

Agricultural Economic Development in CEDS Plans in North Carolina

A Summary of NC Regional Council of Government Approaches to Integrating Agricultural Development Goals into Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies

Each of North Carolina's sixteen councils of government develops a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan in conjunction with the United States Economic Development Agency every five years. The CEDS plans guide regional economic and community development strategies and help member governments – such as counties, cities, and towns – position their own economic development work within a larger regional framework.

Six councils of government shared their CEDS plan goals around agriculture with NC Growing Together in 2017. These COGs represent 41 counties across North Carolina with agricultural goals related to economic resiliency; food access; land preservation; branding, marketing, and tourism; niche industry development; training & workforce development; and agribusiness development.

If your council has additional information or would like their CEDS plan collected in this list, please contact Laura Lauffer at lwlauffe@ncsu.edu.

Region A: Southwestern Commission

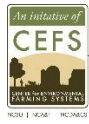
The Southwestern Commission's objective is to promote and support agriculture as a viable economic practice. To accomplish this, they focus on two strategies:

- Develop a marketing effort to highlight the region's towns as centers for healthy lifestyles featuring local foods and outdoor amenities
- Identify areas of competitive advantage in the agricultural sector such as viticulture and forestry

Region A was one of three councils which worked with the NC Rural Center's Rural Agribusiness program in 2017, focusing on identifying and mapping opportunities for rural agribusinesses and providing technical assistance and training scholarships for rural entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector.

The full text of their CEDS plan can be found at <http://regiona.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SWC1702-CEDS-FullReport-Final.pdf>.

Counties Included: Cherokee, Clay, Swain, Macon, Graham, Jackson, and Haywood



Region B: Land of Sky Regional Council

Land of Sky has focused on several agricultural initiatives. The WNC AgriVentures program, a Rural Jobs Accelerator, focused on leveraging local assets and building regional linkages in agriculture, in partnership with Advantage West, North Carolina State University, and the Community Foundation of WNC. The agricultural sector was identified as a high-potential industry with growth opportunities in local beverages, natural products, biofuels, local foods, green building, and ecotourism. Land of Sky also helps sponsor WNC Farmlink, a program that matches beginning farmers with landowners willing to lease farmland, and the ScaleUp partnership with Mountain BizWorks, which provides classes and coaching to agricultural entrepreneurs. They recently worked with the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project and UNCA's NEMAC to create a food analysis map and research local food system challenges and opportunities.

The full resources can be found at www.wncfarmlink.org; www.mountainbizworks.org, <http://landofsky.mapviewer.nemac.org/> and <http://asapconnections.org/research/projects/local-food-system-intro/>.

Counties Included: Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania

Region C: Isothermal Planning & Development Commission

Isothermal participated in the SET V Planning Process for Agriculture and Natural Resources in 2015-2016.

Agriculture is the first target industry in their CEDS plan, with multiple strategies for focusing on development, including unique regional community college training partnerships.

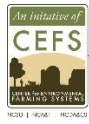
The full text of their Regional Economic Development Plan can be found at <https://regionc.org/regional-development/setv/>.

Counties Included: Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, and Rutherford

Region Q: Mid-East Commission

The Mid-East Commission's 2017 CEDS Advisory Committee included two farmers, and the group was tasked with helping to develop goals, objectives, and action steps. Their CEDS plan recognizes an experienced agricultural workforce as a strength in their SWOT analysis, including the importance of migrant workers to the agriculture industry, and their cluster analysis identifies agriculture as a major regional industry.

The Mid-East Commission's CEDS plan focuses on agriculture through the cluster analysis, by promoting environmentally sustainable development patterns, and by focusing on addressing food deserts as one significant area of need for the region's citizens.



The plan can be reviewed at <http://www.mideastcom.org/CEDP.htm>.

Counties Included: Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin, and Pitt

Region G: Piedmont Triad Regional Council

PTRC includes agricultural development priorities in its Piedmont Together and NC Tomorrow plans, and as a target cluster in their 2017 CEDS planning process (viewed at <http://www.ptrc.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=6579>).

PTRC is also working with Community Food Strategies to pilot a regional food and farming initiative in 2018 that aims to create a regional food council for its 12 counties and 63 municipalities, and is working on several grant initiatives for analyzing and assessing the region's farm and food infrastructure.

PTRC accepted leadership and maintenance for the Center for Environmental Farming Systems' NC Local Food Infrastructure Inventory Map in 2017, and houses the map in GIS format for any local or regional government use at

<http://ptrc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f62735865c1c4d0f83ad40baeb66d864>.

PTRC's plans can be viewed at <http://www.ptrc.org/index.aspx?page=47>.

Counties Included: Alamance, Caswell, Davidson, Guilford, Montgomery, Randolph, Rockingham, Davie, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin

Region F: Centralina Council of Governments

Centralina worked with Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, and the Catawba Regional Council of Governments in 2012 to create a HUD Sustainable Communities project called "CONNECT Our FUTURE." In 2017, their five-year CEDS update included new objectives and goals around agriculture, including farmer networking and distribution needs, as well as continuing the CONNECT project work that was established in 2012-2013 (including a regional map, infrastructure database, and other research and analysis tools).

The full plan can be reviewed at <https://www.dropbox.com/CEDSCentralinaEDDFinal>.

Counties Included: Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union

NC Growing Together Project: Local Food Economies Initiative

An effective way to revitalize the economy in local communities is through support for smaller-scale agricultural enterprises and food entrepreneurship. Local governments, regional councils, and planners and economic developers have a unique opportunity to support the recruitment, retention, and expansion of area businesses through local agriculture efforts, and to build stronger and more resilient communities. NCGT supports those efforts by providing resources, and tools for local governments and small business assistance providers across the state. For more information, contact Laura Lauffer, NCGT Extension & Outreach Program Manager, at lwlauffe@ncsu.edu or visit these websites, www.ncgrowingtogether.org and www.localfoodeconomies.org.