

North Carolina Peach Growers Society

Fact Sheet for Upcoming Peach Growers Referendum

What: North Carolina Peach Growers are being asked to vote for the implementation of a **new assessment** on commercial growers to provide funds to support critical work for the improvement of the peach industry in North Carolina. These funds will be managed by the NC Peach Growers' Society. The annual assessment would be based on the grower's number of trees: **Tier 1- growers with fewer than 500 trees, \$100. Tier 2- 500 to 2,500 trees, \$250. Tier 3- more than 2,500 trees, to be assessed at \$350.**

When: The referendum will be held October 1, 2013, through a mail in referendum supported by NCDA&CS..

How: 2/3 majority of votes in favor will pass the referendum.

Who: One vote per orchard – one assessment would be levied per each orchard, and therefore one vote; Who may vote as a representative of the orchard: the owner or designated family member or orchard manager may vote. Must be at least 18 years of age at the time of the referendum.

Why: According to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, fresh peach consumption continues to trend downward. California is the number one peach producer in the United States. NC Peach growers must support extension, marketing and research, and the development of varieties, rootstocks and pest and orchard management strategies for our climate and clientele in order to **move the industry forward**, increase the profitability for growers and grow the quality product demanded by consumers. The population of North Carolina is expected to grow by 4 million people over the next 10-15 years. This represents a **potential market expansion**. NC peach producers must be able to grow a high quality crop and market it **successfully to compete with product from outside of the state.**

Why should NC Peach Growers vote "yes" in the referendum in support of an assessment? NC peach growers have a unique "niche" market – a **tree ripened, field packed, direct to consumer product known for exceptional flavor and quality.** This market niche is different from other big peach growing states: California has a vastly different climate from NC, while Georgia and South Carolina peach industries feature pack houses using mature-picked peaches that are graded and hydro cooled, allowing for a longer shelf life and shipping. Many of the most sought after peach varieties – Winblo, Norman, Contender, and Carolina Gold – are **North Carolina developed peaches**, suited to our climate, customer needs and production practices. Challenging economic times means that federal and **state budgets are on the chopping block**, and the university system continues to face budget reductions that demand strategic realignment of resources. The Peach industry must show strong support of Extension educational programs, university research and NCDA

marketing by providing financial backing of these initiatives in order to maintain and hopefully increase the programs performed on behalf of the peach industry in the state. Without this funding these **programs will be seriously reduced** and possibly eliminated.

How do growers benefit from assessment funds?

For decades the NC Peach Growers' Society has sponsored an **Annual Conference**, bringing together the latest in research on orchard management, pest and disease control from NCSU specialists, as well as marketing expertise from NC Department of Agriculture. The Society has also sponsored **Field Days** at the Sandhills Research Station as well as **hands-on workshops on orchard establishment, pruning demonstrations**, and more. If the referendum is successful, funds will be available to develop **additional educational programs** for the **western area of NC** peach production as needed. Assessment funds will allow the Society to support the **continuation of research** at the Sandhills and Mills River Research Stations. Peach acreage at the Sandhills Research Station dedicated to research is approximately 18 acres and has been dramatically reduced over the past 30 years. Peach acreage at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research Station in Mills River for peach research is increasing and is approximately 7 acres. It costs approximately **\$500/acre/year** to simply maintain orchards so that they are in place when needed for research projects. While there are fees that must be paid annually by University personnel to cover the cost of the orchards for peach research, funds are not sufficient to maintain orchards when not involved in immediate research needs. Additionally, as University faculty working on peaches retires, the peach industry **will be required to provide funds** to help refill these positions if peach research is to continue. Peaches are a long-term crop; **reliable and consistent support is needed** to maintain orchards at the Research Stations for research as well as for educational and Extension programs. In addition, sufficient funds must be in place to support university positions in the very near future. This is necessary if the work of research and outreach to **support the North Carolina peach industry** is to be maintained.

In addition to supporting research and continuing education for growers, assessment funds can be used to develop **valuable marketing materials** for the use of those growers who **participate in the assessment**, to potentially include advertising support, publications, maps, signs, web-based information and more.