AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Root-knot nematodes have become a major pest in cotton and cause more economic damage to Georgia crops than any other species of nematode. Chemical treatment options have slowly been phased out for nematode control in cotton production. With more than 30,000 acres of cotton planted each year in Burke County in fields where root-knot nematodes are proven to reduce yields, planting a cotton variety that has resistance to root-knot nematodes has become a viable option. UGA Extension Burke County agents continue to conduct on-farm research trials in order to provide useful, up-to-date information producers can utilize when determining what to plant each year. Commercialized resistant varieties show strong yield potential even with high populations of root-knot nematodes and may prove to be sound economic alternatives to other options. Results indicated resistant varieties producing yields as high as 919 pounds per acre versus nonresistant varieties, which yielded 760 pounds per acre in a field where root-knot nematode pressure was high. Taking into consideration Burke County’s average yield of 913 pounds per acre, and assuming a $0.80 per pound cotton price, the increase in yields in infested fields would translate to an increase in profits of approximately $122.40 per acre.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Incidence and mortality rates for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer in Burke County exceed state and national averages. The Burke County Family and Consumer Sciences agent offered the Cooking for a Lifetime Cancer Cooking School in her community. This program is designed for citizens who are rarely or never screened for breast, cervical or colorectal cancer in an effort to encourage cancer screenings and to motivate them to make positive changes in their food intake and activity levels. The program covers topics such as eating more whole grains, fruits and vegetables; limiting sugary drinks and alcohol; reducing the intake of processed and red meat; and controlling sodium intake. As a participation incentive, the agent offered $25 each in farmers market vouchers to two residents through a random drawing at the conclusion of the program. Not only did the majority of participants indicate that they plan to seek cancer screenings, they were also provided access to fresh fruits and vegetables through program incentives. This program is motivating local residents to eat healthier and be more physically active to prevent cancer and improve health.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Burke County 4-H strives to maintain a diverse program in which youth can be actively involved in the learning process. Monthly in-school club meetings for fourth-through eighth-grade youth focus on building an interest in health, agriculture and science, and creating awareness of career opportunities. Outside of the classroom, youth are actively engaged in learning essential life skills through hands-on involvement in 4-H programming. In 2017, more than 60 youth competed on seven 4-H judging teams; 49 youth attended 4-H summer camp; and 14 youth participated in livestock show programs with four species. Members have also participated in regional leadership conferences and District Project Achievement, which allows youth to gain subject-matter knowledge and have the opportunity to travel outside of rural Burke County. As the 4-H program continues to grow, Burke County youth will have even more opportunities to develop life skills through valuable experiential learning opportunities.
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.