



Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries
2006 Specialty Crops Block Grant Program

Final Performance Report

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Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries

Issues

Agriculture remains a vital part of the fabric of Alabama. In years past, specialty crop growers have had little to no support in the areas of marketing or in value added production. The nursery and greenhouse industry ranks third in the state in cash receipts, but fruit and vegetable production would like more data that shows the true economic impact.

The demand for locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables in Alabama continues to grow at a rapid rate due to increased concerns of dietary issues (high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity), food contamination, and loss of small family farms. In order to enhance the competitiveness of Alabama's produce and horticulture, the Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries requested funding in the amount of \$108,926.78 for three projects focusing on several key areas: Economic Impact of fruits & vegetables and horticulture in Alabama and promoting locally grown products through development of point of purchase materials to distribute to farmer's markets, road side stands and retail outlets, increasing consumer awareness through advertising (Public Service Announcements) and branding opportunities for Alabama specialty crop commodities.

Economic Impact Studies

Fruit and Vegetable Study

Approach

The overall approach was to identify the economic impact of the fruit and vegetable crops on the economy. There has not been a study done to tabulate this type of data before.

Goals, Results and Lessons Learned

Auburn University's Decue Fields, PhD agreed to perform the study on behalf of the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. The study looked at several things: Exporting, Economic Impact, total production, and trends (employment). We have purchased the IMPLAN data base that provides up-to-date information on revenue flows for the industry sectors that we are investigating. From this Dr. Fields has been able to set up the initial model with all of the sectors that have revenue streams related to the fruit and vegetable growers industry.

Surveys were developed and approved through the universities Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research Involving Human Subjects. The IRB is a research protocol form that ensures that information collected is being done in professional and ethical manner.

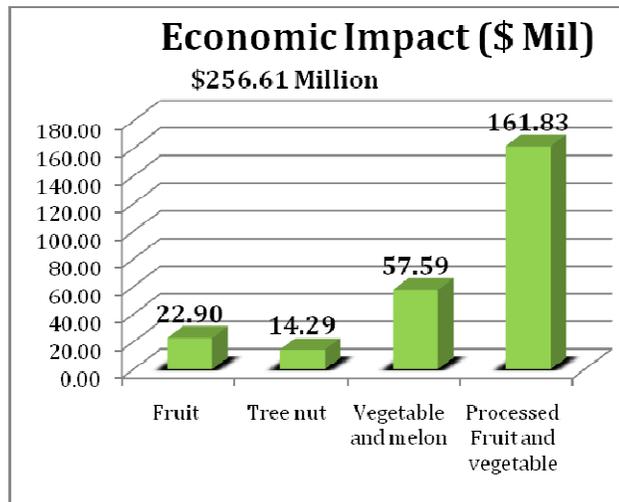
The form asks for project assurances from the principal investigator and the department head. The study achieved its goals by sending out survey's to 3,000 subjects asking questions that address the aforementioned areas. The study showed that labor didn't grow proportionately with revenue, in fact, growers were doing more with less help and because overhead costs had increased due to higher fuel costs, increases in fertilizer costs and equipment costs, growers employed fewer individuals.

Goal #1 Creating a Data Base

As a result of meeting with the Alabama Specialty Crop Steering Committee one of the components to include as part of the Fruit and Vegetable study was to have a data base created. In years past, the National Agricultural Statistics Service has collected the data and because of federal privacy laws, have not been able to share the names of growers with the Alabama Department of Agriculture or any other agricultural entity. The study was able to collect 3,000 names of specialty crop producers in Alabama. The data base will be used to call on growers for future workshops, possible participation in our Farm to School program, research, recycling programs, disaster relief efforts and other agriculture related activities deemed important to help increase the competitiveness of Alabama Specialty Crops.

Goal#2 Impact of total cash receipts on Alabama Economy

The study found that the economic impact of the fruit and vegetable industry in Alabama was more than \$256.5 million, with more than half of total cash receipts coming from processed fruits and vegetables. For each dollar that the farmer received, it circulated two to three times in the state.

