



Sandhills Region – Lee, Moore, and Richmond Counties



Economic Development Plan

Green Fields Initiative

2013 - 2018

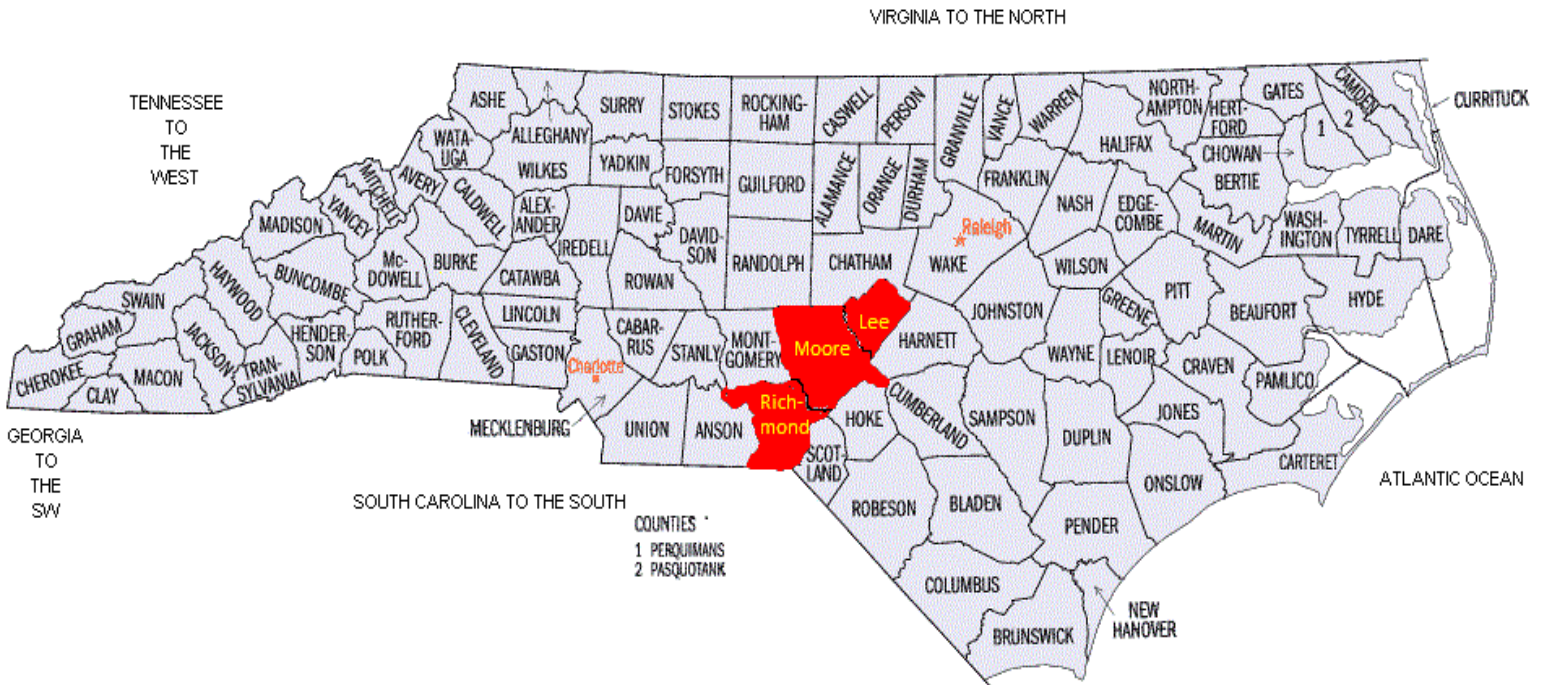
August 21, 2013

Stronger Economies Together Initiative

Launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and their land-grant university partners, the purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Important elements of the Stronger Economies Together program include: building collaboration between communities in a region, providing economic analyses that are tailored to help capture the region's current or emerging clusters and comparative economic advantages, and support by technical assistance provided by land-grant university extension systems to the regions over a period of several months including the SET training.

Sandhills Executive Summary

This Regional Economic Development Plan will serve as the roadmap for the future economic development efforts in the area of sustainable agriculture in Lee, Moore, and Richmond Counties, which counties make up the majority of a geographic area known as the Sandhills Region of North Carolina. Key regional stakeholders embrace a spirit of regionalism to support this initiative. Implementing the action items described within this document will strengthen the ability of the Sandhills Region to secure its economic future and position it as a competitive region. This plan reflects a nine module planning process with active participation from business, civic, and community leaders. Significant research and discussions have led to the development of this plan.



Sandhills Region Description

Lee, Moore, and Richmond Counties are located in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. Part of “Sandhills” country, this region has an ecologically unique topography of sandy, light-textured, and well-drained soils which enjoy adequate rainfall. With its long growing season, the Sandhills Region is perfectly suited for the harvesting and processing of fruits and vegetables, in addition to more traditional row crop production like tobacco. Lee, Moore, and Richmond Counties share a rich history of agriculture and forestry and more recently have built a strong tourism focus, particularly in Moore County. With Lee and Richmond Counties trending towards younger demographics, and Moore County trending towards an older population, the Sandhills Region is positioned to build on a viable local food system and abundant working lands to become an economic engine for the continued growth of the region and the state.



Sandhills Regional Vision

Collaborative economic development efforts in the three-county region of Lee, Moore, and Richmond result in a vibrant agricultural sector that is recognized as a critical component of creating a sustainable and self-reliant community. More healthy local foods are produced and consumed; numerous economically viable, food and non-food, entrepreneurial agribusiness opportunities are encouraged and supported (resulting in the average age of region farmers trending younger), agricultural lands and rural lifestyle are preserved long-term, and the health of community members is significantly improved.

Introduction

Using the SET initiative guidelines, a region's vision sets the tone for the development of a strategic plan. As one member of the Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group said:

“There is great potential for food, forestry, trade, and heritage tourism opportunities in the Sandhills region. With the proper focus and attention, these opportunities may be harnessed into real economic drivers in our communities. This will effect the preservation of our history, culture and land, enabling the region to meet the increasing demand for water, clean air, open space, and recreation opportunities as the area experiences dramatic population growth in the near future.”

The final version of the Sandhills Region's vision considers this statement, but focuses specifically on the role agriculture can play in the development of the region's future. Our targeted industry is therefore Ag Business and how it can be a driver for the region's economy, resulting in healthy, vibrant communities throughout Lee, Moore, and Richmond Counties.



Acknowledgements

The Sandhills Region would like to thank the staff from the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Regional Rural Development Centers, and North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension for support throughout the course of this project. We would also like to show our appreciation to the individuals and organizations listed below, the distinguished individuals that took part in the training sessions, and numerous other individuals, for their invaluable insight and ideas that led to the creation of this plan.

