

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2003**

H

1

HOUSE BILL 931*

Short Title: Farm Futures Pilot Program.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Brubaker; Culp, Mitchell, and Lewis.

Referred to: Appropriations.

April 8, 2003

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A FARM FUTURES PILOT PROGRAM THAT
3 PROMOTES COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AMONG FEDERAL AND STATE
4 AGENCIES, UNIVERSITIES, NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS,
5 PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, AND LANDOWNERS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE
6 WORKING FARMS FOR PURPOSES OF SUPPORTING RURAL
7 COMMUNITIES, PRODUCING SAFE AND HEALTHY FOOD AND FIBER,
8 PROTECTING HABITAT FOR ENDANGERED AND OTHER WILDLIFE AND
9 PLANT SPECIES, PRESERVING OPEN SPACE, IMPROVING WATER
10 QUALITY AND GROUNDWATER RECHARGE, AND INCREASING
11 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXISTING AND NEW FARM FAMILIES.

12 Whereas, in S.L. 2000-23, the General Assembly found that additional
13 permanent protection of lands for environmental protection and public use is needed to
14 complement our State's economic growth and to meet our citizens' needs for generations
15 to come; and

16 Whereas, the General Assembly reaffirms the strong desire of the State and
17 its citizens to conserve and protect working farms as part of North Carolina's
18 agricultural heritage and finds this conservation and protection of working farms is a
19 necessary component of the State's economic health and also protects the State's natural
20 resources and open space; Now, therefore,

21 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

22 **SECTION 1.** A Farm Futures Pilot Program is established in the Department
23 of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The Commissioner of Agriculture shall establish
24 the initial pilot program at an existing facility or research farm of the Department of
25 Agriculture and Consumer Services. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer
26 Services shall develop the Pilot Program so that the Pilot Program serves as a regional
27 catalyst to promote and enhance working farms in North Carolina.

28 **SECTION 2.** The purposes of the Farm Futures Pilot Program are to:

- 1 (1) Promote collaborative efforts that will enhance the sustainability of
2 working farms in North Carolina.
- 3 (2) Provide office space for nongovernmental land trust and farmland
4 protection organizations, entrepreneur farm product incubator
5 activities, satellite university and community college and extension
6 coursework, and other activities associated with farmland protection,
7 farm production, marketing, and value-added industries.
- 8 (3) Develop the need for a food-processing center for local farmers and
9 marketers.
- 10 (4) Conduct workshops for county agricultural districting programs,
11 farmland protection and preservation services, new crop and new farm
12 management systems, and environmental stewardship programs.
- 13 (5) Develop a mentoring program to encourage older farmers to remain on
14 the farm while training young farm families to assume the financial
15 and production responsibilities of the farm.
- 16 (6) Partner with private enterprises, government agencies, educational
17 institutions, and nongovernmental organizations in developing
18 complementary financial, production, and marketing plans with a
19 regional perspective and reflective of changes in traditional agriculture
20 with designs for transitioning to new crops, new farming methods, and
21 new management plans.

22 **SECTION 3.** The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall
23 initially develop the Farm Futures Pilot Program to focus on those central Piedmont
24 counties and communities whose farms traditionally relied on tobacco production to
25 support the working farm and the rural economy. The Farm Futures Pilot Program shall
26 be developed so that it is adaptable to other regions of the State and designed to meet
27 the continued changes predicted for agriculture in North Carolina.

28 **SECTION 4.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
29 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services the sum of five hundred thousand
30 dollars (\$500,000) for the 2003-2004 fiscal year to initiate the Farm Futures Pilot
31 Program established under Section 1 of this act. There is appropriated from the General
32 Fund to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services the sum of two hundred
33 fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) for the 2004-2005 fiscal year to continue the Farm
34 Futures Pilot Program established under Section 1 of this act, for continued staffing,
35 promotion, and coordination of regional programs, and to establish and maintain an
36 Internet information site for the Farm Futures Pilot Program.

37 **SECTION 5.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2003.