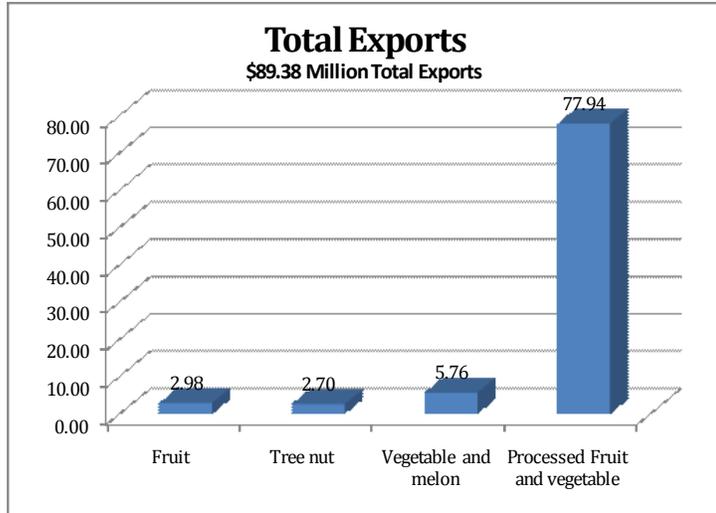


Goal #3

Exporting Outside of State

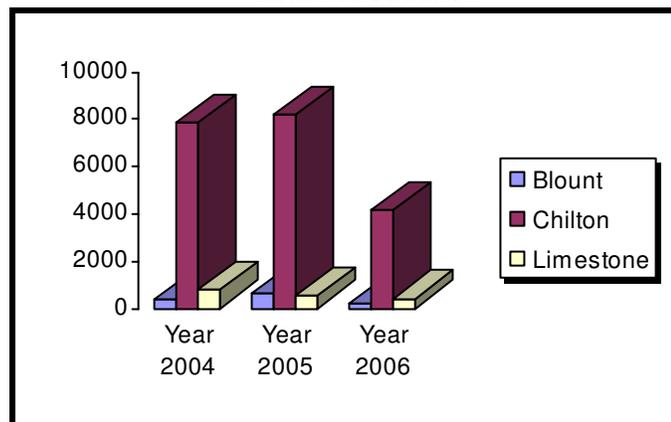
One surprise to learn from the study was that Alabama exports nearly \$90 million of its specialty crops produced. It was also noted that more farmers are using irrigation and have incorporated sustainable agriculture practices in to their operation as a result of technical assistance being provided by the Department of Agriculture & Industries and Alabama Extension.

F-1



The study also showed that the average fruit and vegetable farm was 107 acres, the average family farm is 200 acres according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, NASS. In 2006-2007, Alabama exported \$89.38 Million in specialty crops. Alabama long known for being the real peach capital, has seen a decrease in production due to several natural disasters, i.e. late freeze, drought and not enough chilling hours; however sales increased from on-site farm sales and through direct marketing. Chilton County, one of the three top peach producing counties located in central Alabama dominates peach production and capitalizes on the partnership they have with Auburn University's experiment station located in Chilton County. Alabama peach farmers sold more than \$5million in 2006-2007.

Peach Production



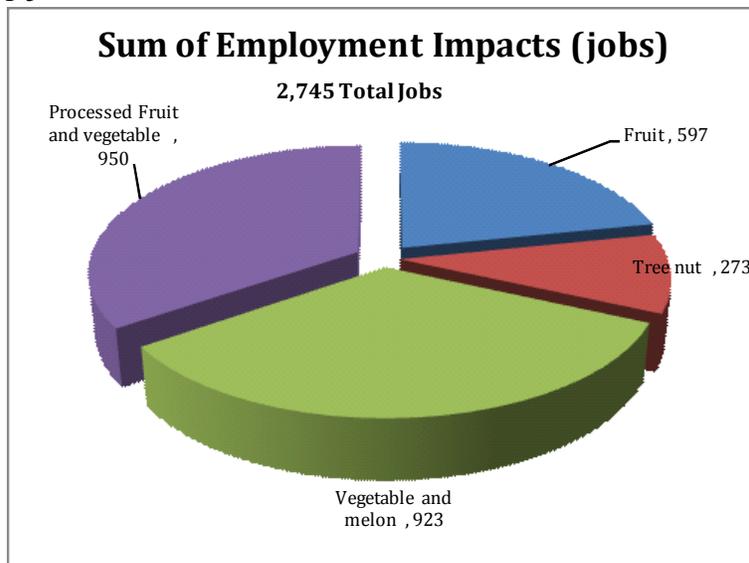
F-2 indicates tonnage of peach production in Alabama's three leading peach producing counties. Growers raked in \$5,142,000.00 in peach sales in 2006-2007 from Blount, Chilton and Limestone County alone.

The study also highlighted that among fruit and vegetable growers, sweet corn, tomatoes, and watermelons were the favorite in crop selection of non-limited resource growers because of return on investment; however, among minority and limited resource farmers, approximately 14 acres of farm land was allocated for production of specialty crops. The most popular vegetables to be considered for production included okra, collard greens, turnip greens, southern peas, watermelons, and sweet potatoes.