- **Moore County Partners in Progress**
- **NC Department of Commerce**
- **Moore County Extension Advisory Committee**
- **Agricultural Advisory Boards of Lee, Moore, and Richmond Counties**
- **Richmond County Agricultural Advisory Board**
- **Sandhills Farm to Table**
- **Town of Robbins**
- **Robbins Farm Incubator**
- **Center for Environmental Farming Systems**
- **Piedmont Food & Agricultural Center**
- **Food Bank of Central NC**
- **Integrity Systems**
- **Sandhills Area Land Trust**
- **Lee Area Farmers**
- **Gerry Cohen**
- **Carolina Common Enterprise**
- **Sandhills Community College**



Regional Collaboration

Letters of support for the planning process came from the following individuals and organizations:

- **Richmond County Board of Commissioners**
- **Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative**
- **Moore County Partners in Progress**
- **Lee County, NC**
- **Richmond County Agricultural Advisory Board**
- **Richmond County Farm Bureau**
- **Moore County Center of the NC Cooperative Extension Service**
- **Lee County Center of the NC Cooperative Extension Service**
- **David's Produce**
- **Moore County, NC**
- **NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**
- **Michael C. Rowland, M.D. (Retired)**
- **First School Garden Program**
- **Lee County Area Farmers**
- **Lee County Agricultural Advisory Board**

Additional input and support was garnered through an event held on September 26, 2013 where this regional economic development plan was unveiled to the public as the "Green Fields Initiative".

Regional Economic Goals

Resources explored throughout the Stronger Economies Together process showed the following industry clusters to hold the most potential for stimulating the economy in the Sandhills Region: Biomedical, Advanced Materials, Ag Business, Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (AER), Chemicals, and Education. After examining these clusters, analyzing the assets in the region, and listening to input from various regional stakeholders, we determined that Ag Business, and in particular, Sustainable Agriculture, would be the focus of this SET economic development plan. We therefore recommend the goals set forth below for the Sandhills Region. Strategies supporting each goal will be identified as either a creation (C) strategy, attraction (A) strategy, retention (R) strategy, or expansion (E) strategy.

Goal 1:

Over the next 5 years, retain the number of acres devoted to agriculture and forestry at 2007 levels, while increasing the number of people entering farming or forestry by 1% per year.

Goal 2:

Produce and consume more agricultural and forestry products in the region, resulting in an increase in average farm income by 20% over the next 5 years and an increase in forestry management plans by 10% over the same period.

Goal 3:

Raise the profile of agriculture and timber industries so they are widely recognized by local and regional policymakers, politicians, community and business leaders, and others as being critical and essential economic drivers. By 2018 the region will be generally recognized as a leader in sustainable agriculture and community development.



Regional Economic Development Plan

Goal 1:

Over the next five years, retain the number of acres in agriculture or forestry production in the region at 2007 levels, while increasing the number of people entering farming or forestry as a profession by 1% per year.

Goal 1 supports our vision by preserving agricultural lands and rural lifestyle and lowering the average age of the region's farmers (which currently is an average age of 58).

Regional Economic Benefits

Two of the three counties in the Sandhills Region have experienced steady population growth; in some cases, even exponential growth. The third county, having lost population for decades, has now stabilized, but at great cost – loss of agricultural and forested lands throughout the region (Working Lands Protection Plans – Lee, Moore, Richmond Counties). With the growing local food and goods movement and its emphasis on reducing the carbon footprint of the national food and timber industry, doesn't it make sense to grow local produce and utilize timber locally as much as possible?

By keeping our working lands in production, the Sandhills Region will continue the rich history of agriculture and forestry in the region. This history strengthens the cultural fabric that binds the region together. The purpose of Goal 1 is to keep farmers farming, support the timber industry, and attract more people into farming and timber. This will enable the valuable open spaces and rural landscapes of the area to continue to exist.

According to recent national research by the American Farmland Trust, the cost of community services for every dollar of revenue collected is \$1.15 for residential development, \$0.29 for commercial/industrial development and \$0.37 for farm/forest land. It follows that agricultural and forest land that remains in production may therefore help control the cost of community services in counties across North Carolina (Mitch Renkow, Department of Agriculture Resource Economics, N.C. State University).

Trainings and Educational Materials

National trends indicate a growing consumer movement that demands locally sourced foods and products. Traditional row crop and commodity production is fairly strong in the region, but because of the decline in tobacco production over the past decade, farmers are rediscovering fruits, vegetables, and other alternative crops (nursery stock, Christmas trees, herbs, floraculture, etc.). To ensure profitability in these nontraditional crops, producers need information not only on the newest production techniques but other resources as well, including business planning and marketing (Strategies 1.1 and 1.2). Lenders and other financiers also need information on these practices to make good loans (Strategy 1.5). Goal 1 strategies address the training and informational needs of producers and the lending community.

Transition Planning

Because the average age of farmers in the region is over 58, concentrated efforts must be made now to attract younger people into farming. Farmland transition planning is extremely important for farm families as well as the communities in which they live and shop, so that the land which grows our food and our



timber is not completely lost to industrial and residential development. Strategy 1.3 includes dissemination of information on farm business succession to attorneys, accountants, and others who advise retiring producers on their options. In addition, Strategy 1.4 recommends the creation of a web-based land referral service to link available regional farmland to emerging or expanding farmers.

Addressing Barriers

Value-added agriculture is regulated by state and federal agencies, making entry into value-added agriculture by small to mid-size farms difficult because of the paperwork and costs involved. Strategy 1.6 seeks to, at a minimum, identify and address the barriers, and when possible, offer workable solutions.

Conclusion

The Sandhills Region is defined by its abundant natural beauty. By maintaining current levels of acreage in the region devoted to farmland and managed forests, the region will continue to be an attractive place to live, work, and play, thus enhancing its quality of place factor.

The region is well-suited for fruit and vegetable production and natural amenity enhancement (natural and agri-tourism opportunities). This fact supports a local foods and agribusiness focus to fuel overall economic development in the region.

Strategy 1.1: *Provide farm business planning trainings to beginning farmers.*

Type of Strategy: (C)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Producers learn various business models and receive training on business planning based on their choice of business model.

Intermediate: Lenders have more opportunity to lend to producers because of improved business planning.

Long Term: More producers receive financing to keep working lands in production.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Create a team to start a “beginning farmer” program (Sandhills Farm School).	NC Cooperative Extension (NCCE) (County Directors)	Short Term*
Collect and evaluate training modules for beginning farmers and farm business planning	NCCE (County Directors)	Short Term
Apply for grant funding to develop beginning farmer training program	NCCE (County Directors)	Short Term
Develop beginning farmer training program and marketing of program	NCCE (County Directors)	Medium Term*
Set up training dates/offer face to face trainings on a regular basis	NCCE (County Directors)	Long Term*
Develop farm mentoring program	NCCE (County Directors)	Long Term*
Recruit timber growers to develop forest management plans	NC Forest Service – Brad Allen	Short Term – Long Term

*For purposes of this plan, usage of the term, “Short Term” shall mean 6-12 months; “Medium Term” shall mean 1-2 years; and “Long Term” shall mean 3-5 years.

Participants: Producers (beginning farmers and timber growers)

Assets: Sandhills Farm School, US Forest Service, NCCE, Carolina Farm Credit, Community Colleges

Strategy 1.2: Provide continuing education to beginning and experienced farmers in marketing to improve profitability.

Type of Strategy: (R)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Farmers learn marketing techniques to achieve profitable operations and be open to changes in production and culture.

Intermediate: Farmers sell their products to multiple markets in the region.

