



# LIVING ON A FEW ACRES

## Engaging small farmers in northeast Florida

**AUTHORS** Dossin, C., [cdossin@ufl.edu](mailto:cdossin@ufl.edu), UF/IFAS Extension Clay County; Jennewein, S., [sjennewein@ufl.edu](mailto:sjennewein@ufl.edu), UF/IFAS Extension Duval County; Wilson, T., [timwilson@ufl.edu](mailto:timwilson@ufl.edu), UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County

### NEED

Northeast Florida agriculture is facing drastic changes as continued urbanization and population growth alter the landscape and structure of communities. Where large operations once dominated the region's agriculture, now small farmers set the scene, many of whom are new to the industry and farming part-time. "Homesteading" is gaining traction with the public, and the buzzword draws interest from the community in small farming. Agents in Clay, Duval, and St. Johns counties collaborated to develop a monthly workshop series to offer information to these producers in one-hour monthly workshops covering a variety of topics related to managing small acreages for farming.

### OBJECTIVES

The following goals were set for this program:

- 75% of participants will increase their knowledge in agricultural management.
- 75% of participants will indicate adoption of recommended management practices.
- Connect small farmers with Extension programs to provide continuous support and resources for their operations as they grow and change.
- Build a community of small farmers by maintaining communication and sharing of resources after participation in the program.



Cohesive branding was developed to improve visibility of the program and convey the combined effort of multiple counties. Advertisements were run through local news channels, radio stations, social media, and flyer distribution.

### METHODS

**Activities** Extension agents in Clay, Duval, and St. Johns counties developed a monthly workshop series to extend recommended practices and information to small farmers in northeast Florida. The agents collaborated on the workshop content and instructional strategies, and left program delivery to the discretion of the agent of each county.

Each workshop focused on a specific topic area for small farmers and served as a "crash course" for that topic. Participants were given introductions to concepts and recommended practices in farm management in these workshops, and exposed to the support and resources available through Extension.

The framework for the program series consisted of the following workshop topic areas:

- pasture management
- small pond management
- sheep and goat management
- backyard poultry
- cool-season and wildlife forages
- drones in agriculture
- small farm cattle management

**Partnership** Collaboration of agents from the counties in the region helped to make this program a success for multiple reasons.

**Program Accessibility** Offering workshops at different times from different locations made the program more accessible to a diversity of clientele. Participants had the opportunity to attend missed workshops at another location and hear from different agents' perspectives and teaching styles. Agents were also able to work together on marketing and outreach.

**Professional Development** Through collaboration on the Living on a Few Acres program, agents were encouraged to share their expertise and experience and were able to learn from their peers.



**Resources** A website was developed to house all the information for the Living on a Few Acres programs in all three counties. Here, participants could find sign-up links, class descriptions, and more information about Extension.

