

Healthy Georgia Connections

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NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM **UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA** COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

EXTENSION FEATURE

Why are the grocery store shelves empty?

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While all industries have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, food and agriculture have been among the hardest hit segments of the U.S. economy. The primary reason lies in the composition of household food expenditures.

The impacts of the pandemic appear to vary by commodity based on two critical issues: perishability and labor use. Perishables like fruits, vegetables and milk are among the hardest hit. Many of these industries also depend on labor for growing and harvesting.

There is no immediate shortage of food in the U.S., according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), however the current demand for items such as consumer-sized products and on-demand delivery is greater than what is in abundant supply: bulk, large-sized products and processed shipments to restaurants that remain open.

This demand-supply mismatch appears to mimic anecdotal evidence of price spikes and empty store shelves on the consumer side and the collapse of demand and dumping of food on the farm side, with a range of linked effects in the middle.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

What can be done by private and public sectors — hopefully in partnership — to offset these challenges? An obvious



option is using storage where applicable to mitigate price spikes, avoid empty store shelves and prevent the collapse of demand. However, not all commodities are easily stored.

Some experts have recommended that the government purchase perishables to transfer to regions and segments of the population where they are most needed. It is not clear that the logistics of such an operation can be pulled off within the short time period needed to accommodate farms and markets.

The stimulus measures to keep businesses in operation — including loans, grants, unemployment insurance and SNAP benefits — alleviate the problem to some extent, but their durability has already been questioned. Policy and other measures will be an ongoing discussion.

Government regulations have been eased somewhat to help facilitate the transition in demand from food service to grocery outlets. Nonetheless, the food and agriculture sectors need more attention, especially the most vulnerable segments, likely in the form of a combination of the above tools employed in greater intensity.

To read more, visit tuga.edu/5TK.



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EXTENSION FEATURE

UGA Extension and Georgia Department of Agriculture seek to help farmers get produce to public

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Georgia farmers and agricultural producers eager to sell abundant supplies of fresh produce and other products are being connected with consumers and other buyers who need their products through a new partnership between UGA Extension and the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown program.

Because of disruptions to the industry triggered by the COVID-19 crisis, many agricultural producers in Georgia — particularly smaller growers and producers — are experiencing difficulties getting their products out to those who can use them.

Through its Georgia Grown Ag-Products Industry Promotion and E-commerce Promotion programs, Georgia Grown — a state membership program designed to help agribusinesses thrive — will waive all membership fees for the service until July to help producers affected by the crisis.

"The first step is facilitating connections between consumers and growers. There are many people who are looking for fresh produce and cannot find it and we have producers who have produce and cannot sell it," said Laura Perry Johnson, associate dean for Extension at UGA's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Types of agricultural products that qualify for the program include everything from produce to meats, dairy and any other agriculture-related products, such as honey and prepared foods.

"We are getting a lot of interest from many types of buyers, including consumer, wholesale, food banks and some restaurants," said Matthew Kulinski, deputy marketing director for Georgia Grown.

Georgia farmers who are keeping regular hours, providing curbside pickup, home delivery or e-commerce sales during the COVID-19 crisis can join the programs by visiting the [Georgia Grown Ag-Products Industry Promotion](#) or [Georgia Grown E-Commerce Promotion](#) pages and filling out forms that will add their information to a statewide database of producers that will be shared with consumers and buyers.

UGA Extension will support the program through its network of county agents and specialists throughout the state.

"This is a grassroots effort that starts with all of our Extension agents, specialists and coordinators who have the relationships with these growers, producers and farmers," said Johnson. "We are working on several different ways to get this information out to producers and consumers, including our [Extension website emergency resources page](#) and through traditional and social media. Together we can make this into something that will not only help agriculture in Georgia, but the people who need access to fresh food as well."

For consumers who are interested in picking their own produce, Georgia Grown also provides a [pick your own list](#) of all producers who offer that option on their farms.

[View the list of farms and markets by county at t.uga.edu/5UB. Read more at t.uga.edu/5UD.](#)

4-H YOUTH

Counties participate in Georgia 4-H Virtual Project Achievement

Cris DeRevere

Georgia 4-H public relations coordinator, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences



More than 425 fourth, fifth and sixth graders participated in Georgia 4-H's recent Virtual Cloverleaf Project Achievement contest. In response to the cancellation of five area Project Achievement contests due to the COVID-19 crisis, Georgia 4-H faculty and staff quickly developed the Virtual Project Achievement Contest.

Thirteen area contests were originally scheduled for this year. While eight contests were held before March, more than 1,500 youth were registered to participate in the remaining contests.

Ultimately, youth from 47 counties in all regions of Georgia were able to compete through the Virtual Project Achievement Contest.

The Project Achievement competition helps youth develop leadership, creativity, public speaking skills and a deep understanding of their desired project area.