Long Term: Income from working lands is sufficient to keep land in production.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Develop a job description for desired marketing position	NCCE (County Directors)	Short Term
Inquire at NC Dept of Agriculture, NCSU and NC A&T for a marketing specialist to work with the region	NCCE – Michelle Eley	Short Term
In the alternative, apply for grant funding for the position (which will be designated for the region)	NCCE (County Directors)	Short Term
Hold workshops on cooperative models to improve profitability	Carolina Common Enterprise – Becky Bowen	Short – Medium Term
Marketing specialist will research expertise on innovative marketing and production techniques		Medium Term
Marketing specialist will develop trainings		Medium Term
Set up training dates/ offer face to face trainings on a regular basis		Long Term
Build website with training content		Long Term

Participants: Producers (beginning and experienced farmers and timber growers)

Assets: NCCE – Michelle Eley (NC A&T); NC Dept of Agriculture (NC Farm Fresh program); Carolina Common Enterprise; farmersfreshmarket.org;

Strategy 1.3: *Provide farmland transition planning and estate planning materials.*

Type of Strategy: (A)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Farm families learn how to plan for estate transition to keep farm intact.

Intermediate: Families plan for generational changes through estate planning.

Long Term: Families will retain working lands across generations.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Fame
Collaborate with Mount Olive College and Andrew Brannon to determine their next steps in delivery of transition planning resources	NCCE	Short Term
Recruit Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT) to partner with NCCE to develop farm succession materials and to deliver them to farmers, lawyers, accountants, etc.	NCCE	Short Term
Deliver farm succession materials	SALT	Medium Term
Identify at-risk properties/develop outreach program	NCCE (Paige Burns)/Ag Advisory Boards	Medium Term
Create and hold Farm Succession Event to be held annually	NCCE/SALT	Long Term
Provide online materials	NCCE/SALT	Long Term

Participants: Retiring growers, Attorneys, Accountants, Tax Advisors

Assets: Mount Olive College (Andrew Brannon), Working Land Protection Plans

Strategy 1.4: *Provide tools to connect available regional farmland to emerging farmers, including the creation of an interactive website listing properties.*

Type of Strategy: (A)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Ag Advisory Boards create website listing region’s available properties.

Intermediate: Create a stream-lined transitioning of working lands.

Long Term: Farmland transition programs allow working lands to remain in production with new owners to transition lands with no heirs.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Research existing land referral services linking available farmland to emerging farmers, including rentals	SALT (provided grant funding available)	Short Term
Develop interactive website	SALT/Ag Advisory Boards	Medium Term
Publicize success stories on website	SALT/Ag Advisory Boards	Medium Term
Implement County Working Land Protection Plan recommendations	Ag Advisory Boards/Economic Developers/County Managers	Long Term

Participants: Producers, Real Estate Agents, Lenders

Assets: NC Farmland Transition Network, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (Anna MacDonald Dobbs), Working Land Protection Plans

Strategy 1.5: Provide resources to agriculture lenders on the value of alternative crops.

Type of Strategy: (C, R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Agriculture lenders receive information on alternative crop values.

Intermediate: Agriculture lenders become more comfortable lending to alternative crop producers.

Long Term: More acres are devoted to alternative crop production, thus contributing to local food system.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Contact Carolina Farm Credit to initiate conversation	NCCE County Directors	Short Term
Contact Gary Bullen (NCSU) about interest in developing resources for agriculture lenders	NCCE County Directors	Short Term
Develop resources		Medium Term
Deliver resources		Long Term

Participants: Agriculture lenders

Assets: Carolina Farm Credit; NCSU – Gary Bullen

Strategy 1.6: *Address barriers to value-added small-farm agriculture.*

Type of Strategy: (C, R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Identify barriers to value-added small farm agriculture.

Intermediate: Develop solutions to barriers.

Long Term: Increase number of small farms engaging in value-added agriculture.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Develop list of barriers to value-added small farm agriculture	NCCE (County Directors)	Short Term
Seek grant funding to prepare action plan	NCCE (County Directors)	Short Term
Prepare action plan addressing barriers	NCCE (County Directors)	Medium Term
Support small diversified farms seeking GAPs certification	NCCE	Long Term

Participants: Producers (farmers)

Assets: NC Dept of Agriculture; NCCE



Goal 2:

Produce and consume more agricultural and forestry products in the region, resulting in an increase in average farm income by 20% over the next 5 years and an increase in forestry management plans by 10% over the same period.

Goal 2 supports our vision by increasing the production and consumption of healthy local foods, encouraging the establishment of entrepreneurial agribusinesses, and improving the health of community members.

Regional Economic Benefits

By producing and consuming more local agriculture products in the region, the Sandhills Region will create a more regionally supported food system that provides satisfactory family income and a good quality of life to producers as well as healthy food choices for consumers. Increasing the number of forestry management plans will result in better environmental and business management of available timberland, thus increasing income potential for land owners while contributing to the prosperity of the community at large by maintaining the beautiful natural amenities the region is known for.

Creating a vibrant and diverse agricultural economy supported by the regional market it serves is the focus of Goal 2. Goal 2 strategies build consumer and institutional buyer awareness of the value of locally produced food and non-food goods in the region as well as develop a regional food system supplied by local producers. They further support better management of timber land, thus resulting in a supply of high quality wood and pulp products to regional and global commercial buyers.

Local Food Benefits

Goal 2 aims over the next five years to generate a 20% increase in both **production** and **consumption** of local produce, meat, and dairy - two sides of the same coin. Farmers cannot and will not grow more food than their customers will demand. To encourage more production of produce, meat, and dairy by the region's growers, Strategy 2.1 calls for more active support of those agencies and organizations already building consumer awareness of the benefits of eating fresh, locally grown food, including improved health outcomes, disease prevention, better taste, seasonal enjoyment, and support of area farms, not to mention a reduced carbon footprint and improved food safety.

By actively engaging consumers in this conversation, a greater awareness of the economic benefit of a regional food system will create a more developed sense of community for the region. Buying local foods will spill over into other local buying habits by consumers thus strengthening the retail sector generally. Moreover, healthy eating will promote better general health, thereby reducing the strain on and high cost of medical services.

A critical action step for this strategy involves brand development of food sourced in the Sandhills Region. By tying local foods to the regional identity, the region itself gains a more cohesive sense of self. A suggestion currently on the table – “ASK for Sandhills,” with the tagline “Agriculture Supplying Kitchens” – as well as other suggestions will be vetted with professional marketers hired to build this brand.

Food Hub Development

USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan spoke to the importance of food hub development for small and mid-sized farms:

“As I talk to farmers across the country, regardless of what they produce or where, they all share one common challenge: how to best move product from the farm to the marketplace. This is especially crucial for small and midsize farmers who may not have enough capital to own their own trucks, their own refrigeration units, or their own warehouse space. They might not have the resources to develop sophisticated distribution routes, build effective marketing campaigns or network with regional buyers and customers.”

Strategy 2.2 recommends the development of a food hub. A regional food hub is a business that manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of locally-sourced food products in the region. The food hub strengthens the ability of local growers to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand. While there already exists a sophisticated network of direct farm to consumer opportunities in the area (local farmers markets, CSAs, pick-your-own farms, and roadside produce stands), the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of local produce to broader indirect markets, such as restaurants and grocery stores, is a much more complex undertaking that demands planning and cooperation among producers, distributors, and buyers. The Sandhills Farm to Institution project in Moore County is currently in the process of assessing the feasibility of food hub development in the area and is a natural partner for the implementation of this strategy.

