

30 in 10

Growing North Carolina's AgBiotech Landscape

A STRATEGIC REPORT AND PROJECT OF STATEWIDE PARTNERS



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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Project Process and Vision	5
STRATEGY 1: Create an Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee	6
STRATEGY 2: Catalog and Strengthen Existing Resources and Partnerships	7
STRATEGY 3: Coordinate Commercialization and Application of Agricultural Biotechnology	8
STRATEGY 4: Develop Clusters of Marine and Animal Biotechnology	9
STRATEGY 5: Educate the Public and Train the Workforce	10
STRATEGY 6: Engage State and Community Leaders	11
Steering Committee Members	13
Strategic Work Group Members	14
Animals	14
Aquaculture and Marine	14
Crops, Trees and Biomass	14
Farming and Rural Advantage	15
Issues, Policies and Implications	15
Niche, Specialty and Value-Added Crops	15

Executive Summary

As North Carolina's economy grows to include high-tech highways, the building blocks of renewable energy and plants that manufacture medicine, its roots in agriculture remain evident. The agriculture sector pumps \$70.1 billion annually into the economy, employing 17 percent of the workforce, or 700,000 people.



To stake North Carolina's claim to leadership in agricultural biotechnology, leaders in farming, research and policy set a goal of 30 in 10: adding \$30 billion to North Carolina's economy over the next 10 years by combining its traditional agriculture and new technology strengths focusing attention on agricultural biotechnology.

Agriculture evolved with the history of the state, shaping its culture, economy and landscape. The Industrial Revolution added manufacturing to the state's economic base, and it also changed the way farmers worked. Machinery allowed easier and more efficient farming, less work for more yield. In the 20th century, biotechnology added herbicide-tolerance and pest-resistance to the list of efficiencies, and these advances reduce the environmental impact of farming.

This technology also promises some astounding new ideas: liquid fuel from the waste of forest products, proteins essential to infants grown in rice and crops that thrive in drought-ravaged regions of the world. Developing these ideas promises a bright economic future for the state while improving the quality of life around the globe.

North Carolina's agricultural biotechnology endeavor, future and gain will spring from many resources. Key among them are our farms, farmers and agricultural lands; biofuels, native plants, niche and specialty crops; animal agriculture; trees and forest products; marine and aquaculture products and resources; business practices rooted in conservation, sustainability and environmental stewardship; an educated public; and an engaged community and state leadership.

For varied reasons questions are raised about agricultural biotechnology. Educational, media, policy and public settings each yield opportunities for forthright, balanced, reflective and accurate answers. As a result, a long-term and enriching agricultural biotechnology endeavor will not be gained without sustained commitment, activities, and vision by every agricultural leader and entity throughout North Carolina.

The committee proposes the following strategies:

1. Create an Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee, managed and staffed by the North Carolina Biotechnology Center
2. Catalog and build upon existing institutional resources and partnerships
3. Coordinate and catalyze commercialization and application of agricultural biotechnology products
4. Develop clusters of crop, marine and animal biotechnology products across the state
5. Educate the public on the issues and benefits of agricultural biotechnology, as well as ensure a trained workforce in this sector
6. Engage community and state leaders to move agricultural biotechnology forward.

Project Process and Vision

More than 100 North Carolinians contributed to *Growing North Carolina's AgBiotech Landscape: A Strategic Project of Statewide Partners*. Working from December 2008 until June 2009, participants assembled, discussed and learned in a two-part framework.

1. A 34-member *Steering Committee*, co-chaired by Governor James B. Hunt and W. Steven Burke, met five times. Listed on page 11, members represent an unprecedented convening of the state's agricultural leadership.
2. *Six Strategic Work Groups*, pages 12-14, each met twice around their focused topic:
 - Animals
 - Aquaculture and Marine
 - Crops, Trees and Biomass
 - Farming and Rural Advantage
 - Issues, Policies and Implications
 - Niche, Specialty and Value Added Crops

No single entity can assume effective responsibility for this project and for its outcomes. A number of agencies, institutions and entities – public and private – are well prepared to shape their role and address their responsibilities. Although certain new activities are suggested in this report, existing parties must take responsibility for North Carolina's agricultural biotechnology endeavor.

