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## **N. C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Awards Grants**

RALEIGH -- The N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission has awarded \$5 million in grants for 24 projects across North Carolina. The goals and objectives from the grants will assist and impact rural communities, livestock producers, consumers, farmers and food entrepreneurs.

“The Commission has chosen outstanding projects to support in 2009,” said Commission Chairman Billy Carter. “They include projects such as equipment for a value-added processing facility, construction planning for a new livestock marketing center, local farmers market expansions, investment capital for agricultural entrepreneurs, implementing produce safety programs and improving agronomic testing resources from which all North Carolina farmers can benefit. The commission also felt it is critical to support viable workforce development and job placement programs during these challenging economic times.”

Commission members funded grants for projects that will focus on diversification initiatives, increasing farm profitability, skill and resource development, natural resource and farmland preservation and community economic development. The grants range in size from \$28,000 to \$500,000 - the maximum grant amount for any one project.

“Many of the projects will have an impact on every county in the state,” said William Upchurch, Executive Director. “The Commission members spent a great deal of time reviewing the applicants and feel confident that the approved grants will truly benefit a large number of people and communities.”

The commission’s funding comes from monies paid by cigarette manufacturers as a result of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement. The Tobacco Trust Fund Commission was established in 2000 by the N.C. General Assembly to help members of the tobacco community – including farmers, tobacco workers and related businesses – lessen the impact of declining tobacco production. When the Commission was created, legislators recognized the strong role that agriculture, and tobacco in particular, have historically played in the state’s economy, as well as the impact the Master Settlement Agreement has had on the agricultural economy. For a complete listing of the grant awards visit [www.tobacotrufund.org](http://www.tobacotrufund.org).

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**2008-09 NC TOBACCO TRUST FUND COMMISSION  
GRANT AWARDS**

**An Improved Laboratory Information Management System to Meet the Agronomic Data of NC Growers - \$455,600**

Design and implement a new Lab Information Management System for NCDA&CS agronomic lab services which will include nematode assays, plant tissue and waste analysis. Lab will be able to better process the increased sampling and testing that have occurred over the last few years. Benefits both farmers and consumers statewide.

**Building Capacity for Working Farm Easements - \$150,000**

The Conservation Trust for NC will use funds to cover transaction costs to protect an additional 10 farms with tobacco backgrounds. Legal guidance and training for Soil & Water Conservation District staff is also included. Benefits statewide.

**Columbus County Farmers Market - \$152,000**

Funds will expand the market to include a 20' x 30' honey extractor room and 10' x 10' walk-in cooler. Benefits Columbus and surrounding counties.

**Developing New Markets for NC Peanuts - \$100,000**

Funds will conduct a market development program to sell more NC Peanuts in major drug store chains. Program includes in-store displays, coupons and advertising to raise awareness about peanuts as a healthy snack and to increase sales. Benefits farmers statewide.

**Evaluation of Food Safety Traceback Programs used by NC Growers - \$30,000**

Conduct surveys and visit NC produce farmers to gather data on produce traceback programs. These programs allow growers, shippers and sales outlets to understand the production and shipping history of fresh produce. Data will be used to implement a statewide recommendation on best program to utilize by all produce growers/shippers. Benefits farmers statewide.

**Expanding Bramble Production in NC with Emphasis on Food & Water Quality - \$261,946**

Develop and further expand bramble (blueberry, raspberry, blackberry) production research and testing at research stations. Integrate good agricultural practices, test the use of high tunnels to extend growing season, and implement water quality improvements. Benefits farmers statewide.

**Expanding Value-Added Opportunities for Farmers in WNC/AdvantageWest Econ. Dev. Group - \$136,500**

Funds will cover outreach coordinators and personnel to assist more WNC farmers in developing value-added products. Increased training, new products and higher sales will be the result. Serves western NC counties.

**Farm City Link Program/L.L. Polk House Foundation, Inc. - \$57,800**

Grant will support educational and promotional efforts of the L.L. Polk House; the birthplace of L.L. Polk, first commissioner of Agriculture in NC. Consumer outreach will include educational displays and programs emphasizing the history and importance of agriculture to NC. Benefits statewide.

