



# Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program Report

Fiscal Year 2021  
July 1-June 30, 2021

September 2021

The Durham County Board of County Commissioners approved an Agricultural Economic Development Grant Program and allocated \$50,000 for the fiscal year 2021. The program's purpose is to offer cost share grants to assist farmers along with promoting Agriculture Development and Outdoor Environmental Learning Centers in schools.

This program provides two types of grants:

- Small grants for Agriculture Development in schools: Up to \$1,000.00
- Grants for farmers: Up to \$5,000.00

The grant application was released on July 23, 2020; Application Deadline: August 31, 2020 at 5:00 pm; The AED grant review committee received 22 farm applications and one school application. The committee received grant request of \$82,975 for 23 projects with an estimated project cost of \$157,555. Durham County allocated \$50,000 that will fund 13 farm projects and 1 school project for fiscal year 2021.

The Agricultural Economic Development Grant Subcommittee administers the grant program. It is made up of nine (9) members that manage the program and evaluate each application. The committee is comprised of a diversity of agency personnel that assist the farming community as well as members of local non profit advisory boards.

### FY2021 AED Grant Committee

<b>David Harris</b> Chair/ Durham SWCD Board	<b>Eddie Culberson</b> Director of Durham SWCD
<b>Terence Priester</b> Durham SWCD Board Associate Supervisor	<b>Talmage Layton</b> Farmland Protection Advisory Board member
<b>Donna Rewalt</b> NC Cooperative Extension Director	<b>Tina Miller</b> Farm Service Agency Director
<b>Justin Page</b> NC Farm Bureau member	<b>Matthew Eagle</b> Farmland Protection Advisory Board
<b>Craig Lloyd</b> Farmer FoodShare, Inc.	<b>Michael Dupree &amp; Sherry Scully</b> Durham SWCD staff support

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### Soil & Water

201 E Main St, Fl 5

Durham, NC 27701

919-560-0558

[WWW.dconc.gov/swcd](http://WWW.dconc.gov/swcd)



## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program Farm Applications and Service Productivity Data

Program Impact & Data	FY 21
Funding level	\$ 50,000
Request for funding from applicants	\$ 82,975
Number of applications	22
Number of farm applications	18
Number of M/WBE applications (farms)	11
Number of non profits that applied	6
Number of Schools that applied	1
Number of farm projects funded	13
Percentage of M/WBE contracts awarded	73%
Number of Farms funded for Food Safety Compliance FMSA/GHP/GAP	4
Number of schools funded	1

Break down of Project types	FY21 Applicants	Funded
Number of farm operations that raise livestock only	7	5
Number of farm operations that raise livestock & produce	2	2
Number of farms that grow produce only	4	4
Projects that improved access/equity/non profits with direct sales	6	1
Schools supporting Agriculture Education	1	1
Other Agriculture Commodities produced/Hay	2	1





## Agriculture Programs at Schools



"The AEDG program adds irreplaceable job experiences for our high school horticulture students - instead of only reading about different turf and grass types in class, they got to experience installing and caring for them first-hand!"

Melissa Amoabeng,  
Farmer and Educator  
DPS Hub Farm





## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program



One of the fastest growing parts of my farm is selling plants. I mostly sell a wide variety of herbs, along with vegetable starts, unusual edibles and native plants. As of this year it was just shy of 1/3 of my sales. I have a lot of requests for new plants but was over capacity this year for my seed starting areas.

I struggled to find places for seedlings and just the room to start seeds. In order to expand I needed a much larger space for seed starting and propagation.



This grant allowed me to quickly build a greenhouse for these needs. This will make a huge difference and allow me to expand and grow at least 50% more plants than last year. I'm so thankful for this opportunity and assistance from the county to expand my farm business.

**Wolfberry Hawthorn Farm**





## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program

Thank you Durham Soil & Water for your amazing contribution to our farm! I am a new and beginning farmer. My wife and I started Good Soil Gardens with the mission to grow beautiful and useful plants for our family and the local community. This grant helped us progress in our mission by leaps and bounds. It has allowed us to increase our usable growing space by building a much needed deer fence. Because of this grant, we were able to complete the deer fence project more than a year ahead of our business plan.

We currently grow specialty cut flowers and herbs, with plans to expand into woody shrubs, trees and native plants, using regenerative and sustainable practices. Because of the new deer fence, this season we will more than triple our production space for tender annuals. The fence will also protect our most valuable crops, such as beautiful tulips and dahlias, that often catch the attention of deer during the early spring.

