Abstract
In the US, Florida has the highest percentage increase (27%) of small farms growing specialty crops. Northwest Florida is seeing a rapid rise in their own numbers as traditional growers switch a growing percentage of their operations to fresh fruits and vegetables. This is in addition to the growing number of homeowners locally that want to produce their own food in a backyard production system. To meet the need of these farmers and local consumers, a partnership was formed between the West Florida Research and Education Center, UF/IFAS Extension, and Panhandle Fresh Marketing Association.

Objectives
1) To increase the supply of specialty crops by value/total sales and by extending the growing season from 7 to 12 months to provide year round sales opportunity and
2) expanding markets by providing at least 20 farmers with an improved regional distribution system and
3) providing a comprehensive food safety program that eliminates barriers farmers faced in selling their product.

Methods
The team hosted four field days (Hi Tunnel, Shade Production, Fall Production, and Food Safety/Marketing) that reached 379 participants, 3 food safety programs that reached over 40 producers, several food safety training demonstrations to enable producers to become food safety compliant, and over 15 tours in 2011. One of the most popular production setups, has been the Sustainable Lettuce Hydroponic system. Small and larger growers, as well as homeowners are interested in helping fill the need for nutritious and fresh lettuce year round.

Results
From post program evaluations, local producers reported an increase in the total number of protected production structures and an increase in the total number of growers applying for NRCS Loans for new structures. In 2011 and early 2012, 39 specialty crop farmers signed up to participate in the PFMA, with a total value of $97,000 of local produce reaching regional consumers. Programs developed from the grant have also increased in the past year. A new class of 26 beginning farmers completed a six week training on starting a specialty crop business with local Extension agents, agents conducted food safety training for all size growers, and researchers held field trials for growers trying to experiment with a different variety of traditional crops, along with weed management, urban farming, hydroponics, drip irrigation, and organic management programs planned for the second half of 2012.

Conclusions
Consumers are demanding locally grown food and production has increased among participating farms. The projection based on acreage planted in 2012 is that sales will reach into hundreds of thousands locally. Retailers targeted will include Wal Mart, Southern Family Stores, and several large food service companies. This has become a program that provides hands on training for local specialty crop farmers through field days, publications, tours, and educational programs.