

Dougherty County 4-H Agricultural Field Day

*Morgan, J. ¹, Thomas, J. ²

¹ County Extension Coordinator, University of Georgia, Albany, ² County Extension Agent, University of Georgia, Albany

Abstract:

Agriculture is the largest industry in Georgia and accounts for \$73.3 billion of the state's economy. The 2018 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report shows that Dougherty County's agriculture is valued at \$71,307,033.00. The Dougherty County School System's Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) pathways ensure that students receive the relevant and rigorous preparation required to continue their education beyond high school graduation whether at a community college, on-the-job training program, four-year college, graduation school, or in military service. The Career, Technical and Agricultural Education Department prepares students for life beyond the classroom by providing them with employability skills, along with the background needed to succeed in post-secondary institutions. Courses are designed based on current data and research in business and industry to give students the ultimate advantage upon exiting high school. Unfortunately, the agricultural pathway ended in May 2015 due in part to high turnover of agriculture education teachers and students losing interest. The CTAE director has previously had a desire to reintroduce the agriculture pathway but did not know how to gauge the level of interest of the students. The Dougherty County Agriculture & Natural Resources County Extension Agent and the 4-H Youth Development County Extension Agent met with the Career, Technical and Agricultural Education director to discuss the possibility of conducting an Agriculture Field Day targeting all seventh graders in the Dougherty County School System.



Figure 2 & 3: SOWEGA Master Gardeners and USDA NRCS joined the group of exhibitors for the field day

Results:

A total of 788 youth from three of the four middle schools were exposed to the Agriculture Field Day. By participating in interactive presentations and hands-on learning experiences, students learned how vital the agricultural industry is to Dougherty County and the state of Georgia. Representatives from the Dougherty County Farm Bureau, Flint River Ag and Turf, Flint River Fresh and Golden Peanut were on hand representing Agriculture Business. The SOWEGA Master Gardeners represented our Horticulture track. The Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College Poultry Club and Harry James' Horse Stables were part of our Animal Science track. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, UGA Extension Water Agents and the Georgia Forestry Commission were all representatives of the Environmental Education/Natural Resources track.

Survey Outcomes:

Data from the post-test showed that 82% of participants were able to name a career related to agriculture other than a farmer. 91% of students also reported knowing how much money the agricultural industry contributes to Georgia's economy. 73% of participants stated they would be interested in an Agricultural Pathway at the middle or high school level. 86% of the students surveyed were able to recall the top 5 agricultural commodities.

