



Season 6 Episode 3 —Cotton Jassid Update

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Announcer:

The Alabama Crops Report Podcast, your trusted information source for Alabama agriculture.

Scott Graham

Hey, everybody, welcome in to another episode of the Alabama Crops Report podcast. We are in the traveling roaming studios today in beautiful Robertsedale, Alabama. We're on tour for our annual Alabama Peanut Producers county meetings. And so we're taking advantage of a little downtime doing a podcast. Scott, Simer. We got Mr. Peanut, Kris Balkcom, Amanda, and Libbie Johnson, director of the Alabama Peanut Producers Association.

Libbie Johnson

Hello, guys.

Scott Graham

Welcome. Welcome in, Libbie.

Simer Virk

Yeah. And this is your first time on the podcast, right?

Libbie Johnson

First, but not last.

Simer Virk

Yeah, there we go.

Scott Graham

So, Libbie, you've been with APPA now two years?

Libbie Johnson

Yes, sir. About two years.

Scott Graham

Before that, you were at the University of Florida.

Libbie Johnson

That is right. And I'm going to say it to everybody in Alabama, because I know you all want to hear it. Go Gators!

Amanda Scherer

I second go Gators. As a former, fellow University of Florida grad.

Libbie Johnson

I would also like to say go Ragin' Cajuns because I'm from Louisiana originally, so that's my team.

Scott Graham

But you're from Louisiana?

Libbie Johnson

Yes, Scott. Didn't you know I was from Louisiana?

Scott Graham

Your accent doesn't give it away.

Libbie Johnson

I'm trying to pretend that I can speak clearly for everybody. Yeah. For those of you who have heard me before in real life, you know, this is not the real way I talk. But I'm trying to speak clearly, clearly for all of you guys.

Simer Virk

So how long were you at Florida? And in what position?

Libbie Johnson

Almost 19 years, Simer.

Simer Virk

Wow. I really didn't know that.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah, a long, long time. Kris and I have known each other probably almost all those 19 years before then. So I was an Extension agent for Escambia County and then Santa Rosa County, which is where I met all of you guys at different times.

Simer Virk

And we were just talking about that during the Covid era, Libbie and Ethan Carter led this video tour across the Southeast, I guess we can say.

Libbie Johnson

Three states.

Simer Virk

Three states, of recording all these different videos and posting them online. And that was a good effort. I'm glad you did that. That's how we.

Libbie Johnson

That's how I got to meet you guys.

Simer Virk

That's how we met.

Scott Graham

Yeah, I met Libbie under the shop at EV Smith. And when she left, I asked Ron, what's wrong with that lady? No that was, that was, that was one of the first, response things I did for Covid was you and you drove up and we did that. And I like you said, Simer, I thought that was really cool.

Simer Virk

Yeah.

Libbie Johnson

What a unique opportunity Covid was. I mean, if you think about it, like how you just had to try to put research and information out there. That was, I hope we never go back to that. That was a difficult time.

Scott Graham

Yeah.

Kris Balkcom

Extension meetings aren't going away.

Simer Virk

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Traditional Extension programming is not going away. We can complement it with other stuff. Right? So today I guess tell us a little bit more about APPA or even our listeners who don't know the different goals that you all have and what all you actually do and how does the organization work, how many people you have, what all of you do during the year, stuff like that.

Libbie Johnson

So since I met you, I was an Extension agent before. I will say that this job is just as varied, probably as Extension or as research, because you all are all doing different things. Farmers are doing different things every day. So APPA's goal is really a tripod for three things, basically. We try to focus on research, which is why I'm here with you guys. Education, both of...

Scott Graham

Also why you're here with us. We do education.

Libbie Johnson

Yes. Y'all do education. Education of farmers is a big proponent or component of our job. And so that's another part of what we're doing here, but also education of legislators. So we do that as, another portion of our job. So we, we get to go up to DC and advocate for farmers and the needs of farmers.

Libbie Johnson

So, some of the things that we get to talk about in DC, some of your research. Often we bring growers with us who share that, their their needs, usually economic. So that's another big, big component of our job.