Goal #4 Employment impacts

The questionnaire results showed that the average age of farmers surveyed was 64, up from aged 53 ten years ago. The major source of labor was family, (farmer, spouse, and children.) Production costs, harvesting and marketing generally extend throughout the year allowing for farm income to be produced year round. But labor costs created major constraint in vegetable production by small and limited resource growers because of the labor intensiveness of harvesting some crops. Hired labor was used temporarily and only when harvesting required more than 40 a week. On average, 62% of labor was supplied by the farm household and 38% by hired labor. Fruit and Vegetable production created 2,745 jobs in Alabama according to data collected. Diagram F-3 shows a breakout by fruit, vegetable, tree nut and processed fruit production.

F-3



Lessoned Learned

One of the major challenges was getting growers to respond to the survey. In the first attempt, there was only about a 2%-3% return of surveys. After getting feedback from growers and extension agents, it was discovered that the low response was due to a lack of trust in government because of past issues such as discrimination, especially among minority and older growers. Growers felt more comfortable working with small groups, their peers, and with extension agents, resulting in a 40%-45% increase of returned surveys.

Budget Fruit/Vegetable Economic Impact Study Budget

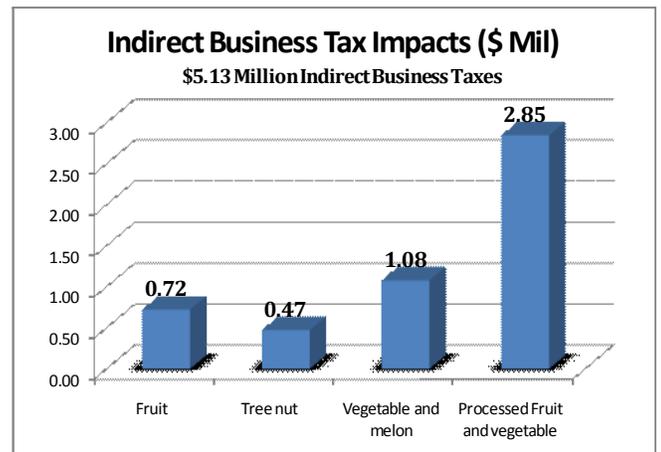
Item	Quantity	Price	Amount Requested
Mail Surveys			
Printing surveys, envelopes, labels, and postcards	2,500	\$0.55	\$1,375.00
Postage for 2 bulk mail survey mailouts	2,500	\$0.24	\$600.00
Postage for business reply envelopes @ 40% Response	1,000	\$0.41	\$410.00
Travel Expenses			
In-State travel (Total days for 2 PIs including meals)	10	\$150.00	\$1,500.00
Regional Commercial Hort Extension Agents (agents)	7	\$600.00	\$4,200.00
Mileage	2,000	\$0.485	\$970.00
Professional Meetings (2 PIs and 1 Student)	3	\$700.00	\$2,100.00
Consulting Fee: University of Florida Economic Impact Analysis Program	1	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00
Salaries			
Graduate Student (months)	12	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Printing			
Comprehensive Report (copies)	1,500	\$2.00	\$3,000.00
Total			\$29,655.00

Results

The study provided information that has never been provided before. The information allows the department to evaluate what steps need to be taken to help the industry continue to grow and to encourage beginner farmers.

The study was not able to break out organic production because there are less than five certified organic operations in Alabama; however, the study identified the indirect sales impact of fruits, vegetables and tree nuts on Alabama's economy. *Figure 4* below, tells the story of indirect tax benefit on the overall state economy.

The study has been distributed to industry associations. Auburn University Extension agreed to print and distribute 1,500 copies of the comprehensive report and that was done by Dr. Fields. The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries encourages the Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and others to use the data as they see fit to educate members and the public. Although it was mentioned that a brochure would be created, it was an idea of the Alabama Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, not The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, therefore, no Specialty Crop Block Grant funds were allocated to create a brochure. That is left up to the industry.



Nursery Greenhouse and Horticulture Economic Impact Study

Approach

The overall goal of the project is to estimate the economic impact of the horticultural industry on the state. This includes nursery and greenhouse production, lawn and landscape services, retail garden centers. The study provided data addressing the recent drought, housing trends and industry profitability.

Goals, Results, and Lesson Learned

Alabama Cooperative Extension, located at Auburn University agreed to perform the impact studies with assistance from the Alabama nursery Growers Association.

