
Title: Georgia 4-H and UGA SNAP-Ed Partner to Promote Healthy Choices and Georgia Agriculture

Author: Courtney Still Brown, PhD, RDN

Summary: Georgia 4-H and UGA SNAP-Ed partnered to create the Farm to Fork: Foods and Nutrition program, which teaches elementary school youth about nutrition, how family and culture impact our food choices, and basic food budgeting all while highlighting Georgia agricultural products. 158 youth participated in this pilot program and set actionable goals around nutrition behavior.

Situation: The health issues facing Georgian youth and families are many and complex. Obesity affects more children and adults than any other chronic health condition; Over the last few years, Georgia has had an adult obesity prevalence hovering around 30%; among children and teens aged 10-17, 34% were overweight or obese in 2019. One in seven children in Georgia face hunger, and 46.8% of households receiving SNAP benefits have children. Solutions to nutrition related health issues cannot simply rely on individual behavior change but must also consider the familial, cultural, and community environment of young people.

Response: Georgia 4-H and UGA SNAP-Ed share a common goal in wanting to empower youth to make the best choices for their overall health. SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; it is part of the U.S. domestic hunger safety net and provides economic benefits to eligible, low-income individuals and families for food purchases. SNAP-Ed, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education, is the nutrition education arm of SNAP. UGA is one of 4 SNAP-Ed implementing agencies in Georgia, and now has partnered with Georgia 4-H to help reach youth and their families. “Farm to Fork: Food and Nutrition” is a new program that builds on the existing Georgia 4-H Friend’s Farm to Fork and Nutrition and Healthy Living Magazines. The Farm to Fork Food and Nutrition program includes three lessons that cover MyPlate, how our family and community impact our food choices, and basic food budgeting, all with a focus on Georgia agricultural products. Lynn Davis, Turner County 4-H Agent, and April Edwards, Jackson County 4-H agent, piloted the Farm to Fork: Food and Nutrition Program in their schools.

Results/Impacts: A total of 158 elementary school age youth participated in this pilot program; 51.6% of participants were female and 47.1% were male. Among participants, 56% identified as white, 34.7% as African-American or Black, 2% as Asian, 2% as American Indian, 0.7% as Pacific Islander, and 4.7% as multiple races. After completing the fun, interactive lessons, students set goals for actions they planned to take as a result of what they had learned. For example, students set goals like helping shop for food with their families, making a recipe from the *Georgia Kid’s Cook! Cookbook*, or talking to their families about their cultural foods. Within each lesson, at least 96% of students opted to set a goal. The program was very well received by school leadership, students, and their families.