Simer Virk

How many people currently at APPA?

Libbie Johnson

It's a small entity. Okay, I know you're coming from Georgia where there's a lot larger component.

Simer Virk

Why do you always have to say that?

Libbie Johnson

Well, because some people might think we have as big of an office as Georgia, but we have a lot less peanuts grown in the state, but high-quality peanuts. I'm going to say that to Kris Balkcom, high-quality peanuts grow in the state.

Kris Balkcom

We're still the number two peanut producing state in the U.S.

Libbie Johnson

Dang straight.

Amanda Scherer

We do pretty well for ourselves.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah. So we have two and a half people in our office. Our half person is our promotions person. She gets a lot of stuff out on social media. So for those of you who are following, I really want to encourage you to try to follow Alabama Peanut Producers Association, both on Facebook and Instagram because we're always putting random information out, but also putting interesting things I would say about farmers.

Libbie Johnson

Just trying to give a farmer's story to what peanuts are. It's not just peanut butter and peanut products. Yeah, it's real growers.

Simer Virk

Are you talking about the videos you guys do with the growers during the season?

Libbie Johnson

Yeah.

Simer Virk

Those are pretty good.

Libbie Johnson

Thank you. And we're going to start that again in, for April and May. Probably just start doing farmers in focus. And for me it's really great because if for those of you listening, I am not, of course, native to the state. So I really like getting out to meet new growers.

Libbie Johnson

Maybe not new growers, new to me. And promoting them on social media has been a really, fun part of this job. And I've had a lot of great comments from other growers and just the public getting to meet people. And, you know, like Kris, Kris probably knows this more than anything because he really sees these farmers a lot.

Libbie Johnson

I think they probably think they're just men and just farmers. But for the public, they are entranced by farmers. They really and interested in what people are doing. And for those of you who have heard, Randall Beers, he has been a very big popular person on his videos. And we hope Randall Beers is coming back with his.

Libbie Johnson

Southern way of sharing his story. I really love having him on those videos.

Scott Graham

You know, no matter how old you get, you are, you never get over the excitement of watching tractors just go through a field. You know, there's just something about it. It don't matter where you're from, whatever. It's just fun to watch that kind of stuff. And that's to your point. I think that's why people like engaging with that stuff on the internet.

Scott Graham

Because what 2%, only 2% of the country's involved in farms now, if that. And so most people, they don't see tractors.

Libbie Johnson

It's a novelty to them.

Simer Virk

I will also say regarding peanuts — planting, while it is very similar to other row crops, which you always excited about when a planter goes, but in peanut we also have a tillage and other. So it's a fresh dirt being turned, but digging peanuts, that's just a very special kind of thing that not everybody sees and all that. Like I have a lot of colleagues in the Midwest. I post videos of doing something with peanuts. They just like, oh man, we didn't know, like, this is how peanuts grow or this is how they are harvested and stuff. So I think that gets a lot of people kind of excited. And that goes back to educating the public or.

Libbie Johnson

Right.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, a lot of them don't realize it's a two-step process, you know, to harvest peanuts. You know, there's not.

Scott Graham

Or how slow a process. That's, that's what really blows their minds.

Simer Virk

Yeah. You can get old just sitting in that tractor. Yeah.

Amanda Scherer

And there's some, some folks that think it's a tree. Yeah. And then they're, they're surprised when you see those videos that they're grown in the ground. And we have to dig them up, turn them up and let them dry out.

Simer Virk

There are a lot of people who don't know peanuts grow under ground.

Libbie Johnson

I'm very well aware of this, unfortunately.

Simer Virk

And that's why we have a APPA.

Libbie Johnson

I think maybe. So let's go with that.

Simer Virk

Right.

Libbie Johnson

We do like sharing that story. I mean, I'm looking back at Kris because he knows I'm a nerd, but like, I like to tell people the scientific name of peanuts. So that way they can get like. And when I tell them it means like, underground spider, like, what do you mean?

Libbie Johnson

That's an underground spider? Like arachis hypogaea. And once they see peanuts turned up, they see the spider, I think. I mean, I think it's kind of neat. Like I've always thought peanuts, even though I'm not from here. I've always thought peanuts are super interesting crop. I mean, just the bright green of them in the summertime has always been beautiful to me.

