

Sustainable Agriculture

Looking forward for this generation
and the next...

at **UGA**



Spring 2013

Small farms appear to be growing, as is the interest in farming. Particularly in north Georgia, there seems to be a resurgence in people who are interested in making part of their income off smaller plots of land. These small farms come in a variety of shapes and sizes and use a variety of production methods. Some are conventional. Some are certified organic. Others are Certified Naturally Grown. County agents all over north Georgia are responding to this clientele by starting new programs.

Several years ago over in northwest Georgia, Keith Mickler (Floyd Co), Mary Carol Sheffield (Paulding Co), Paul Pugliese (Bartow Co), and Ricky Ensley (Polk Co) put together a workshop – “Too Much to Mow, What Do I Grow?” These workshops gave people information on how to look for and develop a market, what the regulations and permitting requirements were for different crops and markets, as well as other suggestions on developing a new farm business. They have continued to work with small farms to train farmers selling at farmers markets on food safety.

Another example is the Master Goat Farmer Certification that gave advanced training to meat goat producers on topics such as nutrition, breeds, pasture management and marketing. Goats are an increasingly important niche market and these

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Upcoming Events

May 30: Pollinator Habitat Field Day
June 8: Mixed Fruit Orchard Field Day
June 27: Organic Grain Production
July 11: 2nd Annual Organic Twilight Tour
July 17: Introduction to Small-Scale
Recirculating Aquaculture Systems
September 24-25: Starting a New Food Business
in Georgia Workshop
October 15-17: Sunbelt Ag Expo

Find more information on these events
at
www.SustainAgGa.org

Also find basic principles of sustainable agriculture, Extension bulletins, research publications as well as archived copies of this newsletter at the above website.

workshops gave goat producers a way to ramp up their management skills. A new training is planned for August. The six-week course has filled up quickly in the past, so check the Sustainable Agriculture and Extension webpages for information. This training is made possible by Bob Waldorf (Banks Co), Forrest Connelly (Stephens Co), Ricky Josey (Franklin Co), Sam Ingram (Jackson Co), Clay Talton (Elbert Co) Adam Speir (Madison Co) and Lucy Ray (Jasper Co).

This group of agents and Monte Stephens (Oconee Co) along with Dr. Elizabeth Little put together the Sustainable Agriculture Workshop Series this past winter. The four-session series focused on the needs of beginning farmers and small farms. Topics covered were organic insect and disease management, food safety, grazing management and marketing. We hope to hold another one-day workshop this winter, so stay tuned.

These are just a couple of examples of the resources Cooperative Extension has been providing that are focused on supporting growers. There are two other good examples in the rest of this newsletter – workshops on backyard flocks and the Master Composter program. Cooperative Extension is working for you. If there are programs you would like to see, let us hear from you.

Good growing!

*Julia Gaskin
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Grower's Corner

Market Income Calculator

The Appalachian Sustainable Development project has developed an interactive guide for growers to use their information to create a

marketing plan specific to their farm. It includes sample pricing information and allows producers to plug in information for a variety of different markets, including farmers market, restaurants and wholesale.

This tool is very handy for any farmer, but particularly useful for those who currently sell or would like to sell at multiple markets. Farmers can plan out which crops to sell at each market for different prices to ensure sales and profits are maximized.

The calculator includes sample pricing information from 2012 for both organic and conventional growers selling at farmers markets. There is also a section for marketing costs for each type of market.

Farmers are able to think through which crops are best for which market by examining a crop matrix that lists the risk factors, financial value, days to harvest, need for irrigation and more.

Check out the calculator on our resources page under Local Foods/Marketing: Producer Info or just go to our homepage and look under the quicklinks toolbar, SustainAgGA.org.

*Kate Munden-Dixon
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Extension

Master Composting Class

You would be surprised at how interested farmers and gardeners are in composting their leftover fruits, vegetables, fallen leaves, and other organic materials. In 2011, Amanda Tedrow, Athens-Clarke County Extension Agent, and Suki Janssen, Athens-Clarke County Waste Reduction Administrator, began planning a Georgia Master Composter program by reviewing program materials and handbooks from Master Composter programs in other states. With permission from the other state programs, the Georgia Master

Composting program was created with a focus on Georgia composting information. The Athens-Clarke County Master Composter program is the first of its kind in Georgia.

