

Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan



W. Stan Dixon, Ed. D.

Ed Emory, M. Ed

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This plan was written by W. Stan Dixon and Ed Emory. Dr. Dixon has an Ed.D. from N.C. State University and served with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Martin, Wake and Greene counties. He retired in 2009 from N.C. Cooperative Extension as County Extension Director. Mr. Emory holds a B.S. and M.Ed. from NC State University and served with the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service in Pamlico and Duplin Counties for more than 28 years. He retired in 2009 after serving 19 years as county extension director in Duplin County.

The following agencies and individuals assisted with the development of this plan:

- North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Rowan County Center
- Rowan County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Rowan County Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Rowan Working Agricultural Lands Committee
- Rowan County Board of Commissioners
- Rowan County Manager
- North Carolina Forest Service
- Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center, University of Mount Olive
- The citizens, farmers and agribusinesses of Rowan County





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Executive Summary

Rowan County has a viable agricultural sector that is an important component of the county's fabric of life. The goal of this Working Agricultural Lands Plan is to reflect the importance of agriculture and assess the opportunities, challenges and issues that are currently facing the industry. This plan provides recommendations, based on citizen input on ways to enhance agriculture, forestry, agribusiness, and agritourism in the county.

Farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource, and the farmers who are stewards of the resource impact the economy and quality of life for all county residents. The economic impact of the agriculture sector in 2008 as reported by Mike Walden in the Agriculture and Agribusiness in Rowan County report was 11.7 percent of the county's value-added total income. The agriculture sector also accounted for 13.8 percent of Rowan County's total employment¹. Rowan County has the resources, human and natural to ensure that agriculture can prosper in the future.

The impact of agriculture in Rowan County is significant and the following statistics show the notable rank of Rowan County's agricultural production of various commodities in 2021:

*Agricultural cash receipts in Rowan County totaled \$91,234,418

*Rowan County ranked 2nd in tomato harvested acreage

*Rowan County ranked 5th in dairy cattle production

*Rowan County ranked 8th in all cattle production and cash receipts from cattle

*Rowan County ranked 10th in beef cattle production

*Rowan County ranked 20th in the state in wheat production

*Rowan County ranked 30th in the state in corn production

*Rowan County was 28th in the state in soybean production²

The following statistics are from the 2017 Census of Agriculture for Rowan County:

*Rowan County ranked 4th in sheep and goats

*Rowan County ranked 7th in milk from cows

*Rowan County ranked 9th in the production of fruits, tree nuts, and berries

*Rowan County ranked 15th in production of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweetpotatoes

*Rowan County 26th in other crops and hay³

Rowan County is experiencing population growth, with an increased population in the county of 7 percent from 2010 to 2021⁴. The county is a member of the Charlotte, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which is the 7th largest MSA out of 384 in the United States⁵. Growth in population and industry has resulted in competition for land. The majority of county farmers surveyed, 57 percent, lacked sufficient land to expand or diversify their operations. Rowan County farmers reported facing other critical issues, cost and availability of labor, rising production input cost and development pressure. The farmers are confronted by other challenges to their operations, such as aging farmer population, with the average age of farmers being 57.1⁶ years old and 63 percent not having farm transition plans to transfer the farm to the next generation, according to survey results. These issues present opportunities to enhance agriculture through education of citizens and local government to encourage continued support.

Of the non-farm citizens surveyed, 99 percent believe that local government should take action to preserve farmland as a valuable resource. Ninety-five percent of non-farm citizens support the use of government funds to support farm and forest development. All of non-farm respondents support farm and forest preservation efforts in the county.

At the center of the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan, based on information provided by farmers, agribusiness leaders, and non-farm residents through personal interviews and surveys, are six proposed

recommendations. The recommendations and action steps were developed to provide a guide for protecting and enhancing agriculture in Rowan County. The success of this plan depends on the collaboration between local government, agricultural organizations, farmers, agribusinesses, and citizens of Rowan County. The plan needs to be evaluated annually to celebrate accomplishments and add new recommendations as needed. The recommendations are to:

- 1. Support measures to protect and promote working forest and farmland in Rowan County.**
- 2. Educate landowners on the benefits of enrolling in Conservation Easement Program to keep land available for agricultural use.**
- 3. Expand Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) programs**
- 4. Develop and conduct programs to assist Rowan County farm and forest landowners with farm transition planning.**
- 5. Promote appreciation and awareness of the benefits of agriculture to Rowan elected officials and citizens.**
- 6. Expand and support youth agricultural education programs.**

The intent of this plan is neither to limit nor restrict landowners' rights and uses. The plan is intended to serve as a guide for actions to provide farmers, landowners and citizens an increased awareness of farmland preservation opportunities. Agriculture is important to Rowan County and its economy and to the well-being of family farms. However, the final decision on farmland preservation rests in the hands of the owners of farm and forests.

A Need for Action

Agriculture, consisting of food, fiber and forestry, is North Carolina's leading industry. In a 2022 report by Mike Walden, emeritus professor and extension economist at North Carolina State University, more than 17.5% of the state's workforce was directly involved with agriculture, an industry that contributes \$95.9 billion, or 16.2%, of the gross state product in North Carolina⁷.

According to the 2008 Agriculture and Agribusiness in Rowan County report by Mike Walden, agriculture and agribusiness added \$429,357,375 or 11.7 percent of the county's value-added total income. Additionally, agriculture accounted for 13.8 percent of Rowan County's employment in 2008⁸.

Rowan County's leadership is cognizant of the importance of agriculture to the local economy and is supportive of a Working Agricultural Lands Plan that addresses issues related to farm and agribusiness viability for the future. This was verified through the interviews conducted within the county. The goal of the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands plan is to provide strategic actions that will guide local leaders in their efforts to preserve farms and forests, as well as market the many benefits of the agricultural industry. Rowan County is one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina. According to the US Census 2021 estimates, Rowan County has a population of 148,150. This figure represents a 7 percent increase from 2010⁹.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce reported that in 2022, nearly one-third (31%) of Rowan County's population was over the age of 55¹⁰.

When farms are passed down to younger generations with little or no attachment to farming, farms are at risk of being removed from agricultural production and sold for development or other non-agricultural uses¹¹.

This plan is grounded in three basic tenets:

1. Agriculture is an important component of Rowan County's economy.
2. Preserving farms and forests is in the public interest.
3. Farms and forests are sustainable natural resources.

North Carolina is blessed to have 8 million acres of farmland, but it's losing agricultural lands to development at a fast pace. In fact, the American Farmland Trust ranks North Carolina as the second most threatened state,

behind only Texas, when it comes to the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses. As the state's population has increased, land has been removed from agricultural production to provide housing and services to the growing population¹².

From 2012 to 2020, North Carolina lost more than 8,900 farms and nearly 1 million acres of farmland¹³. During the time period from 2012 to 2017, Rowan County experienced a loss of 2,231 acres (2%) of farmland¹⁴. Additional information and trends should be evaluated after the release of the 2022 Census of Agriculture figures for Rowan County.

The American Farmland Trust expects both North Carolina and Rowan County to convert a significant amount of farmland to non-farm uses between 2016 and 2040. North Carolina is expected to convert between 661,500 and 1,197,300 acres of farmland for development while Rowan County is projected to convert between 13,000 and 28,000 acres in the same period. The data expects that the majority of the development in both the state and county to stem from low-density residential development, which is most attributed to subdivisions with large lot sizes. A smaller portion of the land transition is expected for high-density residential growth and commercial and industrial development. While growth is inevitable, planned growth can help to preserve the maximum acreage of farmland from being converted to other non-agricultural uses. The ranges are wide and divide the farmland attrition into three main development scenarios. This shows how much agricultural land can be saved by employing strategic commercial and residential development processes in communities¹⁵.

The development of the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan was directed by County of Rowan in partnership with the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. The plan was supported by the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan Committee in partnership with the University of Mount Olive Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center. This plan reports the state of agriculture in the county and the opportunities and challenges confronting agriculture. Agriculture is defined to include horticulture, farming (row crops and livestock) and

forestry. The North Carolina General Assembly defined agriculture in General Statute 105-277.2 through 105-277.7 as:

- Minimum acreage of production land:
 - 10 acres for agricultural use
 - 5 acres for horticultural use
 - 20 acres for forest use
- Production must follow a sound management plan.
- Agricultural and horticultural land must have at least one qualifying tract that has produced an average gross income of at least \$1,000 for the three years preceding the application year.
- Forestland must be following a forest management plan.

In order to determine challenges and opportunities to agriculture in the county, personal interviews and written surveys were utilized. Surveys were distributed in hard copy form at agricultural and community meetings and electronically distributed via Survey Monkey. All responses to the surveys and interviews are confidential according to the University of Mount Olive Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. The data collected depicts the state of agriculture and the future needs of Rowan County. This data was used to develop recommendations which will assist county leadership in keeping farm and forest land viable now and in the future.

Overview of Rowan County

Established in 1753, Rowan County originally consisted of territory north to Virginia, east to present day Guilford County, and west to the mountains. The county was named for colonial Governor Matthew Rowan. The current county boundaries were established in 1836¹⁶.

The first European settlers in the area were Scotch-Irish immigrants who settled in the western part of Rowan County. A few years later, German immigrants settled in the eastern part of the county. Highly productive agricultural land was the main factor for settlement¹⁷.

Farmers took advantage of the fertile soil in Rowan and the county grew throughout the 1740s and 1750s. As the Revolution neared, county residents became more involved in politics and the fight for independence. Rowan citizens eventually composed the Rowan Resolves, an article composed in support of American Independence. The Rowan Resolves have been considered by historians and some Rowan County citizens as one of the first documents proclaiming North Carolina's involvement in the American Revolution¹⁸.

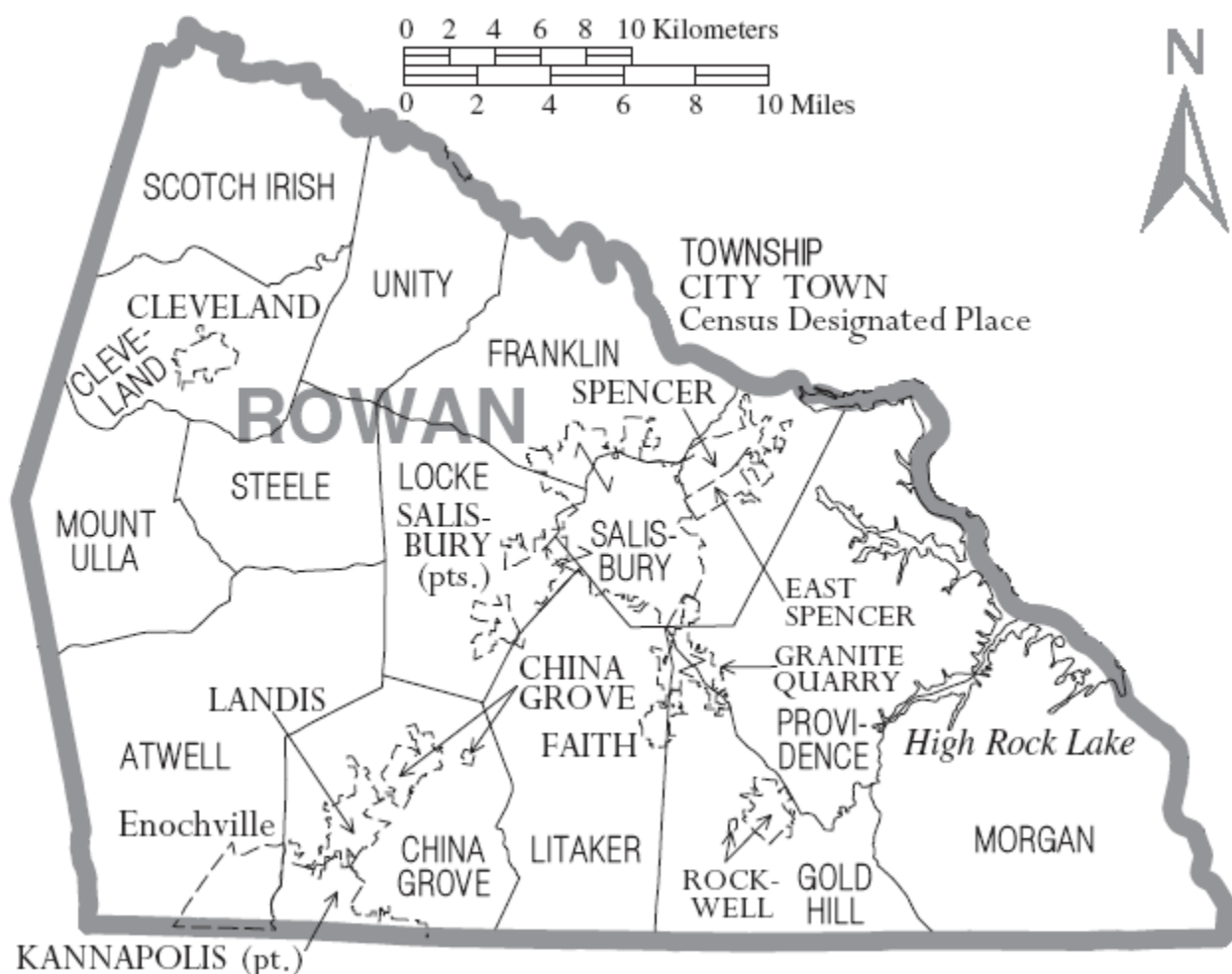
In the middle of the nineteenth century, a community appropriately known as Gold Hill prospered for several years during North Carolina's Gold Rush was discovered in North Carolina in 1799 at Reed Gold Mine in Cabarrus County and in 1824 the precious metal was found several miles away at Gold Hill in Rowan County. During operation, the mines at Gold Hill produced more than six million dollars in gold, eventually causing the government to construct a federal mint in Charlotte. After gold was extracted from the Gold Hill mines, copper was found in 1907, and a large mining operation followed the discovery of this metal¹⁹.

Salisbury was established as the county seat in 1753 providing settlers with the services of a courthouse and jail. It was originally known as Rowan Court House. The location of the courthouse was at the intersection of two ancient Native American trails. The name Salisbury was adopted two years later most likely in reference to the English town²⁰.

According to the US Census 2021 estimates, Rowan County has a population of 148,150. This figure represents a 7 percent increase from 2010. The county population is 78.9 percent white, 17.1 percent African American and the remaining four percent is another race including: American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.7%), Asian (1.2%), Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.1%), and two or more races (2%). Census data indicated that 10.1% of the Rowan County's population is Hispanic or Latino²¹.

Rowan County has the following incorporated areas: Cities of Salisbury and Kannapolis, and towns of China Grove, Cleveland, East Spencer, Faith, Gold Hill, Granite Quarry, Landis, Rockwell, and Spencer.

Rowan County is divided into eighteen townships which are Atwell, China Grove, Cleveland, East Spencer, Franklin, Gold Hill, Kannapolis, Litaker, Locke, Morgan, Mount Ulla, Providence, Rockwell, Salisbury, Scotch Irish, Spencer, Steele, and Unity²² as shown on this map:



Map 1: Rowan Township Map²³

Rowan County is experiencing population growth, with an increase of 7 percent from 2010 to 2021²⁴. The county is a member of the Charlotte, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which is the 7th largest MSA out of 384 in the United States²⁵.

Economy

The North Carolina Department of Commerce ranks each of the state's 100 counties into three tiers based on the economic well-being of each county. Tier 1 is most distressed, and Tier 3 is least distressed. In 2022, Rowan County improved its designation from a Tier 1 to a Tier 2 county. This was a result of reduced unemployment and population growth rate. North Carolina uses these designations to encourage economic growth through incentives in distressed counties. Rowan's tier status provides opportunities for certain grants and other incentives aimed at stimulating the county's economy²⁶.

In 2021, the median household income in Rowan County is \$53,600 compared to the state figure of \$60,516. Seventeen percent of Rowan's population is considered below the poverty level, higher than the state's at 13.4 percent²⁷.

Less than two percent (1.4%) or 857 working Rowan County residents work outside North Carolina. Thirty nine percent or 23,999 residents work within North Carolina but outside Rowan County. More than fifty-nine percent or 36,427 residents work within the county. The 2021 annual unemployment rate for Rowan County was 7.9 percent as reported by the NC Department of Commerce²⁸ which is higher than the 2021 North Carolina unemployment rate of 4.8 percent²⁹.

Agriculture and agribusiness provided jobs for 13.8 percent of Rowan County's working residents according to a study completed by Dr. Mike Walden in 2008³⁰.

The following information appears on the Rowan County Economic Development webpage.

Rowan County's strategic location in the growing Charlotte, North Carolina metro region, its robust talent pool and workforce, and its wide

range of affordable and flexible commercial real estate options make it a prime location for companies from a variety of industries. Rowan County is a diversified economy with a wide range of industries comprising its employment base. The largest sectors of employment are healthcare services (16.1%), manufacturing (15.4%) and retail trade (13.2%).

At nearly 2,500 businesses strong, and growing, Rowan County is home to many Fortune 500 and international companies, including³¹:

Ahold Delhaize Food Lion	3600	HQ/Call Center/Distribution/Retail
Rowan Salisbury Schools	2610	Education
VA Medical Center	2250	Health Services
Daimler	1685	Manufacturing
Novant Health Rowan Medical Center and Clinics	1560	Medical Services
Chewy	1350	Distribution/Warehousing/Ecommerce
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College	900	Education
Rowan County	849	Municipal Government
Gildan	550	Manufacturing
Teijin Automotive	505	Manufacturing

Table 1. Rowan County Economic Development Commission, 2023³²

Cost of Services

American Farmland Trust conducted 151 cost-of-community-services studies, including six in North Carolina, to determine the contributions made to the economy by land uses. The studies focus on three main land uses: commercial and industrial, working and open land, and residential. Agricultural and commercial land uses require few public services than residential land uses, saving money for the county. For each \$1 of revenue received from each land use, the cost of community services study concluded that³³:

- Residential land cost \$1.16 in public services.
- Working and open lands (including agriculture and forestry) require \$0.35 for public services.
- Commercial and industrial land cost \$0.29 for public services³⁴.

While similar impacts would be expected in Rowan County, a study of this nature can help local leaders and developers understand the impact and importance of planned land-use development on the county's economy.

Infrastructure and Transportation

Interstate Highway 85 transects Rowan County from north to south allowing major access to the Piedmont Atlantic Mega-Region. The I-85 corridor is a major business and industrial center for Rowan County serving the entire piedmont area of North Carolina. Rowan County has a network of well-maintained roads and highways that provide access to all areas of the county³⁵.

