

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007**

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HOUSE BILL 850*

Short Title: Funds for Specialty Crops Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Braxton; Faison and McLawhorn.

Referred to: Agribusiness and Agricultural Economy, if favorable, Appropriations.

March 15, 2007

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE NORTH CAROLINA SPECIALTY
3 CROPS PROGRAM.

4 Whereas, the North Carolina Specialty Crops Program is a statewide
5 partnership of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State
6 University and the Marketing Division of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture
7 and Consumer Services; and

8 Whereas, the program began in the early 1990s as a local effort in the Kinston
9 area and then expanded statewide through funding from Golden L.E.A.F. and the
10 Tobacco Trust Fund; and

11 Whereas, the program is now in need of long-term sustainable funding to
12 ensure the program's future; and

13 Whereas, the program is an entrepreneurial catalyst for rural development,
14 reducing risk to growers who want to diversify their crop base by eliminating less
15 feasible alternatives, and providing a systematic way of evaluating niche crops that
16 otherwise would have limited funding possibilities; and

17 Whereas, the program is designed to spur economic development by
18 identifying potential new crops for North Carolina growers, determining whether these
19 crops are suitable for growing conditions in the State, screening for the best varieties
20 and refining production practices, developing markets for these new crops, developing
21 new value-added products and businesses, and educating both Cooperative Extension
22 agents and growers about new crop opportunities; and

23 Whereas, the successes of the program include the development of the Sprite
24 melon which grossed three million dollars (\$3,000,000) in annual sales, the Athena
25 cantaloupe which grossed 16 million dollars (\$16,000,000) in annual sales, the
26 Red-fleshed seedless watermelon, which grossed ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in
27 annual sales, and others; and

28 Whereas, potential areas of exploration and expansion for the program
29 include developing new markets for underutilized crops, developing high value

1 nutraceuticals, medicinals and natural dyes from plants, developing high value branded
2 and organic crops, breeding crops with greater nutritional value, developing season
3 extending technologies to expand the production and marketing window for crops, and
4 other activities; Now, therefore,

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated to the Board of Governors of The
7 University of North Carolina the sum of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) for
8 the 2007-2008 fiscal year and the sum of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) for
9 the 2008-2009 fiscal year to be allocated to North Carolina State University for the
10 support of the North Carolina Specialty Crops Program.

11 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2007.