

WORK SMARTER

IMPROVING AN AGENT'S RETURN ON TIME INVESTMENT

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences

PROGRAM GOAL:

Ongoing staffing issues within the Extension system often results in high turnover, burnout, and gaps in coverage, affecting our ability to serve clients effectively. In light of these challenges, how can we continue to fulfill our mission of providing unbiased information that improves our clientele's lives? One potential solution is to reassess how we view our return on time investment, focusing on more efficient ways to serve our clients while better supporting our agents.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the return on time investment of each agent's daily activities
- Create systems to amplify each agent's outreach
- Build infrastructure to fill gaps in geographical coverage areas or knowledge
- Reduce agents' overall workload

METHODS & ACTIVITIES:

1. CREATED RESOURCE WEBSITE

Created a platform where information can be disseminated quickly, consistently, and timely to commercial producers

SCGROWER.COM

- Features weekly crop reports where agents can keep their producers abreast of what is going on in their region
- Website serves as a consolidated resource hub for produce growers
- Includes: crop reports, pest alerts, research updates, event announcements, resource guides, and podcast links



SUBSCRIBE HERE

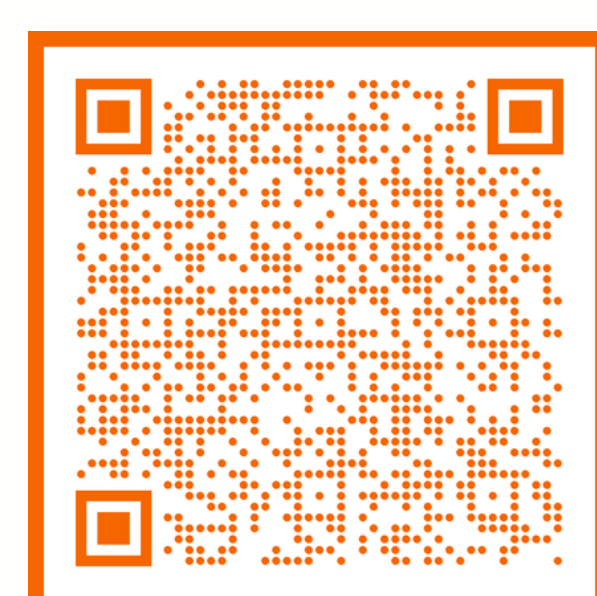
2. ON-DEMAND WEBINARS

- On-Demand webinars allow participants to watch at their convenience, which reduces the need to host multiple in-person trainings
- Accessible to a larger audience that may not typically be reached by in-person programming
- Allows for an increase in diversity of topics and reduces the need for local agent to host a program

3. FARMING FOUNDATIONS COURSE

Online course for new farmers to learn how to operate a successful farm business.

- Free 14-module crash course on how to farm fruits and vegetables
- Allows participants 5 hours of self-guided instruction, freeing up agents' time
- Online platform filters out serious inquiries vs. non-committal leads
- Encourages participants to complete portfolio, which includes soil sampling, crop planning, inventory management, and safety protocols so they will have more productive conversations with extension agents



ENROLL HERE

IMPACT & RESULTS:

1. SCGROWER.COM:

SCGrower website reduces the need to respond to every site visit request for agents covering multiple counties, and frees up more time for agents to deliver programs or perform on-farm trial work.



700+
PEOPLE PER WEEK

WEEKLY VIEWERSHIP

2-3 site visits per week and 15 minutes spent entering a crop report allows agents to reach more people outside of their typical clientele.