Rowan County is at the center of the largest consolidated rail system in the United States with more than 3,200 miles of track. The rail services, which serves 22 states in the eastern half of the country, consists of Norfolk Southern, CSX and Winston-Salem Southbound railroads. An Amtrak station is located in Salisbury³⁶.

Rowan County residents can access three international airports. Charlotte Douglas International Airport is 45 miles away, Piedmont Triad International Airport is 55 miles away, and Raleigh-Durham International Airport is 116 miles away³⁷.

Rowan County operates Mid-Carolina Regional Airport which is located near Salisbury. The airport offers a 5,500 foot by 100-foot runway, instrument landing system, non-directional beacon, and a full-length taxiway. It is 18 miles north of the Charlotte Motor Speedway³⁸.

Salisbury-Rowan Utilities is Rowan County's primary water provider, serving all municipalities except the towns of Faith and Cleveland. Maximum daily capacity is 18,000,000 gallons per day (GPD) with an average demand of 9,240,000 GPD. Surplus is 8,760,000 GPD above average demand. The Yadkin River provides Salisbury with its water with an average daily flow of 2 billion gallons per day. Salisbury-Rowan water and waste water system provides services to residential and business customers in Salisbury, Granite Quarry, Spencer, East Spencer, China Grove, Rockwell and some unincorporated areas of the county³⁹. The towns of Faith and Cleveland maintain independent water and wastewater systems.

Rowan County operates a 415 ton per day landfill for residents and businesses. The landfill's capacity is expected to last for more than 50 years⁴⁰.

Electrical power is provided by Duke Energy, Landis Electric City, Energy United and Union Power Cooperative⁴¹.

Broadband internet services include Fision/Hotwire 100 per cent fiber network at 10 gigabytes per second. Other providers include Spectrum, AT&T, Nuvox and Windstream⁴².

Public transportation is provided for citizens by the Salisbury Area Transit and Rowan County Area Transit⁴³.

Nine percent of Rowan County land area is located in a regulated flood plain⁴⁴.

Education

According to 2020 statistics, a majority (85.9%) of the Rowan County population over 25 years of age have completed high school, compared to 88.5 percent of all North Carolina citizens over the age of 25. Similarly, 19.8 percent of Rowan County citizens have a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 32 percent in North Carolina⁴⁵.

The Rowan-Salisbury Public School System enrolls 18,000 students in seventeen elementary schools, eight middle schools, an early college high school and seven high schools⁴⁶.

Rowan County is the home of nine private schools serving 1,273 students in the 2022-2023 school year⁴⁷.

The county is also served by the Rowan-Cabarrus Community College which is part of the North Carolina Community College System. The college enrolls 22,000 students in 32-degree programs, 30 diploma programs and 142 certificate programs. The college's North Campus and Kannapolis Campus are located in Rowan County. RCC operates the NC Manufacturing Institute which is an eight-week training program leading to a Certified Production Certificate⁴⁸.

Catawba College, located in Salisbury, is a private liberal arts college affiliated with United Church of Christ. Founded in 1851, the College has an enrollment of 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students⁴⁹.

Livingstone College is a private historically black college in Salisbury associated with African American Episcopal Zion Church. Founded in 1879, Livingstone offers 23 academic majors offering BS, BA and Associate of Science degrees. In the fall of 2018, the college enrolled 890 students⁵⁰.

Natural Attributes

In Rowan County, as with all areas, natural resources are paramount in agricultural production.

Rowan County is in the piedmont physiographic province of North Carolina. The county is bounded on the north by the South Yadkin River which separates it from Davie County. On the Northeast side of the county, it is separated by the Yadkin River and High Rock Lake from Davidson County. It is bordered by Stanly, Iredell, and Cabarrus Counties. Rowan County consists of broad gently rolling to hilly landscapes. Rivers and major tributaries are bordered by moderately steep to steep slopes. The county's elevation is between 560 and 850 feet above sea level. The highest peak in the county is Young's Mountain with an elevation of 1,100 feet above sea level. Most of areas of Rowan County drain directly into the South Yadkin and Yadkin Rivers from creeks that flow Northeastward. Rowan County consists of 523 square miles⁵¹.

Two large water reservoirs are located in Rowan County. High Rock Lake is a hydroelectric reservoir consisting of 15,180 acres in Rowan and Davidson Counties. Tuckertown reservoir consists of 2,500 acres. Both lakes offer opportunities for boating, fishing, hunting and other recreational activities⁵².

Both land and water are irreplaceable resources. A combination of best management practices and wise conservation must be employed to keep the resources in good condition.

Soils

Soils are classified into different associations which help determine a soil's suitability for different uses. Soil uses include growing crops, growing trees and residential and commercial construction. Rowan County has ten major soil associations which are:

1. Cecil-Pacolet: Covering eighteen percent of western and north-central Rowan County, this classification is gently sloping to steep well-drained upland soil that have a loamy surface layer and a predominantly clayey subsoil with moderately deep to very deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Management concerns for agriculture are erodibility, soil fertility, and equipment use in steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are restricted permeability, low strength, and slope in steeper areas.
2. Pacolet: Found in fourteen percent of southwestern and north-central Rowan County, this classification is gently sloping to steep, well drained soils that have a loamy surface and a predominantly clayey subsoil and moderately deep to very deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Management concerns for agriculture are erodibility, soil fertility, and equipment use in steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are restricted permeability, low strength, and slope in the steeper areas.
3. Lloyd-Cecil: Found in 8 percent of the west-central and northeastern Rowan County, this classification is gently sloping to moderately steep, well drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and predominantly clayey subsoil with deep to very deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Management concerns for agriculture are erodibility, soil fertility, tilth, and equipment use in the steeper areas. Urban Development management concerns are restricted permeability, low strength, and slop in the steeper areas.
4. Cecil-Vance-Enon: Found in twenty two percent of the areas east of Interstate Highway 85 and a smaller area in the northwestern part of the county, this classification is gently sloping or strongly sloping, well drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and a predominantly clayey subsoil with a moderately deep and very deep to bedrock. Major uses are cropland, pasture, and woodland. Agricultural management concerns are erodibility and soil fertility. Management concerns for urban development are restricted permeability, low strength, and slope in steeper areas. Vance and Enon have high shrink-swell potential.
5. Lloyd-Mecklenburg: Found in eight percent of the west-central part of the county, this classification is gently sloping to moderately steep, well drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and a predominantly clayey subsoil moderately deep to very deep to saprolite, very deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture.

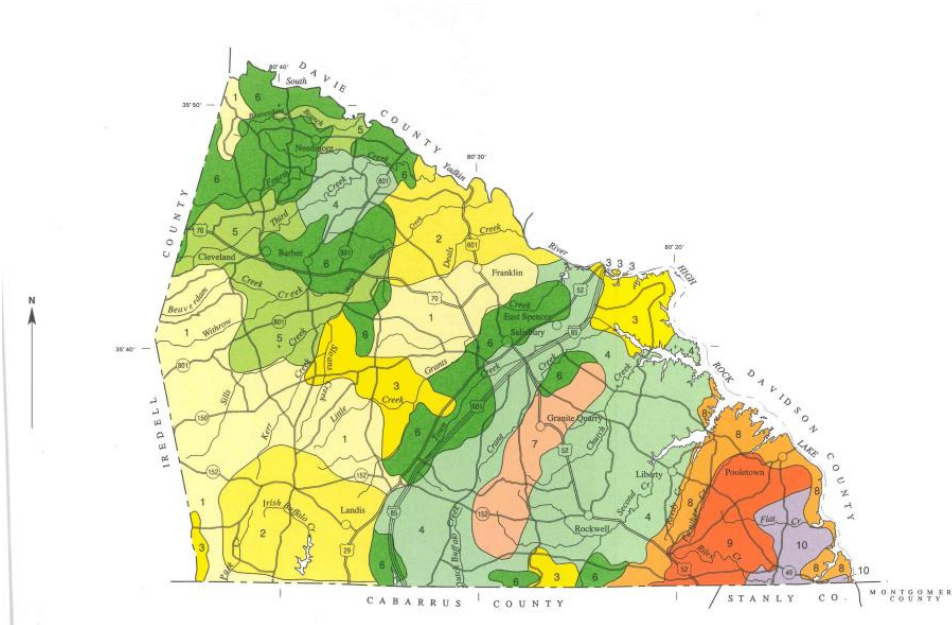
Agricultural management concerns are erodibility, tilth, soil fertility, and equipment use in the steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are restricted permeability, low strength, shrink-swell potential, and slope in the steeper areas.

6. Enon-Mecklenburg-Poindexter: Found in fourteen percent of the central and northwestern parts of the county, this classification is gently sloping to steep, well drained upland soils that have a loamy subsoil, moderately deep to deep to saprolite and moderately deep to very deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Agricultural management concerns are erodibility, soil fertility, and equipment use in the steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development restricted permeability, low strength, shrink-swell potential, depth to bedrock and slope in the steeper areas.
7. Ashlar-Vance-Rion-Wedowee: Found in four percent of the eastern part, in a northeast to southwest trending strip that includes the Granite Quarry and Faith areas of the county. This classification is gently sloping to moderately steep, well drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and a clayey or loamy subsoil, moderately deep to very deep to saprolite, moderately deep to very deep to bedrock with rock outcrops in some areas. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Agricultural management concerns are erodibility, rooting depth, soil fertility, and slope in the steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are depth to bedrock, low strength, shrink-swell potential, and slope in the steeper areas.
8. Badin-Uwharrie-Tatum: Found in five percent of the southeastern corner of the county, this classification is gently sloping to steep, well drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and a predominantly clayey subsoil, very stony surface in some areas, moderately deep to very deep to saprolite, moderately deep to very deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Management concerns for agriculture are erodibility, soil fertility, rooting depth, and equipment use in the steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are restricted permeability, low strength, shrink-swell potential, depth to bedrock, and slope in steeper in the steeper areas.
9. Cid-Badin-Misenheimer: Found five percent of the southeast corner of the county, this classification is nearly level to strongly sloping, well drained to somewhat poorly drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and a clayey or loamy subsoil, shallow to moderately deep

to saprolite, shallow to moderately deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Management concerns for agriculture are wetness, depth to bedrock, soil fertility, erodibility, rooting depth, and slope in the steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are wetness, restricted permeability, low strength, and shrink-swell potential.

10. Badin-Goldston: Found in two percent of the southeastern corner of the county, this classification is gently sloping to moderately steep, well drained to excessively drained upland soils that have a loamy surface layer and a clayey to loamy subsoil, shallow to moderately deep to saprolite, shallow to moderately deep to bedrock. Major uses are woodland, cropland, and pasture. Management concerns for agriculture are erodibility, soil fertility, rooting depth, droughtiness, and slope in the steeper areas. Management concerns for urban development are depth to bedrock, shrink-swell potential, and low strength⁵³.

Map 2 illustrates the geographical location of the soil classifications mentioned above.



Map #2. Rowan County Soils Classifications⁵⁴

Agricultural Land Designations in Rowan County

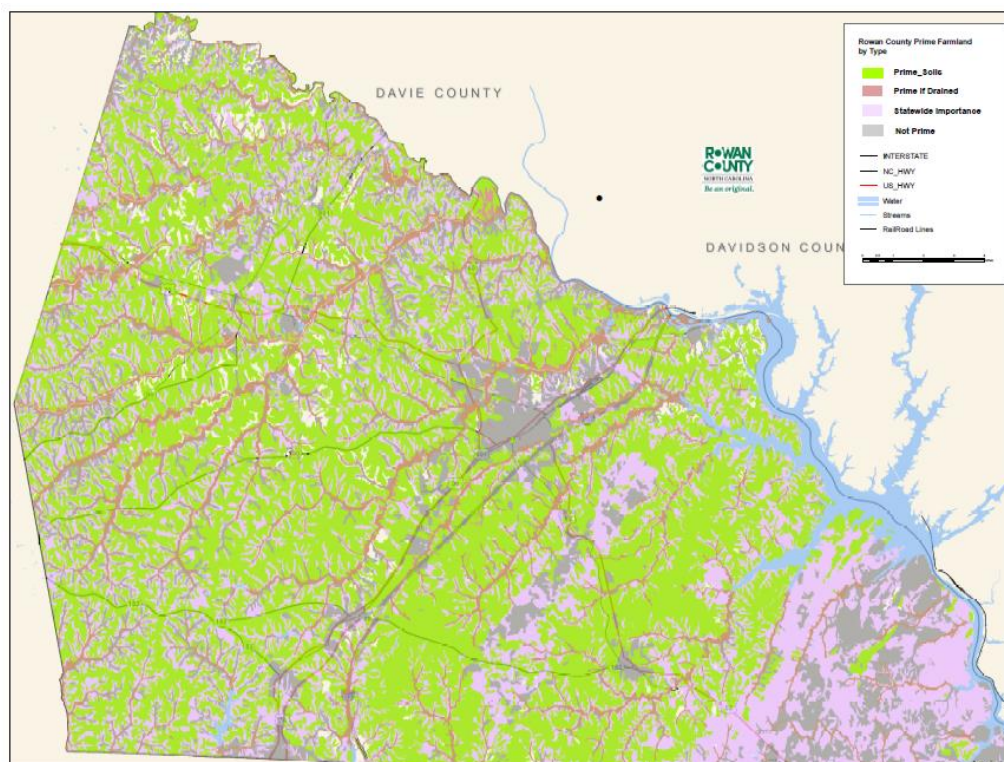
Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and

that is available for these uses. Rowan County has 155,000 acres of prime farmland.

Generally, additional farmlands of statewide importance include those that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce as high a yield as prime farmlands if conditions are favorable. Rowan County has 97,070 acres of farmlands of statewide importance.

Another descriptor of land as prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season. Rowan County has 21,600 acres of farmland in this description.

Farmland classified as non-prime in Rowan County totals 52,275 acres⁵⁵.



Map #3 NRCS Classified Prime Farmland⁵⁶.

Forestry

Rowan County forestland totals 136,376 acres, with 95 percent owned by private landowners. According to North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Rowan County landowners harvested \$4.4 million in timber in 2020. The total forest industry economic impact to Rowan County was \$269 million. Nine-hundred fifty-seven people are employed in the Rowan County forest industry, with a total payroll of \$62 million⁵⁷.

The timber inventory in 2016 was 7.5 million green tons of hardwood and 3 million green tons of softwood. Of the 8.25 million green tons of hardwood, 5.5 million green tons were used for sawtimber and 2.75 million green tons were for pulpwood. Of the 3 million green tons of softwood, 2.5 million were used for saw timber and .5 million tons for pulpwood⁵⁸.

Rowan County: The State of Agriculture

Agriculture is deeply rooted in the history of Rowan County. In 1821, the Rowan Society for Agriculture sponsored the first agricultural fair in North Carolina in Salisbury. Early cash crops included cotton, corn and grains. The United States Census of Agriculture in 1910 indicates that 3,241 farms existed in Rowan County. By 1969, the number of farms in Rowan County reduced to 1,304 farms. During the 1980's farm crisis, the number of farms fell to 823. A revival in farming occurred by 2012 bringing the number of farms to 1,011. The most recent statistics available show that in 2017, 925 farms were in Rowan County⁵⁹.

According to Mike Walden in the 2008 "Agriculture and Agribusiness in Rowan County" report, agriculture and agribusiness added \$429,357,375 or 11.7 percent of the county's value-added total income. According to Dr. Walden, the agriculture sector also accounted for 13.8 percent of Rowan County's total employment in 2008.⁶⁰

The number of farms in Rowan County decreased from 1,012 in 2012, to 925 in 2017 according to the US Census of Agriculture. The average farm size increased slightly from 121 acres in 2002 to 129 acres in 2017. Of the 118,914 total acres of farmland in Rowan County in 2017, 57 percent (about 67,800 acres) were planted in crops and 60,433 (50.8%) acres of crops were harvested in that year⁶¹.

The economic impact of the agriculture sector in reported in 2008 was 11.7 percent of the county's value-added total income⁶². Rowan County has the resources, human and natural, to ensure that agriculture can prosper in the future.

Figure 1 illustrates the land in farms by land use in the 2017 Census of Agriculture with the majority (57%) of land in farms being used for crop production⁶³.

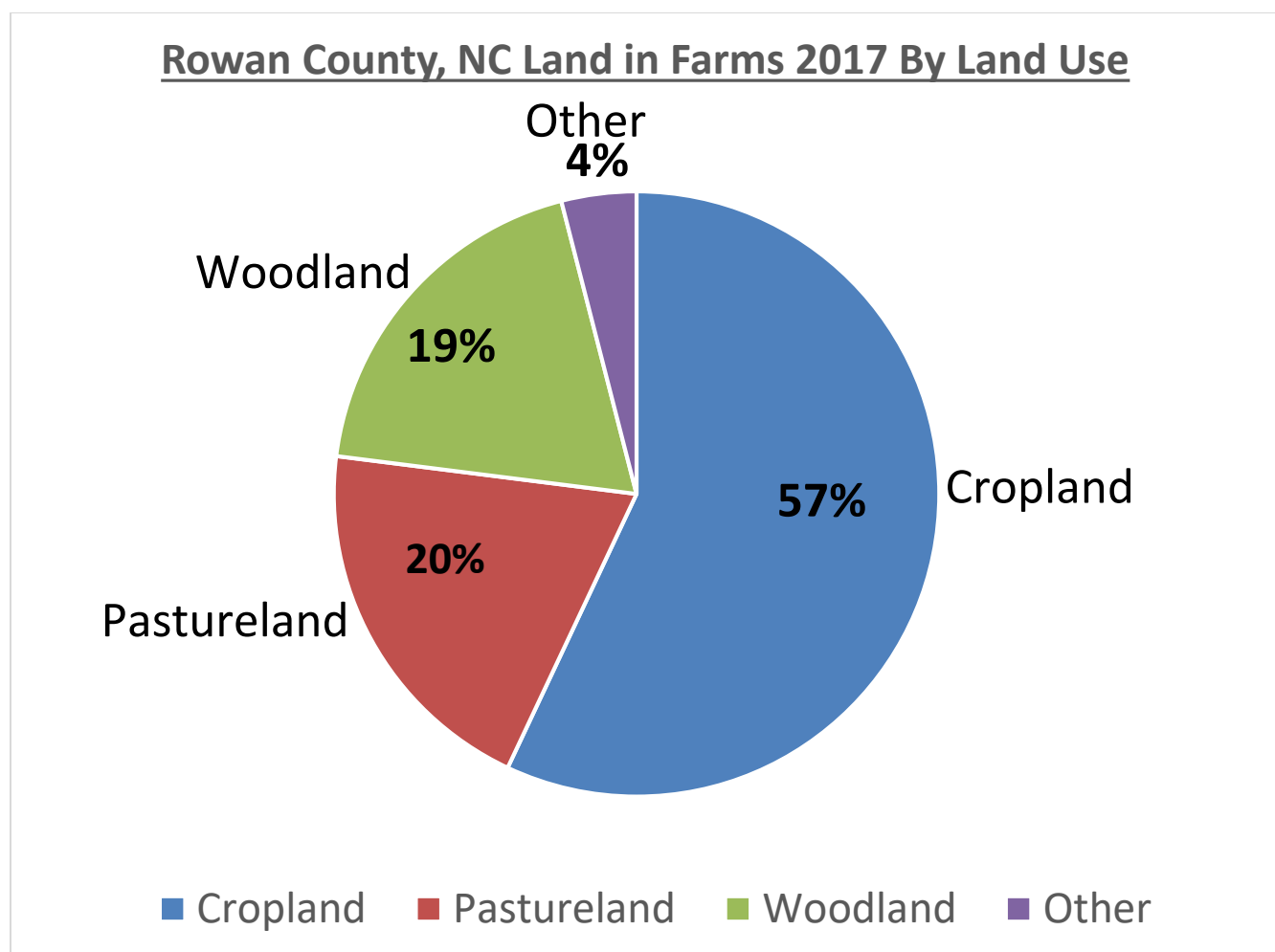


Figure 1. Rowan County, NC Land in Farms By Land Use in 2017 Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, Rowan County, NC Profile.

