

# FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

## MARKET BULLETIN

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • GARY W. BLACK, COMMISSIONER • WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2016 • VOL. 99, NO. 17 • © COPYRIGHT 2016

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT: The five food groups most ripe for spreading food-borne illnesses, and how to handle them

By Thomas Burke  
Georgia Department of Agriculture

Every year an estimated 9.4 million people in the U.S. come down with “food poisoning,” otherwise known as foodborne-related illness. When categorized into individual commodities, the five foods most often associated with illness include leafy greens, dairy, fruits and nuts, poultry, and vegetables that grow on the vine. Below is a breakdown on these commodities with percentage of contribution to total illnesses in parentheses, along with tips and best practices for consumers when shopping for and eating these types of foods:

**Leafy vegetables** (22.3 percent): Examine for bruising or damage, bag separately from meats, and store properly in your refrigerator. Rinse leafy vegetables thoroughly under cool running tap wa-

ter to remove soil and microorganisms. Labeled, pre-washed leafy vegetables are “ready-to-eat” and may be used out of the container with no additional washing.

**Dairy products** (13.8 percent): Consuming pasteurized milk products that are properly refrigerated greatly reduces the chance of becoming ill. While the popularity of raw milk and cheeses has increased, caution should be exercised; many harmful pathogens are often found in raw milk/products that are especially hazardous to young children, the elderly and the chronically ill. In Georgia, it is illegal to sell raw milk for human consumption.

**Fruits and Nuts** (11.7 percent): Rinse fruit thoroughly before consuming, even when not using the skin/rind. Scrub firm produce, such as melons, with a clean produce brush prior to consumption.  
See **FOOD FOR THOUGHT** page 6



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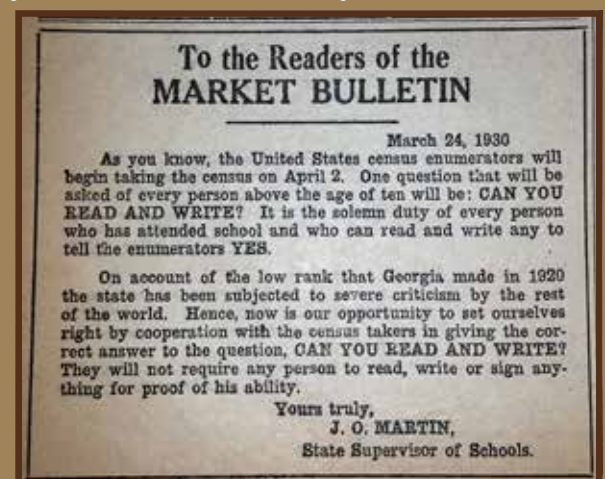
#### Notice

Ads for the Sept. 14 issue — including Farm Services and Handicrafts — are due by noon, Aug. 31.

### FROM OUR ARCHIVES: Loose lips sink ships

The State Supervisor of Schools had a very important message (shown at right) to share with readers of The Market Bulletin in our March 27, 1930, issue. We’re fortunate to have a library of 93 books here at the department containing issues of The Market Bulletin that date back to 1926. The collection offers a fascinating glimpse into the history of agriculture in Georgia (and the politics surrounding it). We’ll be sharing select content from the library as we prepare to mark the 100th anniversary of *The Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin* on March 1, 2017. Hopefully, we’ll make you glad you learned how to read.

-Amy H. Carter, editor



Training for beginning farmers through the UGA Cooperative Extension’s Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program started this month. Photo by Jessica Cudnik

### Journeyman Farmer program offers beginners a crash course in building a successful farm

By Merritt Melancon  
University of Georgia

The University of Georgia’s Cooperative Extension Service kicked off the second year of its Journeyman Farmer training program for beginning and young farmers this month.

This multi-session crash course in business planning, vegetable and fruit production, or goat and sheep husbandry provides those thinking about starting a farm and those who are new to farming with the solid foundation they need to build their business. Participants also have the opportunity for hands-on training to gain farm experience.

Farmers who complete the entire training will receive a Journeyman Farmer Certificate signifying that they have completed coursework in business planning, production and hands-on training.

“Many of the young people interested in

farming don’t come from a farming background,” said Julia Gaskin, director of UGA’s Sustainable Agriculture Program. “We have been very interested in developing a comprehensive training program to help this group and those currently farming that want to improve their operations.”

