**Home School Agricultural Education**



**North Carolina Agricultural Education/FFA Program**

**What is Agricultural Education?**

Agricultural education is a systematic program of instruction available to students in middle and high school desiring to learn about the science, business, technology of plant and animal production and/or about the environmental and natural resources systems. Agricultural education first became a part of the public education system in 1917 when the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act. More recently North Carolina Agricultural Education opened its doors to allow students in charter, private and home school to become part of this dynamic program. Today, nationally over 1,000,000 students participate in formal agricultural education instructional programs annually offered in grades seven-adult throughout the 50 states and three U. S. territories.

Agricultural Education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems. Getting a food product from farm to fork requires many different people with many different specialties and skill sets. Students in agricultural education explore a variety of career fields, from biology to business management. Students receive the knowledge and leadership skills they need to succeed in any career path they choose after high school.

Agricultural education prepares students for more than 300 careers in the agricultural industry including production, financing, processing, marketing, or distribution of agriculture products, as well as the vast network of supporting careers that provide the supplies and services and management and conservation of our natural resource systems. Students may enter the workforce directly from high school or pursue higher degrees through technical schools and four-year universities. Samples of career opportunities include:

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| * Agricultural Economist | * Animal Nutritionist | * Biochemist |
| * Ecologist | * Food Process Engineer | * Geneticist |
| * Marine Scientist | * Nutrition/Dietician | * Plant Pathologist |
| * Rancher/Farmer | * Soil Conservationist | * Wildlife Biologist |

Agricultural Education is committed to equipping young people with the skills they need to be successful. From technological knowledge to the people and personal skills, agricultural education is committed to educating and developing future leaders.

**Agricultural Education’s Unique Model of Learning!**

Since its early inception agricultural education program have utilized a unique and effective model of learning that is built on the three core areas. The three unique areas are: classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience programs (SAE), and the FFA student organization activities and opportunities. The agricultural education program is designed for delivery through a balance of these three core educational strategies:

* Classroom/Laboratory Instruction – quality instruction in and about agriculture that utilizes a “learning by doing” philosophy.
* Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Programs – students put knowledge and theory to use through relevant, experiential, agricultural learning projects. While completing an SAE project, students learn to apply the concepts and principles taught in their agriculture classes to real-world problems and scenarios. A student selects an SAE project based on his or her interests. The student works with their instructor, parent, employer or supervisor to implement and grow through SAE experiences that teaches responsibility, financial stewardship, independence and lifelong skills.
* FFA Student Organization Opportunities – FFA activities are an integral part of the agricultural education program in which all agricultural education students should participate if they are to fully benefit from their agricultural education enrollment (opportunities for the development of life skills necessary for career success are provided through FFA membership and involvement).

A quality agricultural education program has a balanced utilization of these three core educational strategies.

**What are the program outcomes?**

The major program outcomes for students enrolled in an agricultural education program are as follows:

1. Opportunity to explore career options available in agriculture-related fields and to assist them in planning for a future career.
2. Technical skills training for success in an agriculture-related career.
3. Connectivity of school-based instruction with work-based learning.
4. Leadership and personal development training needed to succeed in an agriculture-related career including teamwork, problem solving, and communications.
5. Competitive advantage for students to succeed in an international economy.
6. Commitment to community development and service through projects that require interaction with parents, agribusiness leaders, civic organizations, etc.
7. Development of skills necessary for lifelong learning in agriculture leading to career advancement and success.

**Where can I find Agricultural Education Curriculum?**

The Agricultural Education state staff works with teachers and content experts to produce curriculum materials or identify adopted materials for courses in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Standard Course of Study. These courses are validated by business and industry and are available for charter, private and home school students. Curriculum is available on the North Carolina FFA Website at [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org) under resources. All curriculum is passcode protected. To gain access, contact the State Agricultural Education office at 919-513-1205 or contact Joshua Bledsoe at [joshua\_bledsoe@ncsu.edu](mailto:joshua_bledsoe@ncsu.edu).

Additionally, courses are available on-line through various public and private sites. One example is the Nelson Academy of Agricultural Sciences Online. For more information about the Nelson Academy you can contact April M. Garris at 336.669.3616 or at allagoneline.com. Middle school students curriculum can also be found through 4-H at <http://www.4-hmall.org/Product/agriculture/08330.aspx> and/or <http://www.growforit.org/curriculum>

The recommended period of instruction is 30 or more hours per semester/year for middle school students and 90-100 hours per semester/year for high school students.

