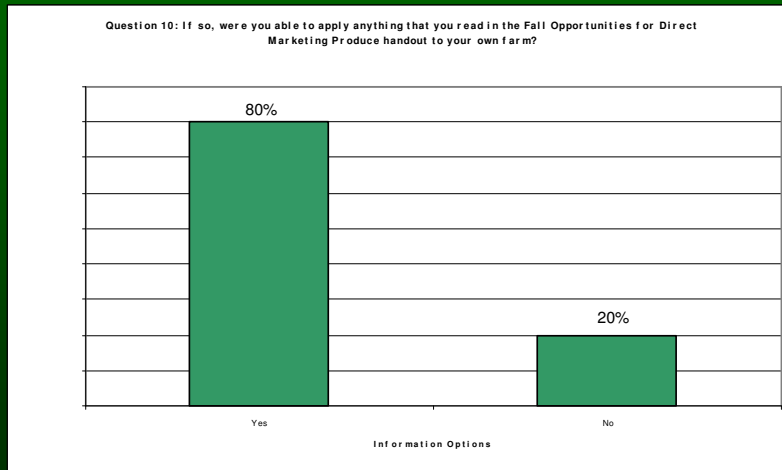
Winter Squash - Winter squash is a traditional crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall.

Winter Squash - Winter squash is a traditional crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall.

Winter Squash - Winter squash is a traditional crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall. They are a popular crop that you can grow and sell next fall.



And then asked them if found the materials useful!



Conducted three years of field studies
on organic and heirloom tomatoes



Photos from J. Davis program

We found that:

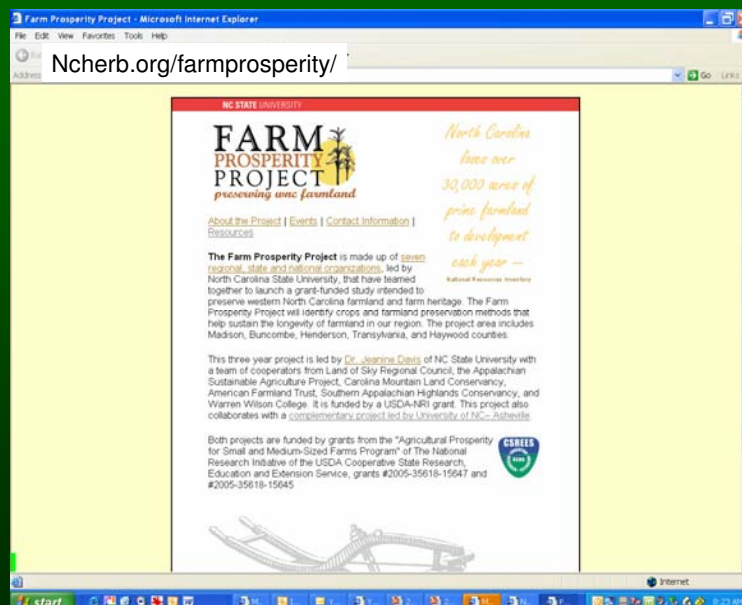


Organic heirloom tomato production is not cheap or easy to do, but can be highly profitable.



Photos by Jeanine Davis

Created a website which will be kept updated as more information is developed.





Expected Impacts

- People will understand that farms are businesses and if they are not profitable, they can't continue to exist.
- New tools will be available to help farmers make informed decisions about the futures of their farms.
- Farmers, public officials, and communities will be better informed about the issues related to farms.
- New alliances will exist between farm advisors, land trusts, and scholars.

Photo by Jeanine Davis

This is the future of agriculture in western North Carolina



Photo of Justin Dillingham in Barndarville in Buncombe Co. by Amy Hamilton