Land use practices indicate how farmers manage land resources in crop production. These practices include no-till, reduced till, intensive till, and cover crops. According to the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, 22 percent of farms in Rowan County utilize no till practices, one percent of farms implemented reduced till, seven percent utilize intensive till and 11 percent of farms used cover crops.

It is important to note the impact of agriculture to Rowan County's economy and to highlight the county's rank in NC agricultural production. This information is available for 2021 as published in the 2022 NC Agricultural Statistics Book from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Agricultural Statistics in partnership with the

National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Census of Agriculture. The impact of agriculture in Rowan County in 2021:

- *Agricultural cash receipts in Rowan County totaled \$91,234,418

- *Rowan County ranked 2nd in tomato harvested acreage

- *Rowan County ranked 5th in dairy cattle production

- *Rowan County ranked 8th in all cattle production and cash receipts from cattle

- *Rowan County ranked 10th in beef cattle production

- *Rowan County ranked 20th in the state in wheat production

- *Rowan County ranked 30th in the state in corn production

- *Rowan County was 28th in the state in soybean production⁶⁴

The following statistics are from the 2017 Census of Agriculture for Rowan County:

- *Rowan County ranked 4th in sheep and goats

- *Rowan County ranked 7th in milk from cows

- *Rowan County ranked 9th in the production of fruits, tree nuts, and berries

- *Rowan County ranked 15th in production of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweetpotatoes

- *Rowan County 26th in other crops and hay⁶⁵

According to the 2021 cash receipts, published in the 2022 NC Agricultural Statistics book, Rowan County farmers had total cash receipts of \$91,234,418 this was a significant increase from the 2019 total of \$67,910,220⁶⁶. Crops accounted for \$52,066,404 (57%) of agricultural sales in 2021 while livestock,

dairy, and poultry accounted for \$35,545,287 (39%). The remaining \$3,622,727 (4%) was received from government payments⁶⁷.

Farmers markets and roadside stands are an important part of the agricultural economy in Rowan County. Eleven percent of Rowan County farms sell directly to consumers totaling \$1,127,000 in 2017⁶⁸.

Crops

In 2021, Rowan County farmers earned a total of \$52,066,404 from crop production. Production of major crops in Rowan County in 2021 includes⁶⁹:

- Soybeans, 20,900 acres, yielding 888,000 bushels
- Corn for grain, 10,700 acres, yielding 1.61 million bushels
- Wheat, 4,900 acres, yielding 333,000 bushels

Livestock

In 2021, Rowan County farmers realized cash receipts from livestock, dairy and poultry of \$35,545,287, ranking the county 48th in the state of North Carolina. This included production of 3.8 million broilers, 21,000 cattle, and 65,000 layers⁷⁰.

Forestry

Rowan County forestland totals 136,376 acres, with 95 percent owned by private landowners. According to North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Rowan County landowners harvested \$4.4 million in timber in 2020. The total forest industry economic impact to Rowan County was \$269 million. Nine-hundred fifty-seven people are employed in the Rowan County forest industry, with a total payroll of \$62 million⁷¹.

The timber inventory in 2016 was 7.5 million green tons of hardwood and 3 million green tons of softwood. Of the 8.25 million green tons of hardwood, 5.5 million green tons were used for sawtimber and 2.75 million green tons were for pulpwood. Of the 3 million green tons of softwood, 2.5 million were used for saw timber and .5 million tons for pulpwood⁷².

Farmer Demographics

As cited in the 2017 US Census of Agriculture, the number of Rowan County farmers was 1,482 with an average age of 57.1 years of age. Principal operators by gender were 1,006 male and 476 female. The majority (98%) of farm owners in Rowan County are white⁷³.

Farm and Forest Protection Programs

Present-Use Value Tax Program

Present-Use Value, or PUV, is a program established by N.C.G.S. §§ 105-277.2 to .7 and administered by the county assessor through which qualifying property can be assessed, for property tax purposes, based on its use as agricultural, horticultural or forest land. The present use value is the value of the land based solely on its ability to produce income. Qualifying property is assessed at its present-use value rather than its market value. The tax office also maintains a market value for the land, and the difference between the market value and the present-use value is maintained in the tax records as deferred taxes. When land becomes disqualified from the program, the deferred taxes for the current and three previous years, with interest, will usually become payable and due.

Basic Requirements

Minimum acreage of production land:

- 10 acres for agricultural use
- Five acres for horticulture use
- 20 acres for forest use

Production must follow a sound management plan.

Agricultural and horticultural land must have at least one qualifying tract that has produced an average gross income of at least \$1,000 for the three years preceding the application year.

Forestland must be following a forest management plan.

Benefits

Protection from increasing land values that are based on development potential and the potential increase in property taxes

More information can be found at
<http://www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/property.html>.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD)

Established by N.C.G.S. §§ 106-737 to 743 and administered at the county level, Voluntary Agricultural Districts are designated areas where commercial agriculture will be encouraged and protected. The purposes of the districts are to increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and to increase protection from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms. A copy of Rowan County's Voluntary Agricultural District ordinance is included in Appendix 1 of this document⁷⁴.

Requirements

Land must be enrolled in the Present-Use Value program or otherwise be determined to meet the qualifications of the program.

The landowner must enter into a revocable agreement to limit development for a 10-year period.

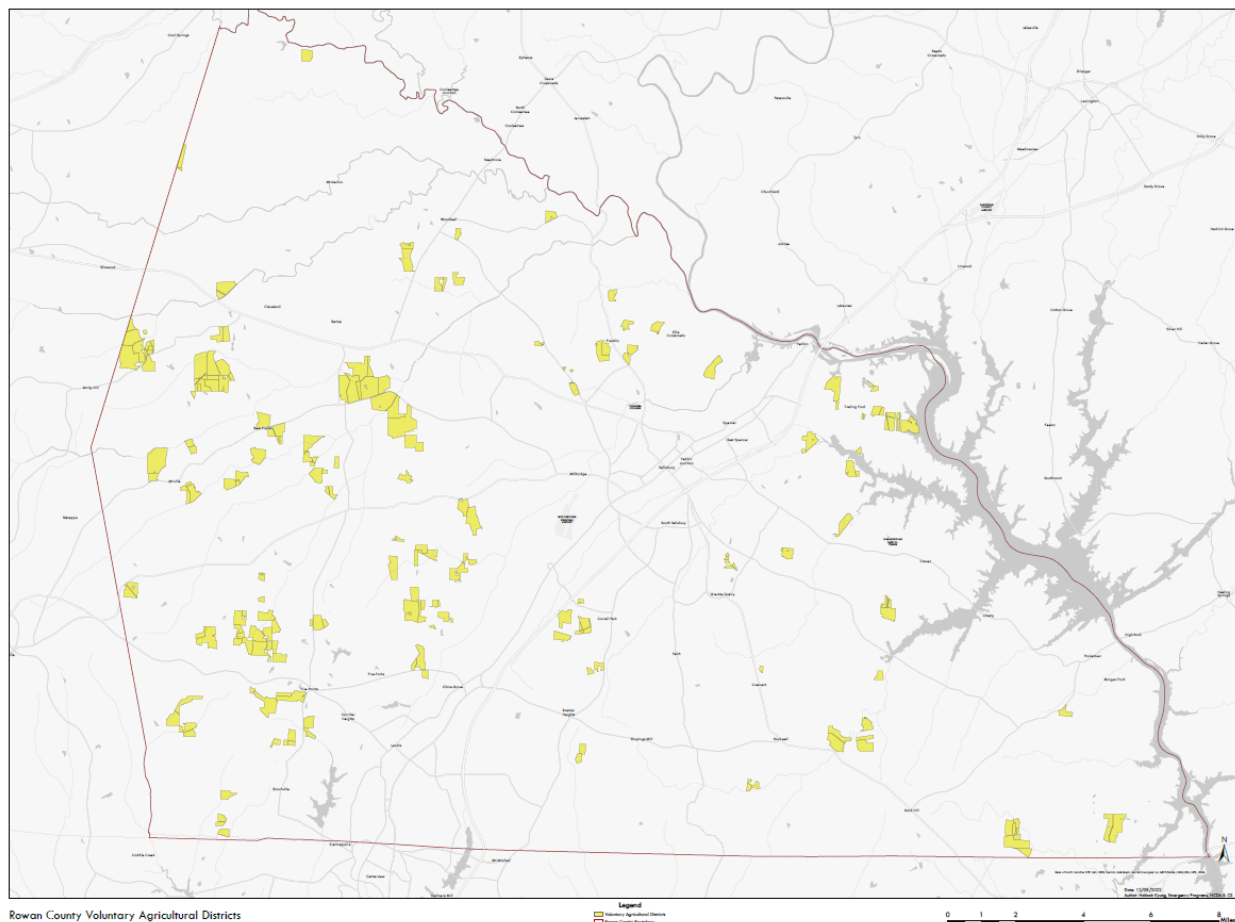
Benefits

- Notification to buyers of nearby property that they're moving into an agricultural area
- Abeyance of water and sewer assessments
- Public hearings on the condemnation of farmland
- Stronger protection from nuisance suits
- Representation by an appointed board regarding concerns on threats to the agricultural sector

Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Established by N.C.G.S §§ 106-743.1 to .5, an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District is a VAD formed of one or more farms that are subject to an IRREVOCABLE 10-year agreement to limit development. In return for the

condition of irrevocability, the landowner receives the added benefits of being able to receive 25 percent of gross revenue from the sale of non-farm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm, and being eligible to receive up to 90 percent cost-share assistance from the Agricultural Cost-Share Program. A copy of Rowan County's Voluntary Agricultural District ordinance, including Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District, is included in Appendix 1 of this document⁷⁵.



Map #4. Rowan County Voluntary Agricultural District Acreage⁷⁶

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a written agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or public agency under which the

landowner agrees to keep the land available for agriculture and to restrict subdivision, non-farm development and other uses that are incompatible with commercial agriculture⁷⁷.

Basic Requirements

Permanently foregoing the right to subdivide or develop the land being conserved. There will be other limitations on activities to preserve the land's productivity, environmental values and rural character. Cash payments in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000 are needed to cover the costs of the transaction. These costs are for legal services, a survey, an appraisal, long-term stewardship services provided by the conservation partner and other miscellaneous activities. In some cases, grant funds will cover these costs⁷⁸.

Other Information

A portion of the property can be left out of the easement, thereby providing an area for future homes and other non-farm activities.

Agricultural activities, including forestry, are allowed under the agreement.

Despite the term "easement," access to the public is not provided by the agreement.

The value of a conservation easement is determined by a licensed land appraiser and is typically between 25 percent and 75 percent of the land's market value.

A periodic inspection of the property is required to ensure that development does not occur. This provision will be included in the agreement.

The agreement is recorded on the county's land records and runs with the title. All future landowners must comply with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Financial Benefits

If the conservation easement is donated, then the landowner will likely qualify for a federal income tax deduction and a state income tax credit. The value of

these benefits depends on the appraised value of the easement and the income tax situation of the landowner.

A conservation easement also can be sold by the landowner through a transaction commonly referred to as a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE). Funds to purchase a conservation easement can be raised from private and government sources. North Carolina and the federal government have programs to purchase agricultural conservation easements. Funding through these programs is very competitive and will generally amount to a percentage of the easement's value. The tax benefits described above can be claimed for any of the easement's value above the purchase price.

Term Conservation Easements

Also called Agricultural Agreements, these agreements are similar to conservation easements but apply for a finite period of time agreed to by the landowner and conservation partner.

Transfer of Development Rights

A program set up by local units of government that utilizes conservation easements to preserve farmland by providing incentives to increase development density in a designated area. The program identifies the "sending area" where conservation is being encouraged and the "receiving area" where development is preferred. A landowner in the receiving area can purchase a conservation easement on a property in the sending area and receive additional density allowances. In North Carolina, counties must receive authorization from the General Assembly to develop and implement a TDR program.

Farm Transition Planning

Making careful plans for the transfer of ownership of farm property and assets from the current owner to the next can be enough to preserve a farm for decades. Many options are available when planning an estate or land transfer. Farm owners can increase the likelihood of a successful transition that maintains the viability of the farm by obtaining professional assistance early in the process.

Right-to-Farm Law

North Carolina has a state right-to-farm law (N.C.G.S. §§ 106-700 to 701(2006)) that protects farm and forestry operations from being declared a nuisance as long as they have been in operation for at least one year and are operated properly and without negligence.

N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

N.C.G.S. § 106-744(c) established a trust fund to be administered by the Commissioner of Agriculture. The purpose of the trust fund is to provide monies to purchase agricultural conservation easements and to fund programs that promote the development and sustainability of farming, and the transition of existing farms to new farm families. Counties and nonprofit conservation organizations can apply for grants for these purposes.

Challenges, Opportunities and Trends: Survey and Interview Results

The methodology employed to access information, perceptions and attitudes related to agriculture and agribusiness in Rowan County consisted of written surveys and interviews with three target audiences—agriculture producers, agribusiness owners and non-farm residents of Rowan County. Surveys were distributed by the Rowan County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. A total of 354 surveys were completed for the study.

In addition, more than 30 key leaders in Rowan County from all three targeted groups were interviewed to better identify challenges and opportunities that exist in the county's agricultural segment. All descriptive statistics presented in this document were calculated using data obtained from these processes. Survey and interview information revealed pertinent information on the state of agriculture in Rowan County from the perspectives of farmers, agribusinesses, and non-farm residents as well as from data sources such as USDA and NCDA.

The results identify specific challenges and opportunities affecting the future of agriculture in the county.

Agriculture Producer Analysis

A review of the 2017 Census of Agriculture revealed that there were 925 farms in the county being cultivated by 1,006 male and 476 female operators. Rowan County farmers are predominantly white with 1,454 white operators, 15 African American operators, 2 Asian operators, and 11 more than one race operators. The average age of Rowan farmers was reported as 57.1 years in 2017⁷⁹. Farmers providing information for the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan represented operations from across the county. The average age of survey respondents was 53 years.

According to the survey, the majority of the operations (70 percent) were farm production only, primarily farm with some timber production was 27 percent, timber production only 2 percent, and primarily timber production with some farm production was 1 percent.

Sixty-six percent of Rowan County farmers surveyed indicated that they had been in operation for more than 20 years. Seventeen percent of the farmers surveyed had been in operation for 10-20 years, and 17 percent of respondents had been in operation 9 years or less (Figure 2).

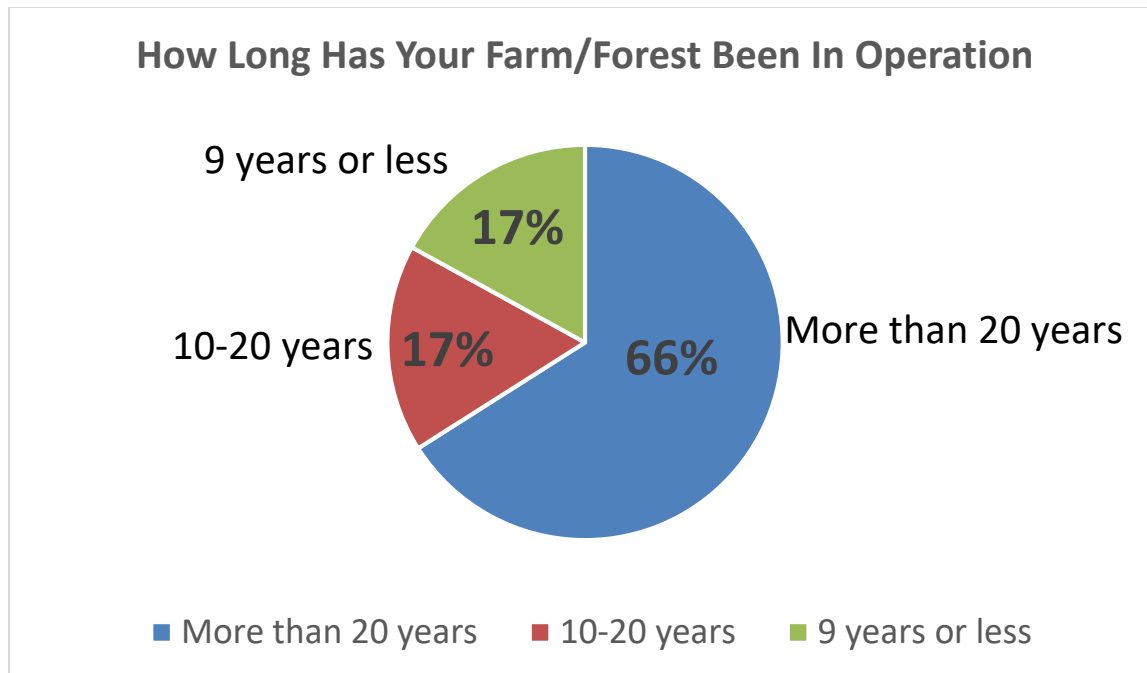


Figure 2. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

Fifty-two percent of surveyed farmers indicated provided 0-24% of their total income, 24% indicated that farming provided 25-49% of their total income, 8 percent indicated that farming provided 50-74% of their total income, and 16% percent of the responding farmers indicated that their operations provided the majority of their household income.

