

# 2026 FARMLAND REPORT



## Who We Are

Home to 120,000 residents, Henderson County has 32,743 acres of active agricultural land. Almost 26% of our county is agriculture and timber spread across over 500 farms.

## Why We Care

Ranked as the top apple producer in North Carolina– 20% of Henderson’s economy is based in Agriculture. Providing over 5,000 jobs and a market value of \$103 million.

## What We Grow

Outside of apple production, Henderson grows a wide array of crops. Over 15% of production is vegetables, and across 32 farms, there is now 220 acres of vineyards in the county.

ANNUAL AGRITOURISM AND AGRIBUSINESS IN HENDERSON ARE WORTH JUST UNDER \$1 BILLION

N.C. RANKS 7<sup>TH</sup> IN APPLE PRODUCTION. HENDERSON EXPORTS OVER 3 MILLION BUSHELS ANNUALLY

EACH COLOR USED ON THIS PAGE MATCHES THE VARIETY OF APPLES GROWN IN HENDERSON COUNTY

## OVERVIEW

### Farmland Loss & Our Neighbors

Henderson County lost over 8,000 acres of farmland in 5 years– the equivalent of **4.5 acres every day**. Following the same trend, our mountain neighbors in the Appalachian region lost a collective 2.52 million acres in the same timeframe– that’s **54 acres an hour**. The United States loses just approximately 5 acres of farmland every minute.

## Economic Concern

"Continued farmland loss *does* reduce food production capability and increases dependence on imported food and commercial grocery outlets, which carries higher transportation costs that compound existing affordability barriers for low-income households." (Rexhausen & Price, 2026)

Henderson has nearly 65,000 residents living inside of a food desert. As farmland loss strains communities, food deserts grow, leaving families in vulnerable positions.

## Easements and Preservation

Recipients of the Agricultural Growth Zones Grant through the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, Henderson County has started developing an Easement program.

This program will serve in addition to the Voluntary Ag Districts, Enhanced VAD, and local partnerships for economic development.

## Beyond 2026

North Carolina is on track to lose between 1.2 and 1.6 million acres of farmland by 2040—leading the country in fastest loss of farmland to low-density development. Southern Appalachia's population growth exceeding 10% in 2023, with Henderson County seeing a 24.7% increase from 2000–2020. Appalachian food insecurity rates are expected to grow from 13.9% to 15.5% *just by 2027*.

*Our farms, our food, our responsibility.*

## CONTACT

HENDERSON COUNTY SOIL  
AND WATER

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