**Got to Be NC Agriculture Direct Marketing Initiative - \$300,000**

Consumer directed television feature on tobacco production in NC and how farmers have diversified into other crops and products. Financial impact on agriculture will be explored to raise consumer awareness. The importance of local food supply to citizens will also be emphasized. Benefits farmers statewide.

**Madison Family Farms - \$119,200**

Project funds will be used for GAP certification and training of growers, management, sales/production coordinator, dock improvements and other training. Serves farmers in the counties of Madison, Buncombe, Yancey, and Mitchell.

**NC Commodity Asian Export Promotion - \$33,000**

NCDA&CS 2-week trade mission to China and Taiwan with NC agri-industry representatives. The mission will promote sales, marketing and company/government relationships for tobacco, soybeans, pork and sweet potato producers. Serves farmers statewide.

**NC Organic Bread Flour/ NC Farm Stewardship Association - \$57,904**

Funds will be used for personnel to conduct a study on feasibility of bringing growers together to sell hard winter wheat to a custom milling facility. Project will also determine feasibility of setting up processing infrastructure for local flour production. Serves farmers statewide.

**Nash Area Farmer's Market Expansion - \$400,000**

Funds will be used to expand the Nash County Area Farmer's Market by building a 52' x 72' open shelter and adding more parking. Benefits Nash and surrounding counties.

**Natural Capital Investment Fund/Financing Sustainable Ag Businesses - \$500,000**

Funds will offer loan and investment capital for sustainable ag businesses. Within 2 years, the project will make a min. of 10 loans and leverage over \$1.4 million in additional investment. Borrowers will be able to expand and/or venture out into new businesses designed to increase their farm income. Benefits statewide.

**Opportunities Industrialization Center of Wilson, Inc. (OIC) - \$240,000**

Funding will continue support for Project New Start Phase III. Assists dislocated workers in Wilson County with job research, personal training and employment.

**Piedmont Value-Added Shared Use Food & Ag Processing Center - \$479,000**

Facility located in Hillsborough will provide a full service food processing center for 22 counties. Funds will be used for equipment to be purchased once renovations are complete.

**Project Skill-Up/NC Community College Systems - \$292,000**

Funding for nine community colleges to target clients who need further job skills training and/or help in securing employment.

**Raising Hopes for Southeastern NC Farmers: A Regional Biofuels Sustainability Project – Southeastern Community College - \$250,000**

Funds will assist in implementing a biofuels processing lab for outreach and education for farmers in Columbus and the surrounding counties. Long range goal is to develop crops in the area that could be used for biofuels and bring more income to farmers. Benefits Columbus and surrounding counties.

**Statewide Agri-Tourism Map - \$28,000**

100,000 large full color maps featuring NC agritourism farms will be printed and placed at all NC welcome centers. Result will be more consumer traffic at these farms resulting in higher sales for NC farmers. Serves farmers statewide.

**Strong Roots: Strengthening Local Food Initiatives in NC / Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project - \$205,000**

Funds will assist ASAP personnel in training 2 NC communities on how to plan and execute local food campaigns, much like the current ASAP model, based on the farmers/food companies in their areas. Grant would cover 2 years of training, planning and implementation for these multi-county regions.

**Succeed II: Production Skills for Today's Tobacco Growers - \$36,320**

Project provides production and leadership course for over 25 exceptional young NC farmers. Workshops, tours and other resources are utilized to expand their knowledge. Serves farmers across the state.

**Sustaining the Economic Impact from Tobacco Production in NC - \$150,000**

Funding will allow conversion of one research station tobacco barn for hot water curing fired by wood chips. Results of cost savings will be shared among other stations and farming operations for possible implementation. Serves tobacco farmers statewide.

**Tobacco Growers Communication Assistance - \$65,730**

Funds will support quarterly newsletters targeting 8,000 tobacco growers with vital research and marketing information. Includes costs for the annual Tobacco Grower Resource Guide. Serves statewide.

**WNC Livestock Marketing Center - \$500,000**

Grant will provide construction planning funds (such as license fees, site prep, architectural and engineering fees ) to design, build and operate a permanent livestock market for western NC producers in Haywood County. Benefits farmers in western NC.