In 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released Re-registration Eligibility Decisions (REDs) that have had a major impact on production practices for NC crops, including strawberries, tobacco, peanuts and more. These new safety measures are intended to reduce the exposure to fumigation chemicals and increase protection to farmers, workers and the public. NC farmers and their employees strive to apply chemicals safely and effectively and these new regulations have increased costs, paperwork and time in order to implement. Experts from several agencies with support from several NC commodity associations have joined to help farmers understand these regulations and reduce their expenses. This grant offers education sessions, cost-share help for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and training. Fumigant handlers must be medically cleared, fit-tested annually for respirators, understand label regulations, maintain extensive records and receive training on safety equipment usage. In addition the EPA requires buffer zones around treated fields so farmers must be trained on how to inform landowners/businesses about fields. The partner agencies have combined their expertise to reach out to as many NC farmers as possible.

**THE RESULTS SO FAR...**

- NC is the ONLY state to offer extensive training and services to farmers that address the new EPA regulations
- Over 1,400 farmers have been served through educational efforts
- Nearly 700 farmers have been professionally fit-tested
- Farmers have saved over $67,000 in equipment costs

In 2010, East Carolina University received a $184,542, two-year grant to administer the program. Done in partnership with the NC Agromedicine Institute at East Carolina University, the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services and NC State University, the project has efficiently addressed farmer concerns about the EPA regulations and has worked closely with the agency to reduce label restrictions for 2012, thus reducing regulations on farmers.
Keeping farmers, workers and their families healthy and working in safe farming conditions can be challenging. Many farmers have little or no health-care coverage. The AgriSafe® of NC component utilizes health professionals to conduct free health screenings at agricultural events, in county clinics and on the farm itself. Blood pressure, lung function, blood sugar and other functions are analyzed. If problems are found, “patients” are referred to their primary care physician. The “Certified Safe Farm” component puts trained Cooperative Extension agents on farms to review conditions and offer guidance on how to prevent on-farm injuries. Equipment, building improvements and proper chemical storage are just some of the many areas reviewed. Agents have also traveled into other counties to conduct educational sessions and train other agents. The end result of both projects will be decreased health care costs, effective medical intervention and a reduction in farm accidents—any of which could lead to unnecessary deaths.

THE FAST FACTS...in 28 months:
- Over 2,600 people received clinical services
- Safety audits conducted on nearly 70 farms
- Over 13,000 reached through educational sessions and demonstrations
- National recognition in “Successful Farming” magazine—circulation of over 420,000

Brothers of one farming operation reported that using air-purifying respirators eliminated the “coughing and hacking” they had experienced when moving soybeans among their grain bins.

In 2009, NC State University’s NC Agricultural Foundation, Inc. received a $500,000, three-year grant to administer the program. Done in partnership with the NC Agromedicine Institute at East Carolina University and the NC Cooperative Extension Service, the project is only the second program in the nation that offers these intensive services.

A Johnston County farmer has saved $10,000 in annual insurance costs thanks to his investment in safety improvements.