

# Alabama Extension|Russell County Provides Student Local Foods Tour

Davidson, J.<sup>1</sup>, Payne, G.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> County Coordinator, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Russell County, Phenix City, AL 36867 jenniferd@auburn.edu

<sup>2</sup> Foundation Regional Agent, 4-H, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Russell County, Phenix City, AL 36867 paynegl@auburn.edu

## Introduction

The importance of locally sourcing food has become an increasingly important factor for consumers in recent years. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, 2017, direct to consumer food sales have increased annually for over 10 years. Today's consumers are more interested than ever in what they eat and where their food comes from, and that is reflected in menu trends research. Students studying the culinary arts are the food procurers of the future, both professionally and personally. Therefore, introducing them to the rich agricultural offerings our local producers provide is an important part of the curriculum.



## Objective

To introduce local culinary art students to the agricultural producers of our community.

## Event

Annually, since 2018, over 30 local culinary arts and home economics students taking part in the Career Technical Program, visited area farms in Russell County, Alabama. Each farm provides an insight into various farm production methods. Examples of sites visited include: large scale poultry production houses, traditional cow/calf operations, non-traditional agricultural facilities, and a poultry processing unit.



## Results

In 2019, participants' knowledge gained was evaluated via a pre and post tour questionnaire. A sample group of forty participants were evaluated. Questions about Russell County included:

1. Name a food product that we produce?
2. What is the most common process of producing beef cattle ?
3. What is our top agricultural commodity?

Pre and Post Tour Evaluation

Q 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre Tour- 0% Correct</li><li>• Post Tour- 100% Correct</li></ul>
Q 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre Tour- 0% Correct</li><li>• Post Tour- 87% Correct</li></ul>
Q 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre Tour- 0% Correct</li><li>• Post Tour- 87% Correct</li></ul>



## Conclusion

Student's knowledge of farming practices in Alabama increased in all question areas: Before the tour all youth answered incorrectly or answered "Don't know" and Post evaluation answered from 87% to 100% correct. It should be noted, while the majority of the students live in an area classified as "rural" very few of the participants had ever seen an agricultural operation up close. One student remarked, "**I had no idea that we grew chickens here**".

Our goal, through this annual event, is to make sure that students graduating from local schools are aware of local production offerings to become better informed consumers after graduation.



## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to: Phenix City Board of Education, Russell County Board of Education, Central High School Staff, Russell County High School Staff, Pecan Point Farms, Bill Lowery, Greg Edwards of Flying E Farms, and Alatrade.