

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011**

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SENATE DRS35167-LD-46 (03/09)

Short Title: Agriculture Research Stations' Evaluation. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Atwater.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO STOP FUNDING THE CONTINUED EVALUATION OF NORTH
3 CAROLINA'S AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SYSTEM AND THE AGRICULTURAL
4 RESEARCH STATIONS AND RESEARCH FARMS BY THE PERFORMANCE
5 EVALUATION DIVISION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 **SECTION 1.** Findings. – The General Assembly makes the following findings:

8 (1) During the 2007 Regular Session of the General Assembly, the Senate
9 considered a proposal for the State budget to transfer the Division of
10 Research Stations from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
11 Services to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to
12 be allocated to North Carolina State University, and the 18 agricultural
13 research stations and research farms so transferred were to be under the
14 direction and control of North Carolina State University, in consultation with
15 North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. North Carolina
16 State University was also directed to consolidate and downsize the
17 agricultural research stations and research farms and determine which of the
18 stations or farms should be retained by the State and which should be sold by
19 the State, with any proceeds to be reinvested in the State's agricultural
20 research efforts. This proposal was rejected. Instead, the 2007
21 Appropriations Act directed the Performance Evaluation Division of the
22 General Assembly to study the current structure and management practices
23 of the agricultural research stations and research farms and determine
24 whether it is desirable and feasible to consolidate or transfer the research
25 stations and research farms to another State department.

26 (2) In its May 2008 report, the Program Evaluation Division included
27 recommendations that were substantially the same as the Senate's proposal
28 for the 2007 State budget.

29 (3) During the 2008 Regular Session of the 2007 General Assembly, after
30 considering the report of the Program Evaluation Division and considering
31 the positions of the various stakeholders, the General Assembly again
32 rejected this proposal. The General Assembly instead directed a study by the
33 Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State
34 University, the Dean of the School of Agriculture and Environmental
35 Sciences at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and



1 the Commissioner of Agriculture to develop a comprehensive strategic plan
2 for the management of the agricultural research stations and research farms.
3 Much time and effort has gone into developing a comprehensive strategic
4 plan, including the input of stakeholders, including 52 agricultural
5 organizations, an external advisory committee, and members of the public
6 who attended four regional public meetings held across the State. The
7 General Assembly receives annual reports of the progress being made in
8 developing the comprehensive strategic plan.

9 (4) In February 2011, the Program Evaluation Division briefed the members of
10 the General Assembly of the unrealized savings presented in its proposal
11 from its 2008 report regarding the agricultural research stations and research
12 farms. The Program Evaluation Division has also included another
13 evaluation of the agricultural research stations and research farms in its
14 2011-2012 work plan.

15 (5) The recommendations of the Program Evaluation Division in its 2008 report
16 are not in the best interest of our citizens. Further discussion of those
17 recommendations by the Program Evaluation Division is not a wise
18 investment of State resources, and the continued reference to those
19 recommendations has caused and will continue to cause considerable
20 confusion and unnecessary concern among farmers, agribusiness operators,
21 and public servants, including State and local elected officials. The
22 comprehensive strategic plan under subdivision (3) of this section that is
23 currently being developed is an effort that better supports North Carolina's
24 unique system of agricultural research to provide support for the agricultural
25 needs of a growing State, national, and world population. Any further
26 evaluation by the Program Evaluation Division now while this other effort is
27 in progress serves only to distract from this important endeavor.

28 (6) During this time of economic hardship, agriculture is one sector in North
29 Carolina that has experienced growth. Further, real estate prices have
30 declined significantly since the sale of this farmland was first considered and
31 rejected in 2007. World food prices have risen dramatically during this same
32 period of time. North Carolina can be a leader in achieving food
33 independence. The long-term benefits of preserving this State's property for
34 its current use as agricultural research stations and research farms to develop
35 innovative and improved methods of producing food and agricultural
36 products exceed any short-term gains from selling the property to help
37 address the State's immediate and temporary budget shortfall.

38 **SECTION 2.** Prohibit Further Evaluation by the Program Evaluation Division. –
39 No funds appropriated or otherwise available to the General Assembly for the Program
40 Evaluation Division for the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the 2011-2012 fiscal year, or for the
41 2012-2013 fiscal year may be used for further evaluating or proposing additional evaluation of
42 North Carolina's Agricultural Research System, the Division of Research Stations of the
43 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or the 18 agricultural research stations and
44 research farms of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

45 **SECTION 3.** Effective Date. – This act is effective when it becomes law.