Additional benefits of this strategy include the promotion of food processing and other agribusinesses that will naturally develop around the food hub activities, thus leading to entrepreneurship and additional job creation for the region. And, with the region already being fairly strong in tourism (to name just a few -- Sanford in Lee County has a vital downtown heritage district; Moore County's Village of Pinehurst receives global recognition for its golf courses; and Richmond County's Rockingham is home to Rockingham Speedway and Dragway, which, while no longer official NASCAR tracks, still holds other cups and races and is a sentimental favorite for many race fans), the opportunity exists to build vibrant food districts serving local fare to tourists visiting the many area attractions.

Value-Added Opportunities

Strategy 2.3 recommends the identification of value-added, diversification, and income-patching opportunities. This strategy compliments other economic development efforts in the region by connecting the source of raw materials, 90% of which are agriculture-based, with a complimentary manufactured end product. Similarly, many environmentally-friendly practices, such as conservation easements and trading of carbon credits, can spark the economy by keeping the abundant natural lands intact for nature tourism opportunities.

For example, while the furniture industry has for the past twenty years outsourced its manufacturing to China and other countries (and as a consequence weakened its positive impact on North Carolina's economy), recent reports suggest that some of the higher quality manufacturers are electing to return to the state for their production needs. Tying those niche opportunities with the region's wood supply is addressed by this strategy. Other evolving industries, like bio-fuels, bamboo products, and charwaste, will have their raw materials supplied by the region, thus making the area a natural location for a manufacturing facility.

Suggested Branding Concept

ASK for *Sandhills*

(Agriculture Supplying Kitchens)



Strategy 2.1: Engage consumers in the conversation about local food and its value in terms of individual health, community well-being, and regional self-sufficiency.

Type of Strategy: (C, A, R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Develop consumer education programs on the value of local food programs in partnership with NC Cooperative Extension, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), etc.

Intermediate: Consumers, restaurants, and other local food vendors purchase more locally produced ag products.

Long Term: Increase agriculture production income from local sources, thereby reducing trade leakage.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Contact CEFS for assistance in consumer education; identify other potential partners	NCCE	Short Term
Promote 10% campaign	NCCE/Chambers of Commerce	Short Term – Long Term
Seek funding for development of marketing campaign for local foods consumption	NCCE (County Directors)/Chambers of Commerce	Short Term
Develop brand and marketing campaign for local foods consumption (e.g., ASK for Sandhills – “Agriculture Supplying Kitchens”)	NCCE (County Directors)/Chambers of Commerce	Short Term – Medium Term

Participants: Consumers

Assets: Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS); Blue Cross Blue Shield; NCCE; Chambers of Commerce

Strategy 2.2: *Create a regional food hub.*

Type of Strategy: (R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Producers, institutional buyers, and consumers are aware of and want to support a food hub and/or Community Supported Agriculture system (CSA).

Intermediate: Institutional buyers and consumers have increased access to regionally produced products and modify buying habits to reduce trade leakage.

Long Term: Production and consumption needs and resources will be organized into contractual arrangements.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Determine demand for locally grown products	Sandhills Farm to Table	Short Term
Determine status of food hub feasibility study initiated by Partners in Progress	NCCE	Short Term
Plan for pilot project with designated institutions	Sandhills Farm to Institution	Medium Term
Create hub	Sandhills Farm to Institution	Long Term
Develop value-added processing facilities where needed, e.g., flash freeze, light produce processing, slaughter)	NCCE/Chambers of Commerce	Long Term

Participants: Producers and Institutional Buyers

Assets: Sandhills Farm to Institution; Farmers Markets; CSAs; Ft. Bragg

Strategy 2.3: *Identify high value alternative crops for the region that will be feedstock for energy production or lead to other value-added opportunities. Provide options and information to producers on diversification and “income patching,” including niche or new products, growing season extension, conservation easements, solar farms, carbon credits, and other non-traditional revenue opportunities.*

Type of Strategy: (C, A, R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Economic developers will work with university researchers to identify development potential of alternative agricultural and timber products.

Intermediate: Growers produce a greater variety of ag and timber products and create more sustainable and renewable commercial uses for their lands.

Long Term: Ag land will be more effectively utilized as working land that supports mega industrial park development and other manufacturing and industrial recruitment, thus stimulating job creation.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Research availability of resources for agriculture products (NC Market Ready) and for non-traditional uses of agriculture and timber land	SALT/NCCE	Short Term
Determine best delivery method of information to land owners	SALT/NCCE	Short Term
Work on developing wood waste materials for plant at Mega Park	NCCE – Stephen Greer	Short Term
Determine how best to support farm incubators in the region	NCCE/Chambers of Commerce	Medium Term
Work with 4/H to expose youth to new/emerging farm and timber products and agribusinesses	NCCE	Medium Term
Implement County Working Land Protection Plan recommendations	All partners	Long Term
Coordinate with other groups implementing strategic plans centered around sustainable economic development affecting the region	SALT	Short Term

Participants: Producers (farmers and timber growers)

Assets: NCSU Research; Moore County Mega Park; County Economic Developers; NCCE – Youth Development (4 H); NC Market Ready; Carolina Common Enterprise; NC Agritourism Networking Association; NC Central Park (StarWorks); Robbins Farm Incubator; Perdue Roaster plant

Goal 3:

Raise the profile of agriculture and timber industries so they are widely recognized by local and regional policy makers, politicians, community and business leaders, and others as being critical and essential economic drivers. By 2018, the region is generally recognized as a leader in sustainable agriculture and community.

Goal 3 supports our vision by developing a vibrant agricultural sector that is recognized as a critical component of creating an economically vigorous region.

Regional Economic Benefits

By drawing attention to agriculture as one of the Region's significant industries, the Sandhills Region will promote policies and implement systems that will accelerate its progress toward regional economic self-sufficiency. The promotion of these policies and implementation of these systems will result in a strong and stable agricultural economy, a vibrant farming base and a community that demonstrates active engagement in agriculture through prioritizing purchase of local agriculture products and supporting other local rural agriculture-based economies such as outdoor and agritourism activities.

Sandhills agriculture supports the livelihoods of small and midsize farmers, rural families, and agriculture-related businesses. It also has the potential to supply a larger percentage of the food for the region, thus reducing dependence on cross country shipping systems and imported oil. Perhaps even more important, however, is the fact that locally sourced food and non-food products build community pride, a key ingredient in any community development toolbox.

Annual Summit

Strategy 3.1 recommends the region host an annual summit on sustainable agriculture and community development practices. Showing leadership and successes in this field will draw the attention of statewide policymakers to build a better North Carolina region by region.

The Sandhills Region also boasts several natural amenities. The topological formation is actually a strip of ancient beach dunes which divides the Piedmont from the coastal plain. Its sandy soils are home to the Longleaf Pine and Loblolly Pine, chief sources of timber, pulp and paper for sawmills. The Longleaf Pine forest is rich in biodiversity and consequently is of particular interest to conservation and environmental organizations. Their desire to preserve these forests, however, is compatible with the region's existing economic development plans, including the recently concluded BRAC study on the proposed Ft. Bragg military base expansion. These groups will be natural partners in implementing Goal 3's focus of promoting agriculture and forestry as players in economic development strategies.

Promotional Tools

Strategy 3.2 recommends building a toolkit for agriculture groups and other grower spokespeople, so that they will become more comfortable engaging in self-promotion. Recent county plans have not recognized agriculture and forestry as economic drivers when data reflects otherwise. Agribusiness value-added income makes up the following percentages of total county value-added: Lee (10%); Moore (14.6%); Richmond (26.1%) and employs the following percentages of the county workforce: Lee (15%); Moore (13.4%); Richmond (22.4%). This oversight by economic development officials must be addressed in the short-term to gain traction with legislative bodies for any needed policy changes (as recommended in the Working Lands Protection Plans).

