

Station Facts

The N.C. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture established the Oxford facility in 1910 to research problems related to tobacco production. Scientific investigations targeted tobacco fertility requirements, cultural practices and insect and disease control. The first flue-cured tobacco varieties with resistance to bacterial wilt, black shank and root-knot nematode were developed at this research station. Over the years significant contributions to tobacco curing, plant bed management, fertilization, cultural practices, and disease/insect control have been made.

In 1964, the USDA expanded its tobacco research at Oxford. This expansion included building glass greenhouses, a headhouse with laboratories, an insect-rearing building and a new laboratory.

The current mission of the research station continues to be to increase tobacco and crop production efficiency, tobacco quality, and to identify crop management systems that conserve and protect water.

Infrastructure

The Oxford Tobacco Research Station consists of three separate tracts of land totaling 426 acres. There is about 110 acres of cropland with the rest used for woodlands and infrastructure.

The USDA transferred all of their research facilities to the NCDA in 2005. In addition to these structures, the research station includes small bulk tobacco barns used for curing, a pack house used for storing and sampling tobacco, several equipment storage sheds, plastic greenhouses, a mechanical shop, and a facilities maintenance shop.

Research Programs

Historically, the research at this station has focused primarily on flue-cured tobacco. Today, genetic plant scientists are continuing to use fields that have been inoculated with disease pathogens for disease nurseries. In addition to studies that continue to improve tobacco quality and production efficiency, studies are being done to determine how tobacco can be used as a source for biomass that could be used for pharmaceuticals and other chemical processes.



The Oxford Research Station also serves as the site for the production and storage to preserve tobacco germplasm for all of the known lines of tobacco grown in America.

The recent changes in the tobacco industry have resulted in current research becoming more diversified. Farmers are seeking to replace income lost from tobacco production by turning to other specialty crops. To help meet this need the Oxford Research Station has recently planted plots of blackberries, raspberries, and blueberries to be used for future research.

Because Oxford is not located in the main production area of other crops grown by farmers in the state, it is an ideal site for researchers to grow transgenic varieties of these crops without fear of cross pollination. Scientists studying transgenic peanuts were the first to take advantage of this opportunity.

The Oxford Research Station has already been designated as an important participant with regards to future research that will impact agriculture. The N.C. General Assembly has chosen this site as the location of the N.C. Biofuels Campus. The building formerly used by USDA for offices and labs will now be the Biofuels' headquarters. The mission is to "develop a liquid biofuels industry that is substantial in output, agriculturally and economically important, sustainable, and significant across the State."



Community Partnership

The Oxford Tobacco Research Station has been an important part of the community since its establishment in 1910. The station has provided a location for local tobacco growers to visit and learn about the newest varieties and technologies. Changes in the tobacco industry have provided the research station an opportunity to expand programs into different research areas.

Farmers have become interested in specialty crops involving vegetables, blueberries and brambles. The establishment of these crops on the research station provides a convenient location for on site visits and future field days to share new technologies.

The BioFuels Campus, a joint effort between several groups including the BioTech Center in the Research Triangle Park, NCDA&CS and NCSU, is located on the Oxford Tobacco Research Station. This campus will provide a central location for the development of biofuels to benefit not only North Carolina, but nationwide. The Research Station will provide support to the Biofuels Campus through facilities such as on-site greenhouses and land for growing a variety of crops such as switchgrass, sweet sorghum and canola.



Research Stations Division

Working together for one cause

Mission

To manage crop and livestock facilities that serve as a platform for agriculture research to make farming more efficient, productive, and profitable, while maintaining a sound environment and providing consumers with safe and affordable products.

Partnership

Agriculture research in North Carolina dates back to 1877, when state legislation established the N.C. Department of Agriculture along with “Experiment Stations” as a division of the department. Since that time, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Research Stations Division, in partnership with N.C. State University, has established 18 statewide locations. Each facility has unique climate and soil conditions, giving researchers a living laboratory in which to investigate a variety of regional crops, forestry concerns, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture. The Division supports these studies by providing land, water, equipment, buildings, and staff who work around the clock to help build a stronger foundation for the future of agriculture.

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RESEARCH STATIONS DIVISION

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