Combining behavior and activities, the imperative is clear: key entities, particularly those represented on the Steering Committee, must strongly commit vision, leadership and goals to agricultural biotechnology in coming years. Without this commitment, North Carolina will not gain expected and realistic outcomes from agricultural biotechnology.

STRATEGY 1:

Create an Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee

All parties can benefit from an innovative and responsive team to accelerate initial strategies and outcomes. Responsibility for this team will reside with the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, where focus on agricultural biotechnology will be created, funded and incorporated. North Carolina does not require a new permanent entity to assist development of agricultural biotechnology.

The Biotechnology Center—in collaboration with partner organizations—will develop and coordinate North Carolina’s Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee. The newly formed Advisory Committee will be responsible for supporting and implementing strategies two through six of this report to achieve and maximize the overall goal of 30 in 10, \$30 billion added to the state’s agriculture economy in 10 years.

Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee members will address areas of attention identified as continually important:

- Product Commercialization and New Company Development
- Niche, Specialty and Value-Added Crops
- Rural and Agricultural Community Development

- Forests, Forestry and Forest Products
- Environmental and Societal Issues
- Partnership Development
- Regulatory Affairs and Policy (at the state, federal and international levels)
- Regional Opportunity Identification
- Animal Agriculture and Biotechnology
- Marine Biotechnology and Aquaculture

Agricultural biotechnology requires problem-solving, assistance and synthesis among the work of diverse parties. A multi-party framework that includes and organizes participants is required, as is non-duplicative coordination. A fluid, trusted and creative group, working in and across sectors, can both initiate projects and speed outcomes. Therefore, the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee will work to develop a shared vision for agricultural biotechnology and coordinate actions to maintain agriculture’s long-term economic position in North Carolina.

STRATEGY 2:

Catalog and Strengthen Existing Resources and Partnerships

A disciplined inventory and analysis of agricultural biotechnology resources – natural, institutional, private, policy and educational – must be shaped with expectations of long-term strategy and realistic knowledge of present and future agricultural biotechnology. Responsibility for inventory and analysis will be assigned to the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee. Taking stock of the state’s agricultural and biotechnology resources is a good strategy for identifying the resources, partnerships and collaborations necessary for achieving 30 in 10.

Capitalize on Existing Networks of AgBiotech Research Sites:

Agricultural research stations and sites across North Carolina can be strengthened in their capabilities for and attention to agricultural biotechnology. Doing so will create an exceptional backbone for activity across the state as well as meet project objectives that regional and existing resources must be strengthened.

In addition, increased plant, tree and animal breeding capabilities determined to be important to universities and companies can be positioned and implemented at the sites.

While new resources, facilities and activities will grow over time, the guiding framework of intent and coordination around biotechnology can be established immediately by involved parties such as the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA), North Carolina’s Cooperative Extension, North Carolina’s Specialty Crops Program, and the Research Station Division of NCDA and North Carolina State University.

Among sites and organizations already targeting attention to agricultural biotechnology and biofuels are the Vernon James Research and Education Center in Plymouth and its proposed pilot-scale botanical extraction facility for testing and developing specialty crops, North Carolina’s Biofuels Campus in Oxford, MARBIONC in Wilmington, the Williamsdale Farm in Duplin County, the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research Station in Fletcher, and existing biotechnology organizations such as the Bent Creek Institute, Biofuels Center of North Carolina and the North Carolina Biotechnology Center. With these facilities as early models, the sites can work toward public-private partnerships and multi-user resources.

STRATEGY 3:

Coordinate Commercialization and Application of Agricultural Biotechnology

Gaining niche, specialty and value-added crops matched to agronomic and regional capabilities is key to North Carolina's agricultural biotechnology future. Two distinct activities will be key in catalyzing development in agriculture and agricultural biotechnology.

