

Keeping North Carolina's Farms and Forests Vibrant and Resilient: An Adaptive Management Planning Strategy

April 2015

North Carolina Agriculture and Forestry Adaptation Work Group

Project Overview

In 2014, a conversation began among leaders from the agriculture and forestry sectors, along with business, academia, research and government partners. The collaboration became known as the North Carolina Agriculture and Forestry Adaptation Work Group. The Work Group's mission was to explore the impacts of increasingly extreme weather events and changing climatic conditions on the agricultural and forestry sectors of North Carolina and determine whether producers were adequately prepared for what science is projecting. The conclusion: Preparation is needed and the state as a whole would benefit from the development of a comprehensive adaptive management strategy for the state's two biggest industries - agriculture and forestry.

The Work Group participants have varied backgrounds, interests and perspectives, but they each share a common premise: the agriculture and forestry sectors will be called upon to do even more to provide food, feed, fiber, forest products, energy and ecosystem services to sustain a world population that is expected to grow from 7.2 billion today to 9.6 billion by 2050. Agricultural and forestry leaders understand the magnitude of the challenges and we are confident that they will rise to the occasion to meet these challenges with sound scientific approaches.

This project and resulting report revealed the tremendous economic impacts and financial contributions that the agriculture and forestry industries provide to the state economy. The project also found that while North Carolina has one of the most varied and diverse climates of any eastern state, farmers, ranchers and foresters who make their living off the land are already witnessing the effects of changing climatic conditions and recognize that more attention to adaptive management planning is required. In response, the Work Group's report outlines findings and recommendations and offers a roadmap for constructing an adaptive management plan to improve agriculture and forestry resiliency and further enhance the economic viability of these sectors for decades to come.

The Agriculture and Forestry Adaptation Work Group leaders have concluded that the risks associated with changing climatic conditions warrant expanded and accelerated adaptive management planning and invite agriculture and forestry leaders along with conservation, agribusiness, academia, industry and government partners to join with them in identifying risk management tools, production and conservation practices, and research and extension priorities that can be used to ensure that production platforms remain resilient and economically viable.

The time has come to make adaptive management planning in North Carolina a priority so the full range of goods and services delivered by the state's farms and forests can be maintained for generations to come. Please join us in this effort.