AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Wilcox County’s farm gate value totals $117 million, excluding broiler-integrator production, and ranks 35th in total farm gate value out of all Georgia’s counties. Of the county’s 243,400 acres, 69 percent, or 168,155 acres, are forested. Timber sales are $6.8 million, a farm gate value that ranks 34th in the state.

Among row crops and produce, Wilcox County’s 25,309 acres of cotton represent $19.4 million of agriculture income, ranking 17th in Georgia. $13.8 million of agriculture income is brought in by 13,361 acres of peanuts. With an increase in produce, Wilcox ranks 5th in watermelon production and 8th in cabbage production in Georgia.

UGA Extension in Wilcox County uses media resources as an educational tool for farmers, agribusiness and the general public. Both radio and website media present timely tips and educational information concerning agriculture and the environment.

The “South Georgia Pine Ag Update” is a weekly radio program aired on seven radio stations across 55 Georgia counties. The program includes information from the county agent on current field crop issues as well as interviews with UGA specialists. In 2018, the agent produced 36 “South Georgia Pine Ag Update” radio programs to 390,000 listeners a week from Macon, Georgia, to the Florida line and Albany, Georgia, to the Atlantic coast. This radio program airs on seven stations across Georgia each week and covers an agriculture income of $5.04 billion (2017 Farm Gate Report).

The agent has also introduced a website and e-newsletter. The Wilcox County Ag blog is used to disseminate local news and educational information concerning agriculture. The newsletter has been a hit with farmers and contains many photos of crops, insects, disease problems and farm activities. It includes hot topics of concern to growers and information from UGA specialists. Information from the blog is sent to 127 farmers and agriculture businesses each week, totaling 9,980 views in 2018.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Disasters are increasing internationally, and disasters like 2018’s Hurricane Michael can wreak havoc on Georgia. Georgia 4-H offered a three-time national award-winning youth preparedness, leadership and educational outreach program known as MyPI (My Preparedness Initiative) for teens. Nine county Extension personnel teamed with seven volunteers, two UGA Extension specialists and the national MyPI training staff at Rock Eagle 4-H Center in MyPI training. The agents, program assistants and community volunteers completed an intensive instructor certification to lead MyPI in eight counties across Georgia.

Training participants received three days of concentrated training in coaching preparedness, including an evaluation specialty. A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant funded a portion of the training and provided youth packs and MyPI manuals for 125 youths. At the training, participants committed to delivering the five- to 10-week training to 125 youths during 2018 and 2019. The training program was held in Wilcox County with a total of 24 students participating. Wilcox had the highest number of participants statewide. There are now 129 Certified Emergency Response Training (CERT) trained students throughout Georgia.

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**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.