



NC GROWING TOGETHER
Connecting Local Foods
to Mainstream Markets



Teaching Agriculture: Integrating REAL Ag & Cooperative Extension Resources

SBC-SBTDC JOINT PD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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EMILY_EDMONDS@NCSU.EDU | LDLAUFFE@NCAT.EDU

WWW.NCGROWINGTOGETHER.ORG

NC GROWING TOGETHER

Connecting Local Foods
 to Mainstream Markets

North Carolina Growing Together is a five-year, USDA-funded project aiming to strengthen and expand local and regional food supply chains and to model this work for other geographies in the U.S.



Farmer capacity

- Food safety, market channels, production techniques, buyer connections



Supply chain expansion

- Wholesale and institutional partner connections, infrastructure assessment and business feasibility



Producer & processor capacity

- Resource development for meat, dairy, seafood, produce, and value-added products



Supportive business environments

- Local government integration; small business development and support for food-based entrepreneurs

Blending REAL Entrepreneurship with Agricultural Expertise

REAL AG ENTREPRENEURSHIP

REAL's Agriculture Entrepreneurship programs are designed so that counselors and educators can utilize the action learning principles of REAL to educate farm & food businesses about entrepreneurship.

The REAL Ag lessons and activities are geared to agricultural enterprises.

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

North Carolina's Cooperative Extension, along with national Extension resources, provide technical knowledge and expertise on production and marketing of agriculture products and foods.

The many resources of Cooperative Extension are an excellent addition to the REAL lessons and activities. We suggest you contact the Cooperative Extension early in your REAL AG program planning process.

Today's Session

Our goal today is to help counselors and educators integrate agricultural expertise from Extension resources into program offerings based on the REAL Entrepreneurship Curriculum for Agriculture.

- ❑ Integrating Extension Resources into REAL Ag Courses
- ❑ Program Planning Considerations
- ❑ Bringing In Local Expertise
- ❑ Finding State & National Resources
- ❑ Unit Selection for single sessions, series, eight-week, and twelve-week courses
 - ❑ Unit Review of Each Major Course Offering under Assessment, Market Selection, Financial Planning, and Operations
 - ❑ Case Study Components for Each Unit
 - ❑ Agendas for Course Offerings
- ❑ Question & Answer Session

Keep in mind...

- Most of the agricultural expertise mentioned here is from Cooperative Extension, but some are drawn from Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, NC Department of Agriculture, and many other sources around the state and nation. **Don't hesitate to use all the resources you can find – especially those local to your region – to expand your course offerings & make them as worthwhile as possible for your students.**
- **This is a suggested outline – but every class is different!** We recommend surveying your class attendees during the registration process to determine what type of business they are (food production, farming, processing, meat vs. produce, wholesale vs. retail, etc.) and then aligning the resources you bring in to suit those needs.

NCGT's Food & Farm Business Resource Guide

- This guide is available in online directory & PDF format at www.ncgrowingtogether.org.
- The guide contains links to several resources included in this presentation for financial planning, legal and tax issues, insurance, labor questions, and other considerations for food and farm businesses.



Planning Guide

- This guide is available in PDF format at www.ncgrowingtogether.org
- This guide was developed with three SBC centers currently offering Agriculture Entrepreneurship programs.

CEFS **NC GROWING TOGETHER**
Connecting Local Foods
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SBCN
Small Business Center Network
Connecting Agriculture to Mainstream Markets

**PLANNING GUIDE FOR
SMALL BUSINESS CENTER
AGRI-PRENEURSHIP
PROGRAMS**

.....

business planning to increase economic
success for North Carolina producers

WWW.NCGROWINGTOGETHER.ORG

USDA United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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Building Courses & Programs

REAL AG UNITS

1. Introduction
2. Feasibility – Self-Assessment
3. Feasibility – Site Analysis
4. Feasibility – Market
5. Feasibility – Financials
6. Business Planning – Marketing
7. Business Planning – Operations
8. Business Planning – Financials
9. Business Proposal