Agriculture Literacy

Education is key to change. The recycling movement did not gain real traction until a generation after it began, when our children learned the new version of the 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). Teaching our youth the connection between the region's growers and the food on their tables will increase the likelihood of a successful regional food system, preservation of our working lands, and development of thriving communities within the region. Strategy 3.3 recommends the adoption of an "Agriculture Literacy" curriculum in all schools in the region.

A critical action step involves the recruitment of FFA/4-H students to engage elementary school-aged children in Fun on the Farm Days and other agriculture literacy promotional events. By doing so, the Sandhills Region will be training its future leaders in the implementation of this plan's strategies for sustainable economic development.



Strategy 3.1: Hold an annual summit in the region to introduce the newest thinking on models of sustainable agriculture and best practices in community development.

Type of Strategy: (C, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Build awareness of the tie between sustainable agriculture and healthy, economically vibrant communities.

Intermediate: Landowners incorporate a variety of sustainable practices into their agriculture and timber businesses.

Long Term: Region expects sustainable agriculture practices, thus creating a market for products using those methods and supporting a region-wide transition to sustainable community development.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Identify potential partners and sponsors (Nature Conservancy, USFWS, Save Our Sandhills, Sustainable Sandhills)	SALT/Partners in Progress (PIP)/NCCE	Short Term
Hold planning meeting for summit	SALT/PIP/NCCE	Short Term
Research grant funding and sponsorships for summit	SALT/PIP/NCCE	Short Term
Hold summit	SALT/PIP/NCCE	Medium Term – Long Term

Participants: Producers, Economic Developers, Environmentalists

Assets: SALT; Save Our Sandhills; Sustainable Sandhills; Nature Conservancy; USFWS

Strategy 3.2: Provide tools for agriculture groups to enable them to promote agriculture and timber industries at local events, schools, etc.

Type of Strategy: (R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: Increase willingness of agriculture leaders to participate in marketing to the public.

Intermediate: Promote the presence of a trade booth at every festival in the region.

Long Term: Agriculture from the region will have a recognizable brand (e.g., “ASK for Sandhills”).

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Research data to support talking points on how agriculture and health are tied together and how agriculture impacts economics (involve marketing specialist)	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Carolina Farm Credit	Short Term
Craft talking points – use working lands protection plans for points	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Carolina Farm Credit	Short Term
Identify advocates in county government	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Carolina Farm Credit	Short Term
Write a Community Rural Development position description for Lee, Moore, Richmond, and Montgomery Counties	NCSU (Jakes)	Medium Term
Develop regional web site and other marketing materials; include content of this plan	NCCE County Directors/Chambers of Commerce/Economic Developers	Short Term
Get a commercial such as Paul Harvey’s “God made a farmer” available on 103.1 or other free avenues	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Carolina Farm Credit	Medium Term

Participants: Producers (farmers and timbergrowers)

Assets: Blue Cross Blue Shield; Carolina Farm Credit; Pat Coughlin/Moore County Chamber

Strategy 3.3: Adopt an “Agriculture Literacy” curriculum into schools and youth programs and promote regionally.

Type of Strategy: (R, E)

Target Outcomes:

Short Term: School children develop appreciation of agriculture production in schools as well as in places like the YMCA.

Intermediate: Agriculture leaders become members of all local school boards.

Long Term: Increased agriculture literacy will impact consumer and institutional buying habits to buy local, thus reducing trade leakage and increasing self-sufficiency.

Action Step	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Involve school stakeholders in discussion of agriculture literacy program and identify advocates	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Charles Hammond/Soil & Water Districts	Short Term
Develop school gardens to promote health and well-being instruction in the classrooms	NCCE Master Gardeners/Farm Bureau/Charles Hammond/ Good Food Sandhills/First Health/Kathy Byron (SCC)	Medium Term
Have high school FFA/4-H kids come to elementary school to give presentations	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Charles Hammond	Medium Term
Have FFA/4-H kids host a Fun on the Farm Day	NCCE County Directors/Farm Bureau/Charles Hammond	Long Term

Participants: School administrators; school children; after school programs

Assets: Southern Pines Elementary School Garden; School Gardens/Sandhills Community College (Kathy Byron); Good Food Sandhills; First Health; NC Farm Bureau; NCCE Master Gardeners

Evidence Basis for Plan

Regional Demographic Data

The Sandhills Region consists of the three contiguous counties of Lee, Moore, and Richmond located in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. The three counties share the physical and natural attributes of rolling hills, sandy soil, long leaf pines, adequate rainfall, and farmland with small fields. Due to economics, demographics, and even highway systems, there exists a fluid exchange of people, goods, and money across the three counties.

Moore and Lee Counties have experienced an increase in population. Richmond County has until recently seen decades of decline. All three counties have lost industry (textiles, lumber) and seen a decreasing interest in farming, due in part to a shrinking farm labor pool, the rising cost of agricultural production, land access and affordability, and the encroachment of more profitable urban development. All counties share a desire to bring more jobs and revenue into the region, as well as an appreciation of the economic and cultural value of farm and timberland. Lee has a greater industrial base with many moderate-sized businesses, while Richmond is under the greatest economic stress. Moore has tourism as its primary economic driver and enjoys higher household income levels than the other counties. It is recognized for its high quality golf courses, equine events, and upper-end retirement communities.

Moore has an older population, more highly educated, and wealthier. For purposes of providing a market for local food, it is the anchor for the region. Low land prices and water availability in Richmond County make it ideal for farming as well as advanced manufacturing and processing facilities. Of the three counties in the region, Lee lies closest to the Research Triangle urban area and has the heaviest travel counts on its roads, thus enjoying a greater support advantage to the denser urban population.

Richmond County is a Tier 1 County; Lee County is a Tier 2 County; and Moore County is a Tier 3 County. These designations are announced by the NC Department of Commerce on an annual basis and reflect the level of economic incentives eligible for each county.. Tier 1 represents counties with the highest level of economic stress; Tier 3 represents the healthiest economically.

Regional Economic Data

Agriculture and the timber industry have a strong tradition in the Sandhills Region and remain a viable economic cluster today. Total 2011 farm income for the three counties equaled \$316 million (<http://www.ncagr.gov>). As an industry cluster, Ag Business, though a “mature” industry, has stayed strong, despite fluctuating commodity prices, the tobacco industry decline, and economic downturns. It remains among the top six industries for the region, which also include biomedical, advanced manufacturing, ARE, education, and chemicals.

Agriculture is the industry that feeds the world, yet it is threatened by a myriad of economic and regulatory forces. It is hard work, with long hours, high capitalization costs, and diminishing returns. Not surprisingly, the average age of farmers is trending upward, and part-time farming is becoming more and more the norm in order to make ends meet.

Recent social trends, however, indicate a growing demand for locally-produced goods. New non-food uses for agriculture-based products, including chemicals, biofuels, and cosmetics, also hold promise for growers and dovetail nicely into the other strong industry clusters in the region, particularly

biomedical and advanced materials. Moore County has taken the lead in the region in response to this trend by initiating a 2012 study with recommendations for the development of a food hub in Moore County (Moore County WLPP).

