



Healthy Food Business Resources

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Offices

Cooperative Extension offices provide educational programming in five key areas: sustaining agriculture and forestry, environmental protection, maintaining viable communities, developing responsible youth and developing strong, healthy and safe families. With over 100 counties in NC, click here to find your local extension office's website: <https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center/>

Resources for Producers and Food Businesses

> **NC Growing Together** is bringing more locally-grown foods into mainstream markets and food service supply chains. They provide resources for selling into wholesale markets, technical resources for postharvest handling, season extension and food safety strategies, marketing tools including guides to social and online media for farmers and food entrepreneurs plus MORE. Click here to access NCGT's resources: <https://www.ncgrowingtogether.org/for-producers/>

Contact Emily Edmonds, Project Extension and Outreach Program Manager, at (828) 399-0297

> The **Center for Environmental Farming Systems** develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems that conserve natural resources, strengthen communities, improve health outcomes and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina. To learn more about their initiatives, programs, and strategies, please check out their website: www.cefs.ncsu.edu

Find the right CEFS Team member by searching their contact list: <https://cefs.ncsu.edu/about-us/contacts/>

GAP and GHP Certification

Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices are voluntary audits that verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled and stored properly to minimize and reduce the risks of microbial food safety hazards. To learn more about GAP and GHP services and how to request an audit, visit the US Department of Agriculture's website for more information: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp>

> North Carolina Department of Agriculture Grading Services GAP Certification Assistance Program: <http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/NCgradesvc/>

> Food Safety Audit Verification Program: <http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/gradnreg/foodsafety/index.htm>

Contact Joe Sanderson, NCDA&CS Markets Division Director at (919) 707-3100



Food Safety, Compliance, and Regulation

Here you can access information about food safety programs, manufacturing processes, industry systems and import/export activities.

- > **US Food and Drug Administration:** Rules and guidance on the Food Safety Modernization Act: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm359436.htm> and <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm253380.htm>
- > **Got to be NC:** Food Safety resources <http://www.ncagr.gov/fooddrug/foodsafety/>
- > **NC State Extension:** Produce Safety resources: <https://ncfreshproducesafety.ces.ncsu.edu/>
- > **Food Safety Handlers & Managers:** NC Food Safety Manager Principles Course: http://www.foodsafetytrainingcourses.com/north_carolina_food_safety_training_course.html

Farmer's Markets

- > **North Carolina Farm Fresh:** Looking for a the freshest locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs? You can find a directory of pick-your-farms, roadside farm markets and farmers markets throughout the state of North Carolina here: <http://www.ncfarmfresh.com/farmmarkets.asp>
- > **NC State Extension** provides Farmers Market Resources, which includes information on Good Farmer's Market Practices, guidelines for farmers and sellers, food safety, and more. <https://ncfreshproducesafety.ces.ncsu.edu/ncfreshproducesafety-growers-farmers-market-resources/>

NC Agricultural Associations

- > **NC Agribusiness Council:** Raises awareness regarding agribusiness, advances agribusiness interests and programs, and works closely with local partners to find workable solutions to today's challenges. <http://www.ciclt.net/sn/clt/ncagbc/default.aspx?ClientCode=ncagbc>
- > **Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA):** A farmer-driven, membership-based non-profit organization that advocates for fair farm and food policies builds systems for family farms to thrive and educates communities about local and organic agriculture. <https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/>. See CFSA's Top Online Resources for Agripreneurs: <https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/top-resources-for-agripreneurs/#more-19826>

Food System Finance

Need money to start or grow your food business? Discover how these organizations are financing farmers, grocers, restaurateurs, food artisans and other food related businesses.

- > **Carolina Small Business Development Fund:** Provides flexible loan terms and financing for healthy food businesses through its Healthy Carolina Loan Program. www.carolinasmallbusiness.org
- > **NC Rural Center Microenterprise Loan Program:** This programs works with individuals who have sound ideas for starting or expanding a small business but may not qualify for bank loans. There is special emphasis to serve rural, low-income, female and minority borrows. <http://www.ncruralcenter.org/programs/business-lending/microenterprise>
- > **Carolina Farm Credit:** Offers financing for young and experienced farmers, as well as those buying a rural home or running an ag-related business.. In addition to a range of available loans, CFC offers appraisal services, equipment and facility leasing and life insurance. <https://www.carolinafarmcredit.com/home.aspx>



Food System Finance (continued)

- > **Self-Help Credit Union:** Self-Help lends capital to food aggregators and distributors, grocery stores and food co-ops, urban farmers, food waste and recycling companies and entrepreneurs hoping to start a food business. <https://www.self-help.org/business/loans/all-business-loans/foodsystemloans>