FOCUS AREAS OF EXTENSION RESOURCES

Assessment & Analysis
(REAL Ag Units 1, 2, 3)

Market Analysis
(REAL Ag Unit 4)

Financial Planning
(REAL Ag Units 5, 8)

Marketing & Sales
(REAL Ag Unit 6)

Production, Processing & Operations
(REAL Ag Unit 7)

Operationalizing Your Business Plan
(REAL Ag Unit 9)

Choosing Course Length

Assessment & Analysis (REAL Ag Units 1, 2, 3)

- Two standalone courses
- First of eight-week series
- First two of twelve-week series

Market Analysis (REAL Ag Unit 4)

- Two standalone courses or series
- Second class of eight-week series
- Third & fourth of twelve-week series

Financial Planning (REAL Ag Units 5, 8)

- Two standalone courses
- Third & fourth classes of eight-week series
- Fifth & sixth of twelve-week series

Marketing & Sales (REAL Ag Unit 6)

- Two standalone courses or series
- Fifth class of eight-week series
- Seventh & eighth of twelve-week series

Production, Processing & Operations (REAL Ag Unit 7)

- Three standalone courses
- Sixth & seventh classes of eight-week series
- Ninth, tenth & eleventh of twelve-week series

Operationalizing Your Business Plan (REAL Ag Unit 9)

- One standalone course
- Eighth class of eight-week series
- Final of twelve-week series

The eight-week outline included here follows the REAL Ag Program Plan for the seven-week session, with one additional operations class added for depth.

Introductory Sections

The REAL Ag Introduction Unit outlines the principles of action learning and the format of the course.

Adding in an overview of the Cooperative Extension structure & resources can be helpful here.

This unit can be given as much or as little time as needed, depending on whether you choose a single class or a series.

Agricultural Expertise

Introductory courses are a great time to bring in experts who can give an overview of the many agricultural resources available for food and farm businesses, including local representatives from:

- Cooperative Extension offices
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

It's also a good time to bring in a successful farmer or food business operator to talk about the importance of business planning.

REAL Ag Activities

Farm Ventures
Smarties

Assessment & Analysis

There are two primary units
that can be used for
assessment courses:

Self-Assessment

Farm Assessment & Site
Analysis

Agricultural Expertise

Farm Assessment Resources

NCDA Agribusiness Division
<http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agribiz/index.htm>

SARE
<http://www.sare.org/learning-center/farm-business-management>

Iowa State Ag Business Decision Planning
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/decisionaidswd.html>

Resources for Water & Soil Testing and Land Analysis

Cooperative Extension
www.ces.ncsu.edu

Soil & Water Conservation Districts
www.ncagr.gov/swc

Resources for Food Production Business Assessment

www.ncagr.gov

Organic Farming Assessment Tool
<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/~media/Files/food/organicgrowing/successtool.ashx>

Land Access Resources

CEFS: NC Farmlink – www.ncfarmlink.org

The Conservation Fund – www.conservationfund.org

NC Association of Public Land Trusts - <http://www.nclandtrusts.org/>

Land Loss Prevention Project of NC - <https://www.landloss.org/>

NC Agriculture Development & Farmland Preservation Fund - <http://www.ncadfp.org/>

REAL Ag Activities

Am I Entrepreneurial Material?

Mix and Match – Ag Version

Micro-Enterprise Ideas for Farmers

Farm & Business Feasibility

Self-Assessment

Unit Outline

I. Review traditional entrepreneurship self-analysis tools, including those from REAL's Ag & Entrepreneurship tracks. Select a few that will work for an **initial self-assessment**.

II. After conducting the REAL Ag self-assessment, consider using the SARE & Iowa State Extension models to **facilitate additional exercises to analyze business decision-making** from the perspective of how they scored on the Am I Entrepreneurial Material survey. What did they feel comfortable with? What areas of decision-making were they uncomfortable with? Explain how you will address these areas moving forward.