Goal#1- Was to identify a method to collect the data. We have purchased the IMPLAN data base that provides up-to-date information on revenue flows for the industry sectors

that we are investigating. From this we have been able to set up the initial model with all of the sectors that have revenue streams related to the horticultural industry, such as equipment suppliers, fertilizer and chemical suppliers, etc..

We have developed surveys for nursery/greenhouse, lawn and landscape, and retail garden center sectors. These surveys have been evaluated by industry professionals and approved through the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research involving Human Subjects. More than 6,500 surveys were sent to the aforementioned sectors.

Objectives to identify:

- Employment trends for horticulture industry
- Identify new retail firms
- Identify output impact
- Identify value added impact
- Export impact
- Indirect business taxes

Employment Trends

The study indicated that sales were up, but labor was not keeping up proportionality. Alabama suffered several recent years of severe drought conditions and 72% surveyed reported that they had an increase in operating expenses, thus impacting hiring, forcing nursery/greenhouse operations to cut staff or hire fewer laborers. In some counties, water restrictions were put in place, which impacted sales, and overall production resulting in farmers scaling back and/or going out of business.

The industry also lost about 80 nursery/greenhouse operations since 2003, which also decreased jobs in the industry. In 2008, the study showed that the industry employed 32,819 individuals.

- Nursery/Greenhouse- 5,748
- Landscape Services-10,285
- Horticultural Retailers- 16,786

New Retail Firms

Since 2003, Alabama has gained about 200 new lawn/landscape service operations. In part, this has helped overall nursery/greenhouse sales because of the housing market. Although 72% of firms reported an increase in overhead expenses, 72% also stated that they had sales of \$250,000 or more. There was also a slight increase in acreage and square footage (greenhouse space).

Output Impact- Indirect and Induced

Below is a chart that highlights the total output numbers. The Nursery/greenhouse industry had a total of \$488,311,688.59, Landscape services, \$883,062,349.13 and horticultural retailers totaled more than a billion in total output contributions to Alabama's economy. Nursery/Greenhouse, Landscape Services, and Horticultural Retailers had a combined Indirect output impact of \$142,754,992.61 and

\$893,072,435.11 in induced output impacts, making nursery/greenhouse, landscape services and horticulture, also know as the green industry 3rd in the state for highest cash receipts. Alabama ranks 14th in the nation in overall green production.

Impact Summary

2008 Economic Impact Study Summary for Nursery and Greenhouse					
	Nursery & Greenhouse	Landscape Services	Horticultural Retailers	Turfgrass Sod Growers	Totals
Total Sales	\$ 349,833,278.00	\$ 729,759,422.00	\$ 1,866,465,863.46	\$ 104,073,095.25	\$ 3,050,131,658.71
Export Sales	\$ 121,891,318.13	\$ 136,097,000.00	\$ 665,768,373.50	\$ 26,743,169.64	\$ 950,499,861.26
Total Output Impacts	\$ 488,311,688.59	\$ 883,062,349.13	\$ 1,294,653,519.73	\$ 134,455,502.16	\$ 2,800,483,059.61
Indirect Output Impacts	\$ 45,071,508.92	\$ 41,021,268.96	\$ 56,662,214.73	\$ 9,888,768.35	\$ 152,643,760.97
Induced Output Impacts	\$ 93,406,901.67	\$ 112,281,658.16	\$ 687,383,875.28	\$ 20,493,638.56	\$ 913,566,073.67
Total Employment Impacts (jobs)	5,748	10,285	16,786	1,453	34,272
Total Value Added Impacts	\$ 264,597,078.12	\$ 542,546,462.22	\$ 2,113,062,782.17	\$ 72,232,038.32	\$ 2,992,438,360.84
Total Indirect Business Tax Impacts	\$ 8,851,547.62	\$ 25,140,958.28	\$ 339,418,178.30	\$ 2,134,316.65	\$ 375,545,000.85

Note- *Turfgrass and sod grower's information was added because they paid Auburn to also collect data for them. No Specialty Crop Money was used to fund research for turfgrass and sod information. Dr. Fields included that information into the report because the National Agricultural Statistics Service in it's collection of data, groups sod and turfgrass with nursery and horticulture. It was thought that the information would be beneficial to the industry at large.*

Value-Added Impact

The study gives growers a clearer picture of their operation compared to their peers. The data identifies operations based on size, revenue, and cost structure. This allows growers to see how competitive they are and if they need to make changes to become more competitive.

Since 2003 nursery and greenhouse sales have increased from \$243.2million to \$340.4 million in sales. Alabama ranks 14th in nursery and greenhouse production in the U.S., up from 16th in 2003. Alabama also moved up two spots from 25th to 23rd in lawn and landscape services.