Grants and Cost-Share Programs

- > **NC Department of Agriculture GAP Certification Cost Share Assistance:** Helps NC growers with financial support in obtaining a third party audit to verify that they are in compliance with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). <http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/NCgradesvc/>
- > **USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS):** The USDA supports public and private investments in the form of loans, grants, promotion and other programs designed to create healthy food options in food deserts. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants>
- > **The Farmer's Market Promotion Program:** Authorized grants through the FMPP are targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Check out the following link for more information about the program and how to apply. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>

Resources for Organic Operations

Organic farmers, ranchers and food processors follow a defined set of standards to produce organic food and fiber. Organic is a labeling term used to show that the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods. These resources provide more information about organic standards and best practices, production and handling, labeling, certification and cost share programs.

- > **USDA's Organic Standards:** The organic standards describe the specific requirements that must be verified by a USDA-accredited certifying agent before products can be labeled USDA organic. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/organic-standards>
- > **Organic Certification:** Certification permits a farm or processing facility to sell, label, and represent their products as organic which provides consumers with additional choices in the marketplace. Get information regarding the basics and benefits of certification and how to become a certified organic operation by visiting the following site: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification>
- > **USDA's National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP):** USDA provides organic certification cost share opportunities for organic producers and handlers. More information and facts on how to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification can be found here: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occp> and [https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2016/organics fact sheet 2016.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2016/organics_fact_sheet_2016.pdf)

Small Business Technical Assistance

These service providers offer technical assistance to help start or grow food businesses.

- > **Carolina Small Business Development Fund:** Provides one-on-one assistance and business coaching, tools and templates, and educational opportunities for food service businesses. To request assistance, visit the website www.carolinasmallbusiness.org or call (919) 803-1437.



Small Business Technical Assistance (continued)

- > **NC State Extension Entrepreneur Initiative for Food (ei4f):** Provides resources for startup and already established food-based businesses of all types and sizes. Topics include how to get started, food product testing, services and supplies, marketing and more.
https://fbns.ncsu.edu/extension_program/entrepreneurs.html
- > **Carolina Common Enterprise:** Provides business and organizational guidance, technical assistance, education and other support to cooperatives and cooperative start-ups. For more information, visit the website www.commonenterprise.coop or contact Teia Evans, Cooperative Developer at (443) 928-5243 or teia@commonenterprise.coop
- > **Carolina Farm Stewardship Association:** Provides Food Systems Business Development Consulting Services, which include feasibility assessments, business planning/development, legal structure guidance, capital identification/development, market channel development and product sourcing. To be eligible, businesses must be (or become) CFSA members. <https://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/food-systems-business-development-consulting-services/>
- > **Gordon Food Service:** Provides a suite of value-added business tools and service solutions for menu design, marketing, labor, staff training, compliance, operations and planning to meet long-term goals. For more information, call (877) 779-369 or visit the website www.gfs.com or email info@gfs.com
- > **NC Choices:** Provides information, technical assistance, educational programming, and networking opportunities for farmers, extension agents, meat processors, buyers, distributors, and consumers. For more information, email Sarah Blacklin, Project Director at sarah@ncchoices.com or email Sheila Neal, Project Coordinator at sheila@ncchoices.com

Marketing Assistance

These service providers can help food-related businesses develop marketing strategies to promote the products and service offered.

- > **North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services:** Provides assistance with marketing farm products and developing marketing strategy and infrastructure. For more information, contact Cliff Sutton, Agriculture Marketing Specialist at (919) 707-3068 or email cliff.sutton@ncagr.gov or visit the website www.ncagr.gov/smallfarms
- > **NC A&T University Cooperative Extension:** Offers a Successful Small Farm Direct Marketing Program, aimed to provide educational resources to improve the direct marketing skills of limited-resource farmers.
http://www.ag.ncat.edu/extension/programs/direct_mkt.htm
- > **Coaching for Cooks:** Provides business coaching to help food entrepreneurs successfully navigate all marketing options. For more information, contact Jill Willett, Marketing Coach at (919) 665-9035 or email jill@coachingforcooks.com or visit the website www.coachingforcooks.com

Supplies and Equipment

Need supplies for your food business? Check out the following resources of food business suppliers:

- > **Restaurant Depot:** One-stop members-only chain selling wholesale food, beverages, equipment & supplies for restaurants & bars. For more information, call (919) 466-0660 or visit the website www.restaurantdepot.com