



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
4350 North Fairfax Drive
Suite 810
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: 202-296-9680
www.nasda.org

Protecting Consumers Behind the Scenes: North Carolina Director of Standards Division Discusses His Career in Agriculture

State departments of agriculture comprise a wide variety of divisions and responsibilities, many of which are not what are typically pictured when thinking of agriculture. One such division is weights and measures, which plays a critical role in ensuring shoppers get what they pay for and sellers – like farmers and ranchers – receive fair payment for their products.

As part of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture’s [recent campaign to highlight careers in agriculture](#), NASDA sat down with Stephen Benjamin, the director of standards division at North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to learn more about his department, his role and how weights and measures regulations benefit Americans nationwide.

State agriculture departments weights and measures officials’ day-to-day never looks the same. Benjamin shared that whether in a grocery store checking packages and scales or at the gas station checking pumps and fuel quality, officials respond to questions across the states. In his role, Benjamin supports the community through leading the response to recalls and working directly with regulators and local media to share information and answer questions.

“Where I may get involved more directly with the community is when we have recalls, when we have a media request or when something’s going on either nationwide or locally,” Benjamin said. “So much of my interface is more question-related from the community, usually the inspected community where they may have had some problems or they have some questions about compliance.”

While Benjamin did not originally set out to work in weights and measures regulations, he quickly learned more about the department and its importance to communities in the U.S. when he started with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

“They were looking for someone with a degree to test fuels in the field,” Benjamin said. “It didn’t occur to me until I went to the interview that someone was even out taking those samples and watching out for me as a customer.”

“I’m very much behind the scenes, but I’m watching out basically for every citizen in the state in different roles in doing that and most of them are completely oblivious to our existence, which I guess means we’re doing our job. But when you need us, for oil and gas or if something’s not right at the register, you have someone to call. We get out there quickly and we look at the situation.”

Benjamin along with his team working in weights and measures are crucial in ensuring fairness, accuracy and quality for shoppers. Benjamin summed up his mission.

“Basically I’m a shopper too, so I’m out there watching out for everybody in the grocery stores to make sure you’re getting what you pay for,” Benjamin said.

Enhance American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement.

The agricultural sector encompasses a vast and diverse array of career opportunities, both on and off the farm. Careers in agriculture can span across various sectors and disciplines, from business, research and development, environment, food safety, technology, engineering and more. Learn more about careers in agriculture at nasda.org/WorkInAg.

###

NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.