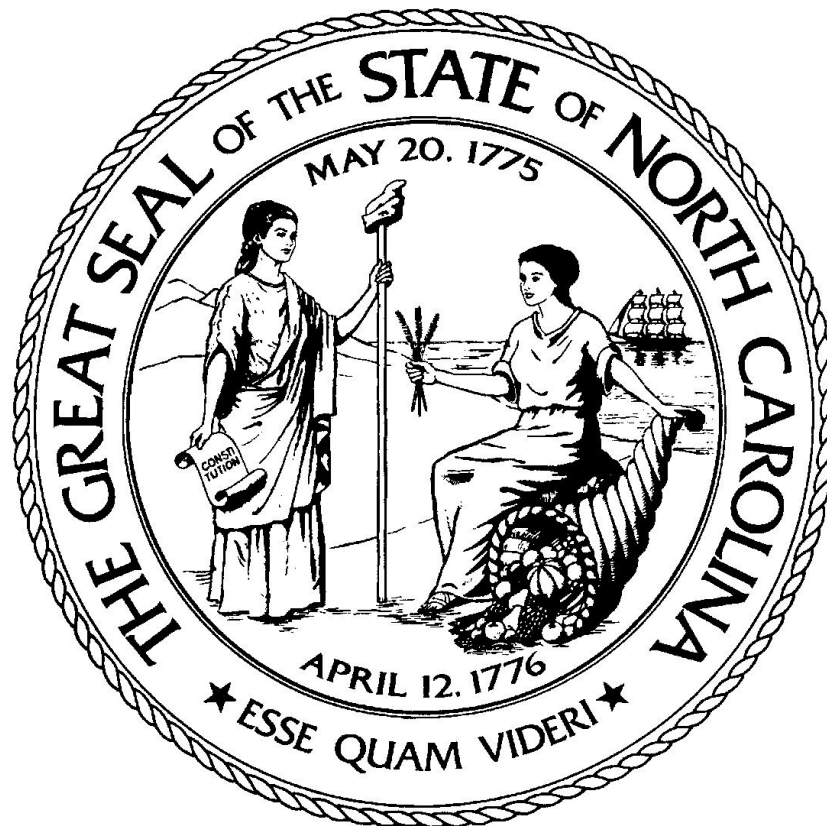


NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2023



Steven W. Troxler, Commissioner

April 22, 2021

This page left blank intentionally

Contents

- 1. NC Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services Strategic Plan Executive Summary.....2
- 2. NC Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services Mission, Vision, and Values3
- 3. NC Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures.....4
- 4. NC Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services Highlights and Opportunities.....14

1. NCDA&CS Strategic Plan Executive Summary

The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) strives to provide services that promote and improve agriculture, agribusiness and forests; protect consumers and businesses and conserve farmland and natural resources for the prosperity of all North Carolinians. To accomplish this mission, the Department plans to provide services to promote and enhance the production, marketing, and distribution of safe and healthy agricultural products and to ensure the sound stewardship of farmland and natural resources for all North Carolina citizens; to protect, manage and promote forest resources for the citizens of NC; to protect the public health, safety and welfare, and preserve environmental quality by monitoring and managing risk for those activities associated with production and marketing of agricultural products in NC and to prevent fraud, deception and unfair business practices for those activities within the Department’s regulatory scope; and to promote NC agriculture and agribusiness by creating positive entertainment experiences and fostering economic opportunities through the management and operation of available state facilities.

2. NCDA&CS Mission, Vision, and Values

NCDA&CS Mission Statement

The mission of the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is to provide services that promote and improve agriculture, agribusiness, and forests; protect consumers and businesses; and conserve farmland and natural resources for the prosperity of all North Carolinians.

NCDA&CS Agency Vision Statement

The vision of the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is to be a globally recognized leader in agricultural promotion; sound stewardship of forests, farmland and natural resources; plant and animal health; food safety and consumer protection that is committed to quality leadership, fiscal responsibility, and empowering our dedicated employees to excel in agency operations.

NCDA&CS Values

The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service's organizational values are:

COMMUNICATION: We strive for all communication to be presented in an honest, clear, and concise manner to ensure understanding while actively seeking to gain full understanding of issues.

ETHICS & INTEGRITY: We maintain a culture of integrity by being fair, honest, knowledgeable and trustworthy in every situation; following through on commitments and obligations; and interacting in ways that build confidence in the intentions of individuals and the organization.

TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION: We believe in cooperation and working together for the common good of the people we serve and the agency's mission by treating each other with dignity and respect.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: We focus on prompt responses, consistent communication, quality information and providing superior interactions with internal and external clients.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION: We respect everyone as individuals and the unique contributions each contributes to the organization.

SAFETY & HEALTH: We share a personal and professional commitment to protecting the safety and health of employees and the citizens that we serve.

3. NCDA&CS Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

Goal 1 – Agricultural Services

To provide services to promote and enhance the production, marketing, and distribution of safe and healthy agricultural products and to ensure the sound stewardship of farmland and natural resources for all North Carolina citizens.

Objective 1.1 – *To increase the number of acres of land protected with long-term conservation easement/agreements by 10%*

Performance Measure or Milestone 1.1

The number of acres of land in NC protected with long-term conservation easements/agreements managed by NCDA&CS.

Strategies/Initiatives – Annual measurement of land in NC protected by NCDA&CS provided by specific NCDA&CS Divisions/Programs. With increased appropriations and financial resources, there is an opportunity to conserve additional acreage across N.C.

Methodology: Non-cumulative sum of acres protected with long-term conservation easements/agreements managed by NCDA&CS.

Trend: Anticipate increase in the number of acres protected through long-term conservation easements/agreements managed by NCDA&CS.

Data Limitations: Ability to protect additional acres may be limited based on availability of funds from state and federal sources.

Program: Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

ADDED

Objective 1.2 – *To increase and enhance the production and marketing of North Carolina agricultural products by 10%.*

Performance Measure or Milestone 1.2.1

The number of farms in NC on an annual basis.

Strategies/Initiatives – Conduct programs and marketing activities to best position our state’s farms to be successful.

Methodology: Number of farms annually as reported by USDA-NASS.

Trend: While this number continues to decline, the Department supports all farmers, and the intent is to act to maintain the current number of farms or minimize their reduction.

Data Limitations: Many factors are outside the control of the Department to minimize the number of farms lost across the state.

Divisions: All

Performance Measure or Milestone 1.2.2

Annual total Farm Cash Receipts for North Carolina

Strategies/Initiatives – Conduct programs and marketing activities to best position our state’s farms to be profitable.

Methodology: Farm Cash Receipts annually as reported by USDA-NASS.

Trend: While this number continues to decline, the Department supports all farmers, and the intent is to act to ensure farm profitability.

Data Limitations: Many factors are outside the control of the Department to minimize the number of farms lost across the state.

Divisions: All

Performance Measure or Milestone 1.2.3

Annual number of memberships in the “Got to Be NC”, Certified Roadside Stands, Certified Meat & Poultry Handlers, and NC Agritourism Networking Association programs.

Strategies/Initiatives – Conduct programs and marketing activities to grow these programs by 10%.

Methodology: The respective Divisions that manage these programs maintain databases to be able to track program numbers.

Trend: These programs have seen increased participation and that is expected to continue.

Data Limitations: As these are voluntary programs, not all farms may choose to participate.

Divisions: Marketing, Meat & Poultry Inspection

	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 1.2.4</p> <p>Increase number of attendees at Department-sponsored workshops, outreach programs and educational opportunities focusing on production, marketing, research and educational activities by 10%.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Conduct workshops, programs and educational activities that are of interest and relevant to farmers.</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> The respective Divisions that manage these opportunities maintain records of number of attendees registered to participate.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> These programs have seen increased participation and that is expected to continue.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> As these are voluntary opportunities, not all farms may choose to participate.</p> <p><i>Divisions:</i> Marketing; Research Stations; Food & Drug Protection; Meat & Poultry Inspection; Structural Pests and Pesticides; and Veterinary.</p>
--	---

Goal 2 – NC Forest Service
To protect, manage and promote forest resources for the citizens of NC.