III. Possible Speakers

- Local Farmer who developed and used a business plan successfully
- Small Business Center Director
- Farm lender or financing agent who can talk about the importance of planning & self-assessment

IV. Possible Activities

- Am I Entrepreneurial Material?
- Mix and Match – Ag Version
- Micro-Enterprise Ideas for Farmers
- Review of Business Plan Outline (Unit 1)

Farm Assessment & Site Analysis

Unit Outline

I. **Utilize the Site & Business Feasibility activity** as homework prior to class. Give some group time at the beginning of the class for groups to finish working on the feasibility activity, focusing on reporting out common feasibility issues such as weather, crops, pests, land type, water resources, knowledge gaps, and others.

II. **Devote a significant portion of the class to invited speakers to discuss various ways to analyze the farm or site where the business will take place.** If predominantly teaching to production farmers, ask Extension to do a lesson on water & soil testing and talk about distance to markets and the need for cold storage. If predominantly food businesses, ask NCDA to do a lesson on facility requirements for different types of commercial food production ventures and their typical costs & restrictions.

III. Possible Activities

Debrief Am I Entrepreneurial Survey

Site and Business Feasibility

Case Studies

For clients who are considering food production as a business venture there are helpful case studies to help with their feasibility plans.

NCGT has developed two resources describing statewide processing facilities.

[The Local Food Infrastructure Map](#) describes supply chain infrastructure around the state (hubs, kitchens, transportation, cold storage, etc.) and the NCGT Hubs and Kitchens Directory (publish date Nov. 2017 on www.ncgrowingtogether.org) contains information on services offered at all copackers, food hubs, and commercial kitchens in the state.

[Case study: The Piedmont Food and Agriculture Processing Center PFAP](#), provides the Piedmont region with a food business incubator offering affordable processing, cooking and storage facilities.

[Farmland assessment](#) - Many farms in North Carolina consider a transition to organic production. This SARE publication focuses on Vollmer Farms in Bunn NC, offering a successful case in the transition process, helping clients assess this option in a farm business strategy. Also, check out the SARE Topic room at <http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Topic-Rooms> for various food and farming start up topics.



Market Analysis

There are two primary units that can be used for market feasibility courses:

Market Selection

Market Diversification

Agricultural Expertise

NC Growing Together Curriculum Units: Direct Marketing, Wholesale Marketing
<https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-educators-advocates-students/>

Cornell University Extension Small Farms Program
<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/>

NC Cooperative Extension
www.ces.ncsu.edu

Center for Environmental Farming Systems
www.cefs.ncsu.edu

NCDA Agritourism Resources
<http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agritourism/index.htm>

Triangle Food Makers
<http://www.trianglefoodmakers.com/>

Growing for Market- Publication and website ocusing on local production and marketing

<https://www.growingformarket.com/>

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group- Marketing Course

<http://www.ssawg.org/choosing-your-markets/>

REAL Ag Activities

Choosing Your Ag Market

Sustainability Scorecard

Zero In On Your Farm Market

Market Selection

Unit Outline

I. Review REAL Ag Activities – an excellent start to this unit is the “Choosing Your Ag Market” activity that helps students begin to frame the differences between wholesale and retail markets.

II. NCGT has created two curriculum units for business counselors to use: Direct Marketing & Wholesale Marketing. Both units provide an in-depth overview of the two types of sales channels, including food safety regulations, packing and storage concerns, buyers, and marketing needs. These units can be combined into a single session that focuses on an in-depth overview of wholesale and direct market channels.