Of the farmers responding, 48 percent did not expand operations during the last five years. Of those who wanted to expand but did not, listed the following reasons:

- Satisfied with current size
- Age of owner/operator
- Low profit margin
- High cost of equipment
- Lack of available land to purchase

- Lack of available labor

Notably, 57 percent of farmers surveyed stated that they did not own sufficient property to expand or diversify their operation. This indicates the importance of and need for leasable land for operational expansion in Rowan County.

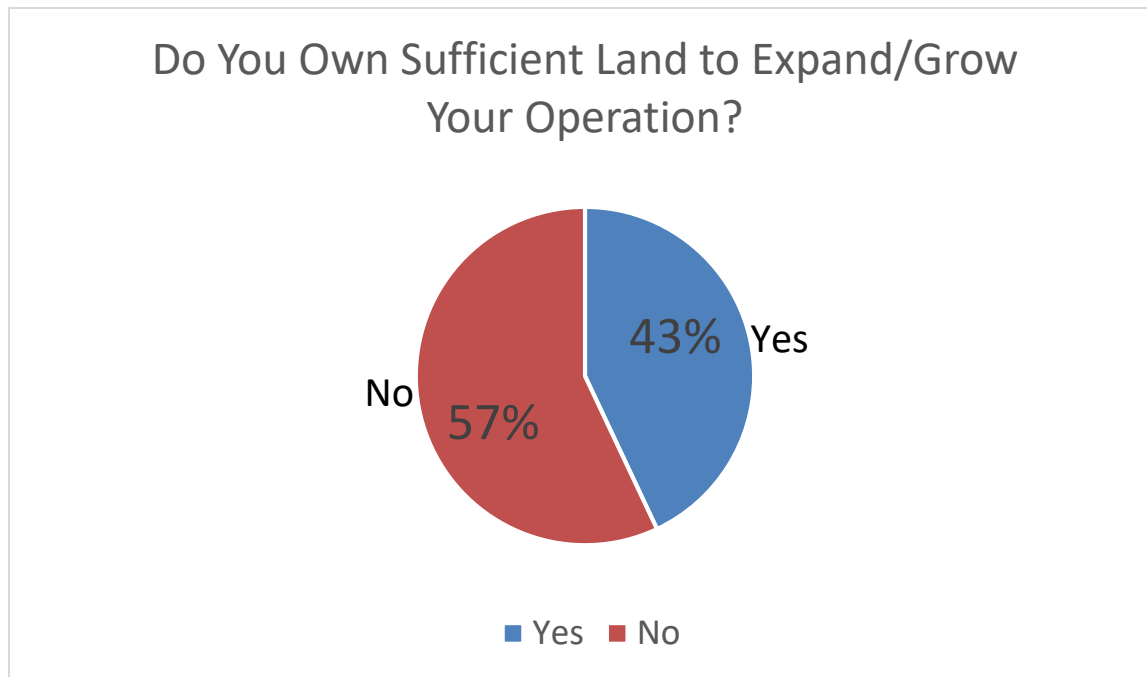


Figure 3. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

Farmers who participated in the surveys identified the most critical issues expected to influence future farming operations as:

1. Production Input Costs
2. Competition for available land
3. Commodity prices
4. Residential housing expansion
5. Available labor
6. Land rental rates

Additional information from the farming community indicated that upon retirement, nearly 85 percent of farmers expected to transfer the farm to family members for continued operation as a family farm. However, 63

percent do not have a farm transition plan. This indicates a need to have training for some farm owners on developing effective farm transition plans. Family farms are the backbone of agriculture in North Carolina, educating farmers on how to pass their farms on to heirs or another generation of farmers is essential to the future of agriculture.

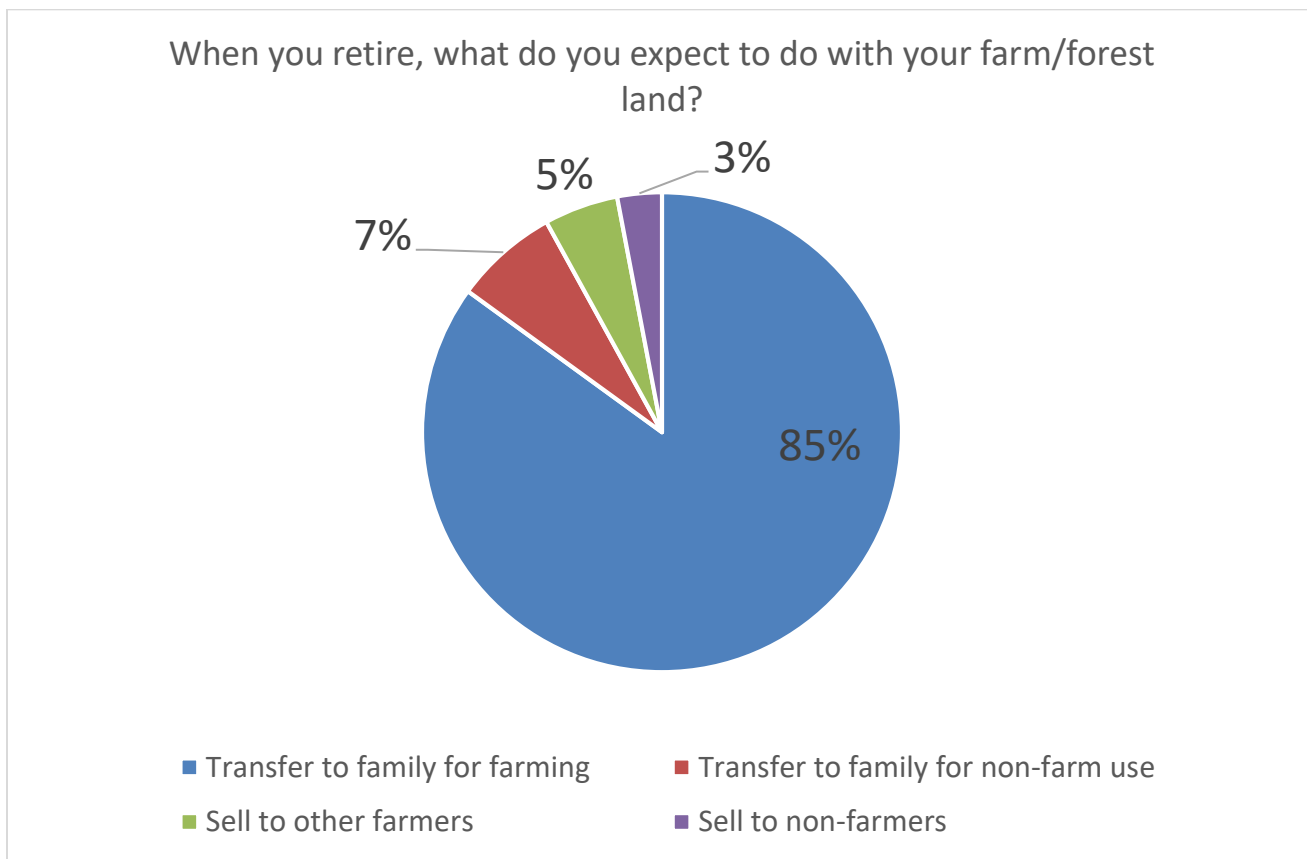


Figure 4. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

Rowan County offers a deferred tax program beneficial to farmers and landowners designated as the Present Use Value Taxation program (PUV). This program offers owners of forestland and those operating legitimate farms a deferred tax program based upon their present use in agriculture, horticulture, or forest land. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents answered that they were enrolled in the PUV program. Twenty-four percent are not enrolled in the PUV program. Eight percent answered that they did not know whether or not their farmland was enrolled. (Figure 5) These results indicate a definite need to educate all landowners on the benefits of the PUV

program. While an increased knowledge of this program could result in additional land enrolled in the program and, in turn, reduce tax revenues, the cost of community services for agricultural land versus residential land shows that the revenue outcome still provides a net gain to the county coffers.

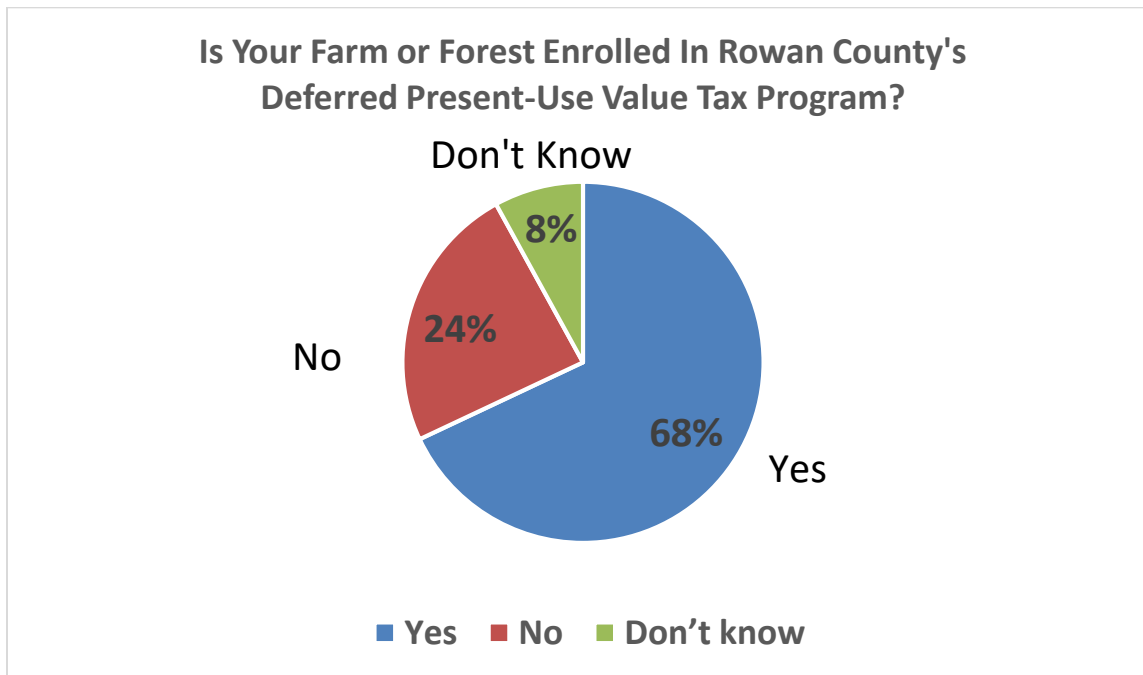


Figure 5. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

When Rowan County farmers were asked to identify taxes that were impediments to their profitability, 59 percent listed estate taxes, 57 percent listed county real property taxes and 56 percent cited county property taxes on buildings and equipment as significant burdens on family farms. (Table 2)

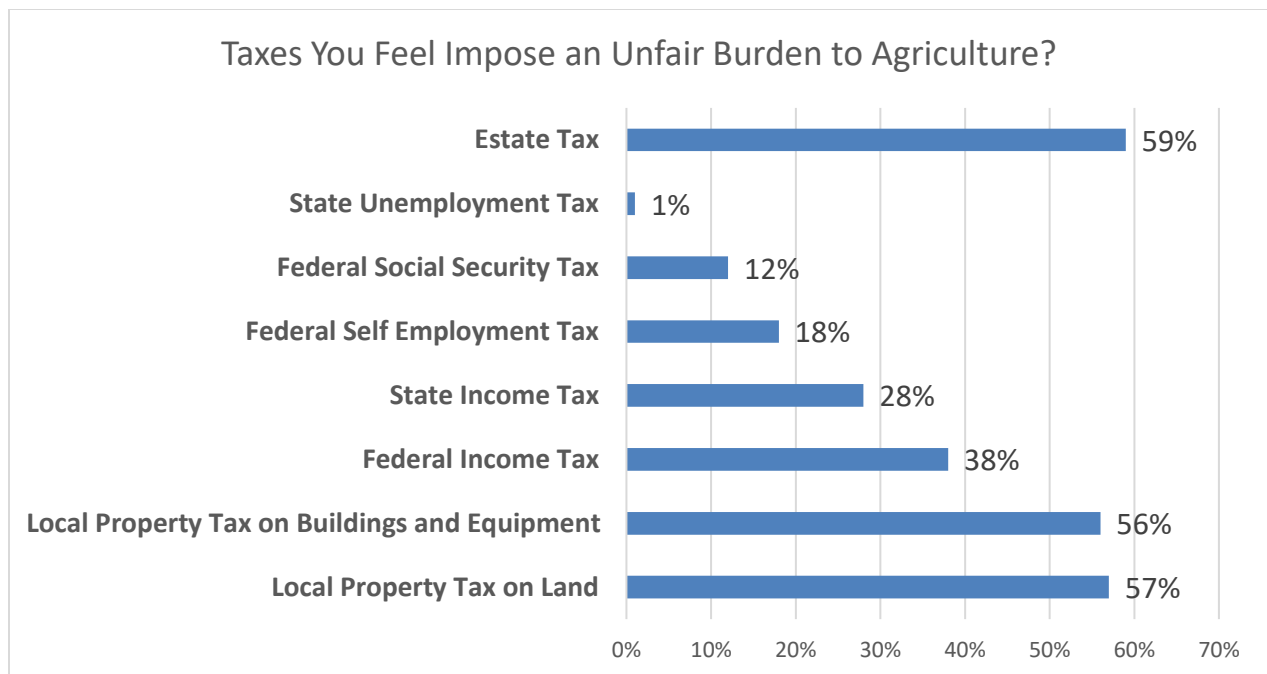


Table 2. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

In 2017, the majority (99 percent) of forestland in Rowan County was privately owned. Forty percent of survey respondents have forest management plans, and sixty percent responded that they have no such plans. A forest management plan is a valuable tool for farmers and landowners to use this resource for greater sustainability and profitability. Management plans are required for forest landowners to enroll properties in the county's Present Use Value program. The survey data indicates the need for the development of an educational program to inform and train landowners on the benefits of a formal forest management plan. Farmers surveyed expressed interest in training in the following areas:

- Timber management
- Development of a forest management plan
- Selecting consulting foresters

Eighteen percent of survey respondents have experienced problems with neighbors in regard to their farming operation. (Figure 6) Of those experiencing problems, the issues centered on:

- Boundary or trespassing conflicts
- Dumping/littering issues
- Slow moving vehicle complaints
- Manure application complaint
- Smoke or Dust

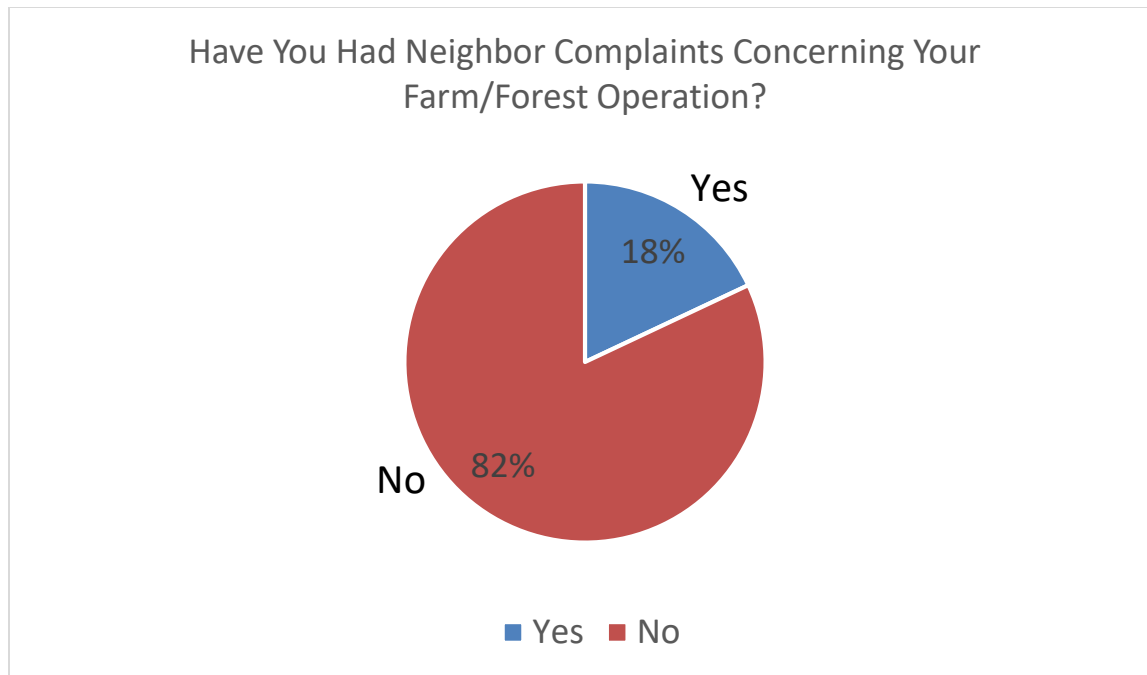


Figure 6. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

Additionally, farmers expressed a need for management, technical and marketing training on the following topics to enhance their operations:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| - Forward pricing and hedging | 34% |
| - Direct to consumer marketing of products | 51% |
| - Identifying and managing risks | 32% |
| - Business website development | 29% |
| - Estate planning/Farm transition | 77% |
| - Federal and State contract training | 47% |

There are multiple opportunities for training and education. This information should serve as a continuing guide for agencies and institutions involved in education within the county to develop plans for short-term and long-term training to serve the agricultural community.

Most of the Rowan County farmers surveyed (58 percent) showed no awareness of farmland preservation tools that could help them in their efforts to maintain their family farms. Forty-two percent of surveyed farmers were aware of farmland preservation tools. As of 2022, 332 farms covering 15,074 acres were enrolled in the Voluntary Agricultural District program. Forty-one farms covering 1,818 acres were enrolled in the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District⁸⁰. The creation and adoption of the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan by the county's leadership are essential steps to ensure support for the agricultural community.

Rowan County farmers, who were surveyed and interviewed, recognized the value of educating the non-farm public to the benefits of agriculture to the county. Ninety percent of farmers surveyed were in favor of a program to increase non-farm residents' knowledge of the social and economic benefits of agriculture.