With this improved protection in place, we will be able to begin our sales earlier in the season, increasing our farm’s earning potential. The greatest long term financial benefit will come from being able to plant long season native plants and other perennial specialty crops, without fear that the deer will make these high value investments a part of their



yearly winter diet. The Durham Soil & Water agriculture economic development grant has allowed us to scale up and diversify the entire farming business, creating more opportunity for us to produce beautiful plants for our local community!

**Good Soil Gardens**





## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program



The grant program allowed us to add cattle panels to create alleyway and squeeze chute for cattle handling. This allows me to work the cattle in a manner that is safer for the animal and for the operator when spraying them, worming, artificially inseminating, loading and unloading, etc.

The grant process worked out really well and was well organized. Mike Dupree and Eddie Culberson were both involved to approve the plan. All went well.

**Rocky Branch Farm**





## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program



The Ag Economic Development Grant Program has “Allowed us to invest with less risk in machinery that helps us be more efficient. That’s really important these days. We used it (the grant funds) to buy a rinse conveyor that I use to clean and sanitize the produce which does 2 things—makes it safer for the consumer but also helps with storage life of the crop.”



The Program “was pretty straight forward to use. We had some help figuring out the paperwork. And then, as soon as we figured out what to do on our end, it seemed to go smoothly.”

**Southwind Farm**



## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program

This grant project allows for grazing and watering under thinned pines for cattle. This silvopasture helps to increase summer grazing acreage to allow for more stockpile of grass for fall and winter. This in turn reduces dependency on baled hay.



**Caywood Farm**



Wrapping cuts of meat in a bag within an outer wrapping of butcher's paper is not appropriate for storage for more than a few weeks. The purchase of a vacuum sealer for packaging meat products allows for longer term storage. In turn, it allows for utilization of time and allows for a better product to be offered to customer.

**Bull City Farm**



## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program

### Waller Family Farm



This mulch lifter allows removal of plastic from strawberry rows at the end of the season. The operation is much more efficient because of the time and labor saved from removing the plastic by hand.

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I did get hay forks last year. The AED grant program is a good thing for farmers because it allows the opportunity to get grant money for infrastructure and/or equipment that would otherwise be difficult to pay for because of expenses. The hay forks I bought last year with the money from the grant makes it a lot easier to move round bails than using pallet forks like I was before.



### Eagle Acres Farm



## Agriculture Economic Development Grant Program

“Currently we are working on a greenhouse and we have been able to receive resources for a pack and wash shed. The pack and wash shed is really helping us be able to store more of our vegetables so that we don’t have to harvest the week of and figure out where it goes. We have a little bit more of a runway so to speak of being able to store it



and refrigeration and

being able to move it to our customer base. So that’s been one thing that is helpful.

The greenhouse is really helping. We end up having to buy a lot of our bedding plants and transplants from a greenhouse in Virginia or sometimes we order them from western North Carolina. We love supporting those businesses but we are not able to find the varieties that we really want to grow. Or,

it’s not cost effective for us to outsource that greenhouse work to someone else. So, being able to have our own greenhouse means that we can really look at the niche plants, the heirloom, open pollinated plants that we want to grow. We always want to grow something that not everybody else is growing. For example, everybody grows crookneck or straight neck squash at the same time but we kind of want to do pattypan or some other kind of more unique squashes. To do that, we need to control the plants that we are growing out. So, having the greenhouse is going to be able to help us be able to grow those kind of niche products that make us unique.



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*Continued from Pg. 10*

I think, honestly, that every county in the state should have a program like this to support farmers. It's really invaluable and like investing in long term viability of farms in that county. It's important if we want to see thriving farmers in Durham County and around the state we are going to need more programs like this that are going to help leverage farmers . Especially when farmers are not nonprofits. They are "for profits" and there are not many resources through nonprofit foundations for grants for "for profit" businesses. So, that is another crucial niche that the Ag Economic Development Program is doing is helping build infrastructure and research and development. It gives you dollars to help test it out so you don't have to take a big hit to your personal finances. It is a helpful resource and I would like to see it grow in this county. It also means it is attractive for farmers to move to this county because there is a resource that will support them. It is kind of a dual purpose kind of resource."

## **Tierra Negra Farms**

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View video links on our website at [www.dconc/swcd](http://www.dconc/swcd) under the **Ag Economic** tab to see more testimonials of the FY2021 Ag Economic Development Grant projects:

[Catawba Trail Farm Video](#)

[Tailgate Farm Video](#)

[Tierra Negra Farm Video](#)

[Southwind Produce Video](#)

Videos filmed and produced by Kyleene Rooks, Contractor (Education) with Durham Soil & Water.



Soil & Water