III. In reflection journals, ask students to consider what markets of both types appeal to them, and why.

IV. Possible Speakers: farmers’ market farmers or managers, wholesale farmer, wholesale buyers/distributors

Market Diversification

Unit Outline

- I. This unit takes the previous learning about wholesale and direct markets and encourages students to think about additional revenue streams – even small ones – that can be added to their farm operation. Combining multiple markets helps to spread risk across revenue streams and diversify funding sources.
- II. Consider utilizing information and resources in this unit from NCDA's Agritourism Section & Marketing Division or inviting a farmers' market manager, local co-op, local grocery store, or local restaurant owner to speak about their needs for local products & how those markets might fit into different sales channels for the farm operation.
- III. Emphasize the learning with REAL Ag Activities such as the Sustainability Scorecard and Zero In On Your Farm Market.
- IV. Possible speakers: restaurant owners, successful agritourism examples, local grocery store buyers, local farmers with multiple income streams

Case Studies



Market diversification at a U-pick farm offers farmers an opportunity to reap extra benefits from each farm visit. Wiseacre Farm (<http://wiseacresorganic.com/>) creates a destination food experience with multiple revenue streams.



Labeling can be an important element in your marketing plan. What makes your product stand out as locally grown? The [Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture](#) Project provides growers with branding support as does the [Piedmont Grown Project](#).



[Considerations for Wholesale Marketing-](#) Growing for Market and Managing Wholesale Relationships

Financial Planning

There are two primary units that can be used for financial planning courses:

Food & Farm Business
Financial Planning

Cash Flow Projections &
Break-Even Analysis

Agricultural Expertise

NC Cooperative Extension Enterprise Budgets

<https://ag-econ.ncsu.edu/extension/budgets/>

NC Farm School: Small-Scale Budgets

<https://ncfarmschool.ces.ncsu.edu/small-scale-budgets/>

Penn State Extension Budgeting for Agricultural Business Planning

<http://extension.psu.edu/business/ag-alternatives/farm-management/budgeting-for-agricultural-decision-making>

New Farmer Business Planning (BeginningFarmers.org)

<http://www.beginningfarmers.org/farm-business-planning/>

Iowa State Ag Business Decision Planning .xls forms

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/decisionaidswd.html>

SARE Guide to Building a Sustainable Farm Business

<https://chatham.ces.ncsu.edu/growingsmallfarms/Business%20Guide.pdf>

USDA Guide to Crop Insurance

http://www.rma.usda.gov/handbooks/18000/2016/16_18010.pdf

NC Cooperative Extension Guide to Farm Insurance

<https://rubus.ces.ncsu.edu/rubus-crop-insurance/>

Farm Commons Guide to Legal Issues for Farmers

www.farmcommons.org

Forming Cooperatives

<https://communitydevelopment.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Agricultural Taxes (Utah State Extension)

<http://www.ruraltax.org/>

RAFI-USA: Better Recordkeeping and Understanding Crop Insurance

<http://rafiusa.org/farmer-resources>

[Farmer's Guide to Ag Credit- RAFI USA](#)

REAL Ag Activities

Toni's T-Shirts

Selling at the Farmers' Market

Country Roads Natural Produce

Food & Farm Business Financial Planning

Unit Outline

- I. Review & utilize possible activities for this unit. Two that are especially useful are Operation Red Tape & Grape Skins.
- II. From the Operation Red Tape activity, begin by reviewing with participants the resources from agricultural experts on such topics as legal issues, insurance, farm taxes, liability and risk, and succession planning (also all provided in the NCGT Farm & Food Business Resource Guide). Ask students to list their major questions about these topics in their journals.
- III. Next, review the cash flow template provided from REAL Ag & ask students to make a first draft before the next course, being sure to include line items for the issues discussed during the class – legal fees, accounting services, insurance costs, tax credits, and other issues.
- IV. Possible speakers: legal or accounting expert; insurance expert; tax expert or Department of Revenue representative

Cash Flow Projections & Break-Even Analysis

Unit Outline

I. Review with students the completed homework from the previous class. Where are the major areas of concern? Which activity will suit their needs best?

II. Utilize the enterprise & small-scale budgets from Cooperative Extension to walk the class through some basic budgeting principles, and then review the other resources (such as Iowa State's Ag Business Planning decision-making tools).

