



**North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services**

May 1, 2009

Dear Designated Legislative Committees / Friends of North Carolina Agriculture,

Throughout history, the American agricultural industry has repeatedly answered the call to provide the United States and many of our neighbors with an abundant, safe, wholesome food, fiber, and forestry supply. That call is growing louder: world population is projected to continue to grow and worldwide incomes are expected to continue to rise, further increasing demands on our industry. At the same time, agriculture must help to meet our energy needs, and food supplies are threatened. Consumers have voiced an increased interest in the environmental impact of food, fiber, and forestry production practices. Expectations are rising for the high quality applied research necessary for our farmers to sustain our rural economies and meet global competition. This is a critical time for urgent and coordinated action to address the needs of our State's agricultural research system – the so-called "seed corn of the agricultural industry."

With these concerns and needs in mind, the members of the North Carolina General Assembly directed the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Deans of the State's two land-grant universities to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the management of our state's agricultural research stations system. Since receiving that mandate, we have been working together to reach our common objective to enhance efficiency, improve effectiveness and modernize our research facilities.

We established a Strategic Planning Council and a Working Group consisting of expert members from each organization. We appointed an External Advisory Committee comprised of 23 leaders in the agriculture community. The Committee met three times, providing valuable input for our plan. We held facilitated discussions with faculty at NCSU and NC A&T, and with research station superintendents, to discuss current challenges and future needs. We conducted "peer reviews" to identify savings and improvements at each research station. We also held four regional meetings across the State to receive public comments and gather information from key farmers, commodity leaders and agricultural communities. Nearly 400 people participated in our planning process.

This plan is only the beginning. We must continue to apply efficiencies in everyday management. Toward that end, we will: 1) refine standard operating procedures to streamline administrative functions and facilitate communications; 2) review and consolidate commodity research programs to realize budget savings; 3) establish an advisory board to actively provide input and guidance; and 4) publish an annual report of research station projects and activities.

We share a common vision and a continuing commitment to work together to enhance the future of North Carolina agriculture. We certainly appreciate your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Steven W. Troxler in black ink.

Steven W. Troxler
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Johnny C. Wynne in black ink.

Johnny C. Wynne
Dean and Executive Director
for Agricultural Programs

Handwritten signature of Donald R. McDowell in black ink.

Donald R. McDowell
Interim Dean