Rowan County farmers and operators who responded to the survey (98%) stated that there is a definite need for agricultural education in public schools, 4-H and youth development, community colleges and other colleges and universities. Table 3 shows the strong support for such programs, which illustrates the need to train youth in the importance of agriculture and the diverse agricultural career opportunities.

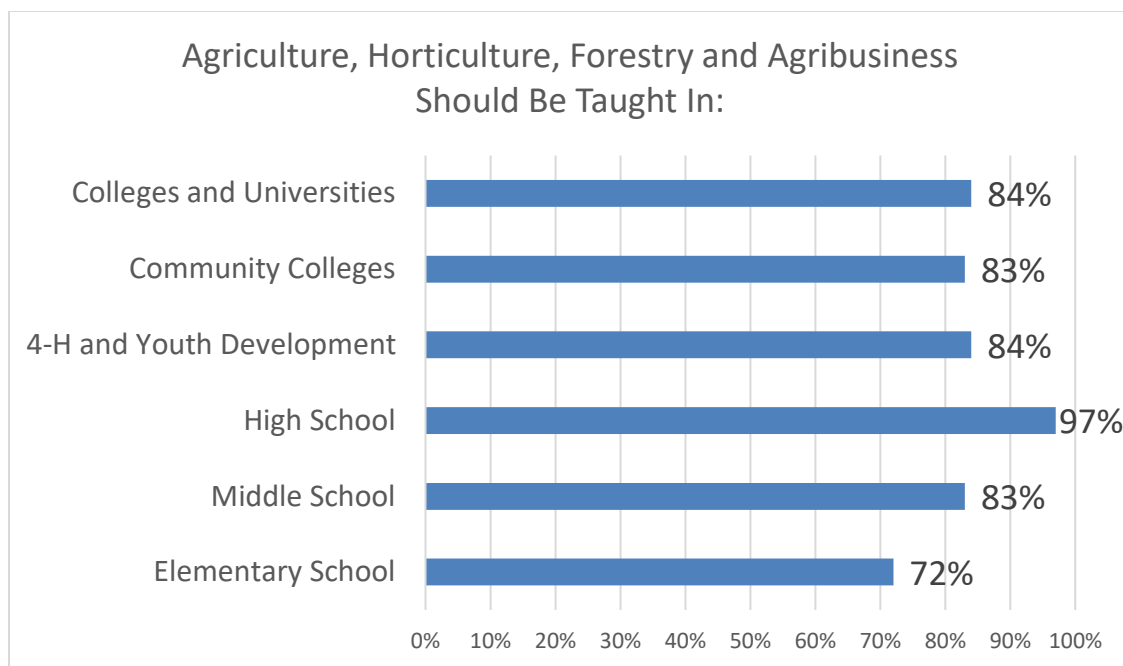


Table 3. Source: Rowan Producer Survey 2022

Surveyed farmers in Rowan County (92%) were in favor of government funds to support agriculture and agricultural economic development in the county.

Interviews were conducted with a cross-section of farmers to obtain their opinions on the issues, challenges and opportunities impacting agriculture in Rowan County. The following were stated as issues that impacted family farms as well as the perpetuity and profitability of these operations:

- Housing and commercial development pressures. Farmers see the influx of new housing developments taking over prime farmland. Development is causing land prices to increase and making it hard for farmers to hold on to existing farmland. Increased land prices lead to higher property taxes. Development is adding more traffic to country roadways causing problems for moving farm equipment.
- Lack of understanding among county elected officials and non-farm residents of the importance of agriculture to the economy and culture of Rowan County. County government is seen as pro development.

- Need for farm and estate transition planning. All farmers interviewed recognized the importance of planning, but only a small percentage had formal plans. Issues related to estate planning identified included no one in next generations to take over farming, equitable treatment of all heirs, and estate taxes.
- Drainage issues due to increased housing development. Drainage ditches are being filled in by housing developers resulting in flooding during rain events and increased debris in waterways.
- High input costs. Farmers expressed concern over the expense of new equipment and technology. Increased labor cost and shortage of qualified labor was also an issue. Low commodity prices make it hard to justify investments in new technology.

Agribusiness Survey and Interview Analysis

Agribusinesses provide essential resources and services vital to the success and profitability of agriculture production services. Agribusinesses, just as any other business, provide jobs and employment, which stimulate the local economy. Agribusiness respondents represented feed dealers, financial/insurance brokers, equipment dealers, agriculture and crop consultants, agriculture processors/distributors, produce marketers, agri-tourism operators, and horticultural services. Sixty-four percent of respondents agribusinesses have been in operation more than 20 years, while 36 percent have been in business for less than 20 years.

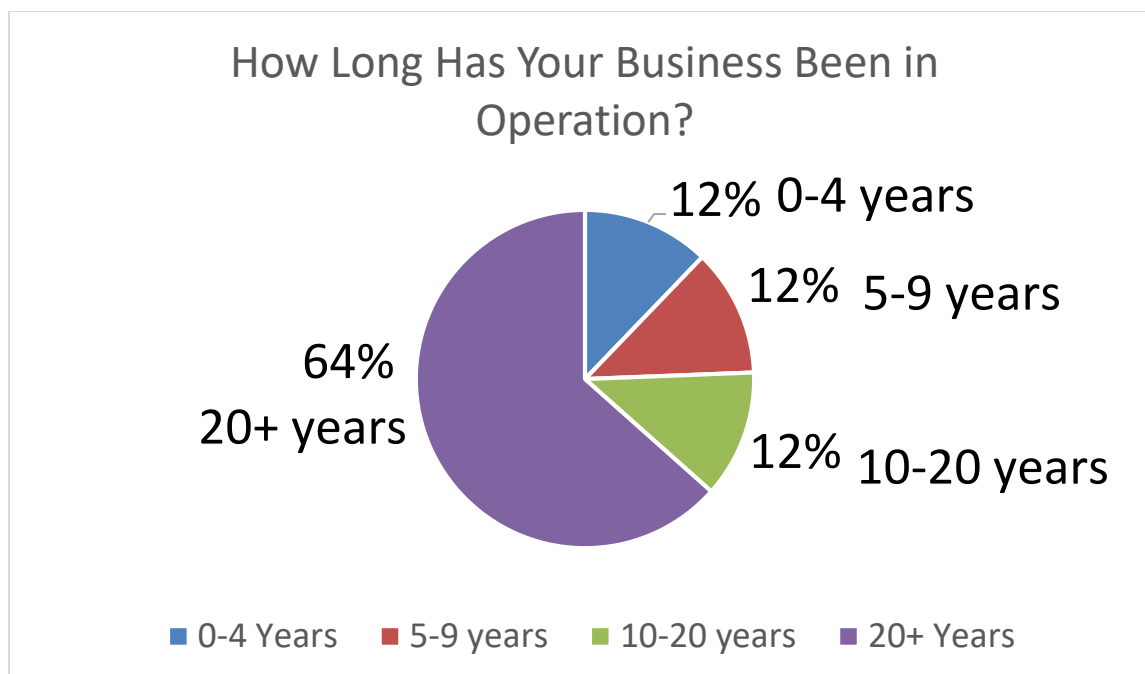


Figure 7. Rowan County Agribusiness Survey 2022

Agribusinesses surveyed (38 percent) recognized that 0-24 percent of their business was generated from the farm community. The majority surveyed (62 percent) reported that the farm community was responsible for the majority (more than half) of their business clientele (Figure 8). Though these agribusinesses offer agricultural services, many also provide services and products that meet the needs of non-farm residents and industries. In the last five years, 63 percent of agribusinesses surveyed have increased the size of their operations. The same percentage (63 percent) reported an increase of agricultural inventories and sales. As non-farm populations continue to grow, agribusinesses (88%) will continue to seek ways to service non-farm residents, which will provide additional support for these agribusinesses.

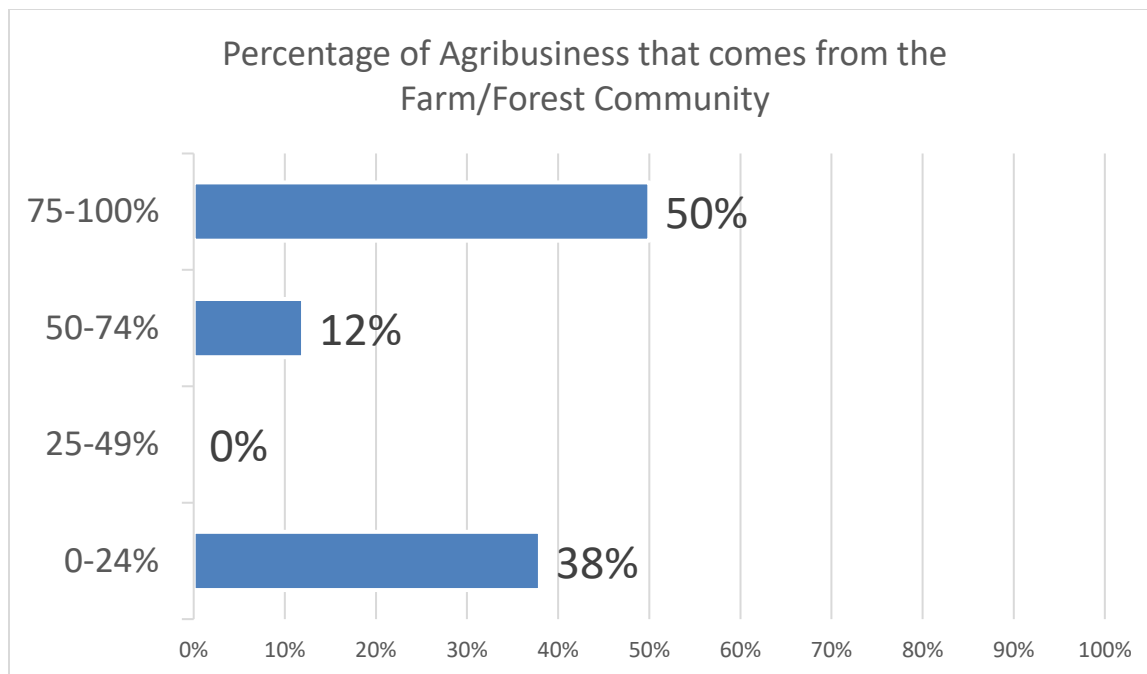


Figure 8. Source: Rowan County Agribusiness Survey 2022

Agribusiness owners also noted trends in agricultural production that could have impacts on their operations including, but not limited to, an increase in the number of small farms, a change to new types of farms, shift to more sophisticated farm operations, fewer large farms, more specialty and direct market operations, and more farm diversification. These trends are being driven by population increase, desire for farm value-added products and change in farm technology. Seventy-five percent of agribusinesses interviewed indicated that they would modify business to adapt to trends.

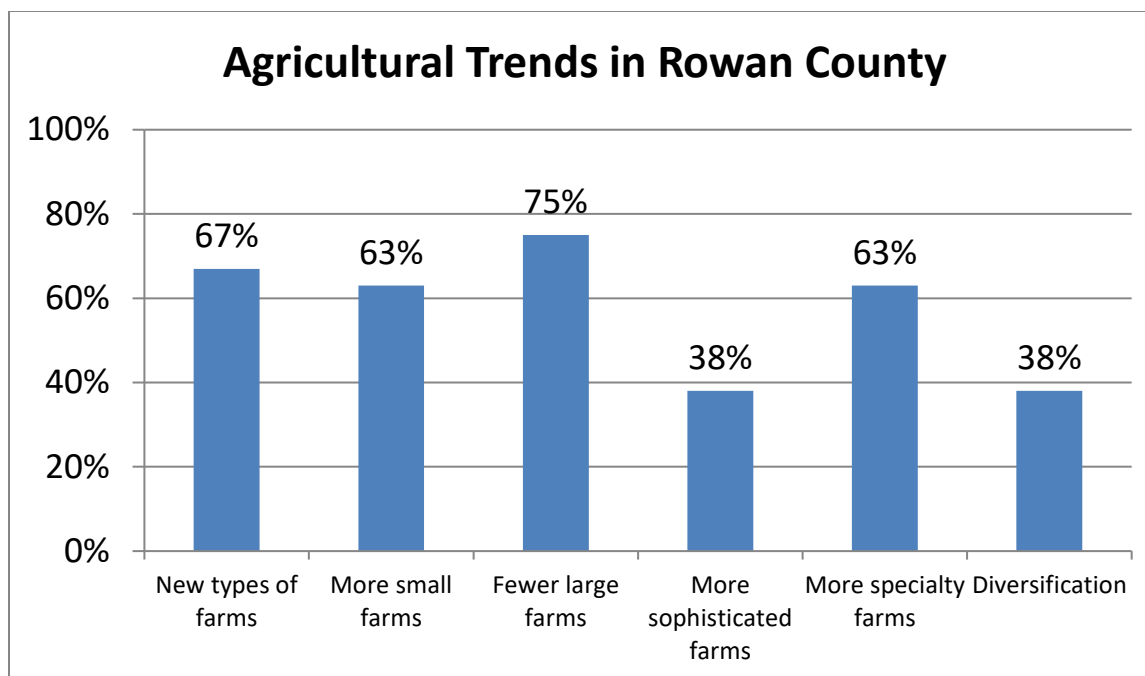


Table 4. Source: Rowan County Agribusiness Survey 2022

Following is a list of challenges and opportunities expressed by the respondents that will have an effect on agriculture in the future.

- One hundred percent of agribusiness respondents identified farm transition and estate planning as a major issue in Rowan County. They also expressed the need for professional assistance and training in transition and estate planning.
- One hundred percent of agribusiness respondents indicated that agriculture and agribusiness should be promoted as a career opportunity.
- One hundred percent of agribusiness respondents noted the importance of education of Rowan County citizens on the impact of agriculture and agribusiness on the county's economic viability.
- Forty-three percent of agribusiness respondents have problems with labor issues, especially being able to provide required health insurance and other benefits.
- One hundred percent of survey respondents saw a need for consumer education on economic impact of buying local in Rowan County.

- All of those questioned said that youth education in the field of agriculture is of great importance, and continued support of these programs in secondary and post-secondary schools is essential to the future of agriculture.
- Eighty-six percent of those surveyed noted agri-tourism was a viable opportunity for agricultural expansion in Currituck County.
- Eighty-six percent of respondents believe that government funding should be used to promote agricultural development.

When asked what would provide additional assurance of success in their business, fifty-seven percent identified succession planning training and the need for adequate financing to maintain or expand their businesses. Forty-three percent have a need for training on new technology in farming. (Table 5)

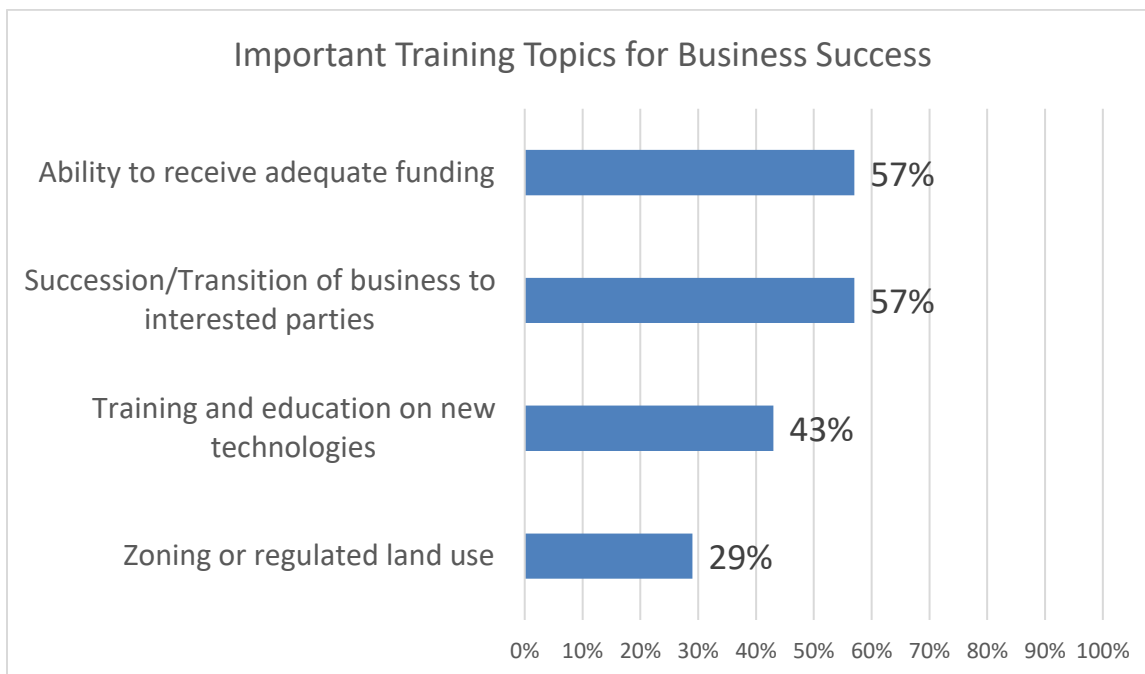


Table 5. Source: Rowan County Agribusiness Survey 2022

Rowan County Agribusiness leaders also identified several challenges and threats for farms and forests:

- Threat from housing development, industrial expansion, and urbanization takes farmland out of production.

- Lack of qualified labor force.
- Lack of agricultural education among non-farm citizens and elected officials. Increasingly, the general public doesn't know where their food comes from, nor do they understand how food is produced.
- The cost of new agricultural technology, while necessary for efficiency, is squeezing profit margins for farmers.
- The lack of succession planning among farmers and land owners.

Rowan County Agribusiness leaders identified the following opportunities:

- More young people becoming involved in agriculture
- Quality of Vocational Agriculture and 4-H Youth Development
- Agritourism expansion
- Small farms- Local foods movement
- New technologies available in agriculture

Agribusiness enterprise owners recognize the value of farming to the economy and environment of Rowan County. Opportunities are limitless for developing new agricultural markets.

Non-Farm Resident Survey and Interview Analysis

Rowan County is home to people of diverse backgrounds. Some have lived in Rowan County their whole lives and others have chosen to relocate or retire in the county. The survey respondents represent an unbiased perspective of agriculture in the county. The majority (74%) that participated in the survey have lived in Rowan 20 years or more. Seventy-eight percent have lived near a farm or forest operation, with 60 percent currently living within one-quarter mile of a farm or timber operation. A positive result of this close relationship with agriculture is that 95 percent stated that farmers are good neighbors. With this in mind, 80 percent have not experienced a problem with their farm or forest neighbor.