<p>Objective 2.1 – <i>Increase the protection of the state’s forests from the threat of wildfire.</i></p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.1.1</p> <p>Protect more forest land from wildfires by reducing acres impacted per wildfire by 1-3%</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Protect more forest land from wildfire. Data provided by the NC Forest Service’s Fire Report System.</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> Rolling 5-year average.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> Previous 5-year rolling average baseline is 6.16 acres per fire.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> With current resources.</p> <p><i>Division:</i> NC Forest Service</p> <p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.1.2</p> <p>Protect more forest land from wildfires by reducing wildfires caused by debris burning by 4-6%</p>
--	---

	<p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Protect more forest land from wildfire. Data provided by the NC Forest Service’s Fire Report System.</p> <p><i>Methodology</i>: Rolling 5-year average.</p> <p><i>Trend</i>: Previous 5-year rolling average baseline is 1,937 fires. Average debris caused fires are trending downward.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations</i>: A heavy fire season can reduce our education and outreach efforts. Funding can influence information and education activities related to wildfire prevention.</p> <p><i>Division</i>: NC Forest Service</p>
<p>Objective 2.2 – <i>Increase the management of forest resources.</i></p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.2.1</p> <p>Increase the number of woodland management plans provided to landowners by 1-3%.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Increase acres of forest land under management. Data provided by NCFS Forest Management Reporting System.</p> <p><i>Methodology</i>: Rolling 3-year average using the three most recent complete state fiscal years of data.</p> <p><i>Trend</i>: Annual numbers have varied, with a 3-year average of 3,871 woodland plans provided to landowners between SFY 2018 to 2020.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations</i>: There are woodland management plans provided to woodland owners (ex. by Consulting Foresters) that are not always reported to the NC Forest Service</p> <p><i>Division</i>: NC Forest Service</p> <p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.2.2</p> <p>Achieve a percentage of 60% or higher for initial Forest Practices Guidelines Related to Water Quality inspections that are conducted on active forest harvest operations.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Prevent adverse impacts to water quality. Data provided by NCFS Forest Management Reporting System</p> <p><i>Methodology</i>: Rolling 3-year average using the three most recent complete state fiscal years of data.</p> <p><i>Trend</i>: Percentages amongst each of the three state fiscal years of data have remained steady with a 3-year</p>

	<p>average of 75% of harvest inspections occurring on active forest harvest operations.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> Not all forest harvest operations across the State have FPG inspections conducted on them. Inspection numbers can also be impacted by availability of NC Forest Service staff.</p> <p><i>Division:</i> NC Forest Service</p> <p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.2.3</p> <p>Increase Tree City USA, Tree Campus USA and Tree Line USA recognitions by 2-4.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Increase management of urban forest resources.</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> Annual recognitions.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> Designations have declined by 10 (212 to 202) due to NCFS Urban & Community Forestry staff vacancies and impact of COVID-19 on communities to meet annual designation standards.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> None</p> <p><i>Division:</i> NC Forest Service – Urban & Community Forest Branch</p>
<p>Objective 2.3 – <i>Increase the promotion of forest resources.</i></p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.3.1</p> <p>Maintain or increase the acres of forest establishment.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Promote new forest establishment through reforestation, afforestation and natural regeneration. Data provided by the NCFS Forest Management Reporting System.</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> Rolling 3-year average using the three most recent complete state fiscal years of data.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> Annual numbers have varied, with a 3-year average forest establishment of 62,943 acres between SFY 2018 to 2020.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> The NC Forest Service does not receive forest establishment information for every project. One example includes private woodland owners whose tree planting projects did not have a NC Forest regeneration plan or cost share financial assistance associated with it.</p> <p><i>Division:</i> NC Forest Service</p>

	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.3.2</p> <p>Educate more of the population in forest resource management.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Increase attendance at State Forests by 3-6%. Data provided by the Educational State Forest Reporting System and DuPont State Recreational Forest Reporting.</p> <p><i>Methodology</i>: Rolling 5-year average.</p> <p><i>Trend</i>: Attendance has been increasing.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations</i>: The economy can influence the public traveling to State Forests</p> <p><i>Division</i>: NC Forest Service</p> <p>Performance Measure or Milestone 2.3.3</p> <p>Increase number of educational events by 3-6%</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Increase promotion of forest with educational events. Data provided by NCFIS Information and</p> <p><i>Methodology</i>: Annual count of events.</p> <p><i>Trend</i>: Increasing.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations</i>: A heavy fire season can limit the ability to provide educational events.</p> <p><i>Division</i>: NC Forest Service</p>
--	--

Goal 3 – Regulatory Programs

To protect the public health, safety and welfare, and preserve environmental quality by monitoring and managing risk for those activities associated with production and marketing of agricultural products in NC and to prevent fraud, deception, and unfair business practices for those activities within the Department’s regulatory scope.