While a small farm local food system currently exists in Moore County, through its farmers markets and the Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative (a multistakeholder commercial enterprise based on a CSA model), potential exists for enlarging it to include institutional buyers and a greater number of consumers through the Farm to Institution initiative currently in development. Data reflects significant trade leakage in terms of where regional grocery stores and supermarkets buy their produce and other food. Opportunity exists to stop the leakage with locally sourced meat, dairy, nuts, fruits, and vegetables.

Total farmland in the three counties has fallen over the past decade, yet significant portions of total county acreage are still devoted to agriculture or woodlands (Lee – 86%; Moore – 85%; Richmond – 90%). (WLPP) Another potential economic driver for the region is agritourism and nature-based tourism, as well as other income-patching opportunities for farmers and other producers.

Regional Assets

Natural. The Sandhills Region is best known for its natural beauty of pine-forested rolling hills and sandy well-drained soils. It is a prime area for the cultivation of horticulture crops, like peaches, melons, and strawberries, because of its excellent drainage, and is also well-suited for the production of garden vegetables, with its exceptionally long growing season, and in some cases, double-cropping. The Region's abundant natural beauty also lends itself to recreational activities like canoeing, cycling, and hiking as well as game lands for hunting.

Built. The Region, particularly in Moore County, has excellent medical facilities, hotel and conference accommodations, and restaurants. All three counties have accessible and affordable community colleges and extension offices which can offer needed trainings to new and emerging producers. Moore County is in the process of developing an industrial park (MegaPark), which is currently seeking tenants. Opportunity exists to recruit a biochar facility to process the abundant waste timber in the region.

Political. The Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative, together with the existing farmers markets in all three counties, indicate a current social, cultural and political leaning towards the creation of a local food system in the region. Support of local food systems is also evident at the state level. The NC Department of Agriculture has the NC Farm Fresh web site which provides a directory of pick-your-own farms, roadside farm markets, and farmers markets throughout North Carolina. The Center for Environmental Farming Systems has successfully launched the 10% Campaign (Farm to Fork) and several other initiatives to promote the development of local food systems throughout the state.

In addition to political support currently backing the establishment of local food systems throughout the state, the NC Department of Agriculture also provides support to farmers seeking protection under the NC Agriculture Development and Farm Preservation Trust Fund.

Human. The large number of small farms and acres devoted to timberland in the region create a realistic and achievable opportunity for sustainable development provided the next generation of land stewards can capitalize on the collective wisdom of its current care takers. A farmer mentoring program, combined with affordable and accessible financial resources and business support, would provide a necessary leg-up for new producers just entering the industry. The Robbins Incubator Farm in Moore County is an effort to show the possible future of the smaller farming industry in the region.

Financial. When the Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group was asked to identify financial resources to support the establishment of small, diversified farms that could contribute to the development of a self-sufficient and independent food system for the Region, as well as support the profitability of regional producers, the list and variety of conventional and non-traditional lenders and grantmakers was impressive. Area banks mentioned included Wells Fargo, Fidelity Bank, and First Bank. Carolina Farm Credit, SBA microloans and USDA coop and specialty agriculture lending programs topped the list as resources for emerging producers. NGOs included Blue Cross Blue Shield, Golden LEAF, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, the Rural Center, the Tobacco Trust Fund, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE), and the Conservation Fund.

Social and Cultural. The variety of social networking opportunities available today through social media is especially effective as a tool for attracting small, alternative farming entrepreneurs and linking them directly to potential markets. GoodFoodJobs.org is a national web-based model for networking in the sustainable agriculture industry and can provide a good model for the development of a regional web site performing the same purpose in the Sandhills. Increasing the visibility of available agricultural properties is a high priority for this region's strategic plan and developing this web site while also partnering with local realtors educated in the high value of agricultural properties in the region could provide the linkages potential producers need to both find their land as well as their markets.

Moore and Richmond Counties are also part of the 8 counties that comprise the Central Park region of North Carolina, an economic development region based on heritage and cultural tourism development and outdoor recreation opportunities. Central Park NC began STARworks Center for Creative Enterprise in a former hosiery mill in the small town of Star. STARworks is home to several for profit and not for profit businesses, focusing on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and creative arts-related businesses. (www.centralparknc.org).

Potential Barriers and Related Strategies

While the Sandhills Region has a strong asset base for pursuing strategies related to sustainable agriculture as a driver of economic development, there is also a list of significant barriers that must be addressed before serious implementation of the plan is pursued. Chief among these is the independent-minded producer who may not be open to trying alternative or cooperative methods of production, marketing, and distribution. Second is the declining interest in family farming among next generation farmers, the reasons for which will be explained in more detail below. Third is the lack of experience in the lending community on making loans to small farms raising alternative crops. Fourth is the need to modify food safety regulations to allow for small farm operations to effectively compete with larger institutionalized farms. Fifth is the need to provide more on-going technical support to emerging farmers, absentee landowners, and retiring farmers to ensure that the region's working lands remain in production.

Attitude of Existing Producers. Profit margins for traditional farming methods are small, while those well-managed small farms that have found a local niche market for their sustainably grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, livestock, or horticultural products have potential for showing greater than average profit margins. The time, desire, and training needed to diversify into alternative markets, as well as adopt collaborative and/or cooperative buying and marketing strategies to break in to these markets, however, can be overwhelming, especially to producers who are comfortable with the way things have traditionally been done.

Strategies: Outreach and education are the keys to changing habits. Creating a toolkit and listing of best practices in addition to providing access to experienced practitioners as mentors to those producers willing to try something different will increase demand for more information on new trends.

Putting "Agriculture" back on the map by making it a major talking point among economic development officials will further elevate the public and insider perception of the industry, thus motivating producers to work outside of the box.

Declining Interest in Agriculture. With the average age of farmers hovering around 58 and the next generation's lack of interest in taking on the family farm, it's no wonder there is a farming crisis looming on this nation's horizon. Add to that fact the lack of farm worker supply, the high rate of farm accidents, high land prices, and the mushrooming cost of farm equipment and agricultural production generally, and the future of making a living off the land seems bleak. Yet, there are also contraindicators – the national growing food culture, the rise of the hobby or part-time farmer, the surprising growth in the number of small farms nationally, the re-emergence of cooperatives as a collective commercial power, and the natural attraction of youth to an alternative lifestyle.

Strategies: Putting "agriculture" back into the classroom will kindle interest in farming among the Sandhills Region's youth, who may pass that interest back to their parents. Developing a greater appreciation for a local food system within the region can lead to greater consumption as well as contribution of labor from local constituents, thus increasing market demand and reducing the demand for imported labor.

Whether transitioning the farm to the next generation or to a new operator, existing producers need help with their planning needs. The North Carolina Farmland Transition Network was an early attempt to provide an online resource for producers to plan for their legacy. Reviving and enhancing this resource with additional tools, information, and outreach activities will help transition farmland from its existing stewards to new ones, whether within the family or outside of it.

Lending Community. A major barrier to new farmers and alternative agriculture is the unknown value of the alternative crop because of the lack of established markets as well as the lenders' lack of familiarity with alternative crops and sustainable agriculture practices. All lenders will require a business plan as a

prerequisite for their lending determination, and the business plan must include financial projections based on the produce value.

Strategies: Creating greater access to resources, such as “Enterprise Budgets,” in alternative crops will influence the ability of lenders to support alternative producers more readily.