**How Can I Join the FFA?**

The FFA is a national organization of high school agricultural education students. The FFA offers students the opportunity to develop leadership, personal growth and career development skills through competition and scholarship programs. The North Carolina FFA Association has over 20,000 members statewide in over 280 FFA chapters and homeschool programs and is a part of the National FFA Organization. The requirement to be a member of the North Carolina FFA Association and National FFA are simple. A student must be enrolled or receiving instruction in agricultural education, must have an on-going supervised agricultural experience program (SAE) and must pay annual FFA membership dues of $12.00 for high schoolers and $8.00 for middle schoolers. (National FFA dues $7.00 and N. C. FFA dues are $5.00/$1.00) Instruction for completing a home school FFA membership application can be found at [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org).

Home School students meeting the requirements above are eligible to become members of the NC FFA Association and National FFA Organization. There are three avenues that a home school student can choose to become involved in the FFA:

1. Student taking agricultural education courses can join the NC FFA Home School FFA Chapter which makes them eligible to participate in any FFA activity above the local chapter level. In team events they can compete for individual honors but cannot join with other home school FFA members as a team.
2. Home schoolers can become part of a local FFA chapter in a public, private or charter school that offers agricultural education and has a FFA chapter if agreeable by the FFA chapter advisor. Parents/guardians should check local school systems for guidelines on access to public schools by home school students.
3. Local home school students can join together to form a home school FFA chapter. Home school chapters must be approved by the NC FFA Board of Directors, must have a designated person as advisor, must meet on a set schedule through the year, have a chapter program of activities and provide an annual report to the NC FFA Board of Directors. Home School FFA Chapters have all the rights and privileges of regular FFA chapters.

**What can I do in the FFA?**

The National FFA Organization is a large organization that provides a many opportunities for its members. As a part of the National FFA Organization, the North Carolina FFA Association provides additional programs, awards, honors and opportunities for its members. Information about FFA opportunities can be found at [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org) or [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org). Below are some examples of those opportunities available.

* FFA Degree Programs– FFA members can advance in the organization by obtaining degrees. Each degree earned requires a higher level of participation and involvement. The degrees of advancement are: Discovery, Greenhand, Chapter, State and American.
* Proficiency Awards – Members can participate in this unique “written award” area that is based on their Supervised Agricultural Experience Program. There are over 40 agriculture-related areas from which members can choose. Applications are then judged at state and national levels.
* Scholarships – Each year the National FFA awards students nearly 2 million dollars in scholarships for their academic success and participation in FFA activities.
* Camping Programs – Each summer for 6 weeks at the North Carolina FFA Center members have an opportunity to participate in premier leadership and personal growth workshops. The North Carolina FFA Center is located at White Lake in Bladen County.
* Leadership Conferences – Throughout the year the FFA presents workshops that promote premier leadership, personal growth and career success. One major conference designed by National FFA is the Washington Leadership Conference. This is held each summer in the nation’s capital. In North Carolina, we offer several conferences including our MEGA Conference held in late winter and our annual State Leadership Conference held at the North Carolina FFA Center in the summer.
* Agriscience Fair – Each year members have the opportunity to compete in state and national agriscience fairs to showcase their experimental and analytical projects.
* Career Development Events – North Carolina FFA sponsors 42 different career development events that provide the opportunity for students to display skills they have developed through instruction in agricultural education. Some of these events are team events and some are individual. Many of these events start at the local level and require competence to advance to higher levels. These events require students to perform hands on skills and proficiency in the various areas of the agriculture industry.
* Conventions – The climax of the year for the North Carolina FFA Association is the North Carolina FFA Convention held each year in Raleigh during June. Thousands of FFA members merge together to conduct the business of their organization, award and recognize members for excellence, develop leadership skills, learn about agriculture careers and celebrate excellence of the organization. The National FFA Convention is the largest youth convention in the world with over 60,000 members in attendance in Indianapolis, Indiana. A sea of blue FFA jackets converge each year in October to conduct the national business of the organization. This life changing event brings together member from all across American for one common purpose agricultural education/FFA.

These are just a few of the many opportunities available for FFA members today. For more information on FFA opportunities, visit the following web sites listed below and sign up for the NC FFA Listserve at <http://ncffa.org/about-us/email-news-letter-signup/> .

National FFA Web Site: [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org) North Carolina FFA Web Site: [www.ncffa.org](http://www.ncffa.org)

**So what is the overall mission of the FFA?**

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. The FFA motto is: Learning to Do; Doing to Learn; Earning to Live; Living to Serve.

**Who manages the FFA in North Carolina?**

The State Agricultural Education Team based in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University leads the Agricultural Education/FFA program in North Carolina. North Carolina is the first and only state agricultural education/FFA program to offer an instructional program for the home education student population. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity please contact:

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