Since this was created as a Master course, participants gained a greater depth of knowledge and committed to pass this knowledge on to others in their community. The first program was held in January 2012 and had 13 participants. These participants attended eight weeks of classes as well as two weekend field trips to backyard, farm and commercial composting facilities.



A three compartment bin at Truly Living Well in Atlanta, GA

These classes included topics such as basic composting, the chemistry of composting and soils, uses of compost, compost microbiology and organisms, vermicomposting, and compost health and safety. Hands on activities included building a worm compost bin as well as a kitchen compost container for each participant.

Upon completion of the class, participants were required to volunteer 40 hours during the first year to graduate from the Georgia Master Composter program. The 2013 program had many changes from the first program including the addition of 20 hours of volunteer service each year after the first to remain certified and active.

The 2012 program participants fulfilled volunteer requirements in their community through approved volunteer projects and reached over 500 citizens. Their projects included community demonstrations for local community gardeners and school children, as well as building demonstration compost bins at 11 local schools during the May 2012 International Compost Awareness week.

Class participants had a monthly booth at the Athens Farmers Market discussing composting with market patrons. This booth was wildly successful with kids and parents alike who learned more about the composting process and even touched a worm or two. Other class participants set up a booth at a 5-K race banana snack station, educating runners on composting fruit and vegetable scraps, and composted over 70 pounds of banana peels after the race.

Another class member applied for a grant with the University of Georgia Office of Sustainability to create an on-campus composting program for students, staff and faculty of the Warnell School of Forestry and Odum School of Ecology. This grant provided composting containers throughout the colleges, educational classes to interested individuals and paid a student worker to collect and deliver compost to the student-run community garden, UGArden.



Dr. Allard whose backyard composting system was a stop on one of the field trips. He is showing off his finished compost in this photo.

In addition to these volunteer projects, 2012 class members have created composting businesses based on the knowledge gained from the program. One of these businesses collects compostable food scraps from homeowners, small businesses and the local farmers market, and then takes these materials to a commercial composting facility in the area as well as selling compost from this facility. Another participant is researching a bokashi fermentation based composting business.

The classes for the 2013 program have now finished for the 20 participants. These participants plan on volunteering in many of the same ways as the 2012 participants. They have already created community

projects such as demonstration compost bins at public locations, created vermicomposting related crafts for local school groups, and volunteered at numerous community booths discussing composting. One student has even created a worm-themed children's book.



David Hoeschest, a graduate of the 2012 Master Composter program transferring compost from one bin to another

Participants from the Master Composter program are from a variety of situations including backyard composters, local farmers, staff of local Beautification programs, and commercial composting facility staff. Both Master Composter program coordinators teach numerous composting classes to the local community and are not able to fulfill all the requests for information or projects. Program participants have helped extend the efforts of our departments by fulfilling more requests as well as building additional partnerships with community groups. Other Extension agents in the state have expressed an interest in offering a Master Composter program in their counties, so look for other programs across the state in 2015!

*Amanda Tedrow
Clarke County Extension Agent
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Photo Credit: Amanda Tedrow*

Backyard Poultry Management

Northeast Georgia is known for being the largest poultry production area in the state. In certain counties it seems like every road is lined

with contract poultry houses containing tens of thousands of birds. What is not as obvious is the growing interest of small farmers and homeowners in raising backyard chickens. These new smallholder farmers are beginning to raise small poultry flocks to sell locally. Not only are these farmers seeking the knowledge to raise their backyard birds properly and economically, they also need the knowledge to learn proper biosecurity measures and the Georgia laws for selling, processing, and safe food handling of poultry products.



An example of how to properly confine backyard chickens

Banks County and Jackson County Extension hosted a Backyard Poultry Workshop at Banks Crossing on the evening of March 28. Over 70 people attended the workshop to learn about heritage breed selection, backyard flock production as well as selling, processing, and food safety guidelines.

Dr. Casey Ritz, UGA Extension Poultry Scientist, spoke on the many factors involved in starting a backyard flock of laying hens and raising a flock of pasture raised meat-type birds. Ensuring a balanced diet for laying hens and meat birds is just as important as it is for people. Many people were surprised to learn that scratch feed should be used only as a snack or dessert because it is not nutritious enough for proper growth and health of chickens. Dr. Ritz pointed out that none of the poultry feed sold has any hormones in it. This was also a surprise to some people. Additionally, the group learned about disease management and the importance of certain vaccinations and sanitizing housing and nesting areas thoroughly.

