AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The cotton industry in Georgia has experienced some drastic changes in recent years in variety selection and plant-growth regulator management for new cotton varieties. The Miller County Extension agent established programs to determine which cotton varieties will yield the best in the local climate and soil types. This program is part of a regional effort that encompasses variety trials in several counties in southwest Georgia. The trials help educate growers in cotton-variety decision making as well as how to place and manage certain varieties in environments that will optimize their performance. In addition, the Miller County Extension agent has collected data in support of the UGA Cotton Team’s effort to generate data to inform growers on how to understand growth potential of new varieties as they come to the marketplace and how to properly manage growth of these new cotton varieties so that yield potential is not inhibited. For 2019 cotton prices, improper variety selection could cost growers up to $197 per acre. Across Miller County in 2019, improper variety selection may collectively cost growers up to $5.9 million, or nearly 25 percent of the total cotton revenue expected to be generated in Miller County for 2019. The UGA On-Farm Cotton Variety Performance Evaluation Program in Miller County is expected to drastically reduce costs, which returns this money to producers and Georgia’s economy. Additionally, the extensive evaluation of plant growth could reduce costs to growers and provides them the growth-management information that could prevent them from implementing unnecessary and yield-inhibiting growth-management strategies.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Miller County 4-H Club, in conjunction with the Miller County School System, provides in-classroom agricultural, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and general science lessons that follow the Georgia Performance Standards for all fourth- through sixth-grade students. The 4-H program has grown and expanded during the 2018 school year, including in agricultural education. The Agriculture Field Day for elementary school students exposed more than 500 students to agricultural practices, activities and resources in our area, including emerging technology. In addition to agriculture- and science-based lessons, 4-H’ers have enjoyed day camps such as Cupcake Wars, with 17 participants who explored the practice of farm-to-fork by learning about every ingredient that goes into a cupcake, then creating and decorating their own cupcakes. 4-H’ers were encouraged to exploring their creative side with an Up-Cycle Art Show and explored their STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills by building gingerbread houses. Miller County 4-H had participants in both the Georgia National Fair and Southwest Georgia Regional Fair. Public speaking is encouraged through Project Achievement, during which students give presentations or demonstrations on a topic of their choice. Miller County had 36 4-H’ers present projects in our local competition. One of the highlights for 4-H’ers is summer camp, with 15 to 20 students attending Cloverleaf Camp annually. In 2018, Miller County had three students attend junior camps, and this summer, 4-H will be sending ninth- through 12th-grade students to senior camp. We are pleased that 4-H has taken root here and is flourishing.
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.