

NC Cooperative Extension, Craven Center



Agricultural Update

March 2026

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Important Note: Registration deadline for events listed below will vary from as few as 24 hours prior the event to as much as 3-4 days prior the event so please register as much in advance as possible. Also, while attendance is open to anyone, meals, when served, will only be provided for those that register in advance.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NO events are currently scheduled within Craven County Extension. Updates will be posted on our webpage, at <https://craven.ces.ncsu.edu/events/>

Reminder: New Pesticide Certification & Training Regulations

The EPA established new rules for training pesticide applicators and mandated that all license holders are knowledgeable and competent of the EPA changes. These changes, known as "Certification & Training Rules". Thus,

- 1) ALL license holders that obtained their license prior to 2025 MUST complete a 1-hour training session by the time their license expires. If not, then their license will not be renewed.
- 2) Required videos and presentation must be shown to all nCA employees. Documentation and required records must be kept at the place of employment. Specific details are on the NCDA & CS Pesticide Division website.

Currently, the easiest way to comply is to watch the video "Certification and Training Rule

Standards (C&T) Training" at the NCDA & CS Pesticide Division webpage Note, we do intend to offer this training However, our auditorium is being renovated so classes may not be offered until June 2026. Seating will be limited due to limited seating at available training facilities.

For more information and these resources, visit Structural Pest Control and Pesticides - [New Certification & Training - Pesticide Section website.](#)



Dicamba Training

Dicamba has been approved for 2026 use. Training will also be required as in years past. This training is provided by companies selling these products and NC Extension. A listing of Zoom trainings offered by NC Extension is below. To obtain the password, email your local Extension Agent prior the event. One MUST register in advance to attend. Register [HERE](#).

- March 10 8:30 AM Tuesday
- March 19 8:30 AM Thursday
- March 25 8:30 AM Wednesday

Ending Sales of Gramoxone*

Syngenta has decided to cease sales of Gramoxone. This product will still be sold between now and December 31, 2026 while supplies last. While Syngenta will no longer offer this product, other companies will continue to produce and sell products with the same active ingredient.

*Gramoxone is the trademark of Syngenta

Middle East Crisis and Production Prices

Generally speaking, most seed, pesticides, surfactants, etc. should be manufactured and sitting ready to sell for 2026. As such, common sense would assume steady prices of these inputs. However, if these products relied heavily upon petroleum products and/or have high energy cost for production, the manufacturer may already be experiencing increased cost for new products. With no certainty for supply or ability to transport, prices may increase this year. We will soon know.

As for fertilizer prices, expect some increase. Even if already stockpiled within the US, fuel prices will increase shipping charges. Perhaps the greatest increase may be seen in the price of nitrogen (N) since it is not only related to oil /gas for production but also requires shipping. As such, if feasible, early purchase of these products may benefit your operation. While there is no guarantee as to what might result from the crisis within the Middle East, we should at least try to anticipate a slower supply and potential price increase of N or other products.

Lastly, while we have made such statement before, it merits mentioning again given our current geopolitical crisis. The statement is simply that any acre of production that is not making a

profit is costing you loss of profit elsewhere. If one has many acres of loss production, one could potentially lose all profit. If the reason for low production is simply poor soil, the only solution is to avoid leasing/planting that farm/field. We wish there was another answer, but there is not. So, examine your fields and planting intentions. Should a field have low or no profit and prices of inputs increase, then losses will be higher. Evaluate this carefully before automatically planting every acre.

Dr Nick Piggott and Derek Washburn, NCSU Ag Economics Department, provided a good overview of the situation at our recent meeting. Simply put, corn production less than 140 bu/ac and soybean production less than 50 bu/ac will be unprofitable in 2026 at current prices. (Note: These budgets do NOT include land rental. If one includes \$50/ac for rent, one must have 53 bu/ac sold at \$12/bu to break even for soybean production. For corn production with the same rental rate, 140 bu/ac yield sold at \$5.23/bu will result in about \$8/ac profit). If the cost of production increases, this also increases the break-even yield.

The Common Trait All High Yielding Producers Share

It was noted during attendance at the NC Commodity Conference held in Greenville, NC that many growers were frantically taking notes during the presentation of Alex Harrell, soybean producer from Georgia with 218 bu/ac soybean yield, as he relayed his production practices. It seemed that each grower concentrated on certain areas such as early seedling plant tissue testing, soil nutrient target levels, minimum base saturation levels, use of potential growth enhancements, etc. However, many failed to note the what seemed to be the most critical aspects of his presentation was that he took a system approach. He examined every detail of his equipment, fertilizer, products and practices. He demanded that all inputs returned at least a 3 to 1 return of investment. He also did not use a product unless it provided such a return at least 2 of every 3 years of use. Too, he has the ability to remove excessive water through drainage as well as add water through overhead or drip irrigation. Lastly, he uses replicated trails of products within a field (at least three replications) to test his theories and potential products, using a calibrate weight wagon to ensure accurate data. With this in mind, note some of the comments we felt noteworthy below. (Most comments follow Extension advice but a few are unproven. However, for discussion, they are listed)

- Planter exactly set to seeding depth for all rows and checked against an exact measured block on a level concrete floor. Each row was adjusted individually to plant the exact desired seeding depth.
- Starter depth and width away from seed were measured similarly for each row to ensure that the fertilizer placement was below the seed.
- Singularity of the seed needs to be perfect. No doubles, no skips and no uneven spacing. If equipment is not performing as designed, throw it away. (He claimed he uses all new parts each year and test this equipment against standards for perfection each year.)
- GPS soil samples on 1 acre grids. Lime and fertilizer applied with variable rate.
- Aim for Soil Base Saturation to be high (He also encouraged a ratio for each base element but science has repeatedly shown that seeking these ratios does not result in higher yield. If one examines his "ratio" for each element, one would notice that he

essentially ensured the soil pH was within the proper range and that no element was lacking. Following NCDA & CS recommendations will get you to his "ratio" of elements)

- Eliminate any soil hard pan.
- Take tissue samples when plants are small (often 1st trifoliate or smaller for soybean and 2-3 leaves for corn). If certain elements are low, then seeking to "push the crop" for yield will be in vain. He admits this will take some time (2-3 years) of study and evaluation on your farm to discover these levels. Having thusly stated, this statement reflects what NC Extension has promoted for years in that high yield is only possible when we aim to supply seedling and early plant development at maximum level. If we do not, then just about anything else we do later in the season will have limited, if any, success.
- Using replicated trails over many years, he has established when plants are "stressed" due to excess or lack of water. He drains or irrigates based upon soil measurement and tissue test analysis. Additional added inputs are similarly scrutinized to determine whether they provide value by increased nutrient content verified by tissue sampling or verifiable yield increases.
- If products only provide a yield advantage one year out of two or three, he abandons the use of this product. (According to him, the product may work as intended but if this need is not a consistent annual need, then one is just buying a product that will not provide a return on investment).
- If any step of this process is eliminated and plants do not show excellent early season growth (usually less than a few inches in height), then simply accept what yield is possible. The plant will not respond to inputs to provide extraordinary yield.
- Yield enhancement products and micronutrient blends and/or fertilizer combinations should be tested on each farm and environment. Some work, some don't, and some only work in certain situations. Each farmers must evaluate these products in replicated trails with positive results for at least 3 years before endorsing as a common practice.

As mentioned earlier, much of these plans reflect what Extension promotes. These growers with high yield are simply taking standard practices and ensuring that the equipment is doing what is it intended to do. If not, they try different equipment or different brand of parts until they find what works for them. Too, they realize soil nutrient and pH variability will eliminate the ability to consistently have extraordinarily high yield. Next, even if a product provides additional yield, if the product does not add significant profit for several years, it is not used. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, they take the time to perform replicated trials of various products, documenting growth and measurable outcomes, prior to creating this as a standard practice. (In other words, side by side comparisons are fun to look at but are worthless when it comes to making a decision to use a product or practice)

In our view, equally as important as what was said is what was "not said". In other words, there was no magic formula of inputs or combination of products, no set level of fertilization, no magic seeding rate, etc. Yes, a few of the potential yield enhancements that NCSU has found to increase yield were indeed mentioned. However, the intent of these products was to ensure early season growth and reduce early stress. Adding yield resulted from the ability to manage water within the field and then fine-tuning foliar applications of fertilizers and products. Without the "whole system approach" nothing will magically increase yield.