Libbie Johnson

I love cotton, and I know we're not talking about cotton, but like seeing the green of peanuts and the smell of peanuts being turned over, like that's a fall smell to me. So even though I'm, once again, not from here. That turned over dust.

Scott Graham

We don't get to smell fresh dirt very often. Yeah, nobody turns the ground and.

Simer Virk

Oh, that's why I said peanut planting is very different than corn and cotton because of that. Tell us how APPA is structured or like the board and other stuff.

Libbie Johnson

Like the what?

Simer Virk

The board.

Libbie Johnson

The board. So we have of course, you know, me. We have, I started to tell you who's in our office. We have a part-time person that does social media. We have another, full-time person who's basically an office manager, but she handles a lot of the peanuts that are sold through our office, sold in cans and little bags.

Libbie Johnson

People are constantly calling us, asking for boiled peanuts. We have no boiled peanuts.

Scott Graham

Quit asking.

Simer Virk

A lot of people may not know you guys sell peanuts out of the office.

Libbie Johnson

Okay, yes. So we do that and let me get that. And we have another person who does a lot of our events. So that's Morgan. So, we are throughout the state doing random events and sharing information about peanuts. And when I say random events, Morgan, was at a conference on Saturday talking to people that work at cafeterias because we're trying to get peanuts more back into schools.

Libbie Johnson

We go to football games, we go to festivals. I mean, we go to all sorts of random things to try to promote people consuming peanuts in different ways, shapes and forms. So that's a big part of our job. In our office, We do sell little bags of peanuts, little three quarter ounce bags of peanuts, which, I mean, I love that we're sitting here in Baldwin County because they throw a lot of bags of peanuts at Christmas festivals or Christmas parades.

Libbie Johnson

And I think there was a bunch threw, thrown out Mardi Gras parades here recently. So that's always kind of fun. Did you catch some some?

Kris Balkcom

I threw some.

Libbie Johnson

Oh, you threw some. Kris Balkcom threw some peanuts. And that's fun. People enjoy getting peanuts, especially around Dothan. They expect it. And I think here it's just an unusual thing to get. But people love getting peanuts. So we sell also cans of peanuts in three flavors honey roasted, butter toffee, and salted. And we still have chocolate right now. That's just, a seasonal thing.

Libbie Johnson

I like to say it's like Girl Scout cookies. You can just get a for a little bit of time. So we're finishing our chocolate covered peanut season.

Simer Virk

That's what you were eating in the truck today?

Scott Graham

No, I was eating the toffee, butter toffee.

Amanda Scherer

I got the chocolate ones.

Simer Virk

Hey, where's my can?

Scott Graham

You asked... not be. You received not, because you asked not.

Simer Virk

Oh, yeah. All right.

Libbie Johnson

Wow.

Simer Virk

All right.

Scott Graham

Throw a little Bible verse out there while we're at it.

Libbie Johnson

Okay.

Simer Virk

Kris, did you get yours today?

Kris Balkcom

Actually, I did have to ask though for it, but but she was able to scrounge up a can that had already been opened. And she gave that to me. And I took it and received it. I said this would be great for later.

Libbie Johnson

With a smile. I offered it to you guys.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Kris Balkcom

It's a crop, that you know, you can't have all that stuff with cotton. You got all this with peanuts.

Simer Virk

And I'll tell you this. We have roasted peanuts at home because my dad loves peanuts. And me being from India, we usually eat them roasted, like, with whole shells. So right at the end of every season, when we harvest our plots or something, usually take a bag or two and we usually last us about a year. You, my dad puts it in a little tin foil and stick it in the oven for about 30-40 minutes.

Simer Virk

And man, yeah, so I get those, but I'll wait on my peanuts.

Libbie Johnson

You can get cans. Next time I see, I'll give you some cans.

Scott Graham

Just for you for your trials moving forward. Simer. You just need to get the butter toffee variety.

Simer Virk

Okay. Just plant that one.

Scott Graham

Like that right. Yep. That's my advice.