This is the second year that the partnership has offered this training. The 2015 class provided training to 60 farmers from 11 counties.

“I found the course very helpful in starting up my farming business,” said Ellis Lamme, a Lawrenceville small farmer and president of the Upper Ocmulgee River Resource, Conservation and Development Council. “Take the time to better your farming business knowledge with this course. Your green thumb will get greener.”

The partnership hopes to expand the number of farmers served this year by conducting  
See **JOURNEYMAN FARMER** page 6











Kelly Thompson, left, and fellow intern Meredith Walker accompanied inspectors from the Georgia Department of Agriculture to a dairy farm.

## GUEST COLUMN:

### How I spent my summer internship

By Kelly Thompson

Does an internship have to mean filing papers, making copies and retrieving someone's coffee? It doesn't at the Georgia Department of Agriculture. I accompanied field inspectors to a livestock auction and chicken sale, completed a Concentrated Animal Feed Operation at a dairy farm, watched how meat comes from a pasture and is processed for consumption, and shadowed the assistant state veterinarian.

On my first day in the office I was greeted multiple times with "welcome to the family!" From that day on I met a multitude of people willing to let me work alongside them and ask questions as they fulfilled their role in helping the agricultural industry. As a student working toward a Master of Agribusiness, seeing the complete circle of agricultural processes feeding one into the next is very important, especially since agriculture contributes more than \$71.1 billion annually to Georgia's economy.

During my internship I learned that a vet is needed for healthy animals, which are essential to a dairy farm. When farmers need to buy or sell cattle for their operation, a livestock sale barn is an important market to connect buyer and seller. The animals brought to this market need to be inspected to protect the safety of other animals, consumers and the reputation of the market. Farms and sale barns provide beef to processors that have been inspected in order to deliver meat and by-products in a useable form that is safe for human consumption.

While I did my share of filing, I also learned which states Georgia sends animals to most often and which states we receive animals from most often. The paperwork I filed not only taught me the importance of penmanship but also taught me about diseases such as brucellosis, tuberculosis and pseudorabies. These are diseases that Georgia is working to guard consumers against.

This is only a small circle in the grand sphere of what agricultural regulation encompasses. There is an entire animal industry division, fuels and measures, plant industry and finance, plus the marketing, licensing and distribution that connect the links between farm and table.

Coming into this internship, I knew about the production side of agriculture. I am a former FFA member who was raised on a farm. However, this opportunity showed me the regulation, prevention and promotion side of agriculture and the significance of the state's role in helping the industry succeed. This internship has been worth braving Atlanta traffic. I was truly blessed to serve Georgia's agricultural industry and to be a part of the family.

*-Kelly Thompson is an Agribusiness major at the University of Georgia. She served a summer internship in the Animal Industry Division of the Georgia Department of Agriculture.*

## JOURNEYMAN FARMER: Teaching for success

Continued From Page 1

the training sessions throughout the state. Training sites will include metro Atlanta and Screven, Carroll and Dougherty counties. Registration for this low-cost training opportunity is open now through county agents in these areas. Participants need to register before the business training classes in August to be eligible for the Journeyman Farmer certificate.

The first step of the training program is small farm business planning. The UGA Small Business Development Center and AgSouth Farm Credit will provide business planning and financing workshops to the farmers.

After completing the small farm business training, participants can enroll in the production training offered in their area, choosing small fruit and vegetable production or small ruminants production. These production areas were chosen because there is demand for these crops. These courses were also designed to help beginning farmers start farming on small parcels of land.

"Goat production is an ideal enterprise for beginning farmers because of (growing) demand for goat meat in the United States and because they do not require an intensive system," said Dr. Tom Terrill, part of the of Fort

Valley State University team led by Dr. Niki Whitley. "Goats can utilize brush, broadleaf weeds and grasses on marginal land and still be productive."

Whitley is also organizing the hands-on training which will allow beginning farmers to gain experience on a working farm.

Georgia Organics is leading the hands-on training for farmers interested in small fruit and vegetable production that will offer internships and/or mentoring experiences.

The UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, UGA Small Business Development Center, Georgia Organics, the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Fort Valley State University and AgSouth Farm Credit, along with other partners, are developing the training and mentorship program to help beginning farmers become sustainably successful farmers.