When problems have arisen, the respondents listed the following:

- Slow moving vehicles
- Pesticide use
- Manure application
- Odors
- Timber harvest

When asked about the state of agriculture as a viable industry in Rowan County, 52% percent of respondents felt that farming is holding its own and has some potential for future growth. Thirty-two percent thought agriculture is an expanding industry with significant growth potential. Sixteen percent said that agriculture has no potential for future growth in Rowan County.

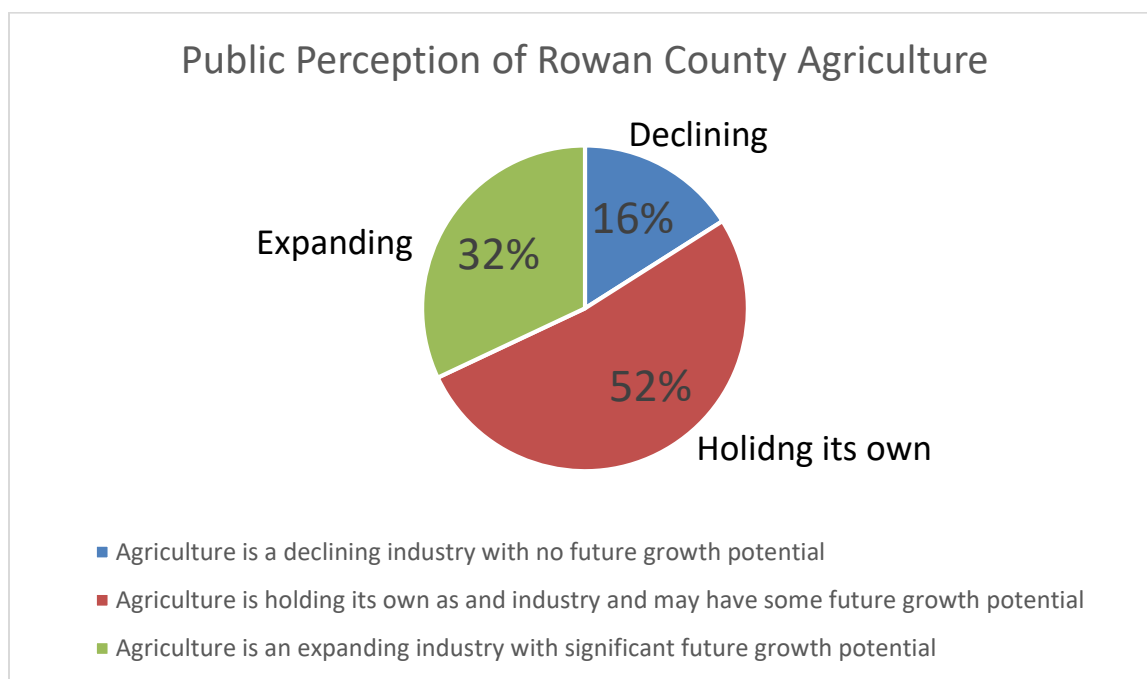


Figure 9. Source: Rowan Non-Farm Residents Survey 2022

Rowan County non-farm residents have a good understanding of the economic impact of the entire agricultural sector on the county's economy (Figure 9). The agricultural industry had a total economic impact of \$427,357,418 to Rowan County in 2008 according to Mike Walden's Agriculture and Agribusiness in Rowan County report⁸¹.

Ninety-six percent of surveyed non-farm residents felt that Rowan County should take steps to help preserve farms and forests. Ninety-four percent of respondents reported that they support local farming by purchasing local produce from farmers markets; pick-your-own operations, and roadside stands. Eighty-nine percent of non-farm residents say that they purchase plants from local greenhouses and nurseries. Additionally, 58 percent have participated in agritourism activities such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches and hayrides.

The statistics below reveal non-farm residents agreement or disagreement with statements about agriculture in the Rowan County.

- 98 percent agreed farms and forests enhance scenic beauty and open space
- 94 percent agreed farmers are good neighbors
- 99 percent agreed that local farmers deliver high quality products
- 92 percent agreed that farming has a positive impact on the environment
- 80 percent stated that farming and agribusiness are high technology businesses
- 68 percent agreed farming presents a good career for enterprising people
- 95 percent agreed that agriculture and forestry as viable career opportunities
- 89 percent stated that tax breaks for farmers are important
- 99 percent would support farm and forest preservation efforts in the county
- 95 percent would support the use of government funds for farm and forest development

These statements clearly illustrate that non-farm residents surveyed have a positive image of agriculture in the county.

Personal interviews with non-farm residents substantiated the finding in the surveys. The interviewees were 100 percent in support of farmland preservation efforts in Rowan County and were in favor of using local government funding to ensure policies and programs that encourage the preservation of agriculture.

The following statements from non-farm residents in Rowan County revealed the following threats:

- Expansion of housing developments, subdivisions
- Urban sprawl
- Solar farms
- Increasing value of developed land as opposed to the value of agricultural land
- Farmland being sold for development
- Age of farmers
- Younger generation not continuing to farm, selling land for development
- Lack of county support for agriculture
- High input costs
- No incentives or grants to start a farm
- Logging/deforestation
- Wildlife habitat destruction
- Government regulations and taxes
- Lack of understanding of the importance of agriculture among elected officials and general public

Potential opportunities as seen by non-farm residents:

- Specialty farming
- Produce farming
- Educational opportunities in schools, FFA and 4-H
- Roadside markets
- Good farm land
- Multiple generational farming
- Forest stewardship and expansion
- Tourism from Charlotte and Winston-Salem
- Close proximity to major highways for shipping
- More educational opportunities for public and public officials
- More careful thought when rezoning farmland
- Agritourism
- Buying local foods
- Distilleries, breweries and wineries
- Land trusts to preserve present farmland

Non-farm residents value Rowan County agriculture and are in favor of preserving and enhancing this vital economic sector. Housing development is the greatest threat to loss of farmland perceived by non-farm residents. It is critically important to have a citizenry and elected officials that are supportive of the preservation of the agricultural industry.

Recommendations

The major result of the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan is a set of recommendations with action steps that, when implemented, will bring about desired change. These steps are based on input from citizens affected by the plan as well as other agricultural sources. The following recommendations are extrapolated from data obtained through interviews and surveys of Rowan County farmers, agribusinesses and citizens and data from USDA and NCDA&CS.

For this plan to be effective, Rowan County citizens, leaders, agencies and organizations must follow through with support and collaboration of these recommendations. This plan needs to be evaluated annually to remain up-to-date and viable. The annual update will ensure that recommendations are being accomplished and new ones are added as needed. Following are the recommendations that can be used to maintain and enhance agricultural working lands in Rowan County.

Recommendation One: Support Measures to Protect and Promote Working Forest and Farmland in Rowan County.

Endorsement, certification and advocacy of the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan are critical to protecting and enhancing agriculture in the county. Once the plan is endorsed by the Rowan County Board of Commissioners and certified by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the county will receive priority status for funding from the NCDA&CS's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund for agricultural projects. Though residents largely support agriculture, added education and understanding is needed. County officials should be continually informed of agricultural information affecting Rowan County.

Utilization of the Cost of Community Services Study (COCS) to increase awareness and guide leadership as development of working lands are considered. Most communities fail to realize that saving land saves money. While residents demand expensive public services and infrastructure, privately-owned working lands enhance community character and quality of

life without requiring significant public expenditures. Their fiscal contributions typically are overlooked, but like other commercial and industrial land uses, agricultural (farm, ranch and forest) lands generate surplus revenues that play an essential role in balancing community budgets. This, perhaps, is the most important lesson learned from Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies.

COCS studies provide a baseline of information to help local officials and citizens make informed land use decisions. They offer the benefit of hindsight to see the effect of development patterns to date. They also demonstrate the fiscal importance of privately owned land in farm and forest uses.

The threat expressed by all target audiences included housing and commercial development pressures. Development causing land prices to increase makes it hard for farmers to hold on to existing farmland. An additional threat is a lack of understanding among non-farm residents as to the importance of agriculture to the economy and culture of Rowan County. One respondent stated that local leaders and residents don't fully understand the economic impact of agriculture and forestry to the county and the region. The Working Agricultural Lands Plan and Rowan County Cost of Community Services Study are tools that can assist in reducing these threats if used as tools for preservation of working lands. These and other tools exist which can be of assistance to local leaders as planning and development occurs. Utility of tools may not eliminate the spread of development in Rowan County, but they can contribute to the awareness of the importance of farms and forests to the economic stability of the county and a need for balanced development.

Action Steps:

- Present the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan to the Board of Commissioners for endorsement and submit to NCDA&CS for certification.

Timeline: February 20, 2023, 6 pm Rowan County Board of Commissioners meeting.

- Annually review the plan for progress and addition/adjustment of any needed recommendations.

Timeline: 2023 and annually thereafter.

- Encourage the Rowan County Board of Commissioners to authorize a COCS for Rowan County. County Commissioners, developers, and planners can utilize and evaluate the results of the COCS for Rowan County and the impact of their decisions on the future land use in the county.

Timeline: 2024 apply for ADFP funds for COCS funds.

- Utilize all available media outlets to inform county leadership and the public about the plan's progress and success.

Timeline: ongoing.

- Develop and implement an educational program for farmers and landowners regarding available farmland preservation tools and incentives suited for Rowan County.

Timeline: 2023-2024.

- Continue to educate landowners and farmers as to the benefits of the Present Use Value Taxation Program. Continue to encourage and assist with enrollment and ensure all eligible landowners enroll.

Timeline: November 2022, Spring 2023, annually afterwards

- Encourage local government, economic developers, land developers, planners, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to work with the Rowan County Agricultural Advisory Board to engage with one another and share information about county projects that impact agricultural production.

Timeline: 2023 – collaborate with Planning and Zoning board.

Responsible Parties:

The Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Committee, Rowan Cooperative Extension, Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District, Rowan Natural Resource Conservation Service, North Carolina Forest Service, Rowan County Planning and Development Department, Rowan Economic Development Commission, Rowan County Board of Commissioners, Three Rivers Land Conservancy, Farm Service Agency, Rowan Farm Bureau Young Farmers Group, Rowan Farm Bureau.

Recommendation Two: Educate Landowners on the Benefits of Enrolling in Conservation Easement Programs to Keep Land Available for Agricultural Uses.

A conservation easement is a written agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or public agency and to restrict subdivision, non-farm development and other uses that are incompatible with commercial agriculture. For donated land, landowners can qualify for federal income tax deduction and a state income tax credit. A conservation easement can be sold by the landowner through Purchase of Development Rights or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement programs. North Carolina and the federal government have limited funds for these programs. The development of local financial resources can attract more landowners to place farm and forestland in conservation easements.

Action Steps:

- Develop local funding through government and private sources to augment state and federal funds to entice landowners to participate in conservation easement funding.

Timeline: 2023 - Soil and Water District investigate outside sources of funding.

- Design and implement a marketing plan to educate landowners on the benefits of conservation easement as a land preservation tool.

Timeline: 2023 - partner with tourism to develop a marketing plan.

- Appropriate agency staff will encourage and assist landowner with the understanding and enrollment in conservation easement programs.

Timeline: 2023.

Responsible Parties:

Rowan Soil and Water Conservation District, Rowan Cooperative Extension, Rowan Working Agricultural Lands Committee, Rowan Farm Bureau Board, USDA Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rowan County Tax Office, Rowan County Register of Deeds, and the Rowan County Board of Commissioners, Three Rivers Land Trust, Carolina Farm Credit, James River John Deere, Rowan County Tourism Board.

Recommendation Three: Expand Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) Programs

Rowan County has 332 farms and 11,000 acres enrolled in Voluntary Agricultural Districts and 41 farms and 1,818 acres enrolled in Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts.

Action Steps:

- The Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Committee will provide leadership in promoting Rowan County VAD and EVAD ordinances.
Timeline: Spring 2023.
- Design and implement a marketing plan using all available media to educate farmers, landowners, developers and realtors as to the benefits of the VAD ordinance.
Timeline: Spring 2023.
- Have appropriate agency staff encourage and assist landowners with understanding and enrolling in VAD and EVAD.
Timeline: Winter 2022-2023.

Responsible Parties:

Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Committee, Rowan County Cooperative Extension, Rowan County Soil and Water Conservation District, Rowan County Farm Bureau Board, Rowan County Tax Office, Rowan County Register of Deeds, Rowan County Planning and Development Department and the Rowan County Board of Commissioners, Rowan Ag Advisory Board, Three Rivers Land Trust, Rowan County Tourism Board.

Recommendation Four: Develop and Conduct Programs to Assist Rowan County Farm and Forest Landowners with Farm Transition Planning.

The average age of farmers in Rowan County was 57.1 years in 2017. According to surveyed farmers, more than 63 percent do not have farm transition plans. Additionally, interviews with farm lending authorities showed lack of farm transition planning as a leading concern about the future of agriculture in the area. Sixty-five percent of farmers surveyed indicated a

willingness to train an intern/young farmer with their farming operation to encourage the next generation to enter production agriculture.

Action Steps:

- Plan and conduct a series of workshops that use a variety of specialists and agencies to provide information on farm transition and estate planning.
Timeline: Nov. 30, 2022- ongoing.
- Develop an apprenticeship program in which young farmers work with experience producers to learn more about agricultural production and gain more knowledge about transition opportunities.
Timeline: 2024 - research and implement successful models.
- Support the Rowan County Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers organization with information on the importance of farm transitions.
Timeline: ongoing.
- Identify farmers willing to investigate innovative strategies for farm transition with beginning farmers.
Timeline: 2023

Responsible Parties:

The Rowan County Agricultural Working Agricultural Lands Committee, Rowan County Cooperative Extension, Rowan County Farm Bureau Board, Carolina Farm Credit, University of Mount Olive Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center, Local attorneys, agricultural economic specialists, Boots on Ground, NC Farm School.

Recommendation Five: Promote Appreciation and Awareness of the Benefits of Agriculture to Rowan County Elected Officials and Citizens.

Today, the majority of the general population is removed from farming and agribusiness. The public needs to understand the importance of agriculture to the local economy. Additionally, non-farm residents need to appreciate where food and fiber is produced. Respondents surveyed and interviewed voiced concerns that agriculture was not adequately represented on local governing bodies. Understanding agriculture will provide stronger relationships

between producers and consumers as well as additional support for local farms.

Action Steps:

- Conduct a Cost of Services plan for Rowan County to show the economic impact of development versus agricultural production.
Timeline: 2024-2026 as referenced in Recommendation one.
- Develop a comprehensive agriculture awareness plan and determine all feasible delivery methods such as social media, speakers' bureau, print and broadcast media.
Timeline: 2024.
- Continue annual Rowan County agricultural promotion events and tours to promote diverse operations including forestry, row crop farming, animal production, road-side markets, wine and beer production, specialty crops and agritourism.
Timeline: 2023 ongoing.
- Develop presentations that show the role of agriculture in Rowan County to be shared with civic, school and religious organizations.
Timeline: Fall 2023.
- Expand and promote events that highlight local foods.
Timeline: 2022 meat suite, 2023 Visit NC Farms App.
- Involve 4-H and FFA members in the promotion of agriculture by conducting a VAD sign design contest.
Timeline: 2023.

Responsible Parties:

Rowan County Cooperative Extension, Rowan County Farm Bureau Board, Rowan County Grange, Rowan-Salisbury Public School System, Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, Catawba College, Livingstone College, Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Rowan County Tourism, Rowan County Chamber Agriculture Committee.

Recommendation Six: Promote, Expand and Support Youth Agricultural Education Programs.

Agribusiness leaders, farmers, and non-farm residents were all in favor of youth agricultural education as a vital component to ensure the future of Rowan County agriculture.

Action Steps:

- Encourage youth to participate in all agricultural organizations such as FFA and 4-H in order to develop leadership skills and engage in agricultural experiences.
Timeline: 2023 on going.
- Support teacher training for expansion of NC Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom curriculum for primary and elementary students.
Timeline: EFNEP position funded 2024, 4H curriculum program assistant 2025-26.
- Work with funders, both public and private, to provide needed resources for 4-H and FFA programs.
Timeline: 2024.
- Promote agriculture as part of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiative in the public school system.
Timeline: 2023 on going.

Responsible Parties:

Rowan County Cooperative Extension, Rowan County Farm Bureau Board, Rowan County Grange, Rowan-Salisbury Public School System, Salisbury Academy, Faith Charter Academy, Essie Mae Charter School, Henderson Alternative High School, North Hills Christian, Sacred Heart, Yadkin Path Montessori, Rowan County Home School Association, Catawba College, Livingstone College, Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Novant, Rowan County Health Department, Healthy Rowan.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Rowan County Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance

Chapter 8.5 - FARMLAND PRESERVATION^[1]

Footnotes:

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Editor's note—An amendment adopted Mar. 7, 2011, amended ch. 8.5 in its entirety to read as herein set out. Former ch. 8.5 pertained to the same subject matter and derived from ordinances adopted July 19, 1990; Apr. 6, 1995; Sept. 7, 2004, and an amendment of Aug. 6, 2007.

Cross reference— Administration, Ch. 2; soil erosion and sedimentation, Ch. 18; hazardous, infectious and low-level radioactive waste, § 19-101 et seq.; zoning, Ch. 21.

State Law reference— Authority to adopt, G.S. 106-735—106-743.

ARTICLE I. - IN GENERAL

Sec. 8.5-1. - Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of the county and more specifically, increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life; encourage the economic and financial health of agriculture, horticulture and forestry.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-2. - Authority.

This chapter is adopted under the authority and provisions of G.S. 106-735 through 106-743 and 153A-121 thru 153A-122.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-3. - Definitions.

The following are defined for the purposes of this chapter:

Board shall mean the county agricultural advisory board established under state law.

Chairman shall mean the chairman of the county agricultural advisory board.

District shall mean voluntary agricultural district (VAD) as established in this chapter.

Enhanced district shall mean an enhanced voluntary agricultural district (EVAD) as established by this chapter.

Farmer shall mean, for the purposes of this chapter, an individual actively engaged in the operation, production or managing of agricultural land, forestland, or horticultural land as defined in G.S. 105-277.2.

Nuisance shall mean an action that is injurious to health, indecent, offensive to the senses, or an obstruction to the free use of property.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Cross reference— Rules of construction and definitions, § 1-3.

Secs. 8.5-4—8.5-20. - Reserved.

ARTICLE II. - AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

Sec. 8.5-21. - Created.

