



Cooperative Extension Programs

FARM TO SCHOOL: A Regional Marketing Model

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FAMU Cooperative Extension Programs, in collaboration with the New North Florida Cooperative, has developed an effective model that addresses the specific needs and capabilities of small-scale farmers to cultivate schools as markets for agricultural products.

The model provides:

- ❖ Opportunities for procurement of local or regional agricultural produce by school nutrition programs.
- ❖ Provides an alternative market opportunity for small-scale farmers



It is intended that such efforts will:

- ❖ Facilitate incorporation of local and/or regional produce by school nutrition programs.
- ❖ Increase participation of small-scale farmers in alternative markets through coordinated production and distribution systems.



Hands-on training activities were conducted to introduce the Farm to School concept. These training activities, or pilot projects, demonstrated to school food service personnel how Farm to School can work for their districts. These activities demonstrated to state and local food service personnel how to procure fresh produce from a network of small-scale farmers. Three value-added enterprises were selected for the pilot including collard greens, green beans and sweet potatoes. There were also hands-on activities for small-scale farmers that involved training and assistance in crop production, mechanical harvesting, and value-added processing & distribution.

PILOT PROJECT 2003 – 2006

- Facilitated school district participation in Farm to School efforts.
- Provided training and assistance for small-scale farmers in existing Farm to School marketing efforts.
- Evaluated the feasibility for small-scale farmers to sell select value-added products.

Participating school districts:

- ❖ **FLORIDA – 7**
- ❖ **GEORGIA – 20**
- ❖ **ALABAMA – 22**
- ❖ **MISSISSIPPI - 3**



Accomplishments 2003-06

- ▶ Over 50 school districts recruited for participation. Incorporated fresh products from local farmers into school meal programs.
- ▶ Small-scale farmers sold over 500 dozens of collards, 1,500 bushels of green beans, 350 bushels of sweet potatoes.
- ▶ State and local school food service personnel trained in procurement of fresh produce from local farmers.
- ▶ Small-scale farmers trained in distribution to school markets in FL, GA, AL and MS.



- ▶ Small-scale farmers developed appropriate planting, spraying, irrigation management system for collards to maximize production yields.
- ▶ Small-scale farmers trained in use of mechanical harvesting for peas and beans (thus reducing production costs).
- ▶ Small-scale farmers established market with over 20 grocery stores; networking across state lines to provide products for these outlets.
- ▶ Small-scale farmers trained in distribution and market development; establishing markets with military commissaries.



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