

SMITH-LEVER ACT

MAY 8, 1914

The Founding of Cooperative Extension

The thirst for knowledge in rural America around the turn of the century gave rise to what is regarded as one of the most responsible and ingenious pieces of legislation the United States Congress has ever adopted – The Smith-Lever Act. This legislation, signed by President Woodrow Wilson on May 8, 1914, authorized cooperative extension work between the Land-Grant Colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture. The Act bears the names of the congressmen who introduced it, Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina.

Although Smith-Lever authorized the organization of Cooperative Extension at the county, state, and federal levels, it did not mark the beginning of the extension education movement. Educational demonstrations had been used extensively prior to 1914, and North Carolina was at the forefront of the development and use of the practical teaching method. The first demonstration in North Carolina was arranged November 20, 1907 with Iredell County farmer J.F. Eagles.

North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts which is North Carolina State University, earned a place in agricultural extension history when , in 1909, President D.H. Hill signed the first Memorandum of Understanding between a Land-Grant College and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to work cooperatively “to improve and aid agriculture.” Today, on the 85th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act, North Carolina Cooperative Extension remains at the forefront of the extension movement. With highly trained campus and field faculty and staff, supported by over 26,000 citizen volunteer advisors, Cooperative Extension is responding to the continuing thirst for knowledge with innovative programs that address the critical issues faced by rural and urban people, farm and non-farm, youth and adult, at the individual, family and community levels.

North Carolina’s Extension Directors

Benjamin W. Kilgore	1914 – 1925
Dr. I.O. Schaub	1925 – 1950
Dr. David Weaver	1950 – 1961
Mr. Robert Schoffner	1961 – 1963
Dr. George Hyatt	1963 – 1978
Dr. Carlton Blalock	1978 – 1981
Dr. Chester Black	1981 – 1990
Dr. Robert C. Wells	1990 – 1994
Dr. Jon Ort	1996 – 2010
Dr. Joseph Zublena	2010 – 2015
Dr. A. Rich Bonanno	2016 – Present

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE SMITH-LEVER ACT AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

- 1860s:** Various methods used in dissemination of information to farms, including Farmer Institutes, the first of which was held in Kansas in 1868; agricultural fairs; corn schools and shows; agricultural trains, which carried displays, speakers, sleeper cars for speakers, etc. By 1906 such trains are being used in 21 states, peaking in 1911 with 71 trains.
- 1902:** John D. Rockefeller established the General Education Board, which was to play a big role in helping finance early extension-type work when state funds were scarce.
- 1903 – 1904:** Boll weevil crosses from Mexico into Texas.
- 1903:** Dr. Seaman A. Knapp submits a proposal to establish a demonstration farm under the auspices of the US Department of Agriculture. The success of the first demonstration on the Texas farm of Walter C. Porter led Congress to appropriate \$250,000 to combat the boll weevil, \$40,000 of which was assigned Dr. Knapp to establish more demonstrations.
- Nov. 12, 1906:** First county agent in the United States, W.C. Stallings, is appointed to serve Smith County, Texas. Boll weevil damage was so severe in Texas and Louisiana that businessmen volunteered to help pay a large share of employing agents.
- 1906:** North Carolina becomes the first southern state to hold institutes for women. The following year there were 50 institutes for women in 38 counties.
- 1907:** With support from the General Education Board, Knapp sends C.R. Hudson to North Carolina to initiate demonstration work. Hudson encountered resistance from the Department of Agriculture, which had its own demonstration work going and moved from Raleigh to Statesville.
- Nov. 18, 1907:** James A. Butler is appointed to first North Carolina county agent.
- Nov. 20, 1907:** Butler arranges the first demonstration with J.F. Eagles, Rt. 1 Statesville (2.5 acres corn; 2 acres cotton). Butler died after only three months on the job, during which time he arranged for 30 demonstrations in Iredell County.
- 1908:** Agricultural Experiment Station, with cooperation of Norfolk and Southern Railway, operates Corn Special train through eastern part of state. Agent Hudson moves office from Statesville to Raleigh campus.
- 1909:** North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now NCSU) signs a memorandum of understanding with USDA to work cooperatively on demonstration work, the first such agreement in the nation.
- This is a historic fact of considerable significance.**
- July 1, 1909:** I.O. Schaub begins work as boys' corn club agent.
- 1910:** By this time North Carolina has 46 agents in 43 counties.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE SMITH-LEVER ACT AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION (Continued)

- 1911:** General Assembly passes act authorizing boards of county commissioners to make appropriations in cooperation with farmers' demonstration work. Farmers, themselves, make contribution to support this work.
- 1911:** Schaub hires Jane S. McKimmon, who had been on farmers' institute circuit for two years, to head girls' club work.
- 1912:** Home demonstration agents work with girls' tomato clubs in 14 counties.
- 1913:** College President D.H. Hill reports following to trustees: "The Extension Department of the College, under the leadership of Professor Schaub and Mrs. McKimmon...has brought the college into closer touch with the people of the state than any other instrumentality yet tried."
- May 8, 1914:** President Woodrow Wilson signs the Smith-Lever Act authorizing cooperative extension work between the Land-Grant Colleges and USDA. The act makes provisions for extension agents to provide instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending college. The system was to be organized at county, state and federal levels. The act bears the names of the two congressmen who introduced it: Senator Hike Smith of Georgia and Representative A.F. Lever of South Carolina. B.A. Calgary becomes the first director of the Division of Extension Work.
- 1915:** Extension staff includes 71 farm demonstration agents and 37 home demonstration agents. First annual report indicates agents conducted over 4,000 demonstrations.