Simer Virk

If you see in my research proposal, say that you know we're going to try to plant this, you'll know why.

Scott Graham

So Libbie back back to the organization. So how does the board work. Because you're not just, you know, I'm the three person show, doing, calling all the shots.

Libbie Johnson

No, sir. So we have 15 board members, from throughout the peanut growing counties throughout the state. They're elected, and they serve a three-year term, and they help with a lot of our events, too. So you'll see them at random events with me. But they also, like for you guys, some of them go through the research and help choose the research projects that we do.

Libbie Johnson

They also help promote us selling peanuts in different places. We also do peanut butter. We also are able to offer peanut butter on a very reduced price. And a lot of these, board members will help us get some of this

peanut butter out through the counties. Once again, sitting here in Baldwin County, they do a really great job of getting a lot of peanut butter distributed to a food pantries.

Libbie Johnson

But most of our counties do work on that to get that.

Simer Virk

And the board meets quarterly?

Libbie Johnson

They meet about 4 to 5 times a year. We just had a meeting in January. We had two meetings in January. I'm looking at Kris because Kris is also an associated board member. As the peanut agronomist, he comes to our board meetings. Then we have a few other, like people with the state that are also invited to come.

Scott Graham

I know, I know, it varies, but how many peanut counties do we have?

Kris Balkcom

Around 30 to 33.

Scott Graham

As far north as, well it's not too far north this year, I don't think.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah. They still on the west side. They go pretty high, you know. Yeah. That lands over there an hour north of Tuscaloosa

Scott Graham

up Fayette County.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah. Yeah. There's a little bit north central. The northeast side is where we really had a pullback there on the Sand Mountain side.

Simer Virk

I saw a peanut field in Cherokee County, '24. Eddie and I were riding around and there was peanuts in the middle.

Scott Graham

You know, Bob Kemerait, always says that if he goes to Alaska and there's a peanut field in Alaska, he'll just assume that Eddie McGriff was there.

Simer Virk

Eddie McGriff might have been there. So there we go.

Kris Balkcom

We used to go to Ider on the northeast side, you know, was about the farthest on that side of that, which is about 30 minutes from Chattanooga. So.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Scott Graham

Oh, wow.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah. Wow. That's a long way.

Scott Graham

Yeah. Yeah.

Simer Virk

I asked you this Friday how many peanut farmers in the state of Alabama.

Libbie Johnson

We say 900 farm families.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Scott Graham

Specific peanut farm families?

Libbie Johnson

Yes.

Scott Graham

Wow. That's a lot.

Libbie Johnson

That is a lot. That's why I'm saying I'm really hopeful that some of you guys are listening. And if y'all want me to visit, y'all holler like, I would love to come and meet you guys.

Simer Virk

How does that bring us to... I know we I know to a little bit extent, but maybe some may not or someone. And how is the APPA like the checkoff funds work and all that. Can you explain a little bit about that?

Libbie Johnson

So through grower money basically all of the peanuts that you guys sell, we get a portion. I think it's \$2.50. The state keeps a portion of it, and then we get the rest and we use it to fund all of our programs throughout the state, which includes research funding. We also are able to include a little bit of money that we're given, that we earn.

Libbie Johnson

I guess you're selling peanuts, but we don't really make that much off of peanuts, so. But it's not a whole great deal of money.

Scott Graham

In addition to research projects that we're doing at Auburn, you're also that's how you go to these places and cook grilled butter jelly sandwiches. Yes.

Scott Graham

And how you talk to kids about why peanuts are a good choice to eat, or parents about why they should introduce peanuts to their kids younger.

Libbie Johnson

At a very young age, six months. I'm going to go ahead. And since we're on a platform, by six months, you should be introducing peanuts. I have a young mother sitting here next to me. I have some young fathers.

Scott Graham

Simer's got a fresh one.

Simer Virk

Can you feed peanuts to a three week old baby?

Libbie Johnson

Not a three week.

Amanda Scherer

Six month, six months.

Libbie Johnson

Okay.

