

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2011**

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**SENATE BILL 614**

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

Sponsors: Senators Atwater; Allran, East, Hise, Jackson, Rabon, and Rouzer.

Referred to: Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources.

April 19, 2011

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

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

- (1) During the 2007 Regular Session of the General Assembly, the Senate considered a proposal for the State budget to transfer the Division of Research Stations from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to be allocated to North Carolina State University, and the 18 agricultural research stations and research farms so transferred were to be under the direction and control of North Carolina State University, in consultation with North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. North Carolina State University was also directed to consolidate and downsize the agricultural research stations and research farms and determine which of the stations or farms should be retained by the State and which should be sold by the State, with any proceeds to be reinvested in the State's agricultural research efforts. This proposal was rejected. Instead, the 2007 Appropriations Act directed the Performance Evaluation Division of the General Assembly to study the current structure and management practices of the agricultural research stations and research farms and determine whether it is desirable and feasible to consolidate or transfer the research stations and research farms to another State department.
- (2) In its May 2008 report, the Program Evaluation Division included recommendations that were substantially the same as the Senate's proposal for the 2007 State budget.
- (3) During the 2008 Regular Session of the 2007 General Assembly, after considering the report of the Program Evaluation Division and considering the positions of the various stakeholders, the General Assembly again rejected this proposal. The General Assembly instead directed a study by the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University, the Dean of the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the Commissioner of Agriculture to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the management of the agricultural research stations and research farms.



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

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

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

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

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

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