According to the data from the study, the green industry has grown at a rate of about 9% from 2003 -2006 and bout 3-4% from 2006-2007.

Lesson learned

Dr. Fields ran into one road block; finding enough graduate students to help perform the work during the summer months; however, schedules were reconfigured and students were able to collect the data.

Outcome Measure

The green industry also saw sales increase but labor not keeping up proportionality. There was a slight increase in acreage and square footage. Since 2003, the industry has lost 80 nursery/greenhouse operations. During the last five years sales in the Nursery and

Greenhouse industry had sales of \$488.31 million compared to 2003 of \$305.90 million in sales. In 2008 Horticultural retail sales reached \$1.2 billion in sales compared to 2003's \$883.06 million. The study did not show how many plants were native to Alabama that were sold compared to those that were not. A plant selection & recognition program is still on the table, but has not been developed yet.

Goal#2

Development of a comprehensive report

The horticulture industry in Alabama is comprised of a diverse mix of production, service, and trade-type businesses, including wholesale nursery, landscape contractors, retail garden centers, home centers and mass merchandisers with lawn and garden departments, brokers, and horticultural distribution centers. For this reason it was thought to be a good idea to update the last report and get that information into the hands of the industry. The study answered many questions concerning the drought, employment and overall growth. Because Alabama suffered severe drought conditions, 35% of nursery/greenhouse operations indicated that sales were down in 2006 and 2007. Of the 6,500 growers surveyed, 72% had sales of \$250,000 or more annually, which was a plus, but the same percentage reported that they had an increase in operating costs. The industry is one of the fastest growing segments of Alabama's agricultural economy and the nation's as well, often experiencing growth and expansion even during recessionary periods.

Auburn University conducted the study and agreed to compile and disseminate the data to all interested parties, i.e. industry leaders, extension, Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, and industry associations. The budget consisted of \$3000.00 to print out a report and disseminate it. The report was presented at the annual Alabama Farmers Federation commodity meeting in Birmingham, AL. Agriculture Agronomist Max Runge with Auburn University presented and discussed the findings and passed out the report to 250 growers.

The cooperative Extension Service at Auburn University and Tuskegee University along with the Alabama Department of Agriculture, The Alabama Nursery Growers

Association and other commodity associations received summarized copies as well. The Alabama Nursery Growers Association also provided the information to their more than 5,000 members.

Goal#3 Brochure

It was stated in our proposal that a brochure was going to be created and distributed; however, no Specialty Block Grant funds were obligated to produce the document. The option to use the information to produce a brochure was at the discretion of Auburn University Extension and the green industry.

Lesson Learned

One thing that was surprising was to know how many growers are using sustainable agriculture practices. At least 40% of those surveyed are using more environmentally friendly practices, by using plasticulture, fewer chemicals and more resilient plants.

Budget for Nursery/Greenhouse Economic Impact Study

Item	Quantity	Price	Amount Requested
Mail Surveys			
Printing surveys, envelopes, labels, and postcards	4,500	\$0.55	\$2,475.00
Postage for 2 bulk mail survey mailouts	4,500	\$0.24	\$1,080.00
Postage for business reply envelopes @ 35% Response	1,575	\$0.41	\$645.75
Travel Expenses			
In-State travel (Total days for 2 PIs including meals)	10	\$150.00	\$1,500.00
Regional Commercial Hort Extension Agents (agents)	7	\$500.00	\$3,500.00
Mileage	2,000	\$0.485	\$970.00
Air travel (Flights)	2	\$450.00	\$900.00
Professional Meetings (2 PIs and 1 Student)	3	\$700.00	\$2,100.00
Consulting Fee: University of Florida Economic Impact Analysis Program	1	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Salaries			
Graduate Student (months)	12	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Printing			
Comprehensive Report (copies)	1,200	\$2.00	\$2,400.00
			\$0.00
Total			\$30,570.75

Marketing/Promotions/Education

Point of Purchase Materials

Public interest in buying locally grown products continues to rise especially since food prices are on the rise as well as gasoline. The Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries created point of purchase materials using our A+ Alabama Agriculture Logo. Farmers selling to the Farm to School Program used logo on boxes to ship products. We also purchased 500,000 food grade produce bags at a cost of \$12,750.00 that were given to retail, u-picks, farmers' markets and roadside stands. We purchased 10,000 one inch oval stickers that were used to place on everything from plant pots, to pieces of fruit at a cost of \$1,958. This helped to offset the cost for many small



and limited resource growers. We printed 5,000 recipe cards at a cost of \$1,870.99 that were given out at food demos, conferences, farmer's markets, and other agriculture venues.