Youth select from 62 project focus categories and prepare presentations on the county and area levels. When competing on the area level, participants prepare and are judged on a four- to six-minute presentation about their selected subjects.

For the online contest, youth uploaded a video of their presentation and their work was evaluated virtually by 170 UGA Extension staff and volunteer judges.

The area level is the final tier for the younger participants in 4-H. However, as youth progress through the 4-H program, students have the opportunity to compete on district and state levels.

Learn more at georgia4h.org/programs/project-achievement.

Hands to larger service

Cris DeRevere

Georgia 4-H public relations coordinator, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Emma Wilson, a 10-year-old from Hancock County, is using her 4-H Project Achievement skills to help during the COVID-19 pandemic by sewing washable, cotton masks specifically designed for children through her Keep Kids Safe project. Her sewing skills and passion brought her a first place award for her Creative Stitchery project earlier this year. Wilson has donated masks to two local hospitals and has received other requests from schools, churches and medical professionals.

She was inspired to begin the mask-making project by her family in the medical field, and she's receiving support from her neighbor, retired UGA Extension Agent Brenda Vaughn, who is also sewing masks to help with the personal protective equipment shortage. **Read more at tuga.edu/5UA.**



AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Building a pollinator garden

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UGA Extension community and school garden coordinator, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

As more of our time is centered around our homes these days, consider getting outside as a family and adding a pollinator garden to your landscape.

The time you put into the garden this spring will pay dividends this summer and fall as your family enjoys watching the insect visitors. As you plan your pollinator space, remember the following:

Plant flowers of various colors, shapes, and sizes.

Different pollinators are attracted to different flowers. Bumble bees like flower blooms that they can get into and buzz, like salvia plant species. The flat flowers of Mexican



sunflowers are attractive to butterflies because they provide a place for the butterflies to land. Many species of small bees prefer the small flowers of mountain mint or our native Georgia asters.

Plan for a succession of blooms. Aim for a garden with flowers blooming as much of the year as possible. Consider Lenten roses for early spring. In the fall, our native goldenrods are an important source of nutrition for bees.

Count by five and seven. Landscape rules tell us to plant flowers in groups of threes, but for a pollinator garden we want a small stand of each type of flower. Adding five to seven of each species will make it easier for the pollinators to find your garden. A monarch butterfly is more likely



to find a group of seven milkweed plants than one lone milkweed.

Add water. Insects need water just like we do, and there are creative ways to add a small water feature to your garden. This could be as simple as adding rocks or pebbles to a pot drainage dish and filling it with water. Or have the family create a butterfly puddle. Remember to clean these features weekly to prevent mosquitos from breeding in your water feature.

Consider larval host plants for butterflies. Butterflies lay their eggs on very specific host plants. By learning the host plant of your favorite butterfly, you will attract and keep butterflies in your garden. We all know that monarch butterflies prefer milkweed plants, but did you know that black swallowtails look for plants like parsley or bronze fennel — and gulf fritillaries look for passion vine?

Limit pesticides. Conventional and organic insecticides can be harmful to beneficial insects.

[UGA Extension Bulletin 1456](#), “The Eco-Friendly Garden: Attracting Pollinators, Beneficial Insects, and Other Natural Predators,” is a great resource for determining what pollinator plants will work in your garden.

Once your pollinator space is in place, set aside time to explore the insects that visit. You will find bees of all sizes, butterflies, flies, wasps and even beetles.

As the season progresses, you can plan garden scavenger hunts and practice insect counting for the Great Georgia Pollinator Census August 22–23.

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES

What you should know about economic stimulus payments

Joan Koonce

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The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law to provide emergency relief to individuals and businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the provisions for individuals is the economic impact payment, also referred to as the economic stimulus payment.

To be eligible for the economic impact payment, you should have a valid Social Security number and must not be claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return.

The majority of individuals who are eligible to receive an economic impact payment will not have to do anything to receive it. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will calculate and automatically send the payment to those eligible via direct deposit or paper check.

Payments will be calculated based on information provided on 2019 tax returns. If taxpayers haven't filed their 2019 return, the information from their 2018 return will be used. The IRS has extended the April 15 tax return and payment deadline until July 15, 2020.

Individuals who don't have to file a tax return, like low-income workers who don't meet the gross income filing requirement or don't have to file for other reasons, are also eligible to receive the payment.



The IRS has created a tool on their website, irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payments, where these individuals can enter their information to receive the payment. Individuals who receive government benefits and don't have to file a tax return can also use this tool to claim the \$500 for each qualifying child under age 17.

Individuals can check the status of their payment, confirm their payment type and enter their bank account information for direct deposit on the same website.

If you are an individual who will not receive your payment automatically, please provide your information to the IRS as soon as possible. The IRS regularly posts updated information to their website at irs.gov/coronavirus.



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Our purpose: We translate the science of everyday living for farmers, families and communities to foster a healthy and prosperous Georgia.