Scott Graham

You know, we when we introduce peanuts, they make those peanut puffs. Bomba or something like that. It's a blue bag. And so my wife is a little nervous as all parents are with their first. And so we went to the emergency room or went to the hospital and just sat in the parking lot. We gave my daughter some peanut balls and I watched her for like 45 minutes and nothing popped up.

Scott Graham

And she and my son both, all they want is puffs, puffs, puffs. They love those peanut butter puffs.

Libbie Johnson

It's the bombas. It's.

Scott Graham

Yeah, bombas.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah, that is how they realize that early introduction works. Yeah, it's. Yeah, that particular product.

Simer Virk

I saw the National Peanut Board or some entity like that. Their research on finding that out. Right.

Libbie Johnson

It was them — National Peanut Board through their research figured out like, yeah, I guess they had grant money that allowed them to.

Scott Graham

That, by the way, part of that is our checkoff funds too, correct?

Libbie Johnson

Technically, no National Peanut Board has additional checkoff funds that come off.

Scott Graham

Okay.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah.

Scott Graham

Okay. Learned something.

Libbie Johnson

So that's why, you know, you can get y'all can get research grants through APPA. And you can also get research project through National Peanut Board. It's because they also have checkoff funds.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Scott Graham

I was thinking like with soybeans I know they give part of the Alabama checkoff, I'm pretty sure it's been explained to me, goes to the United Soybean Board and then they they send it back out. But peanuts are different.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah.

Scott Graham

Okay.

Simer Virk

So the National Peanut Board funds, they still go from the producers, right.

Libbie Johnson

They still also do fund producers. So their money that's SPRI money that we get to help fund you guys. That is also through National Peanut Board. But the National Peanut Board also has larger research projects that they fund separately. That are, its international researchers. So I mean huge money. So it's not just production kind of research. It's also nutrition kind of information.

Simer Virk

Other topics.

Libbie Johnson

Other topics. Yeah.

Simer Virk

All right. So what are some of the topics you guys are currently funding?

Libbie Johnson

We have you guys that are here that are doing, research projects. Scott Graham I would like the world to know that Scott Graham does not ever ask for very much money. He's very finite on his research.

Simer Virk

We don't have to disclose numbers.

Libbie Johnson

We don't. I'm not disclosing numbers.

Scott Graham

Yeah.

Libbie Johnson

Simer is doing planter, some planter research.

Simer Virk

Technology.

Libbie Johnson

Technology. Kris is doing a number of projects. I mean, he does a lot, at the various research station with planting variety trials, but he also is working, I know, with, Audrey Gamble on some cover crop projects and what else, Kris?

Kris Balkcom

Irrigation. Yeah. With seeding rates, row spacings.

Libbie Johnson

That seeding rate to me is a very interesting. I've been listening to you talk about that.

Kris Balkcom

Seed treatment tests. Stuff like that.

Scott Graham

You know, those variety trials are important too. A) because varieties do different in different environments and different years. But B) My, mean, I get a headache trying to keep up with all the different varieties that are out there. And so having a lot of data on what looks good, what doesn't look good, what consistently is toward the top is really important.

Libbie Johnson

And for multiple years and throughout the state, I like that. Yeah.

Amanda Scherer

And different locations, too.

Libbie Johnson

And of course we have Amanda. She's sitting right next to me. She does the fungicide research, which is huge for our farmers because they're always putting fungicide out. And to try to keep the healthiest crop out there. So that's where most of her research, I mean, she's the plant pathologist. So.

Simer Virk

So outside us, there's Alvaro, right?

Libbie Johnson

Alvaro. Dr. Chen. Also gets. I mean, he's a peanut breeder.

Scott Graham

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kris Balkcom

Steve Li.

Libbie Johnson

Steve Li gets money.

Amanda Scherer

He is our weed specialist.

Libbie Johnson

So different peanut researchers since. Get, get various amounts.

Simer Virk

What about, I know you were all talking about all these promotional events and stuff. How many of those do you all on average do.

Libbie Johnson

Oh, brother.

Simer Virk

I'm just like, what's the range?

Libbie Johnson

I have no idea. That's a good question. Like, I need to figure that out. And there's a lot.