Although the country of origin labeling laws (COOL) don't apply to fresh fruits and vegetables yet, these stickers and other point of purchase materials highlighted what was grown in Alabama. We printed recipe cards to hand out at field days, farmer's markets and other Ag related activities. The cards highlight using fresh Alabama products in everyday cooking. Our state website, www.agi.alabama.gov periodically features recipes using Alabama Specialty Crops.

State Logo Campaign

Promotions/Marketing

In the past, the Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries never really invested in the promotion of horticulture/greenhouse or fruit and vegetable production, until now. The Department of Agriculture & Industries was limited in what they could set aside for promotions because of budget restraints. We have partnered with retail outlets like Wal-Mart to highlight local products in their stores. The all in one store has about 100 locations in Alabama and has divided the state into sections in an effort to buy products from each local region. We work with area chefs to not only use Alabama specialty crops to cook with, but to show how they can be incorporated into easy, nutritious, and healthy choices.

- *Southern Home and Garden show* held in the fall in Birmingham, AL at the civic center each year to show off a multitude of products, from how to landscape your home to homemade blueberry torts! Staff along with Chef Clayton Sherrod prepared recipes using Alabama grown fruits and vegetables. Chef Clayton has several popular cookbooks that emphasize using locally grown products. That event had more than 35,000 people walk through the doors over three days.
- *Western Supermarket's* has eight stores in two counties (Shelby and Jefferson) to highlight Alabama products from local growers that are suppliers and potential suppliers to Western. The wine tasting showcased specialty crops through product demonstrations. The event was open to the general public and was a fundraiser for a non-profit that benefits children. Vendors offered up information to participants, while sharing great recipes. We identified local growers who could bring their products and demo them. The staff participated in cooking and passed out recipe cards. Products demoed ranged from greenhouse tomatoes, hydroponic lettuce and herbs, muscadine grapes, and other items made from Alabama Specialty Crops.
- The Culinar, (Virginia College Culinary Arts) - Working with Chef Antony, we identified local growers to provide menu items that changed weekly. We provided our logo as well as other logos of specialty crop producers to be placed on menus. The Culinar is a culinary school that specializes in training students to learn to use local fruits and vegetables such as various berries, heirloom

tomatoes, hydroponic lettuce, Chilton County peaches, sweet potatoes and other items that are in season. One sample menu included:

- Auburn Blueberry sorbet
- Seasonal Alabama vegetables
- Deserts using Chilton county peaches

- *Cancer Wellness Center Annual Fundraiser “Taste for Life”*- In 2008 we worked with Chef DiMaggio from New York. We provided most of the produce, onions, hot peppers, bell peppers shallots, from local farmers used to prepare menu items. We provided all of the flowers and greenery used, which came from local growers as well. The Alabama Department of Agriculture bought \$250 worth of fresh fruits/vegetables from local growers to donate to the chef so that he could incorporate Alabama Specialty Crops in food demonstrations. Chef DiMaggio liked the event so much so, that he committed to opening up a restaurant in downtown Montgomery by 2010.
- *Tuskegee University’s Annual Farmers Conference*- Staff hosted the Alabama product segment of the conference in 2007 and 2008. We identified growers and demoed value-added products like salsa, sweet potato sticks, chopped collard greens grown using plasticultrre. More than 350 attendee’s were able to meet growers and dialogue about how to grow specialty crops in small spaces and to get contact information to visit farms at a later date as well as sample delicious farm fresh produce.

Budget

Promo promotions	Cost
Tuskegee University Annual Farmers Conference	\$5,500.00
Cancer Wellness Event Product for demo’s	\$250.00
Western supermarkets Banner and signs	\$1,000.00
Southern Homes & Garden Show Product for demo’s	\$750.00
Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference, Mobile, AL	\$491.04
Stickers	\$1,958.00
Recipe Cards	\$1,870.99

Total	\$11,820.03
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Eddie Hinson attended the annual Gulf Coast Fruit and Vegetable conference and took satsuma's to pass out to conference goers. We also set up booth space and passed out literature about the various programs for growers in Alabama.

Media promotions

For this grant we wanted to implement a media /PR activities directed at promoting Alabama Specialty Crops through supporting local famers markets, especially in the river region.

Billboards

Alabama has two state farmers markets that are open 52 weeks a year. We wanted to do a pilot project and place a billboard along the interstate heading south to catch eachgoers, spring breakers and those vacationing at the gulf and the Florida Panhandle.