New Crops Seed and Stimulus Fund

Niche, value-added, specialty crops, trees and various fresh and saltwater marine species will be important for expanding markets and strengthening targeted sectors, from biofuels to natural products to aquaculture. Some will be new in genetic traits and output characteristics, growing requirements or markets. Encouraging farmers to grow them is of foundational importance, as is lessening farmers' risk in growing and harvesting.

Various funding programs and projects exist to encourage new seed and crop exploration. Proposals for new funding programs should not duplicate existing funding mechanisms but should them and enable planting and growing of crops, trees or marine equivalents. Annually, a range of crops, species and agronomic conditions will be displayed. Awardees will meet criteria for following protocols and reporting of results. Responsibility for initial review might reasonably be assigned to a member of the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee and shared with partners around the state.

New and Enriched Crops Center: Ensuring North Carolina's Niche, Specialty and Value-Added Varieties

Large agricultural biotechnology companies have spent millions of dollars developing new varieties of crops for high-return, broad-acreage crops. Traits include herbicide tolerance, resistance and other useful attributes. Typically, however, compa-

nies have not genetically modified specialty crop varieties because sales volumes are too small to support the high cost of bringing new products to market. As a result, farmers growing specialty crops do not have access to new useful traits available in broad-acreage products.

North Carolina can benefit from establishing an entity to improve specialty crop varieties with the tools of biotechnology. It will focus on specialty crops and traits useful to farmers in North Carolina. Traits already available in broad-acreage crops could be licensed from large agricultural biotechnology companies. The entity might also license specialty crop rights for new traits discovered by North Carolina research institutions. Functions performed by this proposed entity will include transforming traits into new varieties as well as conducting analytical research necessary to support regulatory approvals.

The need is great and the entity must be carefully planned. The substantial questions about structure, funding and partnerships require full attention from various agricultural and biotechnology leaders, public and private. For example, responsibility for further exploration and implementation might fall to a collaboration between existing institutional resources such as the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, Biofuels Center of North Carolina, North Carolina Specialty Crops Program, North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, North Carolina Research Stations, Cooperative Extension, North Carolina Research Campus, Bent Creek Institute, universities and members from private industry.

STRATEGY 4:

Develop Clusters of Marine and Animal Biotechnology

Strengthened Marine Biotechnology Capabilities:

Few states are as well positioned as North Carolina to target, develop and gain from fresh- and salt-water resources, land-based and sea-based. Increasing attention to marine biotechnology and aquaculture is good strategy and has not been addressed in proportion to its full economic potential.

Continued development of marine biotechnology will serve all public and private parties statewide working for fresh- and salt-water capabilities development. Development efforts will strengthen commercialization of viable applications built on existing university and private research expertise, infrastructure and technology transfer. This targeted effort serves as a foundation for a *Center for Marine Biotechnology* assisting public and private parties who work for fresh- and salt-water economic development. Areas of attention will include: economic development and marketing studies; a development plan for sectors and areas of application, from aquaculture to marine-based pharmaceuticals; enabling technologies; analysis of markets and international competitiveness; and support of shared resource, policy and funding needs.

Establishing a North Carolina Aquaculture Consortium will provide shared focus for a potentially large sector matched well to state resources and a worldwide need for marine resources and food. The Consortium will provide economic verification, state policy commitment, coordination and functional assistance to projects, sites and growers. It will assemble and serve as a model for collaborations and partnerships.

Strengthened Animal Biotechnology Capabilities:

The intersection of biotechnology with animals – their health, growth, characteristics and prod-

ucts – is still relatively new and unfolding. A state strong in turkey, swine and poultry production; in research and veterinary capabilities; and in company leadership is well advised to capture opportunity and expand gain.