<p>Objective 3.1 – <i>Improve compliant investigation and response time.</i></p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 3.1.1</p> <p>Maintain or increase the percent of complaints and investigations completed within standard time. This measure is important to demonstrate our continuing commitment to protecting public health, safety and welfare, and reducing fraud with timely complaint investigation response and resolution.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Protect public health, safety, and welfare by promptly responding to consumer inquiries, concerns, and complaints. Data provided by each</p>
---	---

	<p>regulatory division’s complaint/investigation case files and tracking logs.</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> Each regulatory division maintains a system for determining if their response to complaints and investigations are within the division’s and management’s expectation, also known as “standard time.” The combined division response is the average of the individual division responses.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> As consumers become more aware of issues potentially impacting their health and safety with respect to agricultural production, food safety, animal welfare and other allied industries regulated by the Department, calls for assistance and complaint response increase. The Department strives to increase the percentage of cases completed and resolved within standard time. The standard time will be determined separately for each regulatory program based upon its statutory authorities, commitments, and resources.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> Many factors beyond the control of the Department’s regulatory divisions affect response time: laboratory capacity and sample analysis times; access to necessary departmental and Attorney General’s Office legal counsel; difficulties in determining and contacting responsible parties; and the need to coordinate response and investigation among multiple programs/divisions and local, state, and federal agencies.</p> <p><i>Divisions:</i> Emergency Programs; Food and Drug Protection Division; Meat and Poultry Inspection; Standards; Structural Pests and Pesticides; and Veterinary.</p>
--	--

Goal 4 – Enterprise Centers
To promote NC agriculture and agribusiness by creating positive entertainment experiences and fostering economic opportunities through the management and operation of available state facilities.

<p>Objective 4.1 – <i>Create positive entertainment experiences.</i></p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 4.1.1</p> <p>Maintain or increase attendance at the NC State Fair.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Continuously improving the marketing and programming to maintain or increase gate admissions to the annual NC State Fair (11 days).</p>
---	--

	<p><i>Methodology:</i> Count of scanned entrance tickets at gate. Pre-sale tickets are divided by 11 and added to the daily total.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> Attendance at the NC State Fair remains strong annually.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> Attendance is heavily dependent on the weather and economy. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 NC State Fair was cancelled.</p> <p><i>Divisions:</i> State Fair</p> <p>Performance Measure or Milestone 4.1.2</p> <p>Maintain or increase attendance at the NC Mountain State Fair.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Continuously improving the marketing and programming to maintain or increase gate admissions to the annual NC Mountain State Fair (10 days).</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> Count of scanned entrance tickets at gate. Pre-sale tickets are divided by 10 and added to the daily total.</p> <p><i>Trend:</i> Attendance at the NC Mountain State Fair remains strong annually.</p> <p><i>Data Limitations:</i> Attendance is heavily dependent on the weather and economy. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 NC Mountain State Fair was cancelled.</p> <p><i>Divisions:</i> Marketing</p>
--	---

Goal 5 – Administrative Services
To provide services and support that help the Department achieve its mission and vision.

<p>Objective 5.1 – <i>To increase the percentage of capital improvement projects completed on time, on budget, and meeting the needs of the end user.</i></p>	<p>Performance Measure or Milestone 5.1.1</p> <p>The percentage of capital improvement projects completed on time.</p> <p><i>Strategies/Initiatives</i> – Annual measurement of percent of capital projects completed on time. Data collected through reporting of the Property and Construction Project Engineer utilizing input from the design professional, the general contractor, and the division.</p> <p><i>Methodology:</i> Data will be collected on a cumulative YTD basis.</p>
--	---

Trend: Anticipate increase in percent of capital projects completed on time.

Data Limitations: Many factors beyond the control of the division include, but are not limited to, weather, hidden conditions, approval issues, unexpected financial constraints, and material availability.

Divisions: Property and Construction

Performance Measure or Milestone 5.1.2

The percentage of capital improvement projects completed on budget.

Strategies/Initiatives – Annual measurement of percent of capital projects completed on budget. Data collected through reporting of the Property and Construction Project Engineer utilizing input from the design professional, the general contractor, and the division.

Methodology: Data will be collected on a cumulative YTD basis.

Trend: Anticipate increase in percent of capital projects completed on budget.

Data Limitations: Many factors beyond the control of the division include, but are not limited to, weather, hidden conditions, approval issues, unexpected financial constraints, and material availability.

Divisions: Property and Construction

Performance Measure or Milestone 5.1.3

The percentage of capital improvement projects completed meeting user needs.

