



You Decide: Why Did We Move Away From Self-Sufficiency?

By Dr. Mike Walden, North Carolina Cooperative Extension: I recall my late, paternal grandmother telling me how much she looked forward to the third Friday of each month. This was the day her husband – my grandfather – took her from their small farm into town. For all the other days of the month my grandmother worked on the farm. She made her own bread, harvested and canned vegetables raised in the garden and even helped butcher, dress (remove unwanted parts and divide the kept parts) and cook the pork and poultry raised on their land. In her “spare” time my grandmother altered the clothing of her three sons so pants and shirts could be passed from the older to the younger boys, chopped wood for the stoves, carried water from the well to the house and kept the rooms in the farm house in spotless condition. It makes me tired thinking of all this work. Of course, my grandfather worked equally hard in the fields. He also built their house and barns. Once they could walk, my father, uncles and aunt also contributed. Everyone had their jobs to perform so they could eat, be clothed and stay warm in the winter. There were only fans – operated by moving your arm – to provide some comfort in the hot summer!

My grandparents’ farm was close to, but not totally, self-sufficient. One reason my grandmother enjoyed travelling to town is that she could buy things that either she couldn’t make or which she could only make at great cost. Of course, the other reason is that the town allowed her to briefly escape the hard work she endured every day and visit with other farm families.

Life is much different today. While some of us have small vegetable gardens and others have chicken coops – even in the city – most of us rely on buying food in supermarkets or restaurants, purchasing clothes in stores and buying our cars, trucks and electronics at dealers. Most homes are built by professional contractors with large crews. Why do we do this? Because it’s economically efficient, or in everyday language, it makes us better off. To lead the kind of lifestyle we have today – and – to achieve this lifestyle using only our own skills, we’d each have to be a carpenter, electrician, plumber, farmer, mechanic, computer systems manufacturer, computer technician and our own power generator. And this is just a start. We’d also have to make our own movies, TV programs, video games and perform medical diagnoses and treatments.

This is why we trade. Each of us trains for and specializes in specific skills and occupations and effectively trades the products of our skills for the outputs of others with different skills. Of course, we no longer do this through bartering, but instead use money. This trading goes on between people in the same community, people in different communities and different states and increasingly between people in different countries. Trade between countries has increased in recent decades with advances in transportation and communications. Like people, few states or countries today are totally self-sufficient.

North Carolina is involved in international trade. The latest data show almost 11,000 companies in the state are engaged in selling products and services made in North Carolina to other countries (called exports). These exports are valued at \$30 billion annually and help support over 150,000 Tar Heel jobs. Our state’s leading exports are chemical products, transportation equipment, machinery, computer and electronic products and textiles. The biggest foreign buyers of North Carolina’s exports are Canada, Mexico, China, Saudi Arabia and Japan.

But at the same time, North Carolina companies and residents purchase products and services made in foreign countries (called imports). Also, like the nation, we import more than we export. Imports are valued at \$47 billion annually, \$17 billion more than the state’s exports. Clothing – once a major industry in North Carolina – is a now a leader on the list of imports.

Some would like to see our imports reduced. One option being discussed to accomplish this goal is a border tax on imports. Such a fee would operate through the tax code by allowing businesses to deduct their costs of inputs only if the inputs were made in the U.S. Imported inputs would not be tax-deductible. The objective would be to substitute home-made products for foreign-made products and thus create more domestic jobs. But questions have been raised about whether such a policy would work. How quickly – if at all – could domestic companies gear up to make the products now produced in foreign countries? Would foreign countries retaliate by also reducing the products and services they buy from the U.S.? If our exports drop at the same time imports fall, then gains from fewer imports could be offset by losses from less exports.

Further, the dollars foreigners accumulate by selling imports to U.S. buyers eventually return to our country in the form of investments. It’s estimated that such foreign investments support 240,000 jobs in North Carolina.

My grandmother and grandfather wouldn’t recognize today’s economy. If they were alive today and still involved in farming, they would likely be specializing in one or two products – perhaps hogs and chickens – and a significant part of their revenue would be from foreign sales. They would have traded self-sufficiency for becoming really good at one thing – thus expecting to earn more income. Is this progress? You decide!

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Annual Yard Sale of the Carolinas is Saturday, May 13 in Chesterfield

Registration is underway for the “Yard Sale of the Carolinas” to be held in Chesterfield on Saturday, May 13. The event will be held from 7 a.m. to 12 noon in the 200 and 300 blocks of West Main Street in front of the Chesterfield County Courthouse. The event is co-sponsored by the Greater Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce and Hospice of Chesterfield County’s Sunshine Shoppe thrift and gift store.

The yard sale provides a great opportunity for individuals, families, civic groups and churches to raise funds by selling items. Spaces are available for \$15 (one parking space) and you may reserve multiple spaces. There are a limited number of spaces available.

Residents and organizations are also encouraged to have yard sales on their own property that day. The Town has suspended the yard sale permit requirement for the day of the event. Those having yard sales outside of the street sale are encouraged to register their yard sale as well. A list of yard sales within the town limits will be made available to those visiting the street sale.

Registration forms are available at the Hospice of Chesterfield County office, located at 700 West Boulevard, and the Sunshine Shoppe, located at 122 Main Street, both in Chesterfield. The deadline for registrations is May 10 and spaces are limited. For more information or to have a registration form mailed to you, please email jdouglashcc@hotmail.com or call the Hospice office at (843) 623-9155.



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Unauthorized Hydrant Use

The use of Anson County Water Department fire hydrants for obtaining water for agricultural or any other purpose without written consent of the Water Department is a violation of state and federal law. Hydrants are for use by written-permitted users, water company or fire department personnel only.

The Anson County Water Department will take legal action against any individual or business that unlawfully obtains water from the Anson County water system. Please report suspicious activity to the Anson County Sheriff’s Office or the Water Department.

Hydrant use permit information is available from the Anson County Water Department. Information is available at 704-694-5208.