The Journeyman Farmer program is funded by a 2016 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For more information about the program, visit [SustainAg-GA.org](http://SustainAg-GA.org).

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Continued From Page 1

sumption. Be aware that nuts can also endanger those with allergies.

**Poultry** (9.8 percent): When purchasing chicken, the package should feel cool to the touch. Immediately place poultry in the refrigerator (41°F or lower) and use within three days; otherwise freeze it. Cook all poultry products until the internal temperature reaches 165°F.

**Vine-stalk produce** (7.9 percent): Like leafy vegetables and fruits, rinse thoroughly and look for bruising or damage.

Remember with preparation of any food: Clean surfaces, hands and fresh produce; separate food types; cook to proper temperature; chill leftovers immediately. For more information on food safety of various food types visit: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/> and follow the GDA for more food safety tips at @GDAFoodSafety.



### Keeping farm traditions alive

Phillip Nations, 79, of Hollywood, Ga., shows off a prize watermelon from his garden with the help of his 4-year-old granddaughter, Leah Phongsavanh of Cumming. The fruit is the first to grow to maturity from seeds the pair planted earlier this year.

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## COOK GEORGIA GROWN: Georgia Peach Pasta Salad

### Ingredients:

2 Tbsps. vinegar  
 ¼ cup sugar  
 2 Tbsps. dried basil or ¼ cup fresh,  
 coarsely chopped  
 1 Tbsp. dried thyme  
 4 cloves garlic, minced  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 1 cup olive oil  
 8 slices cooked bacon, crumbled  
 2 cups cooked small shell pasta  
 5 medium Georgia peaches,  
 chopped (peeling optional)  
 ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped  
 6 green onions, chopped

### Preparation:

Place first six ingredients in blender and blend on high until smooth. Slowly add the oil and blend until creamy. Combine bacon, pasta, peaches, parsley and onions in a large bowl. Pour dressing over and toss until well coated. Refrigerate until ready to use

*All recipes have been tested for accuracy in our Georgia Grown Test Kitchen unless otherwise noted. For more recipes and to watch cooking in action, find our "Pick, Cook, Keep" series at [www.gpb.org/pick-cook-keep](http://www.gpb.org/pick-cook-keep)!*



## ARTY'S GARDEN: Gardening with box turtles

By Arty Schronce

For someone who loves nature as much as I do, discovering an Eastern box turtle in my garden eight years ago was an exciting moment. I named him Aristurtle Onassis. A few years later a female, Michelle, arrived. A few years after that came another female, Sparkles. I thought all the box turtles had been killed off in my inner city neighborhood, so I was thrilled to welcome these to my garden. I immediately set about making my garden into a refuge. I have enjoyed observing these creatures in their sometimes secretive daily lives, and especially witnessing some important moments such as egg-laying and baby turtles hatching.



**Hatchlings and young box turtles are vulnerable to predators because they are small and cannot pull their legs and head inside a protective shell the way adult box turtles can. Twice I have witnessed Michelle laying eggs. The process took several hours. If I had not seen it happen, I would never have known the nest was there. This hatchling just emerged from the nest, and it is easy to see why young box turtles stay hidden during their early years. It is also easy to see how turtleneck sweaters got their name!**

I urge all gardeners to learn more about box turtles in order to protect them. Here are a few tips:

- Lawnmowers can be deadly. Cut your grass often to keep the grass from getting too tall, and thoroughly check the area to make sure no turtles are hiding in tall grass when you mow. Provide areas with perennials or groundcovers where the turtles can hide and take refuge.
- Do not kidnap turtles from the woods or other places. It is dangerous for them to try to establish new territories, and they will attempt to return to their original habitat.
- Many box turtles are crushed by cars. If safety allows, stop and pick up a box turtle that is in the road and put it on the side of the road it was heading to. Don't put it back where it was coming from; it will only attempt to cross the road again. Also, do not throw apples or bananas out of your car. You may think these biodegradable fruits can do no harm; however, box turtles may stay in the road to eat them and be killed.
- Box turtles may get into shallow water to soak or drink but do not live in water. If you have a garden pond with steep sides, arrange a sloping stone to allow the turtle to climb to safety if it falls in.
- Keep your dog away from box turtles. Dogs can bite off a turtle's leg and chew on its shell, causing damage or even death. Cats can kill small turtles.



