



NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets

July 31, 2013

Greetings all,

We have a great team in place with the NC Growing Together project, and we are moving forward and making progress on several fronts. In everything we do, we are working to develop models that can work for other retailers across the food system to scale up local foods and keep profitability for producers.

Our strategy, reflected in this month's updates on NCGT project activities, is to:

Identify the most promising solutions by which local and associated value-added activities can enter local retail and food service markets;

Pilot these solutions in North Carolina; and

Evaluate and Report the results for the benefit of others.

➤ Updates on Project Activities

- **NC Local Food Infrastructure Map:** As part of the NC Growing Together project, CEFS is working with North Carolina Cooperative Extension field staff to create a mapped inventory of businesses that serve as intermediary steps in local food supply chains. This includes value-added processors, fresh produce wholesaler/distributors, multi-farm CSA's, food hubs, community kitchens, and cold storage locations. Maps are being created for all five Extension Districts and will be displayed (in mapped and list-form) on the forthcoming NC Local Foods Web Portal, currently under development by NCCE. For a preview, visit the under-construction Map for the South Central District: <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/south-central-map.html>.
- **Demand-side/Consumer Research:** The Consumer Research Team has worked with Lowes Foods store representatives to select six local-demand test stores and six matched control stores. In the summer and early fall, the team will evaluate and provide marketing recommendations for "Meet the Farmer" events held in the test stores. Going forward, we will test and evaluate how different "interventions" (local coupons, video displays, etc.) impact both consumer demand for local foods, as well as overall consumer spending and consumer loyalty to the stores. The "best of the best" ideas can then be deployed across other stores, and potentially other retail environments as well.
- **Produce "Farm Tour" for Foster-Caviness Buyer:** Building on the contacts made at last month's "round the table" meeting with produce growers in Moore County, the Produce Team arranged for NCGT partner Foster-Caviness' local buyer Patricia Tripp to tour the farms of four producers interested in selling to the food distributor. Ariel Fugate of NCGT partner Lowes

Foods also made a connection at the Moore County meeting, and is now sourcing honey from one of the producers who attended. Other product purchases are in the works!

- **Feast Down East and Lowes Foods:** NCGT staff facilitated a June meeting between NCGT partner Feast Down East, Pender County Cooperative Extension, and Lowes Foods. Feast Down East's Burgaw aggregation center quickly became an approved direct-to-store vendor for Lowes Foods and has thus far sold product into six stores in the Wilmington and Hampstead areas, including potatoes, tomatoes and blackberries. As a side note, connections made during the meeting also led to Lowes Foods sponsorship of Pender County's Farm, Fun, Fitness and 4-H Day, which includes a 5k run and other activities to raise money for 4-H scholarships. Some of Lowes Foods' Hampstead store staff will also volunteer at the event.

➤ **Meeting Notes**

Please see attachments for notes from our July 16th Management Team meeting, as well as an update on Research Activities that was presented at the meeting.

➤ **Project Contact Information**

Feel free to contact us with questions or if you'd like more information about NC Growing Together.

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Sincerely,

The NC Growing Together Management Team