III. Break into small groups to apply those new principles & templates to the first draft, and ask students to work with one another through their second drafts.

IV. Finish with the Country Roads Natural Produce activity to ensure that groups are fully understanding and applying the material to that case.

Case Studies

Tumbling Shoals Farm (Jason and Shiloh Avery) has based their market success on extreme record-keeping. This presentation is from the National Beginning Farmer's Conference. Links are to the power point and accompanying audio.

[Tumbling Shoals, Record keeping](#)

[Tumbling Shoals - audio](#)

Recommendation – Utilize this case as a homework assignment and report back impressions from this farm's business recordkeeping strategy.

Clients can peruse entire Beginning Farmer Conferences and additional resources at the Virtual Grange/Stone Barn Center – an excellent source of first voice farmer experiences!

<http://www.virtualgrange.org/conversations/>,

<https://www.stonebarnscenter.org/engage/for-farmers/>



Marketing & Sales

There are two primary units that can be used for marketing and sales courses:

Selling Your Story:
Marketing A Farm or Food Business

Social & Online Media for
Farmers & Food Businesses

Agricultural Expertise

NC Growing Together's Social & Online Media Curriculum Unit

www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-producers

(with associated step-by-step guides to Pinterest, Facebook, and Wix)

NCDA Got to Be NC Campaign & Marketing Division

<http://www.gottobenc.com/>

<http://www.ncfarmfresh.com/index.asp>

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

Natural Farming Systems in the South [Virtual Farm Tours](#), Contains marketing cases for diverse meat and farming market strategies

Growing for Market <https://www.growingformarket.com/> articles and free web content. Subscription option.

REAL Ag Activities

Ag Marketing Mix

People, Place, Price, Product & Promotion

Grape Skins

The 5 P's of Ag Markets

Selling Your Story: Marketing Your Food or Farm Business

Unit Outline

- I. Begin with either The 5 P's activity or the Ag Marketing Mix activities. Encourage students to think about marketing holistically, and identifying the unique story their farm or food product tells – about who they are, where they come from, and what they do.
- II. Explore NCDA's marketing resources & agritourism options. What do these resources offer? Can they be mixed into the marketing you've planned? What do they bring to your business?
- III. Discuss and detail (in small groups) other marketing avenues that are local or regional in scope. What do these resources offer?
- IV. Possible Speakers: local radio/newspaper outlets; university or college marketing professors; successful farm or food businesses with comprehensive marketing strategies; NCDA representative

Case Studies

Ideally, identify interesting farm and food businesses in your area with unique or visible marketing campaigns, branding or media coverage.

[A Diversified Market Plan- St John's Island Vegetable Farm \(SC\)](#) 20 minute video

[Southside Farms](#) in Beaufort NC markets their farm activities to schools groups AND the school nutrition department. The linkage between school to farm visits and food service is a powerful marketing and branding message.

[NCGT case study on Beaufort County Schools](#)

[Piemonte Farm](#) promotes their cheese and on farm activities on a gorgeous web site. What is unique about this farm is the venue, classes, storefront and mobile cheese store. They are hitting many different market sectors and a diverse marketing strategy.



Social & Online Media for Farmers and Food Businesses

Unit Outline

I. NCGT has developed a curriculum unit (including a PowerPoint and step-by-step guides) that covers the basics of telling an agricultural marketing story and utilizing Wix, Pinterest, and Facebook to expand market reach and brand impact.

II. Utilizing this curriculum unit as the core of the program, ask students to bring computers or book a room at the computer lab. Using the guides, ask students to choose one account to set up, and help them fill in the information about their proposed or existing business. Then share these online profiles with the class and ask for feedback about their design, the effectiveness of their storytelling, and what gaps or additional information may be needed.

III. Possible speakers: communications / social media specialist; web designer; graphic designer

Homework: Finish designing the online profiles, and design a logo using a free online service (there are several; www.canva.com is an excellent option). Bring these to the next class and share on the wall for peer review and stars.

