

Plan Chatham Agricultural Focus Group Survey

Fall 2016

The purpose of this survey is gather feedback from farmers and representatives from the agricultural industry to inform the development of the Chatham County Comprehensive Plan.

Note: In general the term "agriculture" as used in this survey is intended to mean farming, horticulture and forestry.

For more information on the Comprehensive Plan visit www.chathamnc.org/comprehensiveplan.

1. What area of the County do you farm or conduct agricultural related business in?

- Northeast Chatham (north of US 64 and east of NC 87)
- Northwest Chatham (north of US 64 and west of NC 87, i.e. Silk Hope, Snow Camp, etc.)
- Southwest Chatham (south of US 64 and west of NC 87, i.e. Bear Creek, Bonlee, etc.)
- Southeast Chatham (south of US 64 and east of NC 87)

2. What type of agricultural operation do you participate in or support? (check all that apply)

- Livestock (cattle, swine, sheep, goats, etc.) for wholesale market
- Livestock (cattle, swine, sheep, goats, etc.) for local market (direct sale, CSA, farmers markets or retail on site)
- Equine (boarding, training, breeding, etc.)
- Poultry (growing for a company)
- Poultry (pastured or free range)
- Field crops (corn, soybeans, wheat, barley, etc.) for wholesale market
- Vegetable and/or fruit crops (conventional)
- Vegetable and/or fruit crops (organic)
- Agricultural product processing (slaughter facility, meat processing, winery, etc.)
- Agricultural sales (feed, equipment, supplies)
- Ornamental horticulture operations (nursery, greenhouses, Christmas trees, etc.)
- Hobby farmer (farming is not a major source of income--do not submit a schedule F, i.e. own a few horses)
- Forestry

Other (please specify)

3. What is the size of your farm or farms that you work with?

- Greater than 200 acres
- Between 100 and 200 acres
- Between 20 and 100 acres
- Between 10 and 20 acres
- Between 5 and 10 acres
- Less than 5 acres
- All sizes of farms

* 4. What are the primary threats to agricultural operations you are involved with in Chatham County?
(Choose up to 4)

- Lack of available farmland to lease
- Lack of capital to support buying or leasing land or purchase of inputs/equipment
- Commodity prices
- Land prices
- Residential growth and associated impacts
- Water availability
- Land use regulation on non-farm activities
- Lack of processing facilities (options or capacity)
- Property tax rates
- Income or sales tax rates
- Limited access to markets
- Increasing traffic
- Wildlife threats (i.e. coyotes, deer, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

* 5. What factors contribute to the long-term viability of farms and other agricultural operations? (Choose up to 4)

- Productivity of soils (i.e. prime farmland or forest productivity)
- Size of farm
- Proximity to other agricultural operations
- Proximity to lands with agricultural protections (i.e. voluntary agricultural districts or agricultural conservation easements)
- Present Use Value (PUV) designation (due to tax benefits)
- Limited surrounding residential development
- Low land prices
- Distance to major markets (Greensboro, Sanford, Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Durham, etc.)
- Distance to farmers markets
- Agricultural practices
- Off-farm employment options nearby
- Other (please specify)

* 6. The Farmland Protection Plan (2009) recommends mapping strategic farmland in order to focus agricultural protection efforts. What should the focus of this map be? (Pick up to 2)

- Identify lands of economic importance (size, productivity, long-term viability, etc.)
- Identify best soils for agriculture and forestry
- Identify lands with existing agricultural operations
- Identify farming operations near concentrations of other farming operations
- Identify lands adjacent to existing operations
- Identify areas where landowners have chosen voluntary protection of agricultural lands (i.e via PUV program, VAD designation, or conservation easement)
- Identify lands that are important to preserving scenic views
- Identify lands that are important for other reasons (i.e. habitat protection, water quality or carbon storage)

Other (please specify)

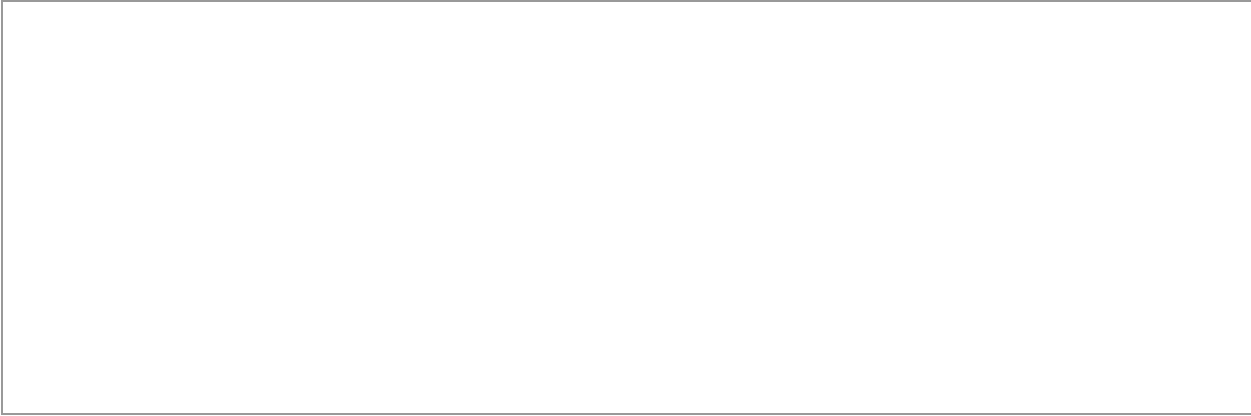
7. Agricultural related businesses are protected by state and county laws. What types of non-farm businesses are compatible with or help support farming directly or indirectly?

* 8. What should the county be doing to support agriculture? (choose up to 5)

- Nothing more.
- More education and outreach to farmers and prospective farmers (i.e. providing info/access to low interest loans, mentoring for young farmers, etc.)
- Support for agricultural related instruction in high school and at community colleges
- Designate areas of important agricultural lands and/or concentrations of working farms on a future land use map and direct development away from these areas
- Create an agricultural zoning district to limit residential density in key agricultural areas or improve site design to reduce conflicts
- Modify current zoning to provide more flexibility for rural businesses
- Consider impact on agriculture and forestry of new ordinances and regulations by requiring prior review by Agricultural Advisory Board
- Encourage agri-tourism (i.e. pick-your-own, corn mazes, hay rides, event & food venues, craft shops, bed and breakfasts, etc.)
- Address water access and availability issues
- Adopt the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program to expand options for land owners
- Increase funding for farmland protection (via voluntary purchase of development rights program or voluntary agricultural easement program)

Other (please specify)

9. What is it about your farming future (or those that you work for/with) that keeps you up at night?

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