

ON THE FARM

Throughout Onslow County's history the majority of its inhabitants have lived a lifestyle defined by agriculture. On small farms and large farms people grew and produced much of what they consumed. During the colonial period Onslow's farmers grew primarily corn, peas, fruit, and assorted vegetables in addition to raising livestock such as pigs, cows, and chickens. Some of these items, like corn and peas, might be sold at market, but they were also used to feed people and animals.



Though many food crops are grown during the spring and summer, cold weather crops such as collards help provide important nutrients throughout the year.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Onslowans were divided by the diet they consumed. Upwards of 3000 enslaved people lived in Onslow who, along with the majority of the poor farming whites, subsisted largely on a diet of corn meal, salt pork, molasses, and what vegetables could be grown in small gardens. This contrasted with the wealthy minority who might enjoy oysters, beef, lamb, cakes, pies, wheat bread, melons, peaches, plums, grapes, and various other foods either grown or purchased. Better nutrition and food equality began to increase in the mid-twentieth century as extension agencies and home demonstration programs became better established.



Livestock played an important role in feeding people living in Onslow County. Raising cows, pigs, and chickens provided milk, butter, eggs, and meat, some of which might be sold in order to purchase other food items. Over time some farms specialized, raising cows only for dairy or establishing large chicken houses.



Produce can still be found, grown by local farmers, at farm stands and farmers markets around the county.

Today farming in Onslow County remains an important part of both food production and employment. Over 400 farms use just over 55,000 acres, with 34,000 of those devoted to crop land. 85% of the farms in Onslow County are family owned. Corn remains a major crop grown in Onslow County, but livestock, especially turkeys, have become some of the most important food exports. In 2012 Onslow County farmers raised over 1.6 million turkeys, making the county the fifth top turkey producer in North Carolina.

To hear more about food crops grown in Onslow County scan this QR code or visit the associated URL:



<https://youtu.be/Rmq4qssBll4>