Atkinson County’s farm-gate value totals more than $107 million, excluding broiler-integrator production, and ranks 41st in total farm-gate value out of all Georgia counties.

Agriculture is a vital part of Atkinson County. UGA Extension provides unbiased, research-based education, playing a vital role in helping producers maximize profits and production. We hold production meetings specific to the crops grown in Atkinson County so that we can share new technologies and recommendations for the coming year. Meetings held this past year addressed corn and soybean production, peanut production, cotton production, area tobacco updates, and blueberry production. Our office conducted trials in cotton-variety selection and tobacco production this past year. The information collected was shared with local farmers to help them maximize profit.

Each year, the Atkinson County Extension agent blasts about 125 or more peanut samples from separate fields and places them on a maturity board. He also opens some of the peanuts and asks questions about the leaves and vines to determine a recommended date for digging. This free service provided by Atkinson County Extension helps farmers maximize profits by giving them information on the optimum time to dig for the best yield and grade. In 2017, Atkinson County had 12,410 acres of peanuts and ranked 31st in the state for farm-gate value of peanuts. Determining maturity can save farmers 200 to 400 pounds of peanuts per acre. If a farmer gains 200 pounds per acre at a price of $400 per ton, they can gain another $40 per acre just by harvesting at the right time. Farmers also can get a little extra premium for a better grade. This total equates to $496,400 for the farmers in the county.

Atkinson County Extension will continue to do what it takes to help the community and its farmers.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The simplest way for 4-H to serve the greatest number of students is through in-school programming. This mission is accomplished through hands-on learning and experiences focused on agriculture awareness, leadership, communication skills, foods, nutrition, health, energy conservation, and citizenship.

Atkinson County 4-H reached more than 300 students in 2018. Members participated in 103 activities, with total enrollment for activities and competitions reaching 2,398 students. A study of 4-H’ers shows that 4-H youth excel beyond their peers. That study, the Tufts Positive Youth Development Research Report, concluded that 4-H’ers are four times more likely to contribute to their community, two times more likely to be civically active, and two times more likely to make healthy choices. Atkinson County was recognized for increasing their participation more than 50 percent in District Project Achievement at the district meeting in August. Atkinson County 4-H’ers competed in events including Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging, Georgia National Fair exhibits, livestock shows, and many community service events such as canned-food drives and pop-tab collection. Each of these programs, club meetings, and community service events helps accomplish the mission of Georgia 4-H to assist youth in acquiring knowledge and developing life skills, enabling them to become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society. Atkinson County 4-H encourages and challenges youth to explore and discover so that they can learn to recognize their potential and build on the foundations of personal self-esteem and confidence.
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Goods and services related to Georgia’s agriculture and natural resources affect each of the state’s communities every day. Agriculture is Georgia’s largest industry, and its direct and indirect economic impact totals $73.7 billion. More than 392,400 Georgia jobs are directly involved in commodity or food- and fiber-related industries.
UGA Extension faculty and staff play a key role in the success of this industry by sharing university-based research for Georgians to use on the farm and at home. Recommendations in areas including soil fertility, pest management, plant and crop varieties, water quality, and herd health and management focus on maximizing production and profits while minimizing environmental impacts.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agents also provide homeowners and communities with information on lawn care, landscaping, gardening and water conservation through a variety of workshops. Some agents also work with schools on projects like community gardens and farm-to-school programs. Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteers give thousands of hours of service to their communities by answering questions in county offices and creating educational opportunities.

4-H Youth Development
As the youth development program of UGA Extension, 4-H is also part of a national network. Georgia 4-H reaches more than 170,000 fourth- through 12th-grade students across the state and helps students develop the knowledge, life skills and attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. This mission is fulfilled through hands-on learning experiences in agricultural and environmental awareness, leadership, communication skills, citizenship, energy conservation, health, and food and nutrition.

Georgia 4-H’ers are well-known for sharing their knowledge and volunteering throughout their communities. At the school and county levels, students participate in club meetings organized by 4-H Youth Development Extension agents. At the state level, students participate in competitions, summer camps and conferences. Some 4-H competitions and events are also offered at the regional and national levels.

Research indicates that, as a result of participating in 4-H, members are more engaged in their academic studies, less likely to be involved in risky behavior, and more likely to graduate from high school and continue their education.

Family & Consumer Sciences
Family and Consumer Sciences Extension specialists, agents and staff assist in addressing real-life issues faced by Georgians of all ages. They provide programs and the latest information on obesity, chronic disease, food and financial insecurity, family stresses, unhealthy housing, food safety and preservation, nutrition and more.

To help promote the positive development and safety of preschool, school-aged and adolescent youth, UGA Extension offers resources for parents, caregivers and others. Extension professionals in this program area lead consumer economics trainings and programs such as ServSafe®, Relationship Smarts, and PRIDE, a parent and teen driving education course.

Extension also promotes healthy lifestyles through statewide programs. Walk Georgia is a virtual, fitness-tracking resource that encourages physical fitness and healthy lifestyles to better the lives of Georgians. Other health programs managed by UGA include the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). These classes teach families how to stretch their food dollars, eat healthier meals and snacks, and reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses.