

### **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

Kudzu bug was noted at commercially damaging levels in soybean in Arkansas during June and July, 2016. So far, only a few fields have been observed, and Division entomologists have stayed in front of this new pest since the initial discovery on kudzu in the Arkansas Delta last year. In response, entomologists have educated county agents, growers and consultants in winter crop production meetings and most recently at a “hands-on” field event in Phillips County. The latest science-based management recommendations have been shared. Based on IPM principles, our scientists emphasize the need for a balanced management approach so that we do not “over-treat”, damaging beneficial insect populations.

Herbicide resistant palmer amaranth continues to develop in the Arkansas Delta and is the most difficult weed science management challenge in the state. Field trials in selected fields of east central and northeast Arkansas show palmer amaranth with resistance to glyphosate and PPO herbicides. In these trials, glufosinate (Liberty) continues to be the most effective herbicide with the new Extend technology (dicamba-resistant crops plus low volatility dicamba formulations) somewhat effective if used very early. The new technology has not been as effective in these trials as initially thought and apparently illegal and inappropriate use of dicamba on or around new dicamba-resistant soybean and cotton varieties planted in the Delta has resulted in many complaints from soybean producers. The scope of the injury has called into question the manageability of the Extend system in Arkansas.

The Division has two new horticulture specialists, one focused on production of fruit and vegetable crops and the other on IPM. Working together, they have engaged both commercial-scale and small local food producers using the latest science-based information and best management practices. With traditional row crop prices in a lull, producers are exploring alternative cropping systems including cucurbits, tomatoes, peppers, sweet corn and other high value horticulture crops in the Delta. Our new specialists are working with these growers “from the ground up” since production and IPM knowledge for these systems are brand new to these producers. These specialists have also initiated local food trials with correctional and other institutions to demonstrate the economic value of local production for direct consumption, with a continuing emphasis on food safety from field to plate.

### **Community & Economic Development/Public Policy Center**

The Arkansas Procurement Assistance Center (APAC) is operated by the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service under a Cooperative Agreement from the Department of Defense (DOD) through a program administered by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). APAC provides statewide business consulting, counseling, contract assistance, and training services on how to participate with government contracting opportunities to both small and large businesses operating in all 75 Arkansas counties.

In fiscal year 2016, APAC assisted Arkansas companies in securing 1,038 contract awards (as reported by clientele). The value of these awards is more than \$126 million, a significant economic contribution to Arkansas communities and the state. Using Department of Defense conversion rates, this has resulted in more than 2,525 jobs that have been created or retained as a result of the program.

### **County Programs**

The County Funding Plan that was launched on July 1, 2015 has been a success. New revenue from counties was received this year. Counties are expected by January 1, 2017 to contribute more than \$1.5 million in additional revenue.

An improved County Performance Evaluation Instrument is complete. County agents were trained on its use in June. Staff Chairs will receive additional training in August on “How to Conduct an Effective Performance Appraisal Conference.”

### **4-H Youth Development**

Arkansas 4-H is piloting an in-school 4-H club approach in 12 counties starting in September. Selected counties vary by population size, county staffing level, and past school enrichment involvement. The three-year pilot will track how county staff build school partnerships, use 4-H educational curricula, develop and sustain 4-H Clubs, and engage youth beyond the school club to participate in county, district, and state activities.

Program goals are to: 1) Increase reach of the 4-H program by partnering with schools; 2) Increase diversity of 4-H membership through school partnerships; 3) Enhance and expand use of experiential learning techniques to prepare students for college and/or careers, including increasing confidence of school staff to use hands-on teaching techniques for core subjects, and providing support for use of experiential learning method and 4-H curricula to build “soft skills” such as communication and cooperation; 4) Increase funding for county-based youth development work by engaging school district support.

### **Family and Consumer Sciences**

The Arkansas Healthy LIFE Project is a CDC-funded community-based effort to make Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) changes in four counties by combining outreach and education with building and engaging community coalitions. Community-wide needs assessment is complete, and coalitions have been engaged to identify strategies to make their communities healthier. With training and technical assistance provided by the project team to both county agents and coalition groups, some early successes have been realized such as fitness policies with local libraries, promotion of financial incentive and educational programs at local farmer’s markets, and local policies supporting improved sidewalks and bike lanes. The project will expand from four to six counties October 1.

The Extension Wellness Ambassador Program continues to train and graduate master health volunteers. More than 100 graduates from the program, which was first introduced three years ago, conducted 620 educational sessions reaching 5,885 Arkansans. Implementation of the volunteer-led Extension Get Fit Program is on-going; thousands of Arkansans are reached each year with ongoing group fitness classes. An agent trainer model increases training access and reduces geographic barriers for volunteers.

The RNECE-funded Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More project, implemented in five counties, utilized faith community-appointed lay leaders and EFNEP program assistants or trained Wellness Ambassador volunteers to educate church members on ways to improve the nutrition and physical activity environment in their faith communities. Pre- and post-surveys and biometrics have been collected and are currently being analyzed to determine changes in individual knowledge, behavior, weight and blood pressure. Comments and notes from field staff indicate that policy and environmental approaches have been implemented and include healthy tips in monthly newsletter, water policy at church functions, church garden, parking lot/walking track mapped with signage. Two Faithful Families EFNEP pages were created and have received over 30 likes which allows us to collect analytics for further analyses.

The Grandparents as our Superheroes program is a collaborative effort between FCS and 4H and offers youth the opportunity to convey the positive contributions senior adults have made in their lives through paintings and writings. Youth read books and participate in facilitated discussions about older adults, then write about and create illustrations about their appreciation for older adults in their lives. Senior adults benefit from the program by seeing how young people in their lives appreciate them.