Simer Virk

I'm just thinking about how many of y'all do those and then let's say average. You interact with 30, 50, whatever number of people, how many people you guys interact with annually through promotion.

Libbie Johnson

You see, as a good Extension agent, I should have that number. But I don't know, like some of our groups are really small, like we're going to be having an event. And it's not our event in the beginning of March that I think I was going to ask, I'm not going to say... Ed White? Don't tell Ed White I'm going to call him y'all.

Simer Virk

But unless he's listening

Libbie Johnson

Listening and he could be listening, to talk to a group of people at a like assisted living. But it's an assisted living where they're still very active. So, I mean, we might just see 50 people there, but like, that's a group of people that want to know more about peanuts.

Simer Virk

You guys were on campus for.

Libbie Johnson

Yes. The Health Nut Club. National Peanut Board. That was a fantastic event.

Simer Virk

Well I can say that that was a great effort in a way, because I'm glad you guys were not on the college of ag side or something, because a lot of students on the ag side, they already get to know about crops. However, you were on the different side of campus where these people don't even know what crops are or how peanuts grow or other stuff.

Scott Graham

Some of them may not even know Auburn's involved in that kind of stuff.

Simer Virk

Yeah, exactly.

Amanda Scherer

And probably the biggest thing you guys do I can think of every year is the National Peanut Festival.

Libbie Johnson

Oh, boy. Yeah, that's nine days, I think. And Kris is there for that too. Like, we all get to work together.

Kris Balkcom

Everybody gets to.

Simer Virk

Tell us a little bit about that.

Libbie Johnson

Oh, Kris.

Scott Graham

Kris has been there since the beginning.

Simer Virk

He started it.

Scott Graham

And he's the Mr. Peanut.

Scott Graham

That big ol' peanut they have there, that's actually Balkcom. That's the statue.

Libbie Johnson

Oh so we basically have a tent on their fairgrounds that we share peanuts and peanut products and peanut information to whoever comes by from a toddler to a 90-year-old, it does not matter. And we have a lot of people that just stop by to get peanut products and just talk to us. Some of them have never seen peanuts before because the Peanut Festival really brings in people from across the country. We usually have peanut, our farmers from other states that come and just want to know more about peanuts. It never fails that we have and thankfully, a lot of our board members do work that, so they're able to sit there and talk to those farmers one on one and share more about peanuts.

Libbie Johnson

And that's always a really good opportunity for them just to kind of talk. But like, it really is a fun event to bring people together to get interested in peanuts. But we'll see hundreds.

Simer Virk

You said nine, over nine days?

Libbie Johnson

I think it's nine. It's 7 or 8 days. It starts on a Friday and we go through the next Saturday. So I guess it's eight days.

Amanda Scherer

And it's normally in October, right?

Libbie Johnson

November.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, 1st of November, but there be people from all over the United States to come to that event, and it's always good for them to have. They'll have a producer there to be able to interact with them because, you know, there's the type of people. They're going to ask all kinds of questions, you know, and we'll have some, visual stuff there set up for them to see peanuts and see facts about them, as well as products to taste and use. And, and, you know, not only at the National Peanut Festival, y'all have events, but just like big things like that will be at Disney World. Sometimes y'all have things, displays set up there at Disney World.

Scott Graham

Man, put me on the list of volunteers for that.

Simer Virk

Yeah, next time, can I.

Kris Balkcom

Yeah, I get a lot of people wanting to work.

Simer Virk

Can we work that one? No?

Kris Balkcom

You know, and in addition to that, you know, just like Montgomery, the Biscuits game, the promotional things there.

Libbie Johnson

That was a fun event.

Kris Balkcom

Talladega, at the race, you know, so your interaction was thousands of people.

Scott Graham

They'll even go to football games in Tuscaloosa and hand out peanuts.

Libbie Johnson

I have been.

Scott Graham

Not just at Auburn.

Libbie Johnson

We're equal opportunity.

Scott Graham

That's right.

Libbie Johnson

South Alabama football games. We've done that. Yeah.

Simer Virk

So I was thinking about, this is in Dothan right? When you look up the peanut facts where the peanuts are grown is it that 50 mile radius of Dothan.