Many farmers with backyard flocks focus on heritage breeds that may have different egg colors, plumage, or temperaments. Jim Adkins, founder of

the International Poultry Center in North Carolina, presented on how to select for specific breed traits when raising flocks of the heritage breeds. Participants were excited about selecting their future generations of birds based on the breed standards set when the breeds were first developed.



A chicken tractor that is used to protect and move pasture raised chickens

The program ended with Oscar Garrison, Division Director for Food Safety with the Georgia Department of Agriculture, explaining the laws for selling eggs, meat, and other poultry products. He also covered the popular topic for many participants of processing birds from a backyard flock, and ended his presentation discussing food safety when handling poultry products for sale. Many participants did not realize that Georgia does not allow any more than 1000 birds to be processed on-farm in one year, although some neighboring states will allow up to 20,000 birds a year.

The need for egg candling classes was a major topic since anyone selling fresh eggs must obtain a license and attend an egg candling class. Many participants were in need of attending a class, so stay tuned for the announcement of classes in your area. There were also some great suggestions for future educational programs, such as candling classes, flock production and management, organic farming, beekeeping, and more. If you are interested in these classes, check with your local extension agent and UGA's Sustainable Agriculture event page at SustainAgGa.org.

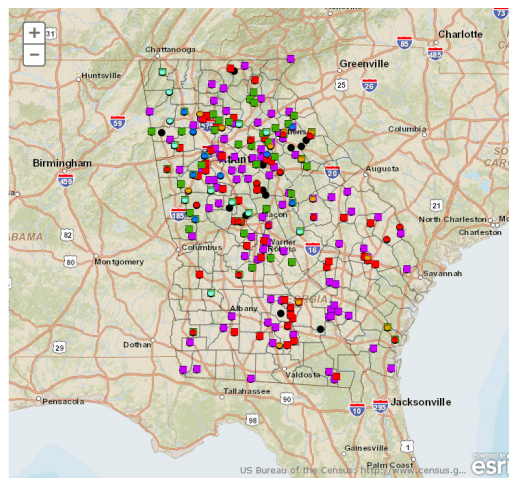
*Bob Waldorf, Banks County Extension Agent
Sam Ingram, Jackson County Extension Agent
University of Georgia
Photo Credit: Bob Waldorf*

Research

Georgia Farmers Interested in Selling To Food Hubs: An Interactive Map

The Georgia Sustainable Agriculture Consortium recently published an interactive map that complements the report, "Is There Farmer Interest in Food Hubs in Georgia?: A Needs Assessment Survey."

The report showed that 91% of the 216 farmers responding to the survey were interested in potentially aggregating and selling to a food hub. In order to connect food hubs and potential food hubs with these interested farmers, an interactive map was developed based on the farmers location in the state. This map gives an overview of the interest at the state level. Businesses interested in forming a food hub will need to conduct a more detailed assessment in their area.



The interactive map showing farmer interest in selling to food hubs

Farmers are broken out by production type so that hubs may search for growers who match what the hub wants to sell. These include: small fruit and vegetable producers, dairy, pork, poultry, sheep and goat, beef, egg and other, which ranges from honey to Christmas trees.

Hubs can also see where these growers are in relation to them, i.e. many of the responses from fruit and vegetable growers came from Northeast Georgia, Atlanta and along Interstate 75. This

does not mean there are not interested growers elsewhere, but hubs may have to do some more groundwork to build interest outside of these hotspots.

While the dots correlate to the county the farm is located in, they do not give an exact address to protect farmers from unrelated inquiries. Food hub operations or projects looking for farmers can receive more information by contacting Kate Munden-Dixon at katemd@uga.edu. Please be aware that contact information is not available for every point. If you are a farmer interested in participating in a food hub and being listed on this map, please contact Kate at the email above.

The map can be found at SustainAgGa.org/GSAC

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Mark your calendars for the evening of July 11th, 2013!

The 2nd Annual Organic Twilight Tour will take place on UGA's Durham Horticulture Farm.

Come out to see new research on a variety of organic fruits and vegetables and talk with the researchers.

For more info, visit SustainAgGa.org/news