**Box turtles have the run of my garden. They move about and eat what they wish including snails, crickets and plants. Earthworms are a favorite, and Michelle can wrangle and devour one with finesse. I put out feeding stations in case they do not find all the food they want or need. This is Michelle at one of the stations. The feeding stations may offer a mix of chopped kale, collards, lettuce, broccoli, tomatoes and cantaloupe along with commercial box turtle food and other fruits and vegetables. I also put out shallow terra-cotta saucers for them to drink from.**

- Include areas of mulch and leaf litter mulch where turtles can take cover and overwinter.

For more information, here are two excellent websites: [www.srelherp.uga.edu/turtles/tercar.htm](http://www.srelherp.uga.edu/turtles/tercar.htm) and [www.carolinaboxturtles.com](http://www.carolinaboxturtles.com)

*-Arty Schronce is the department's resident gardening expert. Contact him at [arty.schronce@agr.georgia.gov](mailto:arty.schronce@agr.georgia.gov), or write to him in care of The Market Bulletin.*



**Male box turtles usually have bright red eyes while the females usually have brown, brownish red, amber or mottled eyes. Males also have a concave plastron (lower shell) and a flatter upper shell than females do. Here is Aristurtle on a rainy day. Box turtles often become active after a rain. That is when they are more likely to find some favorite foods: earthworms, slugs and snails. This day he has also eaten some of the broccoli I left at one of the feeding stations.**



is proud to welcome these new members:

### Silver Level

Biron Chocolate & Tea  
[BironTeas.com](http://BironTeas.com)  
 Macon, Ga.

Coweta Greenhouses  
[GeorgiaGrown.com](http://GeorgiaGrown.com)  
 Newnan, Ga.

Hudson Pecan Co.  
[HudsonPecan.com](http://HudsonPecan.com)  
 Ocilla, Ga.

Simply Southern Bones  
[SimplySouthernBones.com](http://SimplySouthernBones.com)  
 Danielsville, Ga.

The Vidalia Boy Roadside Market  
[GeorgiaGrown.com](http://GeorgiaGrown.com)  
 Lyons, Ga.

and these returning members:

### Gold Level

Bone Creek Farms  
[GeorgiaGrown.com](http://GeorgiaGrown.com)  
 Macon, Ga.

Royal Food Service  
[RoyalFoodService.com](http://RoyalFoodService.com)  
 Atlanta, Ga.

### Silver Level

Beaver Lake Grilling Planks  
[BeaverLakeGrillingPlanks.com](http://BeaverLakeGrillingPlanks.com)  
 Milner, Ga.

Five Points Berries  
[FivePointsBerries.com](http://FivePointsBerries.com)  
 Mauk, Ga.

Lamar Pecan Co.  
[LamarPecan.com](http://LamarPecan.com)  
 Hawkinsville, Ga.

Lowndes County  
 Board of Commissioners  
[LowndesCounty.com](http://LowndesCounty.com)  
 Valdosta, Ga.

Smith Family Dairy Farm  
[GeorgiaGrown.com](http://GeorgiaGrown.com)  
 Norman Park, Ga.

Southern Belle Farm  
[SouthernBelleFarm.com](http://SouthernBelleFarm.com)  
 McDonough, Ga.

Sparkman's Cream Valley  
[SparkmansCreamValley.com](http://SparkmansCreamValley.com)  
 Moultrie, Ga.

**Georgia Grown** is a marketing and branding program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. For more information or to join, visit [GeorgiaGrown.com](http://GeorgiaGrown.com) or call **404.656.3680**.