The primary point of mentioning this is that we have received many call from producers wanting to know how to increase soybean yield given that yield less 45 bu/ac will not even break even. Regrettably, there is no magic formula. Those within NC producing 70-100 bu/ac soybeans are those that:

1. Follow NCDA & CS soil testing for lime and fertilization
2. Do not have soils with hard pans
3. Have fields that are well drained yet adequate water holding capacity to support high yield.
4. Use a burn down prior to planting that includes a pre-emergence herbicide
5. Plant maturity Group III, Group IV or very early Group V
6. Have finished planting early (start in late April and finish no later than mid-May)
7. Protect against damage from corn earworms and stinkbugs (may take multiple applications)
8. Apply a fungicide at early pod development, not just because they are making a trip across the field anyway
9. Defoliate plants for early harvest as needed.
10. Harvest early

It is worth mentioning that NCSU data shows the most impactful decisions for high yield (in order of importance) as 1) Selection of maturity group; 2) Planting date; 3) Use of foliar fungicide; 4) Water management (irrigation and/or drainage); and 4) Seeding rate (lower rates tend to provide higher yield)*

*This statement assumes an early planting date. If planting after May 12th seeding rates should be increased but generally, no more than 130,000 seeds/ac are ever needed to obtain high yield.

NC Ag Leads Strategic Plan

NC Ag Leads Strategic Plan outlines plans for the NC agricultural industry to thrive in future years. It was developed by industry, growers, grower associations, universities and government representatives. This plan addresses NC Extension staffing and priorities. NC State University has endorsed this plan. If you are not familiar with this plan, please consider reading it by downloading it at the link below. If you have read it, then please share with your local Extension Director, District Director, and County Commissioners your view of the plan. Now is time for us to examine current and future needs within our communities. We should take advantage of this and plan for a successful future.

A copy of the strategic plan can be found [HERE](#).

Craven County Agricultural Building Remodeling Update

Just a reminder that remodeling continues for the Craven County Agricultural Building. As such, the auditorium will not be available until some time in 2027. Production meetings, events, pesticide classes, etc. will be held in other buildings within the county or in other counties.

On a more positive note, we have begun moving back into our offices. We are still unpacking but functional so feel welcome to drop by for an office visit.



Managing Deer

As discussed earlier, high yield is desired. For soybeans within this area, it is not possible if a high deer population exists. The primary way to manage excess loss of crops to deer feeding is to remove 70% of the does annually until the population of does is about 30% or lower. If one cannot do this and the doe population increases, then there is virtually nothing one can do to deter deer from damaging crops. As such, communicate with your neighbors and landowners to encourage antlerless hunting. (Using [NC Wildlife data](#), this means that 21-32 does must be killed per square mile for Craven County. To reach this goal, it is may be necessary to kill **only does** until we reached a target population)

Another option that appears to work for many are the use of products applied to the crop to prevent feeding. However, this too has potential problems. First, one must begin sprays as the crop emerges and continue spraying about every 10-14 days. Secondly, one must rotate products because deer simply become accustom to a product when used continuously. Lastly, these products are not cheap. Thus, even if one succeed in preventing damage, there is no guarantee of profit!



NC Farm Help Line

Tariffs, low economic prices, unpredictable weather, age, labor problems, and many other factors contribute to stress of farming. In fact, whether we like it or not, agriculture has one of , if not the highest, accidental death rates due to equipment use, as well as the highest suicide rate for occupations. Do consider potential impact of things that can be a negative influence on production but please don't worry about things you cannot change! If you find yourself depressed, well, we can listen! If you are not comfortable discussing issues with us, help is available 24/7, through the Help Line that connects individuals experiencing a crisis or in need of other help with resources including mental health, financial, legal, farm safety/health, Cooperative Extension and more at 844-325-3276 or online at <https://ncfarmstress.org/crisis-and-resource-lines/>. Additionally, for tobacco producers, legal or labor assistance is available free from [GAP Connections](#)

Disclaimer:

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the NC Cooperative Extension Service nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any product.

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Español

"Para dar cumplimiento a la Ley de Estadounidenses con Discapacidades (ADA), Extension aceptará las solicitudes de adaptaciones razonables que realicen las personas con discapacidades. Por favor, envíe las solicitudes de adaptaciones a: Mike Carroll at 252-633-1477 or email: mike_carroll@ncsu.edu. Las solicitudes podrán ser atendidas con mayor eficacia si se notifica con al menos 10 días de antelación al evento."

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<https://diversity.ncsu.edu/report-a-concern/>*

*You may also file a complaint with the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for
discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.
<https://www.usda.gov/oascr/program-complaints>*

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