Strategies/Initiatives – Annual measurement of percent of capital projects completed meeting user needs. Data collected through reporting of the Property and Construction Project Engineer utilizing input from the design professional, the general contractor, and the division.

Methodology: Data will be collected via a customer survey and will be based on a cumulative YTD basis.

Trend: Anticipate increase in percent of capital projects completed meeting user needs.

Data Limitations: Many factors beyond the control of the division include, but are not limited to, budget restraints, programmatic changes, and legal restraints.

Divisions: Property and Construction

Performance Measure or Milestone 5.1.4

Increase funding and flexibility for salary reserves to address compression, equity and recruitment for qualified employees.

Strategies/Initiatives – Appropriations and flexibility is needed to address recruitment and retention needs across the department, regardless of job classification, to be able to retain a skilled workforce in a competitive environment.

Methodology: Data will be collected by Human Resources on an annual basis and through exit surveys.

Trend: Anticipate increased need for salary reserve funding and necessary flexibility to be able to recruit and retain a talented, skilled workforce for the department.

Data Limitations: Many factors beyond the control of the division include, but are not limited to, budget restraints, programmatic changes, and legal restraints.

Divisions: Human Resources

4. Highlights and Opportunities

Agency Highlights and Best Practices

Following historical devastation from Hurricanes Florence and Matthew in 2018, the N.C. General Assembly allocated \$240 million to the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to implement an Agricultural Disaster Program. Initial estimates for crop damage and livestock losses were over \$1 billion based on assessments following Hurricane Florence.

The General Assembly established the Hurricane Florence Agricultural Disaster Program of 2018 on October 15, 2018. The Department quickly began working with local, state and federal partners along with other stakeholders to design and develop a relief program to provide direct payments to farmers in impacted areas. An online application was developed and launched by November 7, 2018. Around 7,000 applications were received when the application period closed on December 20. The initial round of checks was issued by January 30, 2019.

The Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act of 2019 provided \$3 billion to the Secretary of Agriculture/United States Department of Agriculture for the WHIP+ Program and block grants to states for losses related to crops, trees, bushes, and vines related to the consequences of Hurricanes Michael, Florence, and Dorian occurring in calendar years 2018 and 2019. NCD&CS signed an agreement with USDA-FAS in 2021 for \$79.6 million to help North Carolina producers cover qualifying losses associated with Hurricanes Florence, Michael, and Dorian not covered by other USDA disaster programs for livestock, poultry, plasticulture (including greenhouse, vegetable and nursery losses), and woodland recovery assistance in the form of management plans and technical assistance to woodland owners. NCD&CS, working with our partners across the state, will implement this program Summer 2021.

The successful and timely implementation of this Agricultural Disaster Program in 2018 and subsequent USDA WHIP+ Block Grant Program (combined state and federal disaster relief of \$319.6 million to NC producers) showcases the Department's ability to quickly address needs in collaboration with numerous stakeholders when funding is provided for such activities. This is but one example of the numerous ways the Department is well positioned to quickly act in times of need.

Potential Initiatives

(Insert a description of any additional initiatives that your agency envisions and would like to take on but does not currently have the resources to undertake).

Funded through the Connect NC Bond, the Agriculture Science Center will need recurring operational funding to best serve the citizens of North Carolina and meet the growing needs for the services provided by the facility. Additionally, the Veterinary lab needs lab supplies and purchased services to operate effectively and efficiently.

The Department will continue to pursue additional funding for farmland preservation.

In order to fulfill regulatory and service functions of the Department, funds are needed to support additional positions to meet increasing program demands in the following areas: Emergency Programs Division personnel; Agronomic Services Division Nematode Lab personnel; Plant Industry Division Phytosanitary personnel; Division of Soil and Water Conservation Engineering personnel; and Mountain Island Educational State Forest personnel (slated to open Summer 2021).

The Department needs additional financial resources for IT security, cloud capacity and licensures. These technologies will best allow the Department to better serve the citizens of our state.

Collaborative Opportunities

(Insert any identified opportunities for statewide or inter-agency collaborative initiatives that would yield significant efficiencies or improve effectiveness in State programs).

NCDA&CS maintains excellent working relationships with many local, state, and federal partners as well as other stakeholders. While there are no specific initiatives identified for collaboration at this time, the Department will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to identify any areas for improved efficiencies and effectiveness in State programs as they arise.