A county agricultural advisory board, to consist of five (5) members appointed by the board of commissioners, is hereby established.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-22. - Membership.

- (a) Requirements. Each board member shall be a county resident. Three (3) of the five (5) members shall be actively engaged in farming and shall be selected from the names of individuals submitted to the board of commissioners by the soil and water conservation district, the cooperative extension advisory council, the farm service agency or by application to the board of commissioners.
- (b) Tenure. The members are to serve for terms of three (3) years, except that the initial board is to consist of one (1) appointee for a term of one (1) year, two (2) appointees for terms of two (2) years, and two (2) appointees for terms of three (3) years. Thereafter, all appointments are to be for a maximum of two (2) three-year terms or until replacement has been appointed.
- (c) Vacancies. Any vacancy on the agricultural advisory board is to be filled by the board of commissioners for the remainder of the unexpired term.
- (d) Removal for cause. Agricultural advisory board members may be removed by the board of commissioners at any time for failure to attend twenty-five (25) percent or three (3) consecutive meetings within any twelve-month period (excepting excused absence) or for any other good cause related to performance of duties or when no longer actively engaged in farming during tenure for those appointed as a farming representative pursuant to subsection 8.5-22(a).

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-23. - Funding.

Funds may be appropriated to the board to perform its duties based on approval by the board of commissioners.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-24. - Procedure.

- (a) Chairman. The board is to elect a chairman and vice-chairman each year at its first meeting following the appointment of new members or reappointment of existing members. The chairman shall preside over all regular or special meetings of the board. In the absence or disability of the chairman, the vice-chairman shall preside and shall have and exercise all the powers of the chairman so absent or disabled. Additional officers may be elected as needed.

- (b) Jurisdiction. The jurisdiction and procedures of the board are to be as set out herein, except that the board may adopt supplementary rules of procedure not inconsistent with this chapter or with other provisions of law.
- (c) Board year. The board will use the county fiscal year as its meeting year.
- (d) Meetings. Meetings of the board, following such notice as is required by this chapter, shall be held at the call of the chairman and at such other time as the board in its rules of procedure may specify. A called meeting will be held at least every two (2) months.
- (e) Majority vote. The concurring vote of a majority of the members of the board shall be necessary to reverse any order, requirement, decision or determination of any administrative official or agency, to decide in favor of an applicant or to pass upon any other matter on which it is required to act under this chapter.
- (f) Records. The board shall keep minutes of the proceedings showing the vote of each member upon each question or, if absent or failing to vote, indicating such fact and shall keep records of its examinations and other official actions, all of which shall be immediately filed in the office of the board and shall be a public record.
- (g) Administrative. Both the soil and water conservation district office and the county planning department will serve the board for recordkeeping, correspondence, application procedures under this chapter and whatever other services the board needs to complete its duties.
- (h) Decisions. All decisions will be sent to the board of commissioners for final disposition.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-25. - Duties.

The agricultural advisory board shall:

- (1) Review and recommend approval of applications for qualified farmland enrollment in either enhanced or voluntary agricultural districts and make recommendations concerning the establishment and modification of said districts. All decisions will be sent to the board of commissioners for final disposition.
- (2) Hold public hearings pursuant to sections 8.5-61 and 8.5-62 of this chapter.
- (3) Advise the board of commissioners on projects, programs or issues affecting the agricultural economy or activities within the county and that will affect agricultural districts.
- (4) Perform other related tasks or duties assigned by the board of commissioners.
- (5) Each district shall be assigned to a member of the board who will monitor and represent that district in all business conducted by the board. Insofar as possible, individual members will represent those districts closest to them geographically. Insofar as possible, no member will represent more than thirty (30) percent of the total number of districts in the county or thirty (30) percent of total land area.
- (6) May develop, and maintain if approved, a countywide farmland protection plan as defined in G.S. 106-744(e) for presentation and consideration to the board of commissioners.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Secs. 8.5-26—8.5-40. - Reserved.

ARTICLE III. - APPLICATION, CERTIFICATION OF QUALIFYING FARMLAND, ENHANCED AND VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Sec. 8.5-41. - Requirements.

- (a) To secure county certification as qualifying farmland, a farm must be:
 - (1) Participating in the farm present-use-value taxation program established by G.S. 105-277.2 through 105-277.7 or is otherwise determined by the county to meet all the qualifications of this program set forth in G.S. 105-277.3.
 - (2) Managed, if highly erodible land exists on the farm, in accordance with the Natural Resource Conservation Service defined erosion-control practices that are addressed to such highly erodible land.
 - (3) The subject of a conservation agreement, as defined in G.S. 121-35, between the county and the owner of such land that prohibits nonfarm use or development of such land for a period of at least ten (10) years, except for the creation of not more than three (3) lots that meet applicable county zoning and subdivision regulations.
- (b) Voluntary agricultural districts. To form or be included in a voluntary agricultural district, a landowner may apply to the chairman for such inclusion at the same time he applies for qualifying farmland certification or at any time subsequent to receiving qualifying farmland certification:
 - (1) The purpose of voluntary agricultural districts formed by landowners shall be to encourage the economic and financial health of farming areas, to increase protection from nuisance suits, undesired nonfarm development and other negative impacts on participating farms and to increase the identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life.
 - (2) Requirements to participate:
 - a. An agricultural district shall consist of all qualified participating farms within a township of Rowan County.
 - b. An agreement to sustain, encourage and promote agriculture must be executed by the landowners in the district with the county and recorded with the register of deeds.
 - c. Must have plan on file with the Natural Resource Conservation Service or the United States Forestry Service.
 - (3) Landowners may apply to participate in existing districts and are encouraged to do so.
- (c) Enhanced voluntary agricultural districts (EVAD).
 - (1) The enhanced voluntary agricultural district will provide additional benefits to farmers than the current voluntary agricultural district program.
 - (2) Benefits.
 - a. The benefits applied to property included in a voluntary agricultural district pursuant to this chapter also apply to property included in an enhanced voluntary agricultural district.
 - b. Property participating in the EVAD program may receive up to twenty-five (25) percent of its gross sales from the sale of nonfarm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm that is exempt from zoning regulations under G.S. 153A-340(b).
 - c. A person who farms land that is subject to an irrevocable conservation agreement pursuant to subsection 8.5-41(c)(3) of this chapter is eligible to receive the higher percentage of cost-share funds for the benefit of that farmland under the agriculture cost share program pursuant to G.S. 143-215.74(b).
 - d. State departments, institutions, or agencies that award grants to farmers are encouraged pursuant to G.S. 106-743.4(c) to give priority consideration to any person who farms land that is subject to an irrevocable conservation agreement per subsection 8.5-41(c)(3) of this chapter.

- (3) Conservation agreement. The conservation agreement entered into between the agriculture advisory board and the landowner pursuant to G.S. 106-743.1(a)(2) shall be irrevocable for a period of ten (10) years from the date the agreement is executed. Enforcement or revocation contrary to the terms of the conservation agreement may be enforced by the provisions contained in subsections 8.5-45(a) and (b) of this chapter. At the end of its term, a conservation agreement shall automatically renew for a term of three (3) years, unless notice of termination is given in a timely manner by either party as prescribed in this chapter. The benefits outlined in subsection 8.5-41(c)(2) of this chapter shall be available to the farmland for the duration of the conservation agreement. The applicant will be provided full disclosure of the details and requirements of the program in writing thirty (30) days prior to consideration of the EVAD application by the agricultural advisory board.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-42. - Procedure.

- (a) To secure county certification as a qualifying farm and, if so desired by the applicant, as an agricultural district, a landowner for such certification will apply to the chairman of the agricultural advisory board. Application forms may be obtained from the chairman.
- (b) Upon receipt of an application, the chairman will forward copies immediately to:
 - (1) The local tax assessor's office.
 - (2) The local office of the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture for their evaluation pursuant to section 8.5-41. Such offices shall evaluate, complete and return their copies to the chairman within thirty (30) days of receipt.
- (c) Within sixty (60) days of receipt back from the local tax assessor and NRCS offices, the advisory board will meet and render a recommendation to the board of commissioners regarding the application(s). The board of commissioners will notify the applicant by mail if the real property for which certification is sought satisfies the criteria established in article II and if the land has been certified as qualifying farmland, and also as an enhanced or voluntary agricultural district, if application was so sought.
- (d) If an application is denied by the board of commissioners, the landowner may, within ten (10) days of notification of disapproval of the application, request in writing that the board of commissioners reconsider its decision. The request for reconsideration shall state the reason(s) therefore. Upon either an initial denial, if no request for reconsideration was made, or denial after reconsideration, the landowner shall have thirty (30) days from the date of notification to appeal the decision through the appropriate legal process.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-43. - Identification on county records.

Enhanced and voluntary agricultural districts will be marked on county maps displayed for public view in the following county offices:

- (1) Register of deeds.
- (2) Code enforcement.
- (3) Tax supervisor.
- (4) Soil and water conservation district.
- (5) Agricultural extension.
- (6) County planning.

- (7) Any other office deemed necessary by the board.
- (8) County's GIS website.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-44. - Public information program.

The county may take such action as it deems appropriate through the agricultural advisory board or other body or individual to encourage the formation of enhanced or voluntary agricultural districts and to further their purposes and objectives, including at a minimum a public information program to reasonably inform landowners of the farmland preservation program.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-45. - Revocation of conservation agreement; procedure.

Revocation by the landowner or the agricultural advisory board shall follow the procedures as prescribed below for the respective district type:

- (a) Voluntary agricultural district (VAD). By providing thirty (30) days advance written notice to the advisory board, a landowner of qualifying farmland within a VAD may request revocation of the conservation agreement or the advisory board may recommend revocation of the same conservation agreement based on noncompliance by the landowner, subject to the same provisions as contained in subsection 8.5-42(d) of this chapter. After review and decision by the board of commissioners such revocation shall result in loss of qualifying farm status and loss of eligibility to participate in a VAD. If the board of commissioners shall revoke this conservation agreement for cause, the landowner shall have the appeal rights set forth in subsection 8.5-42(d) of this chapter. Transfers of land in a VAD due to death of the landowner, sale or gift shall not revoke the conservation agreement unless the land no longer qualifies for the present-use-value taxation program or, in the event that there are water or sewer assessments held in abeyance, the new owner(s) fails to agree in writing to accept liability for those assessments in the event that the land is withdrawn either voluntarily or involuntarily from the VAD. Enforcement of the terms of a conservation agreement for land enrolled in a VAD shall be limited to revocation of the conservation agreement and the benefits derived therefrom. A notice of revocation shall be recorded in the county land record system sufficient to provide notice that the land has been withdrawn from the voluntary agricultural district program.
- (b) Enhanced voluntary agricultural district (EVAD). Conservation agreements for land within EVAD are irrevocable for a period of ten (10) years. Enforcement of the terms of the conservation agreement may be through an action for injunctive relief and/or damages in any court of competent jurisdiction. The board of commissioners may also terminate any benefits to the owner under this program either permanently or during the period of violation, as appropriate. If the board of commissioners shall revoke this conservation agreement for cause, the landowner shall have the appeal rights set forth in subsection 8.5-42(d) of this chapter. The right to terminate program benefits is in addition to any legal rights that the county may have under either this chapter or the terms of the applicable conservation agreement. The county may seek costs of the action including reasonable attorney fees if such a provision is incorporated into the conservation agreement. A notice of revocation shall be recorded in the county land record system sufficient to provide notice that the land has been withdrawn from the enhanced voluntary agricultural district program.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Secs. 8.5-46—8.5-60. - Reserved.

ARTICLE IV. - PUBLIC HEARINGS

Sec. 8.5-61. - Purpose.

Pursuant to G.S. 106-740, which provides that no state or local public agency or governmental unit may formally initiate any action to condemn any interest in qualifying farmland within an enhanced or voluntary agricultural district until such agency or unit has requested the local agricultural advisory board to hold a public hearing on the proposed condemnation, this article provides for such hearings.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-62. - Procedure.

- (a) Upon receiving a request, the agricultural advisory board shall publish notice describing the proposed action in the appropriate newspapers of the area within two (2) days of the request and will, in the same notice, notify the public of a public hearing on the proposed condemnation, to be held within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the request.
- (b) The board will meet to review:
 - (1) If the need for the project has been satisfactorily established by the agency or unit of government involved, including a review of any fiscal impact analysis conducted by the agency involved.
 - (2) Alternatives to the proposed action that are less impactful and disruptive to the agricultural activities and farmland base of the voluntary agricultural district within which the proposed action is to take place.
- (c) The board will consult with the county agricultural extension agent, U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service personnel and planner, and may consult with any other individuals, agencies or organizations, public or private, necessary to the board's review of the proposed action.
- (d) Within ten (10) days after the public hearings, the board will make a report containing its findings and recommendations regarding the proposed action. The report will be made available to the public for comment prior to a final public hearing/decision by the board of commissioners. Following the commission's decision, the final report will be conveyed to the decision-making body of the agency proposing acquisition and/or condemnation.
- (e) Pursuant to G.S. 106-740, the county will not permit any formal initiation of condemnation action by local agencies while the proposed condemnation is properly before the advisory board within these time limitations.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Secs. 8.5-63—8.5-80. - Reserved.

ARTICLE V. - WAIVER OF WATER AND SEWER ASSESSMENTS

Sec. 8.5-81. - Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to help mitigate the financial impacts on farmers of some local and state capital investments unused by such farmers.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-82. - Procedure.

- (a) Landowner(s) belonging to enhanced or voluntary agricultural districts shall not be assessed for or required to connect to water and/or sewer systems.
- (b) Water and sewer assessments will be held in abeyance, without interest, for farms, whether inside or outside of a voluntary agricultural district, until improvements on such property are connected to the water or sewer system for which the assessment was made.
- (c) When the period of abeyance ends, the assessment is payable in accordance with the terms set out in the assessment resolution.
- (d) Statutes of limitation are suspended during the time that any assessment is held in abeyance without interest.
- (e) Assessment procedures followed under G.S. Article 9 of Chapter 153A shall conform to the terms of this chapter with respect to qualifying farms that entered into conservation agreements while such chapter was in effect.
- (f) Nothing in this section is intended to diminish the authority of the county to hold assessments in abeyance under G.S. 153A-201.
- (g) Water and sewer assessments will be conducted through Salisbury Rowan Utilities and the Rowan County Tax Assessor's office.
- (h) To the extent that this section conflicts with the terms of federal, state, or other grants under which county utility systems are constructed this section shall not apply. This section shall not apply to utilities that are not owned by the county unless the county has entered into an agreement with the entity(ies) owning the utilities and that agreement provides that this chapter shall apply.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Secs. 8.5-83—8.5-100. - Reserved.

ARTICLE VI. - STATE AGENCY NOTIFICATION

Sec. 8.5-101. - Purpose.

The advisory board shall consult as much as possible with the state department of agriculture, the state division of soil and water and any other entity the board deems necessary to the proper conduct of its business.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Sec. 8.5-102. - Procedure.

A record of the ordinance from which this chapter derives shall be recorded with the state commissioner of agriculture's office after adoption. At least once a year the county shall submit a written report to the commissioner of agriculture including the status, progress and activities of the county's farmland preservation program, including voluntary agricultural districting information regarding:

- (1) Number of landowners enrolled.
- (2) Number of acres applied.
- (3) Number of acres certified.

- (4) Number of acres denied.
- (5) Date certified.
- (6) Copies of any amendments to this chapter.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Secs. 8.5-103, 8.5-104. - Reserved.

ARTICLE VII. - LEGAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 8.5-105. - Severability.

If any article, section, subsection, clause, phrase, or portion of this chapter is for any reason found invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this chapter.

(Amend. of 3-7-11)

Appendix 2: Rowan County Agricultural Producer Survey

Rowan County Agricultural Producer Survey

1. Introduction

Your input is needed to create a Working Agricultural Lands Plan for Rowan County. This plan will show the current state of agriculture and forestry, outline the challenges and opportunities for agriculture and forestry that exist, and develop recommendations to help maintain family farms and forests in Rowan County. The general public, agribusinesses, producers and landowners are targeted audiences for this survey. If the comprehensive strategies are to be meaningful, they need to be shaped by the input of the farm and forest producers. Your responses will help us to understand the needs of agriculture.

Rowan County received a grant from NC Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to create the Working Agricultural Lands Plan. The Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center at the University of Mount Olive is directing the project.

Many challenges face agriculture such as a heightened awareness of the relationships between farm uses and other land uses. Farms and forests, when located adjacent to industries and communities, are considered "compatible use partners" and provide numerous benefits to the county and its residents. A comprehensive strategy will assist with the county's agriculture and land use policies and programs as well as develop these compatible partnerships. The Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan will provide that strategy.

The intent of this plan is neither to limit nor restrict landowners' rights and uses. The plan will increase awareness of agricultural development opportunities and appreciation of agriculture and forestry. The preservation of agriculture is important to the well being of family farms as well as to the county and its economy. However, the ultimate decision of agricultural development rests in the hands of the landowners of farms and forests.

Please note that all information will be strictly confidential. Responses to the surveys will remain anonymous and are not identifiable. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Thank you for your interest and participation. If you have additional concerns or questions please contact semory@umo.edu or william.dixon@umo.edu.

Rowan County Agricultural Producer Survey

2. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER SURVEY

You should complete this survey ONLY IF you have income in excess of \$1000 from the production of crops, livestock, or aquaculture OR if you own timberland OR if you receive income from renting farm acreage.

All information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL as referenced on introduction page.

Rowan County Agricultural Producer Survey

3. CURRENT STATE OF AGRICULTURE

Please tell us the type and the size of your farm/forest enterprise(s) in the following categories.

1. Please answer each item as appropriate for your operation:

How many total acres of land do you farm within Rowan County?

Of this total acreage farmed, how many acres do you rent?

If you are a landowner who rents your land to farmers, how many acres do you rent?

How many total acres of timberland do you own within Rowan County?

Of this total, how many acres are managed for timber production?

How many acres of farm and/or forestland do you manage outside of Rowan County?