THE LEGISLATIVE TIME LINE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

- 1862:** President Abraham Lincoln signs into law the first Morrill Act, “an act donating public lands to the several states and territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and mechanic arts.” With this signing, the Morrill Act, commonly referred to as the Land Grant Act, gives each state 30,000 acres of public land for each senator and representative according to the 1860 census. These lands are to be sold and the profits from those sales used in perpetual endowment for the support of Colleges of agriculture and mechanic arts in each state. The institutions will provide members of the working class with a liberal yet practical education. In North Carolina, the land-grant funds were originally used to support the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- 1877:** Largely due to the efforts of University President Kemp P. Battle, the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station becomes only the second agricultural experiment station in the nation – a full 10 years before the federal government supports such a plan.
- 1887:** The Hatch Act provides for the creation of agricultural experiment stations for scientific research at each of the institutions founded as a result of the Morrill Act. The Hatch Act furthers “...the policy of the Congress to promote the efficient production , marketing, distribution, and utilization of products of the farm as essential to the health and welfare of peoples and to promote a sound and prosperous agriculture and rural life as indispensable to the maintenance of maximum employment and national prosperity and security. It is also the intent of Congress to assure agriculture a position in research equal to that of industry, which will aid in maintaining an equitable balance between agriculture and other segments of our economy.”
- March 7, 1887:** While North Carolina is a leader in establishing an agricultural experiment station, controversy surrounds the use of land-grant money in Chapel Hill. A group of Raleigh leaders and legislators combine their efforts and the funds provided by the Hatch Act to establish the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in Raleigh, now known as NC State University.
- 1890:** The Second Morrill Act extends access to higher education by providing endowments for all land grants and by allowing for the creation of 17 new land-grant colleges, including North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, for African-American students.
- 1903 – 1904:** Dr. Seaman A. Knapp sets up a demonstration program that will play a key role in extension work. His efforts in Texas aim at improving cultivation practices at a time when the boll weevil poses a serious threat.
- 1907:** North Carolina’s extension efforts begin with the appointment of James A. Butler as the state’s first county agent.
- 1909:** N.C. State officials sign a memorandum of understanding for cooperative demonstration work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The agreement provides for the college to support the development of Farmers’ Boys’ Clubs, or Corn Clubs, the forerunner of 4-H.

THE LEGISLATIVE TIME LINE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION (CONTINUED)

- 1914:** The need for information dissemination grows. The Smith-Lever Act establishes Cooperative Extension in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities “in order to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture, home economics, and rural energy, and to encourage the application of the same...” The act also requires that federal, state, and local government is established.
- Aug. 27, 1914:** North Carolina’s Extension Service officially begins when the memorandum of understanding with USDA, NC State College, and the state department of agriculture is signed. North Carolina has 66 farm demonstration agents and 32 home demonstration agents.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM

MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTHS	FACTS
During the past 20 years, Extension resources have been shifted from agriculture and natural resources to family, youth, and social programs.	During the past 20 years, Extension’s allocations to agriculture and natural resources have increased by 11 percent; youth decreased 9 percent; and there was a slight increase in home economics and economic development. Extension staff has decreased 8 percent in this same time period.
Extension has moved way beyond its original legislative purpose of serving farmers.	The federal enabling legislation, Smith-Lever Act of 1914, stated the purpose was to “...provide instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture, home economics and related subject...” No mention was made of rural or urban locations. Since 1914, this legislation has been modified to expand even further the Extension purposes, including solar energy, urban youth, etc.
With the number of farmers at its lowest level in this century, why do we need to continue the Extension Service?	Extension’s purpose is broader than farmers; agriculture is more than farmers; it is the entire food and fiber chain from production to consumption. The well-being of agriculture does not stop at the farm gate.
Extension has no business serving urban areas. Other resources do what Extension is doing in urban areas.	Extension has expanded slightly into urban areas (currently, 10 percent of the counties have 63 percent of the U.S. population). This expansion has been done primarily with county, city and private funding. Extension works closely with other relevant urban-serving agencies for effective and efficient use of mutual expertise.
The concept of county based Extension office staffing is outmoded: Extension offices should be regionalized and specialized.	County-based Extension services are basic to the unique funding partnership – federal, state, and county. This assures access for all citizens. For many years, county government has provided 20 percent of funding within the total Extension budget; for operations of the county Extension offices, the national average is 40 percent provided by the county government.
Extension doesn’t focus its resources or set priorities; it’s everything to everybody.	The Extension System sets priorities at the national, state, and county levels on a continuous basis to remain proactive to issues facing citizens. Currently, Extension is focused on seven base programs with eight targeted initiatives within these base programs. Thus, Extension may be something to a lot of people, but it is not everything to everybody.
Extension primarily serves the large, commercial farmers.	Extension serves mid-sized farm operations, and provides programs for limited resource and part-time farmers. In fact, Extension is often criticized for not paying enough attention to large, commercial farmers.
Extension is no longer needed because most farmers get their information from the private sector farm suppliers and consultants.	Farmers are facing ever increasing complex production, management, and marketing decisions. Therefore, they seek information from a variety of sources. In addition, Extension provides training and up-to-date information from the land-grant university system to the private sector.
Extension is involved in programming that duplicate that of social service agencies.	Extension programs, such as youth and family development, family resource management, and human nutrition, are educational programs that complement the service oriented programs of other agencies. Furthermore, Extension collaborates their educational programs at the local, state, and national levels with the various social service agencies. This helps assure effective use of funds and for the mutual benefit of the clientele. Examples of collaboration range from youth and family development programs to human nutrition education in concert with the USDA food stamp program.