

The Value of On-farm Demonstrations

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Land grant universities are a three-legged stool comprised of research, education, and extension programs. Each component necessary in achieving the land grant university mission, and there is no better example of this symbiotic relationship than on-farm demonstrations. The UF/IFAS Extension program has worked to develop a model for on-farm demonstrations that develop an effective collaboration between research and extension. The objectives of this model are 1) to establish a network between producers and Extension faculty; 2) use on farm trials to collect field data on peanut cultivars and fungicide programs; and 3) use on-farm demonstrations to train agents who are unexperienced in peanut production. Partnership for on-farm demonstrations are between a specialist, extension agent, producer, and at times industry representatives. The research component is overseen by the specialist, with trials evaluating new products or varieties often provided by industry to gather unbiased performance data. Extension finds a host location, bridging the gap between researcher and producer while also creating an opportunity for continued education and outreach. This is achieved through the organization of field days, farm tours, and extension scholarship at production meetings. Over the past three years, Extension faculty have worked with a state specialist to collect peanut cultivar performance, fungicide, and nematicide data in large plots on farmers operations and managed by farmers. UF/IFAS Extension faculty have worked with state specialists to complete an average of 8 trials each year between 5 extension agents and 3 specialists. These demonstration trials function as a platform for extension programming, facilitating producer interaction and education on both an individual (host) and group (field day; farm tour) level. These large informal meetings are an excellent way to obtain producer management strategies and learn what obstacles they currently face in the field. In addition, faculty who are unexperienced in peanut production have achieved better understanding of field practices and an ability to better understand and interact with county and regional extension personnel as well as with growers.