Kris Balkcom

100-mile radius, 50% of the peanuts in the United States are grown within 100 mile radius of Dothan.

Simer Virk

And that stretches into Georgia and Florida.

Kris Balkcom

Yes.

Simer Virk

Right. Okay.

Libbie Johnson

And that makes it the peanut capital. Let's be clear. Let's let's all remember that the peanut capital.

Scott Graham

of the world.

Libbie Johnson

people's hurt, hurt feelings, we're very thankful for it.

Amanda Scherer

Took the words right out of my mouth.

Simer Virk

Okay. What else you want people to know about APPA? Or if they have any questions, they want to learn more.

Libbie Johnson

If they want to learn more, they're very welcome to visit our Alpeanuts.com website. Y'all are always welcome to call me, email me to try to find out more information. We'd love to sell you some peanuts. We, you don't have to come to our office to get peanuts. I'm telling this to you guys, too. Y'all can go to a lot of vendors that we have throughout the state.

Libbie Johnson

If you go to Alpeanuts and do shop, you can find out where they are. But,

Scott Graham

We buy the butter toffee at a local place in Auburn for Christmas presents for people.

Amanda Scherer

You know, about to say, that's one of my family's highlights, in-laws and my family as well. They love the butter toffee. Yeah.

Libbie Johnson

And since Amanda's sitting next to me I know her. Some of her students are going to be selling some peanuts.

Amanda Scherer

Yep. So APPA has been generous the last few years in partnering with our departments. Graduate student, undergraduate student club. So the etymology and plant pathology, FSA Rant Club. And that's been their biggest fundraiser that they do every year where, you know, they'll sell them even at football games and certain tailgates. And so that's another great way, you know, that you've partnered with the university, with the students in particular to get that information out there.

Amanda Scherer

And all of the the peanuts have, you know, that it's produced in Alabama and, you know, it's a great resource.

Libbie Johnson

Good. That makes me happy. The one thing I want to leave this, this conversation with, just because I'm not going to say it's the bane of our existence, but the whole boiled peanuts situation. I want to say one thing about boiled peanuts. They're not available fresh, year-round.

Scott Graham

They are delicious though.

Libbie Johnson

They are. They are delicious to some people.

Libbie Johnson

But I mean, we get people contacting us in February, we get people contacted.

Simer Virk

Could you not freeze them and then just take them out and boil them?

Libbie Johnson

Yes. But that's not the way people are thinking. They want them.

Simer Virk

Freshly dug and boil.

Scott Graham

Tell them to go to the racetrack.

Simer Virk

Go, hey, we need to work on a variety that you can grow year-round.

Scott Graham

Yeah.

Simer Virk

And just like.

Scott Graham

They just go local gas station down the road and get some out of the big tub. They're cooking them.

Libbie Johnson

And there's those cans. I mean, there's those cans of peanuts. Says a person who does not eat boiled peanuts. I don't know what they taste like, but.

Amanda Scherer

They'll do in a pinch. But it's not like when you get them fresh, during, you know, at that peak part of the season, it's not the same

Libbie Johnson

year round.

Simer Virk

Tell us, since we are actually at one of those meetings, tell about the peanut production meetings that y'all do.

Libbie Johnson

Well, thankfully, we have some fantastic sponsors that help, promote or pay for this event to pay for all the meals. So I think this year we're doing seven, Kris, throughout the state. And we get all of you guys to come and talk as well as one of our very famous friends that's a peanut economist to remain unnamed.

Libbie Johnson

To come and talk. And basically we try to gather as many producers that will come to hear the research that you guys are sharing and to get answers to the questions to help them produce more and better peanuts.

Simer Virk

And then you try to target central and west central.

Libbie Johnson

Yes, from east to west, as far north as we can. That has a good production.

Scott Graham

And I would say between the collaborations with our local agents in those regions and you guys, we get a high percentage of the peanut growers out to meetings, which is really good.

Libbie Johnson

But we always want more.

Kris Balkcom

And for those that don't, might get, you know, Alabama peanut producers also on their website has our recordings of our talks that we've gave so that they can go there to their site and listen to what each of us had to say.