Beautiful Boer buckling and Boer/Kiko buckling, photos available, ready to pick up now. Lisa Hutcheson **Douglas** 912-381-9421

Boer and Boer/Nubian cross bucklings, DOB 02/22/16, vaccinated, easy to handle; \$300-\$600 each. Nancy Mills **Mcdonough** 770-957-2255

Boer/Kiko/Savanna cross goats, bucks and does, closed herd since 2000, healthy, DOB 03/2016. C.L. Cambron **Acworth** 770-380-3505

Dorper/Katahdin sheep, 6 fully grown males, \$150 each. Tye Kuykendall **Ball Ground** 770-735-3532 770-833-2808

Herd reduction sale, all ages, white Dorper, registered purebreds. Tammy Walls **Hiwassee** 706-897-2918

Herd reduction with great bloodlines: 16 Alpine/Kiko mixed 5 m/o kids, 4 Alpine nannies; \$2000/all. John Doulgerakis **Cumming** 404-906-3105

Herd sale: 100% purebred Savanna buck, 1 y/o buck 75%, 9 does 50%, 10 doelings 75%; \$5850/all. L.D. Carver **Jasper** 770-735-3432

Katahdin sheep, photos available: 21 purebred rams, ewes and young lambs, \$150-\$200; registered ram, \$400; others non-registered. Terrence Jameson **Carrollton** 770-689-8188

Katahdin sheep: Ram and ewe lambs, one registered ram, very pretty, 2 y/o; \$125+. Russell Cantrell **Newborn** 770-855-3008

Kiko goats: 5 females, 3 m/o-3 y/o, purebred, registered or registerable. Annie Davis **Carrollton** 770-342-8781

Kiko goats: NKR registered doelings and bucks; \$275+. Mark Carroll **Plainville** 706-234-5344

Miniature female goat, 6 m/o, brown & white, can be tamed for a pet; \$55. Pat Burns **Lawrenceville** 404-626-7921

Myotonic meat goats: Registered, healthy, shots UTD, good quality, 7 bucklings, 5 m/o; \$250 each. Eric Yawn **Warm Springs** 770-584-7477

Nigerian Dwarf buck, 2 y/o, dehorned, 23" H shoulder, black and white; \$200. James Byington **Hawkinsville** 478-783-1792 478-231-2828

Nigerian Dwarf goats, nannies and billies, good bloodlines, call/text for photos. Nikki Rowden **Farmington** nikkirowden@att.net 706-296-9322

Nigerian/Dwarf Pygmy mix, sweet, friendly and very playful, cream and tan; \$60. Scott Bowie **Newnan** 678-621-3094

Nubian buck and Saanen bucks from heavy milkers, beautiful; \$25 each. Jewell Wood Po Box 670 **Hampton** 30228 770-946-8619 404-353-2498

Nubian buck, DOB 01/23/16, really wants to do his job; \$175, or negotiable w/trade. Debi Shell **Lenox** 229-546-4404

Nubian goats: 2 purebred bucks, 2014; 6 small does, part Saanen, 2014-2015; 1 buckling; \$1300. Jay Seigies **Murrayville** seigies@gmail.com 706-867-1358

Nubian/Kiko mixed: 2 bucks, 3 does, 4 m/o bucklings, 5 m/o buckling, call for prices. Davida Celestin **Fayetteville** 770-258-1691 770-847-6623

Purebred Kiko bucks/does, 80% doe producing herd sire, excellent bloodlines, mature stock available; \$150+. James S Sarratt **Jasper** stevensarratt@gmail.com 706-260-5131

Purebred Oberhasli doelings, DOB 03/2016, from good milking lines, 1 polled; \$250. Tom Kuettnner **Lakeland** 229-560-5145

Purebred Red Boer bucks, 6 m/o, not registered, sire is ABGA registered, BonJoli bloodline; \$250. Steve Gore **Tallapoosa** 770-574-2829

Pygmy buck goat, DOB 02/11/2016; \$135. Amanda Crowe **Mansfield** 404-213-8511

Pygmy nanny; \$100. John Dees **Lizella** 478-731-2978

Registered Boer purebred goats, black buck and red doe, 4 m/o. A.D. Bryan **Blairsville** 706-745-2223

Registered breeding pair of Babydoll sheep, 5 y/o, produced twins the last 2 years; \$600. Kim Goldau **Hartwell** 864-903-3865 864-903-3865

Registered Katahdin ram, DOB 02/29/16, Hound River breeding for parasite resistance/growth. Hubert Bailey **Dawsonville** 706-265-2669 770-530-6150

Registered Kiko breeding stock: Bucks and does with great bloodlines. Andy Shelton **Warrenton** 706-496-5795

Saanen 1st freshener, bottle-fed doeling, bred does, 2 proven bucks, superior genetics, herd reduction; \$200-\$350. Sandra J Stephens **Hoschton** 706-654-2867

Saanen nanny goat in milk, 2 registered purebred bucks, great genetics; \$200 each. Wayne Niemeyer **Morganston** 706-374-5111

St. Croix ram, purebred, 18 m/o; \$225. Wesley C Chandler **Danielsville** 706-795-0242

**Equine For Sale**

*If you have questions regarding ads in this category, call 404-656-3722.*

**Advertisers in the Equine for Sale or Equine at Stud categories must submit current negative Coggins tests for each equine advertised. This includes horses, ponies, donkeys, etc. Buyers are urged to request verification of a negative Coggins from the advertiser before purchasing any equine. Negative Coggins reports are valid for 12 months from the date the blood sample is drawn. Falsification or altering of any Coggins results can result in fines and suspension of advertising privileges. If you are faxing or mailing in an ad, the Coggins needs to be sent along with it. For ads submitted online, the Coggins can be attached using the attachments button. Generalized ads, such as "many horses," "variety to choose from," etc., will not be published. Equine at Stud ads will also require a current stable license in order to be published.**

9 y/o Kentucky Mountain Horse gelding, black and white, very gentle, rides great. Tony Green **Fairmount** 770-605-0888

Female spotted donkey, for pet, pasture or guard, 1 y/o; \$350. Harvey T Lyons **Chamblee** 770-891-3939

Miniature donkey for breeding or guard, nice colors, very gentle. H.N. Ralston **Eatonton** 706-473-3119

Pony gelding, 40" chocolate Palomino, 7 y/o, gentle and rides well, can deliver; \$350. Janice Wilkes **Athens** 706-207-9366

Wanted: Bombproofed pony for grandchildren, 12H and UTD on shots, less than 14 y/o, good home. Nancy Yates **Lagrane** 706-884-3167

**Equine Miscellaneous**

*If you have questions regarding ads in this category, call 404-656-3722.*

2003 Hart aluminum 4H slant, week-ender package LQ, midtack, ramp, loaded, new tires; \$28,500. Cathy Stoops **Hogansville** csstoop@gmail.com 309-696-9329

3 horse-size anti-grazing muzzles, 2 new and 1 barely used; \$30. Betsy Gilman **Decatur** 404-202-8221

4-horse slant load gooseneck trailer, great condition, drop windows with screens, extra thick floor mats; \$5500. Ladonna Reynolds **Carrollton** 770-851-6315

Horse training for colts just starting, or tune-ups for older horses. Nathan Garner **Kingston** 770-203-9699

Roping saddle: Big Horn 16, barely used, no damage/wear, does have small stain; \$495. Rachel Henry **Adrian** 478-494-3479

Stubbien Siegfried all-purpose 17" saddle, excellent condition with leathers and stirrups; \$600. Pat Vaillancourt **Tyrene** 678-592-6298

TWH breaking cart boat seat, easy entry, good tires; \$200. Steve Stowers **Dawsonville** 706-974-0576

Western saddle, brown synthetic material, 30" girth strap, 13" seat, lightly used, rack stored in tack room. L.A. Gassmann **Social Circle** 770-597-0181

Wintec 17" brown Western saddle, excellent condition, \$275. Linda Fulmer **Lincolnton** 706-359-1303

**Boarding Facilities**

*If you have questions regarding ads in this category, call 404-656-3722.*

**Advertisers must submit a current stable license in order to advertise boarding and breeding facilities. Ads submitted without this information will not be published. For questions regarding licenses and applications, call 404-656-3713.**

The Stables at Prize Fighter Farms is now accepting boarders, fully lit arena included; \$150/month. Andrew McClure **Douglasville** 404-790-8551

**Market Bulletin Farmland Ad Form**

The Fall 2016 Farmland Edition of the *Market Bulletin* will be published Sept. 14. The deadline to submit ads for that issue is Aug. 31.

Ad guidelines: Only Georgia farmland of five acres or more may be advertised. Include price, acreage and county where the property is located. All property must be for sale by the owner. Property under contract with a real estate agent cannot be advertised. Limit descriptive terms to property characteristics or structures. A maximum word count of 30 – including name, address, phone number and city – is permitted in Farmland ads. Only one ad per subscriber per issue. You must be a paid subscriber to advertise in the *Market Bulletin*.