We did not intend to do a market study, but wanted to see if it was going to increase foot traffic at our state markets. The sign is 12'x42' Catoma Creek. At a cost of \$6,958 for a 12 month contract the sign has proved to be paying off in 2008 and 2009. Our Fairview market has only been open five years and continues to grow. The signage has helped this market considerably. Before the ad, people didn't realize the market existed in their area. Four neighborhood associations have contacted the market manager and have begun hosting their monthly meetings at the market in an effort to develop relationships with growers and to shop. Combined, the four associations have more than 2000 members (Cloverdale, Garden District, Cottage Hill, and Cloverdale/idewile). Based on Feedback from the market manager there has been an increase of 100% of foot traffic enough to extend the hours of operation from closing at 5:30 P.M to closing at 7:00p.m.



Special Notes:
none

LAMAR
© THIS DESIGN WAS CREATED BY LAMAR ADVERTISING AND CANNOT BE USED FOR ANY OTHER ADVERTISING PURPOSES WITH OUT WRITTEN PERMISSION.
Product Size: 12 x 42
Print: Montgomery
Print: Shortman Media
Monday, March 17 2008

two and is of off I-65 south of

Vendor spaces were at half capacity, know they are full. More than 60,000 cars pass by the billboard everyday and that increases to about 80,000 during holidays, and spring break. When customers come through the doors, they also ask about other markets in the area and we direct them to the other state farmers market. Based on the time of year we also let them know if other markets in the area are open.

Our other Market, located off of Federal Drive in Montgomery, AL has also benefitted. Before the advertising, the market was half leased. It was difficult to secure growers because they would travel to Georgia or Florida to sell in bulk, but the additional publicity has increased interest in the general public. These markets have about 25 bays and only eight were leased out, know all 25 are full and we have a waiting list.

T.V

In the fall of 2007, the Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries reached out to our ABC affiliate, WNCN 32 in Montgomery which serves about 26 counties out of 67 (Montgomery, Macon, Autauga, Elmore, Lowndes, Butler Crenshaw, Perry, Chilton, Coosa, Tallapoosa, Lee, Chambers, Russell, Bullock, Pike, Barbour, Crenshaw, Butler, Dallas, Wilcox, Coffee, Monroe, Conecuh, Bibb, and Hale). With the idea of educating and introducing viewers to the idea of buying locally grown Alabama Specialty Crops, Joe Hagler, the host of “Good Morning Montgomery” wanted to lend a helping hand.

The program airs five days a week from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30a.m. “Good morning Montgomery” is the top rated program at that time slot. Nearly 40,000 viewers watch the show. We bought spots that aired four times during the two and a half hour program, plus as a bonus, Commissioner Sparks was a special guest and we featured a product spotlight that identified local growers in the viewing area. We bought five months of ad time and received the following:

- 120 spots
- Three guest appearances 30min each
- Highlight growers in viewing area and give out contact information to farm
- Noted as sponsor on website www.goodmorningmontgomery.com

We paid \$15,178.00 for the above. This was half the original cost, which did not include guest appearances.

Radio/Internet

We bought spots with Tomato Crate Productions. The program, Home Grown tomatoes is an internet radio live call in talk show all about agriculture that airs every Saturday from 8:00-10:00a.m. The website is www.HGTradio.net. The host Ken Allen also performed a live remote at our Annual Farmers Market Day event. The remote lasted four hours and featured interviews with Alabama Agriculture Commissioner Ron Sparks, and Alabama Extension agents about the importance of supporting local growers, u-picks road side stands and the like.

We spent \$1,995 for a years worth of advertising. We received the following:

- four spots per show (208 30sec.PSA's)
- One live remote
- Option to be special guest on show as many times as we liked.

The PSA's were created in house and then digitally transferred to Ken Allen to air on his show. We would touch on a variety of topics like how to grow herbs in a pot, Container gardening, Nutrition and health, FYI segments, etc.

Results & Lesson Learned

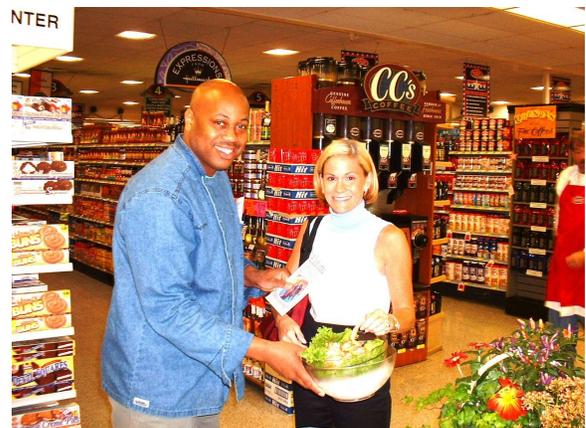


The Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries created point of purchase template materials for stakeholders and SCG's to use in promoting local produce. We worked with over 80 independent stores across the state and large chains such as Wal-Mart, Bruno's and Winn-Dixie. The goal was to help increase visibility of Alabama products and encourage consumers to ask for them when they shopped.