Food Safety Regulation. There is an apparent conflict between government food safety regulations and its desire to support farmland preservation, because many of the policies and guidelines are challenging for small to mid sized farms to implement from an economic standpoint.

Strategies: Identifying the conflicts is a critical first step towards developing reasonable policies addressing public concerns. This plan recommends the start of a conversation to address challenges small and mid-sized growers face in the regulatory framework.

Business Trainings. Farmers run a business, and just like any other business owner, they need to have a plan to start-up, operate, and eventually transfer the farm to a new owner/operator. Over the past several decades, the business model for running a farm has changed dramatically, and in the 21st century is still changing in light of the smaller, niche markets that are developing around local food systems. New farmers may lack the skills it takes to develop a business plan that is built around this model.

Strategies: Providing farm business planning trainings to beginning farmers will teach producers about various business models and planning. This will prepare producers for when they seek financial help from lenders, thus leading to a greater chance of success for their farm business as well as keeping working lands in production. Beginning and experienced farmers will also have greater access to continuing education in innovative marketing techniques.

Evaluation Plan

Key Measures and Strategies to Track Progress:

Tracking the progress on each of the strategies listed in this plan will be accomplished in the manner identified for such strategy in the Module 9 handout, which is included in the appendix. Evaluation methods used include pre and post surveys, number and kinds of trainings, number of participants, change in number of loan applications, business plans, levels of acreages devoted to farming and forestry management.

Implementation

The Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group has devoted a great deal of time, thought, and energy to the development of this regional economic development plan. In order to ensure the implementation of the various strategies named herein, North Carolina Cooperative Extension has agreed to devote personnel to the task of initiating and/or delegating the action steps identified for each strategy. NCCE will also track progress on each of the strategies by using the measures identified in the Module 9 Measurement Plans attached in the Appendix.

Appendix

The Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group wishes to thank the individuals identified as Planning Group Members on the attached list. Their dedication and hard work contributed to the successful development of this Regional Economic Development Plan.

The Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group also wishes to thank the individuals identified as Training Team Members on the attached list. They facilitated the discussion generated by the Stronger Economies Together curriculum, guided us through the planning process, and assisted us in the writing of this plan.

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Paige Burns, Richmond County Extension
Taylor Williams, Moore County Extension
Stephen Greer, Moore County Extension
Susan Kelly, Richmond County Extension
Susan Condlin, Lee County Extension
Jesse Wimberley, Sandhills Area Land
Trust
Becky Bowen, NC State University, NC Cooperative Extension

Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group

Planning Group Members

Paige Burns, Richmond County Extension
Taylor Williams, Moore County Extension
Susan Kelly, Richmond County Director (NCCE)
Stephen Greer, Moore County Director (NCCE)
Susan Conclin, Lee County Director (NCCE)
Kaitlyn Cranford, Moore County Extension
Wayne Watson, Lee County Ag Advisory Board
Fenton Wilkinson, Sandhills Farm to Table
Jesse Wimberley, Sandhills Area Land Trust
Jeff Sheffield, City Manager, Robbins, NC
Matt Northcutt, NC Department of Commerce
Terri Holt, Local Restaurant Owner
Kathy Byron, Sandhills Community College
Rebecca Dunning, Center for Environmental
Farming Systems
Mike Rowland
Paul Dunham
Rickie DeWitt
Joseph Goldston
Tom MacCallum
Chris Yaklin
Don Bryant
Wendell Brown
F.W. Herndon

Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group

Training Team Members

Susan Jakes, NC State University, NC Cooperative Extension
Becky Bowen, NC State University, NC Cooperative Extension
Mitch Renkow, NC State University, Department of Ag and
Resource Economics
Brian Queen, USDA

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What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p>Strategy 1.1: Provide farm business planning trainings</p> <p>Participants: Beginning farmers</p>	<p>Names and contact information for beginning farmers</p> <p>Informational materials for trainings</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>
<p>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</p> <p>Producers learn business models and receive training on business planning</p>	<p>Trainers</p> <p>Training materials</p> <p>Training Dates & Sites</p> <p># of Participants in trainings</p>			<p>Upon completion of trainings</p>
<p>Behavior</p> <p>Lenders have more opportunity to lend to producers because of improved business planning</p>	<p>Names and contact information of lenders making ag loans</p> <p># of applicants with business plans</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>
<p>Condition</p> <p>More producers receive financing to keep working lands in production</p>	<p>Names and contact information of lenders making ag loans</p> <p># of approved ag loan applications</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>

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<p><i>Strategy 1.2: Provide continuing education to beginning and experienced farmers in marketing</i></p> <p><i>Participants: Beginning and experienced farmers</i></p>	<p><i>Names and contact information of possible participants</i></p> <p><i>Informational materials for trainings</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>Farmers learn marketing techniques</i></p>	<p><i>Trainers</i></p> <p><i>Training Materials</i></p> <p><i>Training Dates & Sites</i></p> <p><i># of Participants</i></p>			<p><i>Upon completion of trainings</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Farmers sell their products to multiple markets</i></p>	<p><i>Names of markets where products are sold</i></p> <p><i>Usage by regional farmers</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Income from working lands is sufficient to keep land in production</i></p>	<p><i>Farm income by farmer</i></p> <p><i>Acres taken out of production</i></p> <p><i>Acres added in production</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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<p><i>Strategy 1.3: Provide farmland transition planning and estate planning materials</i></p> <p><i>Participants: Experienced farmers</i></p>	<p><i>Name and contact information of experienced farmers</i></p>	<p><i>Ag Advisory Boards</i></p>		<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>Farm families learn how to plan for estate transition to keep farm intact</i></p>	<p><i>Resources for farm succession planning</i></p> <p><i>Name and contact information of lawyers, accountants, farmers, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Event information/# of participants</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Families plan for generational changes through estate planning</i></p>	<p><i># of counseling sessions re succession planning</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Families will retain working lands across generations</i></p>	<p><i># of ag acres lost due to no successor interested in farming</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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<p><i>Strategy 1.4: Provide regional tools to connect available regional farmland to emerging farmers</i></p> <p><i>Participants: Selling farmers/emerging farmers</i></p>	<p><i>Inventory available farmland</i></p> <p><i>Identify emerging farmers</i></p>	<p><i>Realtors</i></p> <p><i>Ag Advisory Boards</i></p>	<p><i>Link to existing realtor websites</i></p>	<p><i>Weekly</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>Create website to bridge buyers and sellers</i></p>	<p><i># of hits on website</i></p>			<p><i>Monthly</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Create a stream-lined transitioning of working lands</i></p>	<p><i># of sales of working lands as a result of website</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Working lands remain in production when there are no heirs</i></p>	<p><i># of acres lost to development</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p><i>Strategy 1.5: Provide resources to ag lenders on the value of alternative crops</i></p> <p><i>Participants: Ag lenders</i></p>	<p><i>Resource materials on alternative crops</i></p> <p><i>Name and contact information of ag lenders</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>Ag lenders receive resource materials on alternative crop values</i></p>	<p><i># of resource materials delivered</i></p> <p><i># of participants at trainings</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p> <p><i>Upon completion of trainings</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Ag lenders become more comfortable lending to alternative crop producers</i></p>	<p><i># of alternative crop producers applying for loans</i></p> <p><i># of loans made to alternative crop producers</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>More acres are devoted to alternative crop production</i></p>	<p><i># of acres devoted to alternative crop production</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p><i>Strategy 1.6: Address barriers to value-added small-farm agriculture</i></p> <p><i>Participants: producers, government agencies</i></p>	<p><i>Names and contact information of producers</i></p> <p><i>List of government agencies involved in value-added processing</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>Identify barriers to value-added small farm agriculture</i></p>	<p><i>Barriers to value-added small farm agriculture</i></p>	<p><i>Producers</i></p> <p><i>Government agencies</i></p>	<p><i>Focus Groups</i></p> <p><i>Surveys</i></p>	<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Develop solutions to barriers, where possible, thus providing a roadmap to achieve policy changes</i></p>	<p><i>Research innovative solutions to barriers in other regions, states</i></p> <p><i># of producers participating in solution development</i></p>	<p><i>NCSU, NC A&T</i></p> <p><i>Host of brainstorming sessions</i></p>		<p><i>Per barrier</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Increase number of small farms engaging in value-added agriculture</i></p>	<p><i># of small farms engaging in value-added agriculture</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p><i>Strategy 2.1: Engage consumers in the conversation about local food and its value in terms of individual health, community well-being, and regional self-sufficiency</i></p> <p><i>Participants: Consumers</i></p>	<p><i>Pre- and post-surveys</i></p>			<p><i>Baseline and at end of 5-year period</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>Develop consumer education programs on the value of local food programs</i></p>	<p><i>Resource materials</i></p> <p><i>Identify sponsoring partners</i></p> <p><i>Venue for education programs</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Consumers, restaurants, and other local food vendors purchase more locally produced ag products</i></p>	<p><i># of food vendors purchasing local products</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Increase ag production income from local sources, thereby reducing trade leakage.</i></p>	<p><i>Farm income derived from local sales</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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<p>Strategy 2.2: Create a regional food hub</p> <p>Participants: Producers, distributors, buyers/consumers</p>	<p>Who supplies food to grocery stores, restaurants, etc.</p> <p>Who distributes food</p>	<p>Sandhills Farm to Institution</p>		<p>Baseline and at end of five-year period</p>
<p>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</p> <p>Producers, institutional buyers, and consumers are aware and want a food hub</p>	<p>Knowledge and support of food hub</p> <p>Name and contact information of supporters</p>		<p>Pre and post surveys</p>	<p>Baseline and at end of five-year period</p>
<p>Behavior</p> <p>Institutional buyers and consumers have increased access to regionally produced products and modify buying habits to reduce trade leakage</p>	<p>Modification of consumer buying habits to buy local</p> <p># of food vendors selling local foods</p>		<p>Surveys</p>	<p>Baseline and at end of five-year period</p>
<p>Condition</p> <p>Production and consumption needs and resources are organized into contractual arrangements</p>	<p># of food vendors selling local foods</p> <p>Amount of produce sold to local vendors</p> <p># of cooperatives and buying clubs formed</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>