### RESULTS

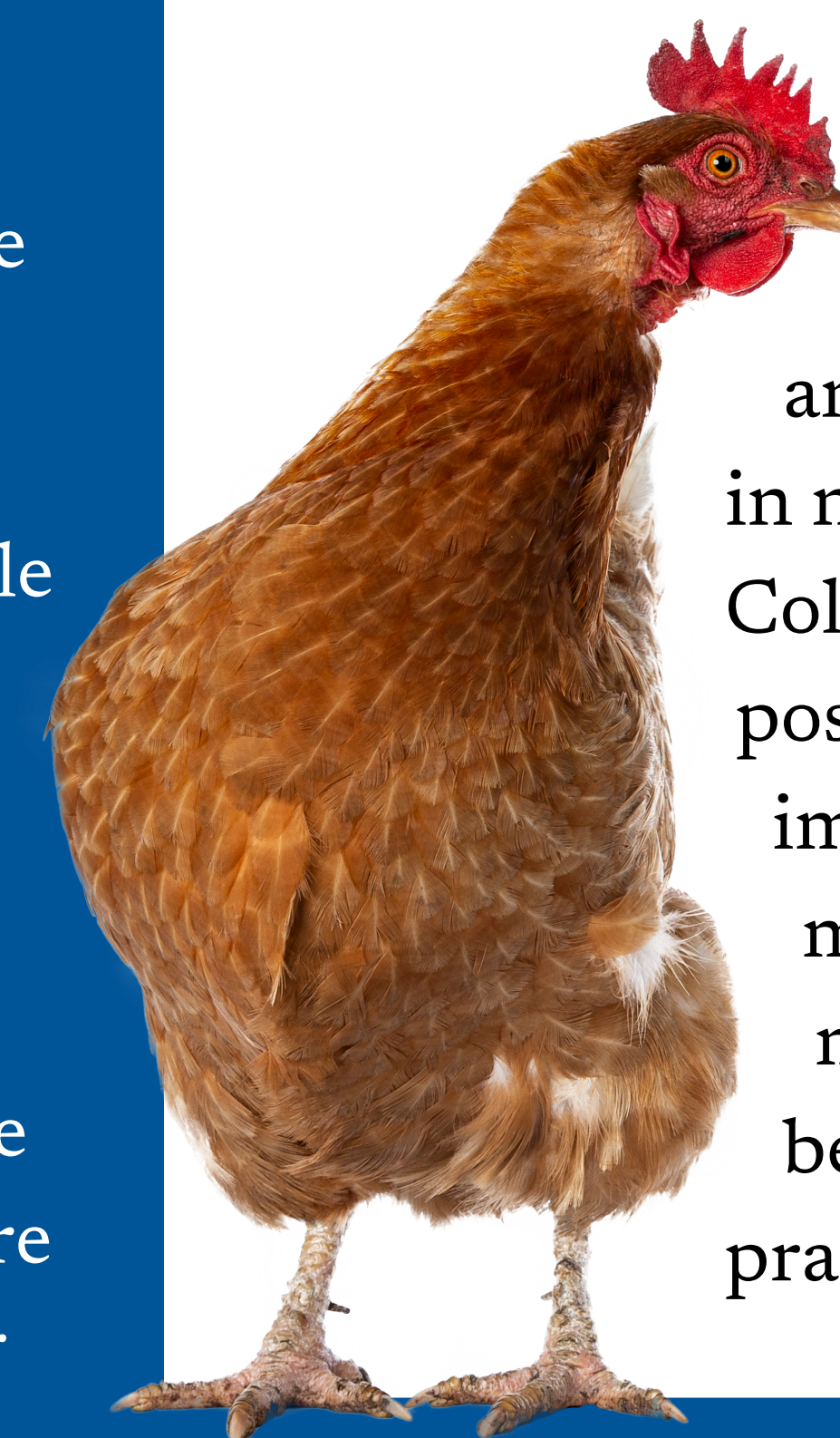
69 individuals attended a total of 14 events across 3 counties. post-program surveys were completed and received after each event. Participants reported on knowledge gained and their intention to adopt recommended practices into their small farms as a result of the programming.

**Knowledge gain** 95%

**Farm management practice intent to adopt** 93%

Another positive effect of the program was the continued participation of many attendants to subsequent workshops. Participants were vocal in their appreciation for the classes that sparked later site visits, consultations, and discussions.

### CONCLUSION



The Living on a Few Acres workshops series has been successful in drawing a new small farmer audience to Extension programming and has offered new opportunities for learning in northeast Florida.

Collaborators are happy and encouraged by the post-program survey results, and have begun implementation of the program into 2025. more data from past participants, such as 6-month and 1-year post-program surveys, will be collected to uncover more information on practice adoption and impacts.

### MOVING FORWARD

Living on a Few Acres programming is set to be a staple educational opportunity for northeast Florida small farmers. By facilitating the program in its first year, collaborators overcame obstacles and implemented adjustments to improve delivery and reach of the program. By continuing the outreach and connection with small farmers, the program aims to provide sustainability and resiliency to the changing communities of northeast Florida.