

## **North Carolina Agricultural Transitions: From Tobacco to Vegetables**

Josh Lang – Community and Regional Planning

North Carolina is not immune to the political and economic forces involved in the industrialization of agriculture since at least the Great Depression. While it used to be a tobacco-dependent state, it looks like that has nearly come to pass. Policy changes, namely the “Tobacco Buyout (2004),” have exacerbated the industrialization of agriculture in NC and the increasing difficulty of small and medium sized family farms to survive. My case study is focused on former and current tobacco farmers in North Carolina who have received a cost share grant in an effort to transition to fruit and vegetable production. My methodology includes farmer and organizational leader interviews as well as organizational document reviews. Understanding the successes and challenges of these transitioning tobacco farmers and organizations encompasses numerous lessons: 1) how small and medium sized farmers stay in agriculture in NC; 2) how agricultural organizations in NC work together and deal with change; and 3) how NC, as an agricultural region, has dealt with the challenges of maintaining small and medium sized family farms. There is a long-standing debate that persists among numerous disciplines over both the sustainability of local food systems and industrial agricultural. While this continues, North Carolina is proving that equitable local food systems are possible, and in fact, many former tobacco farmers are leading the charge.