

## **Application of Climate Information to Agriculture and Natural Resources Risk Management: The Southeast Climate Consortium Extension Program**

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Encouraging agricultural producers and natural resource managers to use climate forecasts is challenging. The task requires going well beyond simply producing good climate forecasts. For climate information to benefit society, it must fit into a decision making process and must affect actions of decision-makers. The Southeast Climate Consortium (SECC) conducts research aimed at managing risks to agriculture and natural resources that arise from climate and weather variability in three southeastern states (Florida, Georgia, and Alabama). The SECC cooperates with the Extension Services and other agencies to provide climate information and climate-based products to stakeholders in agriculture, forestry, and water resources management. Our vision is that agricultural, forestry, and water resource managers will better cope with uncertainty and climate associated risks through routine and effective use of climate forecasts and climate related decision support tools. This vision includes a major role of Cooperative Extension Services through an outreach and an education program.

A central premise of the SECC is that climate forecasts should be integrated in the context of a broader information delivery and decision support system. This process needs to be supported by a thorough understanding of how information is accessed, understood, evaluated, and used in decision-making. Our extension program is based on four main lines of action: 1) Outreach: developing methodologies to deliver climate forecasts and customized information to decision makers; 2) Research and development: conducting research needed to combine and translate climate, agricultural, forestry and water resources information into "decision aid products"; 3) Partnerships: building relationships with extension faculty, agricultural, forestry and water resources managers to ensure that our findings and products are relevant to stakeholders; and 4) Monitoring and Evaluation: Documenting and assessing the utility and impact of climate forecast information provided to stakeholders. A key tool in carrying out this Extension program is the web-based climate information and risk management system. The lines of action along with the role of AgClimate.org will be presented and discussed.

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