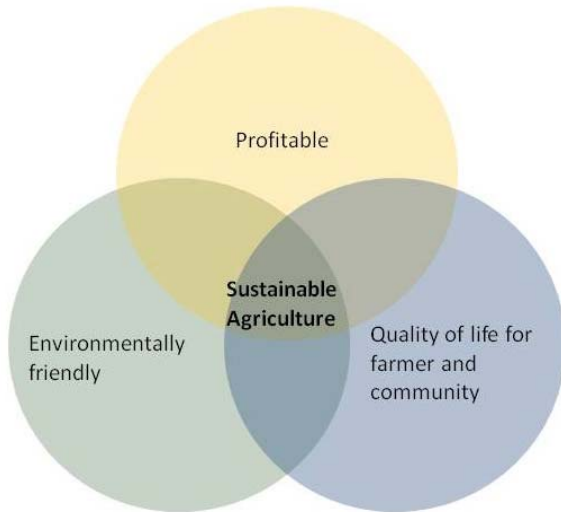


Sustainable Agriculture

Looking forward for this generation
and the next...

at **UGA**

Fall 2009



What is sustainable agriculture? I hear that question quite often. In some ways, it is a difficult question to answer, because there is no one way of doing things that can be said to be sustainable for all farms and all places. The core of sustainable agriculture is developing an agricultural system that is profitable, environmentally friendly, and promotes a good quality of life for both the farmers and the community as illustrated by the schematic above. We may see some farms that are profitable, but aren't dealing with environmental impacts well. In this case, they may need techniques to help reduce environmental impacts while staying profitable. Others may find themselves working long hard hours but struggling to make a living. In this case, they may need to look for more efficient ways to produce crops while protecting the environment. In any case, finding approaches that work for your crops, on your land, and in your community while moving towards a truly sustainable agriculture is not easy. We all have a lot to learn from each other. We at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at UGA, Fort Valley State University and our other partners across the state are working to provide you with the information you need.

Are we helping? Let us know. We would love to hear your questions, comments or topics you would like to see more information on. Email us at jgaskin@engr.uga.edu.

Thanks.

Julia Gaskin
Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator, UGA-CAES

Vegetable Grower Survey

One of the top needs for information identified by farmers is vegetable varieties that perform well in low input or organic production systems. Dr. George Boyhan, the Sustainable Vegetable Production Specialist at UGA, is beginning a new research focus on evaluating and developing varieties that work in Georgia's soil and in our climate.

So, we need to know: What are your favorite varieties? How do they yield? How do they sell? Do they resist diseases and other pests?

Our new online survey focuses on summer vegetable crops. It's short and won't take long. So please, take a moment, click on this link and tell us about your favorite varieties. Be sure to continue to the bottom of the survey to include information about your farm.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=j6X3cFjx8RyETTndNhhQQ_3d_3d

This survey will run from now through October 22.

Don't put it off.

We will report our results to you in the Winter newsletter and also through the newsletter of our partner, Georgia Organics. Thanks for your input.



Research Update

Food Safety, Small Farms, and Farmers' Markets

Food safety is an important issue to all of us. Several years ago, at a Georgia SARE Sustainable Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting, stakeholders discussed the need for better information and training for small farms on this topic. Small farms often don't have the resources to put into equipment and certifications that are used by larger growers. They need training on high risk practices and practical solutions for reducing these risks. The University of Georgia, along with Clemson University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University recently received a grant from the USDA National Integrated Food Safety Initiative to help address these needs.

The grant will allow researchers to survey farmers and managers of farmers' markets to determine current knowledge and practices. Information from these surveys will help us develop training materials that can be used by Extension, other educators and farmers' market managers to teach farmers about ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses.

The research component of the grant will evaluate survival of pathogens such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli* in soils amended with organic materials such as composts, manures and green manures. It will also look at survival of viruses and bacteria on commonly used surfaces like gloves, plastic containers or cardboard and look at washing techniques to determine the risk of spreading pathogens. The information developed should help provide practical guidance for small growers and farmers' market managers on best practices.

This information will eventually be presented at venues such as the annual conferences of Georgia Organics and Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG).

For more information, contact: Dr. Judy Harrison, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension, University of Georgia, judyh@uga.edu.

Southern SARE has issued a call for proposals for Producer Grants and On-Farm Research Grants. Deadline to submit a proposal is **October 15**. See full call for proposals and instructions for online submission at: <http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/callpage.htm>

Grower's Corner

Marketing Eggs from the Backyard Flock

*Notes from Dr. Casey Ritz,
Extension Poultry Scientist*

For many people, having a backyard egg laying flock is enjoyable simply from the satisfaction of raising a few birds and providing a few eggs for the table. Others look to a



Photo by Stephanie Schupska

backyard flock as a source of income from selling eggs.

While most individuals do not eat fresh eggs every day, a laying hen will produce an egg nearly every day, often producing more than the family can reasonably consume. If you want to sell your excess eggs, a few factors need to be considered.

Eggs sold at the farm for direct-to-consumer marketing typically are not produced or sold under a license nor are the eggs inspected and therefore fall under the "buyer beware" category. This is not to say that the farm-fresh eggs are bad or less wholesome, it's that they might not have gone through the same cleaning and inspection process as those found within retail markets.

In Georgia, you can sell 30 dozen eggs a week to a household consumer directly from your farm without obtaining a Food Sales Establishment License. Farm sold eggs must be candled by a licensed candler and follow labeling, transporting, and storing/display requirements.



In order to sell eggs through a farmers' market or flea market, one must first apply for and obtain a license from the Georgia Department of Agriculture and must follow posted "local operating rules" for the market. The eggs must also have been candled by someone who is officially licensed as an egg candler as provided by the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Egg candling training can be obtained from the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Contact the district office nearest you to schedule a training opportunity.

Eggs cannot be sold to or from any store that sells to the public unless the eggs and the facility from which they were processed meet state and federal inspection standards and the seller has a Georgia Department of Agriculture permit to do so. Roadside markets located on state or federal highways that cater to transient rather than neighborhood trade also fall under this inspection requirement.

With the many people who enjoy and appreciate the taste of farm-fresh eggs, people with backyard egg operations may find ample opportunities to market their eggs for fun and profit, when done so within the appropriate guidelines and regulations to ensure consumer safety and product wholesomeness.

Information regarding the State of Georgia laws and supporting regulations regarding eggs and poultry processing can be found at the Georgia Department of Agriculture website:

http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732_0_40971469,00.html

The list of district offices is at:

http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732_0_40972745,00.html

A handbook about shell eggs, candling and grading criteria is available on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) website:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateA&navID=CommodityAreas&leftNav=CommodityAreas&page=PYHomePage&description=Poultry%20and%20Eggs&acct=poultry>

Compost for Sustainable Vegetable Production

***Notes from Dr. George Boyhan,
Extension Vegetable Specialist***

Compost is the product of aerobic (requires oxygen) digestion of formerly living material to the point where the original parent material can no longer be identified. Compost can be an important part of sustainable and organic production. This black amorphous material can dramatically improve soil quality with better water and nutrient holding capacity, improved soil structure, and ultimately as a source of plant nutrients. Improperly made compost, however, can cause serious problems. It is critically important that compost be completely mature before using especially if it is used near the time of planting.



Windrow composting with specialized equipment that regularly mixes the compost. Photo by George Boyhan.

In certified organic production, compost is so important that the rules specify how it should be made including the process conditions. These rules specify that the initial material should have a carbon:nitrogen ratio of 25:1 to 40:1. Rules further require that the material reach a temperature of 131-170° F for an extended period of time (see [NOP rules](#) for complete details).



