

# WNC Growing Farms & Forest Economies

## Local Food & Forest Products Asset Mapping and Marketing

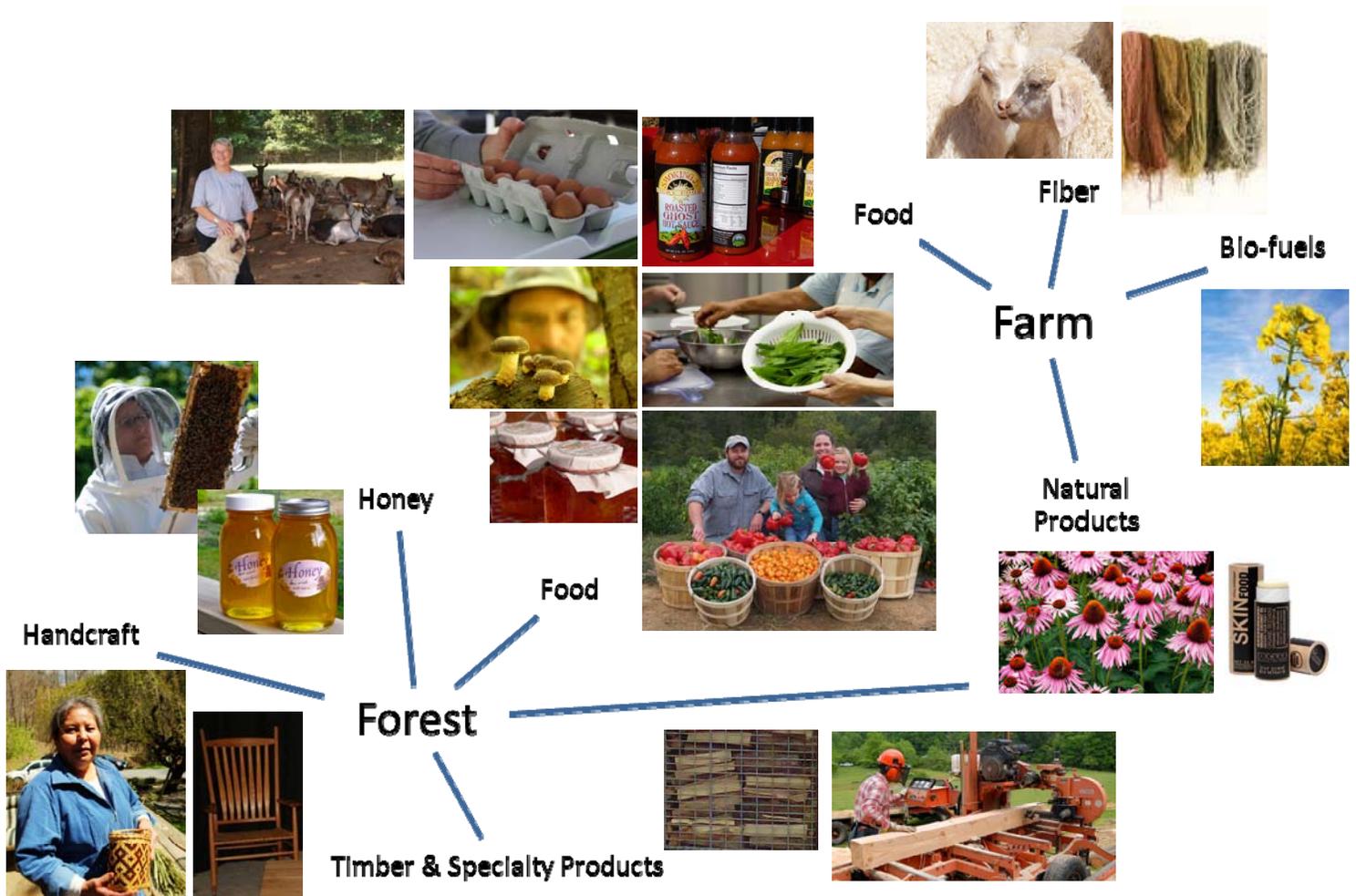
The *WNC Growing Farm & Forest Economies Project* (“WNC Farm & Forest”) will lead to the creation of higher wage jobs by identifying key niche markets in processing and manufacturing of value-added products and services, highlighting existing infrastructure capabilities, and investigating opportunities for growth.

### Project Region

Land-of-Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) is the Economic Development District Organization (EDD) for Region B, North Carolina which includes the counties of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania.

### Laying the Foundation for Growth

Local farm and forest products are a business cluster with a high potential for growth in western North Carolina (WNC). WNC communities have a long history of supporting a prominent agricultural sector and local products. The nature of the agricultural economy in WNC embraces the principles of entrepreneurship through support for local small businesses, producers, restaurateurs, handcrafters, and retail markets. The project will build on existing infrastructure, marketing, and branding efforts for the many agricultural products in the region, while fueling the potential for outside investment and expansion into global markets.



## Structure & Activities

WNC Farm & Forest will improve the conditions needed for greater productivity and job creation, while diversifying the local regional economy due to its target audiences, size, and scope. Improving the WNC farm and forest economy is part of an over-arching, long-term strategy to develop emerging clusters and attract regional economic drivers. By developing agribusiness, the region also retains its rural character while providing jobs and opportunities. The WNC Food & Forest Economy will address critical regional priorities including:

### **1. Regional Technical Leadership Workgroup**

The regional leadership workgroup will include key representatives of business, government, agricultural sector, nonprofit, economic developers, and marketing professionals to guide the project and investigate regional marketing options. The project will integrate with the region's WNC AgriVentures Innovation Council to take advantage of the sector-based expertise.

### **2. Local Food & Forest Asset Map & Analysis**

Identify existing distribution networks, infrastructure, assets, and gaps to demonstrate the food and forest supply chain. The asset map will also identify existing challenges and future opportunities for business development and niche markets. Project partners will work with local food policy councils, health departments, and existing efforts to build on food access models and integrate economic development infrastructure into the regional model.

### **3. Develop a regional local food strategy**

Policy recommendations will be developed to support the continuing emergence of local food business models.

## Partners

WNC Farm & Forest is a key part of a long-term, coordinated and collaborative regional economic development approach with support from leaders across all sectors including public, institutional, and private entities. WNC Farm & Forest will collaborate with related partners and regional efforts such as WNC AgriVentures, GroWNC, Appalachian Foodshed Project, Appalachian Grown, and EvolveEnergy<sup>P</sup>.

## Contact

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## Sponsors