Subscriber Number: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Grid of lines for providing address and contact information.

The following statement must be signed by the advertiser submitting this notice for publication:

**I hereby certify that the above notice meets all the necessary requirements for publication in the upcoming farmland edition of the *Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin*.**

**FARMLAND SECTIONS AND COUNTIES**

Table with 6 columns: Northwest, Southeast, Northeast, Southwest, East Central, West Central. Lists counties under each section.









## COMING SOON TO THE FARM FAMILIES THEATER AT THE GEORGIA NATIONAL FAIR: Andy Stone offers a peek at the corporate side of blueberry farming

By Amy H. Carter  
Editor

Georgia's blueberry growers have just 13 weeks a year to make an impression on consumers. Their success of late has emboldened Superior Berries Co. President Andy Stone to pitch a new identity for the Peach State to the powers that be in Atlanta.

"We've got some peach growers that are state representatives and I kid them from time to time and ask them when they're going to change the official fruit of Georgia from peaches to blueberries. I don't get a positive answer out of that," said Stone.

All kidding aside, Stone is bargaining from a position of strength. In 2014 Georgia ranked No. 1 in the nation in blueberry production with a harvest of 100 million pounds. The yield was down slightly in 2015, but the state is holding steady in the top five among blueberry states.

"We're probably going to bounce back and forth between first and third and fourth depending on what our production is every year. Bottom line is we're an important part of the blueberry industry in North America," Stone said.

The role that Superior Berries has played in

growing Georgia's blueberry industry will be explored on the big screen at the Georgia National Fair in Perry Oct. 6-16. Superior Berries is one of two blueberry farms featured in a series of films produced by the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The films will be screened every day of the fair in The Farm Families Theater, sponsored by the Georgia Federal-State Shipping Point Inspection Service. The theater is located in the Georgia Grown Building at the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in Perry.

The blueberry industry started in Southeast Georgia about 40 years ago, Stone said. Superior Berries was founded in 2004 as a subsidiary of Superior Pine Products Co.

"We started because this land is high in organic matter. It's an acid-based soil and those are the things that blueberries like," Stone said.

Superior Berries grows Southern highbush and rabbiteye varieties on 485 acres near Homerville and harvests about three million pounds of berries annually. The company used to grow rabbiteyes exclusively and enjoyed a harvest in excess of four million pounds annually. Adding the Southern highbush to the mix lowered the company's yield, Stone said, but it also allowed the company to extend its season



Andy Stone, president of Superior Pine Products and Superior Berries. Photo by Nathan Wilson

by six weeks.

"That gives us about a 13 week window we'll be harvesting in, and that just helps us as far as providing fruit for the market for a longer period of time. The earlier in the season you get the higher the prices and they taper down as you get later on," he said.

Quality suffers as well as the summer heats up and the humidity takes its toll on the crop,

Stone said. Superior's early harvest is sold primarily to the fresh fruit market in Canada. Later harvests are sold to a processor in Shelby, Mich., for the frozen fruit market.

Superior's berries are harvested by machine, and that helps the farm's managers avoid some of the labor woes that plague growers who still harvest by hand.

"You see more farms that are either already machine-picking or headed in that direction because they know the availability of labor is going to be slim," Stone said.

Superior would have to hire 500 to 600 people to pick its blueberries by hand. The use of machines to harvest the crops means the farm only needs 50 to 60 laborers.

Superior Berries is a corporate farm managed by a full-time staff reporting to 47 shareholders. The majority of the farm's shares are owned by descendants of the three founders of Superior Pine Products. The company is 90 years old.

Learn more about Superior Berries specifically and Georgia's blueberry industry in general by visiting The Farm Families Theater during the Georgia National Fair in Perry. Get more information about the fair online at GeorgiaNationalFair.com.

## Researchers work with growers, consumers to develop new peach varieties

By Sharon Dowdy  
University of Georgia

Two years into the job, University of Georgia peach specialist Dario Chavez is pleased with the development of his research program. The new research peach orchard in Griffin is filled with more than 130 different peach tree varieties, several newly grafted potential varieties and a host of trees for irrigation and fertilization studies, all in an effort to help growers of the crop that gave Georgia its nickname – the "Peach State."

