**Agriculture and Natural Resources**

In 2017, the total farm-gate value of vegetables in Echols County was more than $189.3 million. The high value of the Georgia vegetable industry comes with high input costs and high risks. Two of the biggest inputs are the fumigants used and the plants themselves. The plants need a seedbed free of weeds and nematodes as provided by the fumigant, but the fumigant has to be out of the seedbed before the transplants can be safely planted. A fumigant gas meter was purchased and placed in the Echols County Extension office for use with producers in Echols and surrounding counties to help protect growers’ investments. When producers start fumigating, there are many variables that determine when it is safe for them to plant. The fumigant level in the plastic bed has to be at a certain level, or it could stunt or kill the plants. Soil type, soil moisture, temperature, type of plastic, fumigant and rate are all determining factors for how long it takes the plastic bed to gas out. Most growers use a calendar to determine if enough time has passed for the beds to gas out and then wait on companies selling the fumigant to come out and check it using a fumigant gas meter. This process works well, but there are a limited number of companies and meters in our area, so the wait time can sometimes be lengthy depending on the number of growers in south Georgia needing a plastic check and whether or not a field has to be checked more than once. With produce, you try to hit a planting window, allowing you to start picking when the market is high rather than when market prices are starting to go down. Being able to get in the field earlier allows producers the added security of hitting their target window.

**4-H Youth Development**

The Echols County 4-H Club offers a variety of activities for youth. We partner with the school system to offer in-school club meetings to students in the fourth through eighth grades and provide hands-on learning opportunities that follow the Georgia Performance Standards. In 2018, we reached 316 students through in-school programming.

Public speaking is a big part of what 4-H is all about. Presenting a demonstration at Project Achievement gives 4-H’ers important life skills. This year, 11 students competed in public speaking competitions.

Modified Trap shotgun program. 4-H also offers traditional livestock show programs in which 4-H members can exhibit hogs in the local and state shows. Thirty-two students have participated in various hog shows, including the Georgia National Fair, the local hog show, and the State Hog Show in Perry, Georgia. Summer camp is offered to students of all grade levels in different locations throughout Georgia. Our office has worked hard to make camp affordable for as many youth as possible. We offer several fundraisers for parents to choose from to reduce the out-of-pocket cost of camp. We also offer leadership conferences to students in seventh through 12th grades throughout the year, including Senior Fall Forum, Senior Conference, Junior Conference and State Council. By participating in community service projects, students learn the importance of giving to others. Each year, we donate pop tabs and cans to Ronald McDonald House Charities.
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.