North Carolina has to date not targeted animal agriculture as an area for deliberate policy, economic return and development. Benefit to producers, processors and agricultural communities can accrue, as can leadership in careful biotechnology application, attendant environmental and societal issues and commercialization. Merging need with opportunity and strengthening capabilities requires an organized, multi-party, concerted effort. A two-part framework comparable to that seen above for marine and aquaculture is proposed.

First, convene parties and shape objectives through an Animal Biotechnology Consortium. The convening party can begin the process of evaluating potential ideas for commercialization and development opportunities in animal agriculture and biotechnology.

Second, formulation of a new animal biotechnology entity – be it project or center – to organize and accelerate the science, policies, application and product outcomes of animal biotechnology. However constituted, the entity would work for multi-party projects, partnerships, attention to issues and junctures of animal products with human health, protein production, nutrition and niche markets. Also key to success will be an evaluation and organization of funding mechanisms to potentially fund commercialization models for animal biotechnology industry and sector development.

Responsibility for initial implementation might reasonably be assigned to a member of the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee and shared with partners around the state.

STRATEGY 5:

Educate the Public and Train the Workforce

The basic nature of agricultural biotechnology compels appropriate and balanced content about its development, issues and applications. The continuum from curriculum-based education to workforce training to general public information must be addressed with different, tailored materials. Strategies will vary, as will conduits, venues and responses.

Objectives specific to agricultural biotechnology require new approaches and thinking. Four are significant:

- Addressing key audiences with content on issues surrounding the environment, sustainability, renewable resources and cultural issues.

- Informing policy, elected and community leaders about the ongoing significance to North Carolina of agricultural biotechnology.
- Targeting the agricultural community and small farmers with information, proven models and sound evidence about agricultural biotechnology.
- Bringing a new generation to agriculture and agribusiness by triggering interest in the innovative outcomes, technology and possibilities of agricultural biotechnology.

Responsibility for initial implementation might reasonably be assigned to a member of the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee and shared with partners around the state.

STRATEGY 6:

Engage State and Community Leaders

Engaging leadership and stakeholders statewide is critical to maintain commitment to agricultural biotechnology and achieving 30 in 10. Three distinct activities have been identified:

- North Carolina's AgBiotech Leadership Council:
 - Establish a high-level group co-chaired by the Governor, Commissioner of Agriculture, and president of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center to ensure shared thinking, coordinate activities and goals, and induce imaginative long-term thinking.
 - Likely to meet once a year, the Council will learn, report, and recommend.
 - Whether or not a committed staff person can be gained, it is possible that administrative responsibility will rotate every two years among key agricultural parties.
- Three Annual Agricultural Biotechnology Leadership Summits:
 - Under guidance of North Carolina's AgBiotech Leadership Council, three large meetings will be held at regular intervals to convene parties around key topics: policy, environmental and sustainability issues, animal agriculture, marine and aquaculture, forestry, biofuels, niche and specialty crops, markets and competition, new biotechnology developments, and education.
 - The meetings will document and trigger agricultural biotechnology outcomes over four years of targeted effort and commitment. Reports of the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee will be a lead component. Each Summit will outline current status and recommend new activities. The third meeting will also shape strategies for subsequent years of focused attention to agricultural biotechnology in North Carolina.
- Agricultural Biotechnology Policies Portfolio:
 - Smart policies, whether based in legislation or activities, are the tools by which good ideas can move to reality and responsible behavior. An ongoing consortium of project steering committee members and others will merge needs with vision and craft a package of recommended state policies for responsible economic development of agricultural biotechnology in key areas, likely to include: land use; environment and sustainability; regulations and permitting; grower support; energy, biofuels, and agriculture; company development; commercialization; and rural and community development.
- Program of Work 2011:
 - Using the work and efforts of the Leadership Council, Leadership Summits and Policies Portfolio, propose agricultural biotechnology as the Institute for Emerging Issues 2011 program of work.

Responsibility for initial implementation might reasonably be assigned to a member of the Agricultural Biotechnology Advisory Committee and shared with partners around the state.

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