In addition to the new orchard in Griffin, Chavez travels to Bryon to work with U.S. Department of Agriculture rootstock breeder Tom Beckman and to meet with Georgia peach growers. There are currently more than 10,000 acres of Georgia land devoted to growing peaches. The state ranks third in U.S. production of the fruit.

"At the end of the day, the growers are comfortable with what they are doing," Chavez said. "They are planting new orchards every year, and it's a stable production system. They are making money and supporting the economy."

Chavez said Georgia peach growers offer



In addition to the new University of Georgia peach orchard in Griffin, scientist Dario Chavez travels to Bryon to work with USDA rootstock breeder Tom Beckman and to meet with Georgia peach growers. Photos by Sharon Dowdy



UGA graduate student Catherine Belisle is leading a peach quality project using information collected through consumer taste panels. Belisle (left) is shown talking with consumer panelist Betty Howard of Griffin.

a "really high quality" peach and are typically second- and third-generation farmers.

"There's a lot of tradition and a large knowledge base in growing Georgia peaches," he said.

Under Chavez's leadership, UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences graduate students on the Griffin Campus are looking at Georgia-grown peaches from a new perspective. Like their forerunners, the UGA scientists are still working to help Georgia farmers grow the crop as efficiently as possible, but they are also searching for ways to produce a crop that consumers want to purchase and eat.

"We are focusing more on fruit quality. Consumers buy the peaches for appearance, but then, when they bite it, they may have a different opinion about the eating experience than their opinion about the fruit appearance alone," he said. "Looks are not an indicator of quality."

To help peach breeders create varieties that consumers will love, UGA graduate student Catherine Belisle is leading a peach quality project using information collected through consumer taste panels. Under the direction of Chavez and CAES sensory scientist Koushik

Adhikari she has consumers taste peaches and provide feedback.

"We are looking at aroma, flavors, textures and other characteristics from people who taste the peaches for us," she said. "Then we will cross reference this information with instrumental data in the lab."

If consumers like the aroma of a particular peach variety, the UGA scientists search for the compounds that create the aroma, she said. They also measure the sugars, acids and volatiles – or aromas – of the peaches and compare them to the consumer panel input.

"The aroma is the most interesting part. (The panelists) are picking up a lot of fruity, citrus, peach and – with a white-flesh peach – floral aromas," she said. "Then we use the instruments to find the compounds that are responsible for those aromas."

Belisle has been working with Georgia growers to test 45 varieties of peaches, five varieties per week during the summer growing season for the past year and a half.

"Peaches have basically been my life, and it's a sweet life," said Belisle, who admits she has never bought peaches but has eaten her fill at work. "My lab mates and I evaluate the peaches together at night while we are rounding out the day and do our own makeshift study."

Belisle, Chavez and Adhikari will share their results with Georgia peach growers. This information will also be used to select varieties that could be used in developing new breeds in collaboration with the USDA.

Another study within Chavez's program is being conducted by UGA doctoral student Bruno Casamali. Under the direction of Chavez and CAES horticultural physiologist Marc van Iersel, Casamali is using the new UGA Griffin Campus peach orchard to conduct irrigation and fertilization tests.

"We believe the fertilizer numbers (that Georgia growers) use are based on California

studies, which involve totally different climatic conditions (than we have in Georgia)," he said. "We want to make sure that growers apply the best rate for reproductive growth and good foliage in the spring and summer, and good quality fruit with good yield at harvest."

Georgia peach growers traditionally don't irrigate their trees until the third year of growth, Chavez said.

This is the first year of study, which is funded in part by the Georgia Peach Council.

According to the 2014 Farm Gate Value Report, peaches grown in Georgia generated a farm gate value of \$53.5 million. Peach County produced the most peaches with 2,500 acres,



On the UGA campus in Griffin, UGA doctoral student Bruno Casamali is testing different irrigation methods and fertilization rates to give Georgia growers advice on how to grow peaches more efficiently.

followed by Macon County with 2,060 acres. Peaches are the second most popular fruit grown in Georgia, behind blueberries.

In the future, Chavez plans to study new production systems for growing peaches. "I'd like to do density studies and see if planting peaches closer together or farther apart changes the game any while using the new, upcoming rootstocks like MP-29," he said.

-Sharon Dowdy is a news editor with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

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