<i>their land</i>				
Condition 1. Ag land will be utilized as working land that supports industrial development 2. Farmers have a guaranteed market at a good price for their products and land usages	# and size of industries attracted to region due to value-added processing of alternative crops Farm income comparisons			Annually each (month)

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<p>Strategy 2.3: Identify high value alternative crops for the region. Provide options and information to producers on diversification and “income patching.”</p> <p>Participants: Producers, timberland owners, economic developers, university researchers</p>	<p>Names and contact information of potential producers of high-value alternative crops</p> <p>Names and contact information of university researchers</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>
<p>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</p> <p>1. Economic developers will work with university researchers to identify development potential of alternative agricultural and timber products</p> <p>2. Provide support for farmers with an interest in diversification, thus allowing them to gain new skills and produce new products and income sources.</p>	<p>Identity of high-value alternative crops suitable for region</p> <p># of industries recruited to region because of high-value alternative crops</p> <p># of inquiries</p> <p># and types of trainings on diversification</p> <p># of participants in trainings</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>
<p>Behavior</p> <p>1. Producers will grow alternative crops because of the security identified long term demand will bring</p> <p>2. Growers create more commercial/ industrial uses for</p>	<p># of producers growing high-value alternative crops</p> <p># of acres devoted to high-value alternative crops</p> <p>Pre and post surveys</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>

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What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p>Strategy 3.1: Hold a "Sustainable Economies Summit"</p> <p>Participants: General public, thought leaders, environmental organizations</p>	<p>Hop topics</p> <p>Key speakers</p> <p>Budget</p> <p>Sponsors</p> <p>Marketing</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>
<p>Attitudes/Knowledge/ Skills</p> <p>Build awareness of sustainable agriculture and living practices</p>	<p>"Ignite Sandhills"</p> <p>Pre and post surveys</p> <p># of participants</p>			<p>Upon completion of summit</p>
<p>Behavior</p> <p>Landowners incorporate a variety of sustainable practices into their ag and timber businesses</p>	<p># of land management plans</p> <p># of sustainable practices inquiries</p>			<p>Annually each (month)</p>
<p>Condition</p> <p>Region expects sustainable agriculture practices, thus creating a market for products using those methods and supporting a region-wide transition to sustainable community development</p>				

Stronger Economies Together Participants' Guide
Module Nine: *Measuring for Success*

Handout 2: Measurement Plan Template

Slide 10

What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p><i>Strategy 3.2: Provide tools for ag groups on how to promote agriculture and timber industries</i></p> <p><i>Participants: Ag groups</i></p>	<p><i>Names and contact information for various ag groups</i></p> <p><i>Resource materials</i></p> <p><i>Names and contact information for events and trade fairs</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills</i></p> <p><i>Increase willingness of ag leaders to participate in marketing to the public</i></p>	<p><i># of public speaking opportunities</i></p> <p><i># and types of ads and other promotional materials</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Promote the presence of a trade booth at every festival in the region</i></p>	<p><i># of festivals and other events at which ag was represented</i></p> <p><i># of festivals and other events at which ag was not represented</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Agriculture from the region will have a recognizable brand</i></p>	<p><i># of promotional outlets for the ASK for Sandhills brand</i></p> <p><i>Consumer surveys</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>

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What you want to measure	What information you need	Who has the information	How you will get the information	How often/when you will get the information
<p><i>Strategy 3.3: Adopt an "Ag Literacy" program into schools curriculum and promoted regionally</i></p> <p><i>Participants: School Board, teachers, ag leaders, after school programs</i></p>	<p><i>Current usage of Farm Bureau curriculum</i></p> <p><i>Objections to curriculum</i></p> <p><i>Supportive members of School Board and teachers</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Attitudes/Knowledge/Skills</i></p> <p><i>School children develop appreciation of ag production in school as well as in places like the YMCA</i></p>	<p><i># of teachers using curriculum</i></p> <p><i># of preschools and afterschool programs using curriculum</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Behavior</i></p> <p><i>Ag leader will become member of all local school boards</i></p>	<p><i>Identify potential candidate</i></p> <p><i>Identify sponsors for campaign</i></p>			<p><i>Annually each (month)</i></p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p><i>Increased ag literacy will impact consumer and institutional buying habits to buy local, thus reducing trade leakage and increasing self-sufficiency</i></p>	<p><i>Pre and post surveys of parents of school-aged children</i></p>			<p><i>Baseline and at end of 5-year period</i></p>

Sandhills Sustainable Ag Working Group
Paige Burns
Richmond County Extension
PO Box 1358, Rockingham, NC 28380
paige_burns@ncsu.edu
(910) 997-8255