Case Studies

Ideally, you can find Facebook, Pinterest and Websites from local farms and food businesses. Hopefully, some of the students have some to share!

Use these cases to explore the different tools used in social media such as on-line ordering, sharing recipes, farm schedules, directions, venue details, etc.



[Lilly Den Farm- Facebook](#)



[Summerfield Farms-Pinterest](#)

Production, Processing & Operations

There are three primary units that can be used for feasibility courses on risk & operations:

Introduction to Food Safety and Managing Risk from the Ground Up

Infrastructure & Equipment

Production & Processing

Agricultural Expertise

NC Cooperative Extension FSMA Guides, Area Agent Contacts, and Training Events:

<https://ncfreshproducesafety.ces.ncsu.edu/>

NCGT's FSMA Resources & NSAC Flowchart

<https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/ncgt-resources/fsma-resources-sept-2016/?portfolioCats=192%2C195%2C187%2C188%2C189%2C211>

GAP Workshop Manual (NCGT & CFSA)

<https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/ncgt-resources/fresh-produce-good-agricultural-practices-workshop-manual/?portfolioCats=192%2C195%2C187%2C188%2C189%2C211>

USDA GAP&GHP Online Resources

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp>

NCDA FDA Website

<http://www.ncagr.gov/fooddrug/>

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/>

NCDA Meat & Poultry Division

<http://www.ncagr.gov/meatpoultry/>

On-Farm Infrastructure Toolkit (CFSA & NCGT)

www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-producers

Finding Processing, Cold Storage, Distribution, and Other Supply Chain Nodes

<https://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/statewide-infrastructure-map.html>

NC Choices (Niche Meat Production & Marketing Resources)

www.ncchoices.com

NCGT Best Practices for On-Farm Cold Storage and Walk-throughs of Cold Storage Facilities

www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-producers

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

[Natural Farming Systems in the South](#)

Center for Environmental Farming Systems

[Field Research](#)

RAFI USA Innovations in Farming

[100 projects](#): short and useful case studies

North Carolina Cooperative Extension is the largest state network for production and marketing resources. Each of North Carolina's 100 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians host a NCCE office. Find your local county center here: <https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center/>. **The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** is the national USDA entity that works with local **Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)** across the state. NRCS & SWCDs provide valuable information about erosion, soil and water management, soil quality, seasonal production, livestock water sources, and other information. Check out the NRCS website here: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/national/home/>.

REAL Ag Activities

Operation Red Tape

Setting Up Shop (Ag Version)

Tomatoes, Molasses and Corn Maze

Introduction to Food Safety & Managing Risk from the Ground Up

Unit Outline

I. NCGT has created a curriculum unit called Introduction to Food Safety, which outlines the basic risk inherent in growing and producing food (weather, pests, diseases, global market impacts, and food safety). The unit includes information about GAP, GHP, and FSMA along with regulatory information useful to produce, meat, and value-added producers, and discusses how these regulations can increase economic success.

II. The unit includes a section on recordkeeping – which can be combined with the Setting Up Shop – Ag Version activity in the REAL Ag program.

III. This class is best utilized with agricultural experts present from a number of different services – at a minimum, NCDA should be invited to attend, bringing experts that are related to the majority of students (meat & poultry, GAP/GHP, FDA, etc.).



Infrastructure & Equipment

Unit Outline

I. Begin with an activity such as Tomatoes, Molasses, and Corn Maze, that gets students thinking about the different operations required to produce different types of products for various markets.

II. Bring in speakers who can discuss the infrastructure & equipment needed by successful operations, whether they are farm-based or food-production:

- Local incubator/shared-use kitchen operators
- Local cold storage / food hub operators
- Local farmers who operated on-farm packing or storage units
- NRCS & SWCD can speak to high tunnel funding for season extension as well as many on-farm construction issues

III. Review the [On-Farm Infrastructure Toolkit](#) & NC Cooperative Extension's guide to value-added production (depending on the student audience) for step-by-step explanations of different kinds of infrastructure and equipment.

