



# Extension Meeting Needs of Alabama Peanut Farmers

## Impact Statement

### **The Problem/Issue:**

Peanuts are planted and managed each year on approximately 195,000 acres in the state. Peanut acreage has been historically located primarily in the 10 southeastern counties known as the Wiregrass. counties. Recent development of a peanut industry in southwest Alabama now accounts for about 25 percent of the state's acreage. Peanut production and the supporting industries result in approximately \$900 million of value-added income to the state.

### **What's Been Done:**

Broadband education efforts by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System reached more than 2,000 peanut farmers. In addition to research conducted at both the Wiregrass and Gulf Coast Regional Research and Extension Centers, more than 50 on-farm demonstrations were conducted so farmers could see how new varieties perform in their area. Specialists and agents have conducted a Peanut Scouting School for more than 20 years, focusing on correct identification and timely applications of pesticides. In 2003, two Scouting Schools were held, with one held in west Alabama for the first time. Extension targeted the west Alabama meeting to reach new peanut producers with the latest information on insect pests and management options. At harvest time, county Extension agents in peanut-producing areas used pod-blasting technology to help farmers identify the optimum time for harvesting.

### **Why We Care:**

On-farm demonstrations illustrated that new varieties would out yield old favorite varieties. Scouting Schools and other Extension efforts helped farmers reduce input costs by teaching them how to choose correct tillage and planting methods, choose correct pesticides and apply them on a timely basis. Planting of varieties that are resistant to tomato spotted wilt virus continues to increase because of Extension efforts. In 2003, it is estimated that an additional 15 percent of the crop was planted in TSWV-resistant varieties, boosting the overall acreage to almost 95 percent planted in these varieties. This one change could increase agricultural income by more than \$10 million in the region. Free pod-blasting testing helped farmers dig their crops at the time when they can get the most money for the peanuts. These efforts resulted in a substantial support network for Alabama peanut growers. By changing cultivation practices and selecting better varieties, growers are increasing their yields. By

improving weed and pest management practices, growers are reducing their input costs. By digging at optimum harvest time, growers are receiving more money for their crops. It is estimated that in Henry County, pod-blasting alone has increased profits for more than 300 growers by \$2.75 million over the last five years. In Houston County, more farmers than ever chose to use pod blasting to determine digging times. Yield estimates for 2003 were more than 900 pounds above 2002 generating more than 39 million more pounds and almost \$7 million.