

COMMENTS BY: Dr. Richard Reich

Assistant Commissioner

North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

RE: Empire Foods Groundbreaking Ceremony

DATE: Monday, Nov. 8, 2010; 2 p.m.

LOCATION: Halifax Corporate Park, 16504 Hwy. 561, Halifax

- What a great day in Halifax County! Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to be here on behalf of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler.
- Unfortunately, the Commissioner was not able to be here, but he sends his congratulations to Greg Hatem, Michael Drozd (Drahzd) and the rest of Empire Foods on this momentous occasion.
- I would also like to take a moment to thank the department employees who helped Empire Foods get to this day, especially Ron Fish, who leads our Agribusiness Development group.
- **[Thank employees present.]**
- Greg and Michael, your food processing facility is a great example of how local and state agencies, foundations and businesses can work together toward a common goal.
- Collaborations between different parties have helped agribusiness grow across our state, and I trust we will see even more collaborations in the future.
- Agriculture, which includes agribusinesses like this one, is a \$74 billion industry in North Carolina.
- The department's agribusiness development team was happy to be a part in the early stages of your venture, and we will be with you in the future.
- Our Food and Drug Protection Division will be there to assist you through the steps needed to be compliant with regulations and ensure the highest levels of food safety.
- Our Marketing Division looks forward to helping you bring your packaged product to consumers. Whether it's through the Flavors of North Carolina shows, a Got to Be NC Agriculture promotion or some other way, our staff is there to help you succeed.

- When Empire Foods starts operation, it will provide a great opportunity for the people of Halifax County and surrounding areas.
- This plant is expected to bring 200 jobs to this community over the next five years.
- That is tremendous in the challenging times we face, but the impact of Empire Foods will extend beyond the walls that will soon stand nearby.
- Nearly half of the land in Halifax County is farmland and there are more than 300 farms.
- Cotton and soybeans are large crops in Halifax now, but Empire Foods' presence signals a great opportunity for local farmers.
- Over the coming years, farmers can increase their commercial acreage and enter new markets by diversifying their crops to meet the demands of the new facility.
- Fruits and vegetables will be needed, and what better place to source them than from right here in Halifax County.
- The department will be there to work with local farmers and provide technical support to help them incorporate new crops.
- Departmental agronomists and extension agents from NC A&T State University and N.C. State University will be ready to offer valuable advice.
- Regionally, consumers will benefit from the technology Empire Foods uses to preserve food.
- Restaurants, hotels and schools throughout eastern North Carolina will benefit from fresh fruits and vegetables have an extended shelf life without refrigeration.
- Again, these benefits and others would not be possible without collaborations between private, public and nonprofit organizations.

- Congratulations again to the entire team at Empire Foods.
- We look forward to more partnership opportunities in the future.
- Thank you.