2. Help us understand more about your operations. Please select the statement that best describes your operation:

- ☐ Timber production only
- ☐ Farm production only
- ☐ Primarily timber production with some farm production
- ☐ Primarily farm production with some timber production
- ☐ Wholesale Greenhouse/Nursery Production

3. How long has your farm/forest been in operation?

- ☐ 0 to 9 years
- ☐ 10 to 20 years
- ☐ 20+ years

4. What is your age?

5. Is farming/forestry your primary occupation?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

6. What percentage of your household income comes from your farm or forest operation?

- ☐ 0-24%
☐ 25-49%
☐ 50-74%
☐ 75-100%

7. Have you, in the past 5 years, expanded your farm or forest operations?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

8. If you did not expand, what were the primary reasons?

(Check ALL that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Satisfied with current size | ☐ Lack of available land to be purchased |
| ☐ Age of owner/operator | ☐ Lack of available land to rent |
| ☐ High cost of equipment | ☐ Land is available, but too close to development to farm or manage |
| ☐ Lack of available equipment | ☐ Lack of available labor |
| ☐ Inability to obtain needed financing | ☐ High cost of additional labor |
| ☐ Low profit margin | ☐ Personal or others reasons |
| ☐ Market volatility and excessive risk | ☐ Environmental or other governmental restrictions |
| ☐ Other (please specify) | |

9. Do you currently own sufficient property to expand or diversify your farm/forest operation?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

10. How much longer do you plan to operate your farm/forest?

- ☐ Less than 5 years
☐ 5 to 9 years
☐ 10 to 19 years
☐ More than 20 years

11. Of the issues listed below which do you anticipate to most influence your operation in the next five years: (Check ALL that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Production input costs | ☐ Competition for available land |
| ☐ Marketing costs | ☐ Residential Housing Expansion |
| ☐ Regulatory costs | ☐ Industrial Expansion |
| ☐ Commodity prices | ☐ Export demand for products |
| ☐ Available labor | ☐ Local demand for products |
| ☐ Affordable labor | ☐ Land rental rates |
| ☐ Market competition | |

12. When you retire, what do you expect to do with your farm/forestland?

- ☐ Sell to other farmers
- ☐ Transfer to family for farming
- ☐ Sell to non-farmers
- ☐ Transfer to family for non-farm use

13. Do you currently have a farm transition plan/estate plan?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. Have you shared your thoughts of farm transition with your family members?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. If you have forestland, do you have a written forestry management plan to follow?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Is your farm or forest enrolled in Rowan County's deferred present use value tax program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

17. If your operation is involved in the production of produce, have you obtained Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification for your farm to assure food safety?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not grow produce

18. If you are a landowner, do you currently lease any of your property for:

(Check ALL that apply)

- ☐ Farming
- ☐ Cell Towers
- ☐ Solar Farm
- ☐ Mining/Quarry
- ☐ Hunting/Fishing
- ☐ Do Not Lease
- ☐ Other (please specify):

19. If you do lease land, how many acres do you lease?

20. Have you had neighbor problems concerning your farming or forestry operation? See Question 21

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

21. If you answered yes to the previous question, what was the nature of the complaint?

(Check ALL that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Manure application complaint | ☐ Smoke or dust |
| ☐ Boundary or trespassing conflict | ☐ Noise complaint |
| ☐ Drainage issue | ☐ Slow-moving vehicle complaint |
| ☐ Dumping/littering issue | ☐ Chemical use or application issues |
| ☐ Impact of farming on wildlife | ☐ Adverse environmental impact of farming |
| ☐ Other (please specify) | |

22. Please answer each question presented below:

	Yes	No
Are you aware of the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) programs?	☐	☐
Do you have acreage enrolled in the VAD or EVAD Program?	☐	☐

4. FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

Please answer the following questions about the future of agriculture and opportunities for agriculture.

1. Do you think local government funding should support agricultural development?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Do you think educating non-farming citizens about the economic and social contributions of farming/forestry will increase community support for farms/forests and improve your operating conditions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Of the taxes listed below, please select the top three that you feel impose an unreasonable burden to agriculture/agribusiness.

☐ Local property tax on land

☐ Local property tax on buildings and equipment

☐ Federal income tax

☐ State income tax

☐ Federal self employment tax

☐ Federal social security and Medicaid taxes for employees (payroll taxes)

☐ State unemployment tax

☐ Estate tax

4. Do you see agritourism as an expansion/diversification opportunity for agriculture and agribusiness in Rowan County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Is it important to promote agriculture and forestry as career opportunities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Agriculture, horticulture, forestry and agribusiness should be taught in:

(Check ALL that apply.)

- ☐ Elementary school
- ☐ Middle school
- ☐ High school
- ☐ 4-H Youth Development
- ☐ Community college
- ☐ Colleges and Universities

7. Would you consider training an intern/young farmer within your farming operation to encourage the next generation to enter production agriculture?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Only if monetary incentives were provided.

5. TRAINING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Please answer the following questions about training and business development opportunities to maintain the viability of your farm or forested land.

1. Select which of these potential trainings you would attend: (Check ALL that apply)

- ☐ Timber management
- ☐ Development of a Forestry Management Plan
- ☐ Selecting Consulting Foresters
- ☐ None of the above

2. Would you attend training on business planning such as these: (Check ALL that apply)

- ☐ Direct to Consumer Marketing of Products
- ☐ Business Website Development
- ☐ Regional Product Branding
- ☐ Identifying and Managing Risk
- ☐ Diversifying through Agritourism
- ☐ Marketing and Sales Promotions
- ☐ Forward Pricing and Hedging
- ☐ Organizing Buyer/Seller Groups
- ☐ Taxes and other Regulations

Other (please specify)

3. Would you attend training on Estate Planning and Farm/Forest Transition?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Would you attend training on how to apply for federal and state contracts for your products?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Both opportunities and threats exist for agriculture and agribusiness in Rowan County.

Please list two threats you perceive to agriculture/forestry/agribusiness in Rowan County.

Please list two opportunities that exist for agriculture/forestry/agribusiness in Rowan County.

6. Please add any additional comments you may have about agriculture and forestry in Rowan County.

6. THANK YOU!

Your time and effort on this survey will help create a Working Agricultural Lands Plan for Rowan County. This plan will provide recommendations for both short and long-term strategies to support agriculture and forestry in Rowan County. Once the plan is written, it will be presented to the county commissioners for endorsement. Once it is endorsed, it will be sent to NC Department of Agriculture for certification. When the plan is certified, the county will receive priority status for funding from NC Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

If you have any questions or would like more details, please contact Ed Emory at semory@umo.edu or Stan Dixon at william.dixon@umo.edu

Appendix 3: Rowan County Agribusiness Survey

1. Introduction

Your input is needed to create a Working Agricultural Lands Plan for Rowan County. This plan will contain the current state of agriculture and forestry, outline the challenges and opportunities for agriculture and forestry that exist, and develop recommendations to help maintain family farms and forests in Rowan County. The general public, agribusinesses, producers and landowners are targeted audiences for this survey. Many of Rowan County's agribusinesses are individual, independent operations with unique interests, needs and concerns. If the Rowan County Agricultural Development Plan is to be meaningful, it needs to be shaped by the input of agribusiness owners.

Rowan County received a grant from NC Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to create a Working Agricultural Lands Plan for Rowan County . The Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center is directing the project.

Many challenges face agriculture such as a heightened awareness of the relationships between farm uses and other land uses. Farms and forests, when located adjacent to industries, military installations and communities, are considered "compatible use partners" and provide numerous benefits to the county and its residents. A comprehensive strategy will assist with the county's agriculture and land use policies and programs as well as develop these compatible partnerships. The Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan will provide that strategy.

The intent of this plan is neither to limit nor restrict landowners' rights and uses. The plan will increase awareness of agricultural development opportunities and appreciation of agriculture and forestry. The preservation of agriculture is important to the well being of family farms as well as to the county and its economy. However, the ultimate decision of agricultural development rests in the hands of the landowners of farms and forests.

Please note that all information will be strictly confidential. Responses to the surveys will remain anonymous and are not identifiable.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Thank you for your interest and participation. If you have additional concerns or questions please contact semory@umo.edu or william.dixon@umo.edu

Rowan Agricultural Business Survey

2. AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS SURVEY

Please complete this survey ONLY if you own a business that is tied to agriculture, aquaculture and/or forestry through services, trainings, products, manufacturing, processing, etc.

All information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL as referenced on introduction page.

1. What type of agribusiness do you operate?

(Check ALL that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Feed dealer | ☐ Veterinarian |
| ☐ Equipment dealer | ☐ Logger or forester |
| ☐ Equipment repair | ☐ Dairy |
| ☐ Ag consultant | ☐ Ag processor |
| ☐ Farm supply store | ☐ Landscape/horticulture |
| ☐ Seed/fertilizer/lime/agri-chemical | ☐ Financial/insurance |
| ☐ Nursery/greenhouse | ☐ Agri-Tourism/Event Venue |
| ☐ Processor/distributor | ☐ Winery |
| ☐ Other (please specify) | |

2. How many people do you employ in Rowan County? (Please provide number of employees)

Full-time

Part-time

3. How long has this business been in operation?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ☐ 0-4 years | ☐ 10-20 years |
| ☐ 5-9 years | ☐ 20+ years |

4. Approximately what percentage of your business comes from the farm/forest community?

- ☐ 0 to 24%
- ☐ 25 to 49%
- ☐ 50 to 74%
- ☐ 75 to 100%

3. OVERVIEW OF LAST FIVE YEARS

Please help us understand what has occurred in your business in the LAST five years.

1. Have you increased your operation size in the last five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Have you added service area to hold or expand your market share in the last five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Have you increased agricultural inventories and sales in the last five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. If you have NOT expanded in the last 5 years what are the primary reasons?

(Check ALL that apply)

☐ Satisfied with current size

☐ Low profit margins

☐ Loss of market share

☐ Declining agricultural sales

☐ Lack of labor supply

☐ Lack of room to expand

☐ Age of owner

☐ Regulatory obstacles

☐ Lack of financial capital

☐ Receivables collection problems

☐ Other (please specify)

4. OVERVIEW OF NEXT FIVE YEARS

Please help us understand what you foresee for your business in the NEXT five years.

1. Do you expect to increase your operation size in the next five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Do you expect to increase the number of employees at your place of business in the next five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Do you expect to add new product lines or services for farm/forestry operators in the next five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Do you expect to add new product lines or services for non farmers in the next five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. TRENDS IN AGRICULTURE

1. What agricultural trends have you observed in Rowan County?

(Check ALL that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ A change to new types of farms | ☐ A shift to more sophisticated farm operations |
| ☐ More small farms | ☐ More part-time farms |
| ☐ Fewer small farms | ☐ More specialty and direct market operations |
| ☐ More large farms | ☐ More diversification |
| ☐ Fewer large farms | ☐ No significant changes |
| ☐ Other (please specify) | |

2. Based on what you have observed, will you modify your business to adapt to these trends?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. If yes, what modifications will you make?

6. THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

1. Is transition/estate planning an issue facing agribusinesses in Rowan County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Do agribusiness owners need assistance with transition/estate planning?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Is it important that agriculture and agribusinesses be promoted as career opportunities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Is it important to have neighbor and/or community education about the importance of agriculture and agribusiness in Rowan County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Do you have labor issues at your business?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. If you answered yes to the above question, what issues do you face? (Check all that apply)

☐ Lack of qualified staff

☐ Lack of training opportunities for staff

☐ Lack of capital to hire staff

☐ Unable to provide required benefits such as health insurance, employment taxes, etc.

☐ Other (please specify)

7. Is there a need for consumer education on the economic impact of buying "local" in Rowan County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Is there a need for youth agriculture education to be taught in the schools of Rowan County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Do you see agritourism as an expansion/diversification opportunity for agriculture/agribusiness in Rowan County?

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. For your business to succeed, what topics are most important to you?
(Check ALL that apply)

☐ Ability to receive adequate financing to maintain/expand business

☐ Succession/transition of the business to interested parties

☐ Training and education on new technologies that are being developed for agriculture/forestry

☐ Zoning or Regulated Land Use

☐ Other (please specify)

11. Would you support county government funding of agricultural preservation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. Both opportunities and threats exist for agriculture and agribusiness in Rowan County.

Please list two threats to agriculture/forestry/agribusiness.

Please list two opportunities that exist for agriculture/forestry/agribusiness.

13. Please add any additional comments you may have about agriculture and forestry in Rowan County.



7. THANK YOU!

Your time and effort on this survey will help create a Working Agricultural Lands Plan for Rowan County. This plan will provide recommendations for both short and long-term strategies to support agriculture and forestry in Rowan County. Once the plan is written, it will be presented to the county commissioners for endorsement. Once it is endorsed, it will be sent to NC Department of Agriculture for certification. When the plan is certified, the county will receive priority status for funding from NC Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

If you have any questions or would like more details, please contact Ed Emory at semory@umo.edu or Stan Dixon at william.dixon@umo.edu

Appendix 4: Rowan County Non-Farm Resident Survey

1. Introduction

Your help is needed to create a Working Agricultural Lands Plan for Rowan County. This plan will contain the current state of agriculture and forestry, outline the challenges and opportunities for agriculture and forestry that exist, and develop recommendations to help maintain family farms and forests in Rowan County. The general public, agribusinesses, producers and landowners are targeted audiences for this survey. Non-farm resident participation is essential to ensure that views on open space, values placed on farms and forests, and impacts of development are part of the plan.

The word "agriculture" in this survey refers to farms (row crops, livestock, fruits/vegetables, flowers/plants, aquaculture) and forests.

Rowan County received a grant from NC Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to create the Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan. The Lois G. Britt Agribusiness Center at the University of Mount Olive is directing the project.

Many challenges face agriculture such as a heightened awareness of the relationships between farm uses and other land uses. Farms and forests, when located adjacent to industries, military installations and communities, are considered "compatible use partners" and provide numerous benefits to the county and its residents. A comprehensive strategy will assist with the county's agriculture and land use policies and programs as well as develop these compatible partnerships. The Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan will provide that strategy.

The intent of this plan is neither to limit nor restrict landowners' rights and uses. The plan will increase awareness of agricultural development opportunities and appreciation of agriculture and forestry. The preservation of agriculture is important to the well being of family farms as well as to the county and its economy. However, the ultimate decision of agricultural development rests in the hands of the landowners of farms and forests.

Please note that all information will be strictly confidential. Responses to the surveys will remain anonymous and are not identifiable. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Thank you for your interest and participation. If you have additional concerns or questions please contact semory@umo.edu or william.dixon@umo.edu.

Rowan County Non-Farm Resident Survey

2. Non-Farm Resident Survey

Please DO NOT complete this survey if you are a farmer/timberland owner OR if you receive income from renting land for farming OR if you own a business primarily dependent on farm and timber customers. These individuals will be surveyed separately.

All information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL as referenced in the introduction.

1. Please tell us, by town and/or community, where you live in Rowan County:

2. How long have you lived in Rowan County?

- ☐ <5 years ☐ 5 to 9 years ☐ 10 to 14 years ☐ 15 to 19 years ☐ 20+ years

3. Please answer each question below:

	Yes	No
Have you ever lived near a farm or timber operation?	☐	☐
Have you ever owned or operated a farm or timber operation?	☐	☐
Do you live near (within 1/4 mile) of a farm or timber operation?	☐	☐
If yes, is that farmer or land owner a good neighbor?	☐	☐

4. When was the last time that you visited a farm or timber operation?

- ☐ Within the last year ☐ More than 10 years ago
☐ Within last 2 to 9 years ☐ Never

5. Which statement best represents your view of Rowan County agriculture?

- ☐ Agriculture is a declining industry with no future growth potential
☐ Agriculture is holding its own as an industry and may have some future growth potential
☐ Agriculture is an expanding industry with significant future growth potential

6. Can you estimate the size of Rowan County's agricultural industry?

- ☐ Less than \$10 million ☐ \$100 million to \$300 million
☐ \$10 million to \$99 million ☐ Over \$300 million

7. Do you feel that Rowan County should take steps to help preserve farms and forests?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

8. How do you support the agricultural economy of Rowan County? (Check ALL that apply)

- ☐ I buy local produce at Farmers Markets, Pick-Your-Own farms, roadside stands, etc.
- ☐ I buy plants from local nurseries and greenhouses.
- ☐ I participate in agritourism activities such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, hay rides, etc.
- ☐ I lease farm land to farmers
- ☐ I buy meat from local producers
- ☐ I lease farmland and forest land for hunting and fishing
- ☐ I don't support the agricultural economy in Rowan County
- ☐ Other (please specify)

9. Have you ever experienced problems with a farm or forest neighbor regarding any of the following? (Check ALL that apply)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ No problem | ☐ Slow-moving vehicles | ☐ Boundary/trespass issues |
| ☐ Noise | ☐ Drainage issues | ☐ Fencing/loose cattle |
| ☐ Odors | ☐ Pesticide use | ☐ Crop dusting |
| ☐ Smoke/Dust | ☐ Timber Harvest | |
| ☐ Manure application | ☐ Irrigation | |
| ☐ Other problems such as dogs, personal, etc. (please specify) | | |

10. If you had problems with a farm or forest neighbor, how did you resolve them?

- ☐ Called authorities
- ☐ Contacted the producer/landowner
- ☐ Mediation
- ☐ Nothing

11. When you dealt with the above issues, how did you feel about the resolution?

- ☐ I gained a better understanding of why the landowner/producer did the activities that upset me initially.
- ☐ The issue was not resolved
- ☐ Litigation was pursued
- ☐ I still do not understand why that activity is necessary

12. Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: (PLEASE SELECT A RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM PRESENTED).

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
Farms and forests enhance the scenic beauty and open space of Rowan County	☐	☐	☐
Farmers are good neighbors	☐	☐	☐
Local farmers deliver generally high-quality products	☐	☐	☐
Farming is positive for the environment	☐	☐	☐
Tax breaks for farmers are important	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture and farming are high-technology industries	☐	☐	☐
The price of most farm food commodities is relatively low	☐	☐	☐
Farming presents a good career for enterprising persons	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture and forestry should be promoted as viable career opportunities	☐	☐	☐

13. Would you support farm and forest preservation efforts in Rowan County?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

14. Would you support the use of county government funds for farm and forest preservation?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

15. Both opportunities and threats exist for agriculture and agribusiness in Rowan County.

What are two threats to agriculture/forestry/agribusiness that you see in Rowan County?

What are two opportunities that exist for agriculture/forestry/agribusiness in Rowan County?

16. Please add any additional comments you may have about agriculture and forestry in Rowan County.

3. Thank you!

Your time and effort on this survey will help create Rowan County Working Agricultural Lands Plan. This plan will provide recommendations for both short and long-term strategies to support agriculture and forestry in Rowan County. Once the plan is written, it will be presented to the county commissioners for endorsement. Once it is endorsed, it will be sent to NC Department of Agriculture for certification. When the plan is certified, the county will receive priority status for funding from NC Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

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