Scott Graham

And we we normally put together those little research reports too or whatever. And,

Simer Virk

Are the videos already there?

Libbie Johnson

The videos are not, currently ready as of today, but she's editing them some, but they should be ready by the end of the week.

Simer Virk

What about the research reports that the producers fund and all that? Are they accessible somewhere or.

Libbie Johnson

We haven't been putting them out.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Kris Balkcom

Well, we did those production guides.

Simer Virk

Oh. Production guides

Kris Balkcom

And we made that from some of that stuff. You know,

Scott Graham

It's kind of a, a more applicable for everybody kind of thing.

Amanda Scherer

Where we each had like about one page and we put the main highlights, what they needed to know.

Kris Balkcom

And then just like when they had the Alabama-Florida Peanut Trade Show there at the end of January, we all we each researcher from Georgia, I mean from Florida and Alabama made their posters of kind of research that they had done and just had that there on display so all the producers could look at what their research dollars have been put to.

Libbie Johnson

That's another good event you brought up, Kris.

Simer Virk

About the meeting in the summer, do you want to share any details or anything over finalize, or maybe tentatively we might be doing something like that?

Libbie Johnson

Yeah, we're finalizing details. People can go to the website and find out more information. We're still trying to get one of the facilities, that management facilities to agree to let us book through them. But it will be the middle of July, I think the 21st to the 23rd. I'm looking at Kris like he's going to remember when it is.

Simer Virk

Escambia County or what all, which region?

Libbie Johnson

What do you mean?

Kris Balkcom

I thought we were talking about the growers conference.

Libbie Johnson

Oh, yeah. Are we talking about the growers conference? Which one are you talking about, the growers conference or the one in the summer time.

Scott Graham

You're talking about.

Simer Virk

The one meeting that got canceled for tomorrow.

Scott Graham

The farm tour.

Libbie Johnson

So we're still trying to work those details out.

Scott Graham

But Christy, we'll have that Christy Hicks will have that information for growers in this area.

Libbie Johnson

I thought you were asking about the summer conference.

Simer Virk

Oh the southern peanut growers?

Simer Virk

Yeah, that's in Panama City?

Libbie Johnson

Panama City. And that's going to be the 21st through the 23rd. So they can look at the Southern Peanut Growers Conference website. Just Google that and you'll find out more information about, getting your hotel or your...

Simer Virk

Other travel.

Libbie Johnson

Condo booked. Registration won't start till April 1st. So you they cannot register for that till April 1st.

Scott Graham

For next year. If you come to the peanut producers meetings, county meetings. You fill out for a raffle for a free trip.

Libbie Johnson

Yeah, you could possibly win a free trip.

Scott Graham

That's a good deal.

Simer Virk

One per meeting?

Scott Graham

Uh, no. One per farm number, I think. Yeah.

Simer Virk

All right.

Scott Graham

Well, Libbie. Thanks for your time. This was. It was.

Libbie Johnson

Nice seeing you guys was.

Scott Graham

Good. Yeah. And always, you know, we all at Auburn greatly appreciate the support that APPA gives us. And, the with research and Extension and everything that we do. So. Good. Good to help get that message out.

Libbie Johnson

Y'all are a good team. I will I mean I said it early and I do mean y'all are a very good team.

Simer Virk

Yeah. And, and we would also highlight, you know, I know we get to see producers at some of these meetings and stuff, but if there are producers who are listening and all that, you know, you have any research ideas, topics, anything that you want to share with our team or the APPA or something. We're always looking for that feedback from you all, so that we are doing the relevant research that directly impacts you on the farm.

Scott Graham

Yeah, absolutely. Reach out to your local agent and they can get in touch. And if if Mr. Peanut says we can do it, we'll do it.

Kris Balkcom

Oh, we'll make it happen.

Scott Graham

Yeah. All right. Well thanks everybody. Appreciate you, y'all being here for the podcast and all our listeners, as always, as Simer said, if there's anything that we can do to help, please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know.

Announcer:

The Alabama Crops Report is a production of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.