



The demand for organic products continues to exceed organic production in Georgia. Organic sales in Georgia exceed \$5,725,000 annually. However, perception of barriers impact growers for entering and/or expanding into this market. This study provides strategies for minimizing production, marketing and financial risk that producers may encounter.

## Quantifying the Market for Organic Fruit and Vegetable Production in Georgia

### Who cares and why?

Fruits and vegetables account for 37 percent of all U. S. organic sales but only about 1.2 percent of Georgia's vegetable acreage was devoted to organics in 2008. Thus, in an effort to make the state's producers more aware of the potential in organics, the specific objectives of this proposal are: (1) to estimate the market demand for fresh and frozen organic fruits and vegetables in Georgia and the Southeast, (2) to survey fruit and vegetable producers in Georgia to determine production potential within the State, and (3) to conduct workshops for current and potential organic producers to assist in minimizing risks and maximizing income potential. To accomplish the first objective, a Rotterdam model was used to estimate the organic market demand for Georgia and the Southeast using 156 weeks of ACNielsen

sales data for the period May 2009 through April 2011. The second objective involves conducting a telephone survey of Georgia's fruit and vegetable producers to assess and identify the production, marketing and management challenges regarding organics. Finally, the project will provide workshops for producers with information on ways to capitalize on challenges and opportunities in the organic market. Currently only 91 farms in Georgia are growing certified organic products. Therefore, the long-term objective of this project is to enhance producer awareness of the opportunities in certified and exempt organic agriculture and the number of Georgia fruit and vegetable producers in certified organic agriculture.

### What has the project done so far?

The state wide telephone survey of organic producers and other vegetable and fruit producers was completed in April 2014. The survey yielded 400 completed questionnaires. Initial analysis of the data suggest that there are perceptions of both production and marketing barriers impacting potential converts to organic production. These perceived barriers included cost of certification, lower organic yields compared to conventional yields, weed and pest control, meeting organic quality and buyers quantity requirements. Our analysis show that these barriers significantly hamper the expansion of organic production in the state. As a result of the survey, a series of three workshops were provided to address the major barriers. The first workshop held on July 23, 2014

addressed Organic Fruits and Vegetables Pest and Weed Controls. Presenters at the workshop included a successful certified organic producer, USDA representative that addressed the availability of resources to address some of the barriers, and prominent researchers and extension personnel with extensive organic practical experiences. Additional workshops are scheduled for September and October on Fort Valley State's organic farm and at the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition in Moultrie, Ga. Analysis of the AC Nielsen data show that there is unmet excess demand for organic vegetables that are traditionally produced in Georgia.

## Impact Statement

The survey of fruit and vegetable producers identified prominent perceptions of barriers to increased organic output. Workshops offered address the perceptions, such as USDA assistance with the cost of certification and transitioning to organics.

Organic sales are currently about \$35 billion, a 3400 percent increase since 1990. Vegetables account for more than 40 percent of the sales, products that Georgia excel in producing. If the project is successful in addressing the producers' barriers to expanding organics production, this will significantly impact Georgia farm and state's economics.

### What research is needed?

More research is being conducted involving prioritizing and the most cost effective means of addressing organic and potential producers production and marketing needs.

### Want to know more?

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Strategic Priority  
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### Additional links:

<http://www.umes.edu/ard/Default.aspx?id=46285>

Year and Institution:

2014, Fort Valley State University

This project was supported by Fort Valley State University and Georgia Department of Agriculture.