

# NC AgVentures Grant Program



In today's global marketplace, innovation has become the key that allows one business to rise above others. Farmers are both creative and entrepreneurial, but transitioning an agricultural operation to compete in the global economy is a huge undertaking. Extension professionals, with their agricultural expertise and ties to the land-grant system are uniquely positioned to help local producers explore new opportunities, access local and university resources, and enhance project success.

NC AgVentures is an Extension grant program sponsored by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission (NCTTFC). The overall goal is to strengthen the rural economy, particularly in places negatively impacted by the downturn in the tobacco industry.

## Two Grant Opportunities

The program offers two grant options; an individual farm grant or a community grant. The individual farm grant offers cost-share grants up to \$10,000, for family farms with innovative ideas to diversify, transition, or enhance their farm operation. This could include adapting new technology, such as using a drone to monitor field crops, converting a tobacco greenhouse for microgreens production, or using social media for marketing.

The second option, a community grant up to \$10,000, provides funds for NC Extension Agents and Extension County Directors to pursue project ideas that will strengthen their agricultural community. The project should build collaboration between three or more Ag producers. There is no limit on the size of the group and the Agent can invite farms in other counties to participate. Some of these grants have been used for research projects and others have been used to purchase equipment that can be shared (rented) by multiple farms. This year we received a 3-year grant for 1.46 million to expand this grant opportunity to more farms.

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## GRANT IMPACTS 2014 – 2017

Awarded 89 farm grants

Awarded 10 Community grants

Invested \$880,000

Jobs Created – 230

Jobs Sustained – 689

Current or former tobacco farmers and farm workers assisted – 450

Workers with upgraded skills – 285

Acres of farmland impacted – 56,788

Acres of new crop production - 607

Value of product produced – \$10,999,96

*Impact numbers are gathered from project reports submitted by the grant recipients.*