Agricultural Field Day Survey Results

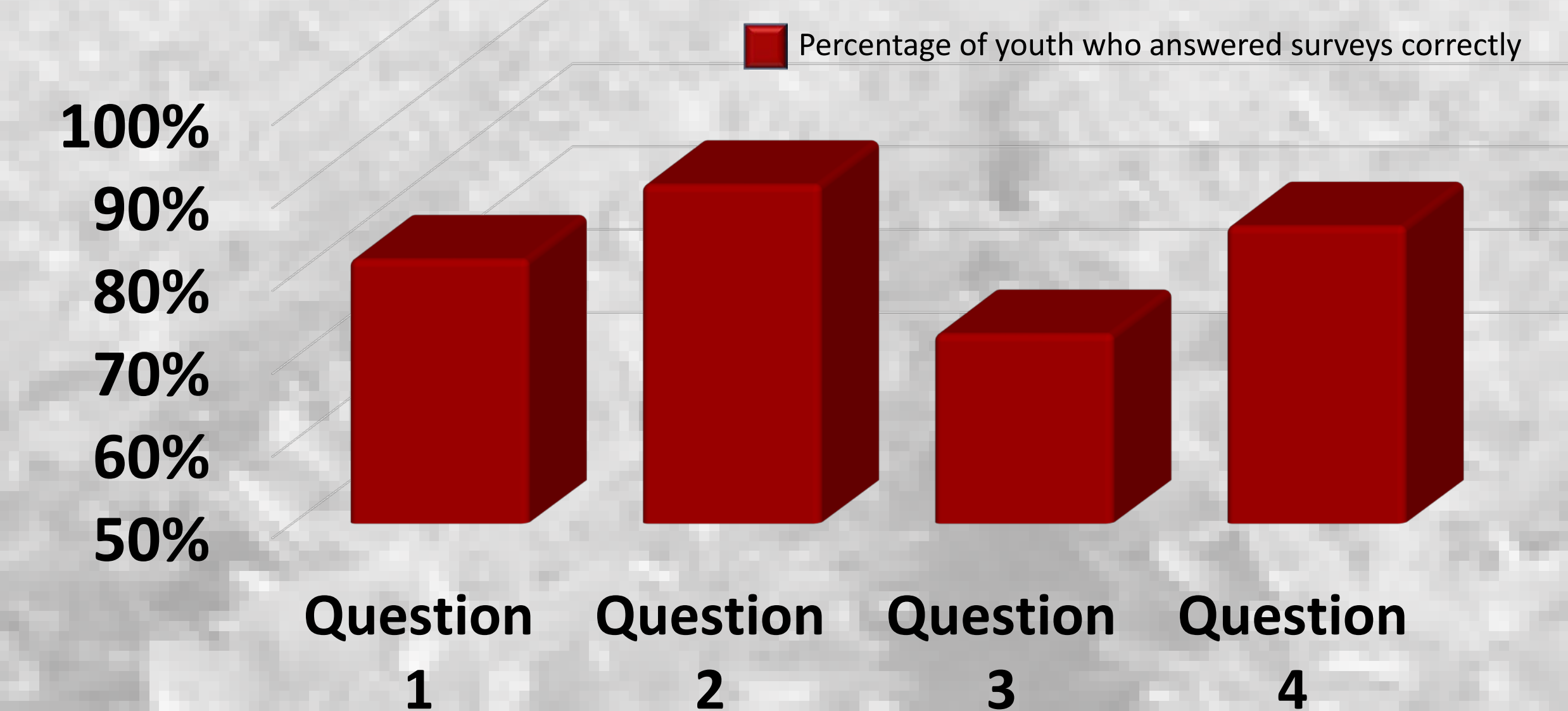


Figure 5: Data compiled from surveys taken by participants

Question 1: 82% of participants were able to name a career related to agriculture other than "farmer". **Question 2:** 91% of students also reported knowing how much money the agricultural industry contributes to Georgia's economy. **Question 3:** 73% of participants stated they would be interested in an Agricultural Pathway at the middle or high school level. **Question 4:** 86% of the students surveyed were able to recall the top 5 agricultural commodities.



Figure 6: Georgia forester shows students forestry related insects

Acknowledgements: Dougherty County School System's CTAE Department, Georgia Forestry Commission, UGA Stripling Irrigation Research Park and UGA Water Agents, Dougherty County Farm Bureau, USDA NRCS, Georgia Peanut Commission, Phoebe Network of Trust, SOWEGA Master Gardeners, Flint River Fresh, Golden Peanut and Mr. Harry James



Figure 1: James Morgan, Dougherty County ANR Agent and Extension Coordinator, talk to students about farming equipment

Purpose:

When talking to kids in urban area about careers in agriculture, farmers are the first thing that comes to mind. The goal of the Dougherty County Agricultural Field Day was to educate students in five agricultural fields of study. These areas included Agricultural Business, Horticulture, Environmental Education and Natural Resources, Crop Production and Animal Science. Five representatives per field of study were identified. Each representative was sent an Ag Field Day flyer and vendor form to complete and confirm their attendance. The 4-H Agent developed a pre/post-test that was given out to the students at the beginning of each assembly and then again after they visited their last station. The CTAE director handled the logistics of providing tables and chairs for each station, soliciting volunteers, assigning each of the four middle schools times in which to participate in the field day, arranging lunch and transportation to Merry Acres Middle School where the Ag Field Day took place.



Figure 4: Students gather at the Flint River Fresh station

Some student were given the chance to climb inside the cab of a tractor for the first time and see that they are equipped with the latest technology to assist farmers. They were given the chance to be up close and interact with the horses and the poultry handlers. They learned about soil erosion, water quality and conservation, type of irrigation systems and pollinators from Natural Resources Conservation Service employees, UGA Extension Water Agents and SOWEGA Master Gardeners. The 4-H Educator and AmeriCorps State Member made peanut butter and smoothies with peanuts donated by the Georgia Peanut Commission. The students also learned about forestry resources and growing their own vegetables in small spaces.