IV. Homework: Use the map created in the Site Analysis unit to add additional infrastructure or equipment needed to streamline operations. Physically draw out the spaces, water or electric lines, equipment, and other items needed to make the operation work functionally. Tie this back to the cash flow projection – is everything accounted for? Do you need to adjust your financial plan?

Production & Processing

Unit Outline

- I. This unit relies heavily on the expertise of local Cooperative Extension agents, and should be scheduled well ahead of time to ensure that they can be present.
- II. Share the composition of the course – how many are already farming, and how many are starting out, as well as what kinds of food production they are interested in. Each Extension office has multiple specialties for fruit & vegetable, horticulture, natural products, cattle, meat & poultry, and pest & disease management. Work with your local office to determine the best topics for this particular unit.
- III. Ask students to come to class with their site analysis maps and cost estimates, and to prepare questions about their assumptions for the speakers.
- IV. Additional speakers could include NCDA regional or local representatives, USDA representatives, and NRCS/SWCD representatives. If time allows, share the infrastructure map for your region on a large screen, allowing students to find processing, cold storage, farmers' markets, food hubs, incubator kitchens, and other important supply chain businesses near their own business location.

*This is an excellent on-farm course if you can accommodate a field trip excursion!

Case Studies

Ken Dawson Maple Spring Gardens (NC) 18 minute video (SSAWG)
[Plasticulture and Labor on Diverse Vegetable and Flower Farm](#)



Mark Cain [Cut Flower Production & Marketing Dripping Springs Garden \(AK\) 20 minute video \(SSAWG\)](#)



[Alternative Swine Production- CEFS Unit and Resources](#)

Operationalizing Your Plan

There is one combined unit
for operationalizing your
business plan:

Building Successful Business
Proposals

Agricultural Expertise

NCGT's Guide to Cost-Share Programs & GAP Assistance

<https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/ncgt-resources/assistance-for-farms-pursuing-gap-certification-in-north-carolina/?portfolioCats=192%2C195%2C187%2C188%2C189%2C211>

NCGT's Guide to Financing for Farm & Food Businesses in North Carolina

<https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/ncgt-resources/financial-and-business-resources-for-food-entrepreneurs-and-farms-in-north-carolina/>

REAL Ag Activities

Ag Business Proposal Summary

Building Successful Business Proposals

Unit Outline

- I. This final unit builds on the existing Ag Business Proposal Summary that traditionally takes place during a final class in the REAL Ag curriculum.
- II. Before allowing students time to work on their proposals and share with their small groups, review the financing opportunities provided in the Agricultural Expertise section above. Ask a representative from one of the ag lending agencies or grant programs to come and discuss what they're looking for in a final proposal, or pull together a panel of local lenders and have a mini-pitch competition for students as a last exercise.
- III. Complete the summary proposal in class and share feedback among small groups, and follow REAL Ag closing methods from that point forward.

Case Studies

[Wildwood Farm-A Business Plan for CSA Expansion](#); The Carrot Project

The Carrot Project is a New England based farming organization focusing on financial management skills.

[Five Uses for Your Farm Business Plan- Practical Farmers of Iowa](#)

A membership organization serving beginning farmers with a mission to strengthen farms and communities through farmer-led investigation and information sharing.

[Farm Link- Sample Goat Farm Business Plan](#)

Farm Link helps farmers find land and other resources to continue or expand farming operations.





Question & Answer Session



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REAL Entrepreneurship Agriculture Unit

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Sequoyah Fund, Inc.

PO Box 1200

Cherokee, NC 28719

(828) 359-5003 phone

(828) 359-5007 fax

www.sequoyahfund.org



For More Information

www.ncgrowingtogether.org | www.realentrepreneurship.org

Emily Edmonds: Emily_Edmonds@ncsu.edu

Laura Lauffer: LDLauffe@ncat.edu