



**Title:** Alabama Farm\*A\*Syst Program for Low Income and Underserved Farmers - an Update

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**Organization:** The Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Auburn

**State:** AL      **Region:** Southern

**Year of Funding:** 2000

**Theme:** Pollution Assessment and Prevention

**Situation:** There is a need to communicate the best management practices for reducing farm pollution to low income and underserved agricultural producers in Alabama since that group continues to increase in numbers. Low-income farmers are defined as those with farm sales of no more than \$200,000 per year. Many of these farmers are working part time on their farms or on leased farmland making it difficult to provide training to them by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

**Objectives:** We are seeking to determine the best delivery method for training the target audience using the training materials developed for this project. The three delivery methods used were: 1. Dedicated and Trained county staffs working individually with volunteer farm participants. 2. Trained volunteers working individually with farm participants. 3. Send the training materials to farm participants without individual or personal intervention.

**Methods:** There were a total of 10 county programs volunteered in counties where the majority of the low income and underserved farmers were located. All counties solicited and identified at least nine (9) farmers that volunteered to participate. There were at least three (3) farmers in each program delivery category and as many as nine (9) per category in one participating county. Three training publications had been previously developed and were used to train the farm volunteer participants.

**Partnerships:** Partnership strengthened with Alabama A. & M. University's Small Farms Program, The Alabama Farm Statistics Service and The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries all provided input and oversight to this grant program.

**Research:** Research discovered the Best Management Practices written in the Alabama Farm\*A\*Syst publications which was used to educate the target audience on pollution prevention on their production facility. The training program is in itself a research effort to determine the most effective delivery technique to employ for the identified audience.

**Resources:** The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service and Alabama A. & M. University provided valuable services to this project that were not compensated by the grant.

**Results:** One year from this date, after compiling the results of the effectiveness of the delivery techniques, we will know if one technique is more effective than the other two or if there is little or no difference between them. The least expensive technique to perform is to send out the training material to participants with no personal intervention. With Extension program funding cuts, this may be the only feasible way to carry out this program in the future.



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