Also, we have tried to do a better job of recruiting growers and finding out what their needs are.

Through the Specialty Crop Council, the Department of Agriculture & Industries has taken a different approach in promoting Specialty Crops. By taking advice from those who are selling directly to the consumer, we are able to be more effective. For instance, sales have increased about 25% at the state farmer's markets according to reports from vendors' through informal interviews. There are more than 100 farmers' markets in 67 counties in Alabama. This was not the case five years ago. Through phone survey's vendor's were asked to compare last years sales to the current year and the response averaged 25% among vendors poled.

We continue to work with chefs and retail stores. We promoted Alabama Specialty Crops at the Southern Home and Garden Expo; we had cooking demonstrations and passed out recipe cards that highlighted using Alabama products. The nursery growers association with more than 5,000 members did garden landscape demonstrations as well as highlighted plants indigenous to Alabama. We also worked with grocery stores and held in-store demos. We participated with a huge annual fundraiser with Western Supermarkets and showcased Alabama Specialty Crops. One of the goals was to participate in several large venues, offering the



department an opportunity to reach hundreds of people. We were able to partner with the Cancer Wellness foundation and bring Celebrity chef Joe DiMaggio from New York, who subsequently was looking to open a restaurant in the south. He was so impressed with the event, that he has since bought a building and is opening a restaurant in downtown Montgomery. We provided signage, plants from growers as well as fruits and vegetables that were needed for the menu.

The department also designed billboards highlighting farmers markets as a place to buy locally grown. The Commissioner has been promoting specialty crops and encouraging the general public to support their local growers by patronizing u-picks, farmers markets, and roadside stands and visiting farms buying direct.

We were a sponsor of the oldest agricultural conference in the United States—the Tuskegee University Farmers Conference. We provided produce and flowers from local growers for the conference meals. We allowed growers to have food demos. They prepared relishes and cooked vegetables from crops grown on their farms. We also did workshops on sustainable agriculture practices and using plastic mulch. This was well received because many growers had small acreage and limited resources. As a result of the workshops, at least a dozen growers contacted the office requesting information about the Specialty Crop program

One of the things that we learned was that the demand for fresh Alabama Specialty crops is there. We also learned that there are more growers on a small scale than we thought and that we will ensure that we do a better job in reaching out to them in the near future. Because we are a regulatory agency, some growers are reluctant to ask for assistance because they think that we might use information gathered against them because of the travesties suffered by minority and limited resource farmers in the past. We also learned that working with our land-grant institutions more helps to increase our outreach because they are also working to promote small scale production in extremely rural areas that we may not have reached before.

The Media campaign was well worth it. We found that the focus for families is to buy fresher, more nutritional items at a reasonable price. As money comes available, we would like to expand our efforts in encouraging the consumer to support Alabama Specialty Crop Growers.

Outcome Measure

Since receiving SCBG funds, the Department of Agriculture & Industries has been able to promote qualifying crops that have increased sales at u-picks, farmer's markets, and roadside stands by about 25%. We produce a publication called "Farm Bulletin" and we produce a supplement in the spring that lists all u-picks. Each year we contact them and get updates and discuss issues that are of concern to them. In 2007, of the more than 200 growers, 50% expressed that they have had an increase in sales and 10% indicated that local restaurants are buying Alabama products from them. We know this because as we are updating our records we are also performing an informal interview which helps us to

determine if what we are doing is impacting the growers directly. We also worked with one of our land-grant universities, Tuskegee to survey participants at our annual farmer's market day event and based on preliminary results, we found that families really enjoyed bringing their children out to learn about agriculture and to see where Specialty Crops come from. Kids are an intricate part of ensuring the longevity of farming in Alabama.

We have not met our goal of reaching 500,000 with in-store promotions, food demos but we are still striving for that number. More than 35,000 people attended the Southern Homes and Gardens Trade Show, the Western fundraiser for 2007 and 2008 had a total of 2,500 attend. Again through phone and personal interviews with growers, they indicated that having the support of the department has helped them in promoting their products. Growers have commented on the fact that customers like knowing that the department of agriculture supports them and that customers feel they are getting a premium product because they supporting local growers.