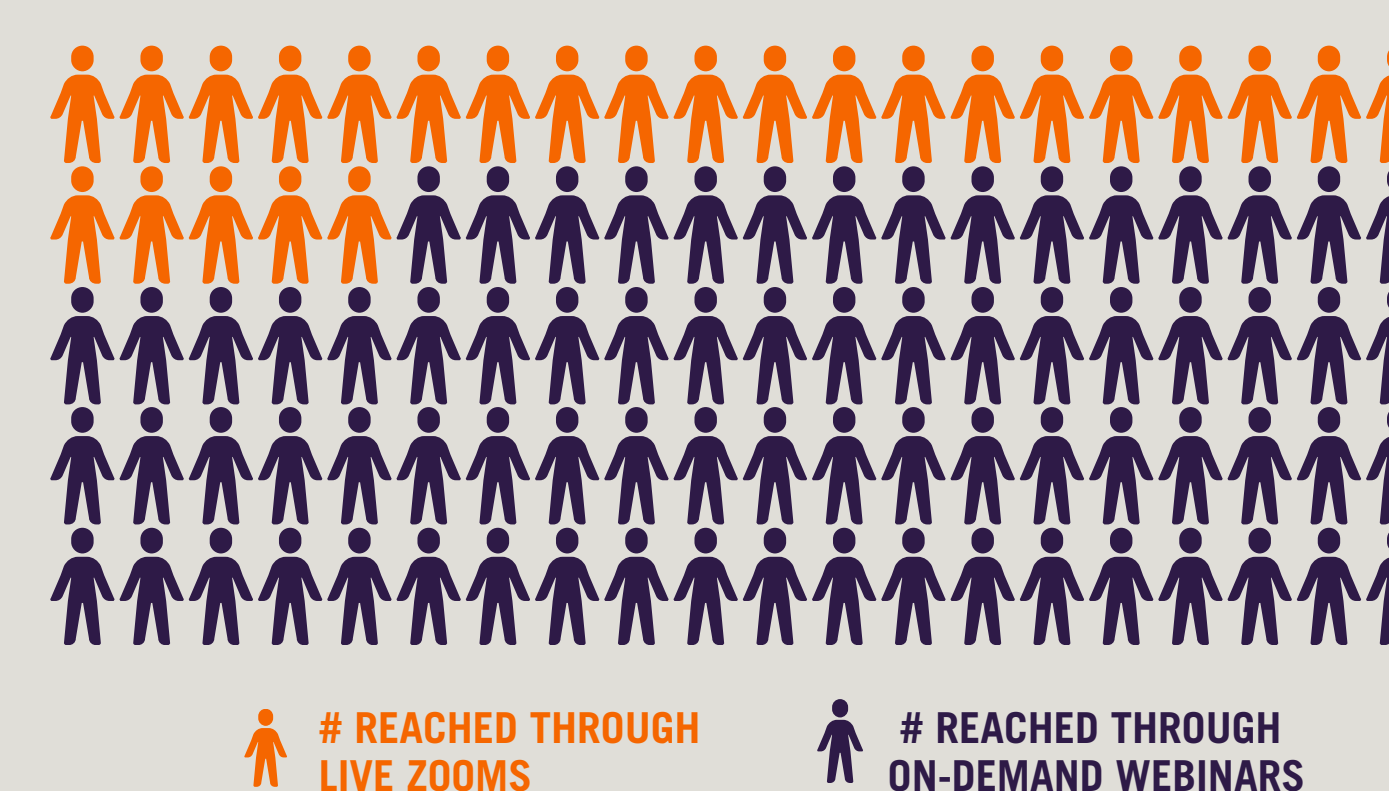
WEEKLY CROP REPORT:

Agents write about observations in the field, such as signs of disease and pests, which reduces the number of calls and site visits per week.

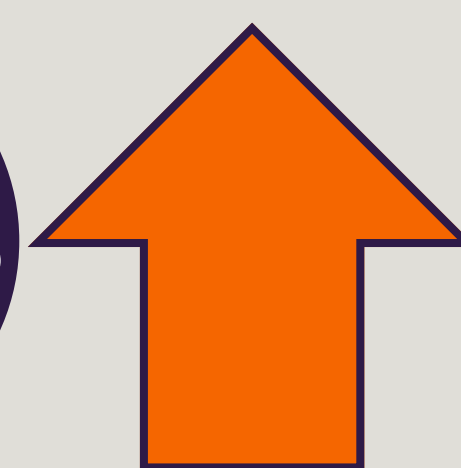
2. WEBINARS:

While traditional in-person programming remains important, on-demand webinars and videos have significantly expanded the reach of Clemson Extension agents. By providing participants with on-demand access, agents can deliver programs more effectively, reaching a broader audience with the same effort required for a live webinar, and with less work compared to in-person events.

LIVE ZOOM VS ON-DEMAND:



363%



ON-DEMAND WEBINAR VIEWERSHIP INCREASE VS. LIVE WEBINAR

A traditional in-person program on average takes an agent 16 hours to plan and implement a one-day program, which may only reach 20 people or 1.25 people hour of agent's time.

An on-demand webinar may reach 168 people with 17 hours invested resulting in 9.88 people per hour of agent's time.

3. ONLINE COURSE:

Farming Foundations was created through a partnership with Clemson Extension and Clemson Online. The course features lectures and resources to reach a larger, more diverse audience. Although the initial creation of the course requires significant time, less than 10 hours are spent maintaining the class annually.



1,032
CONTACTS

PARTICIPANTS REACHED

Since 2021, Farming Foundations has reached 1,032 people

4,984
HOURS

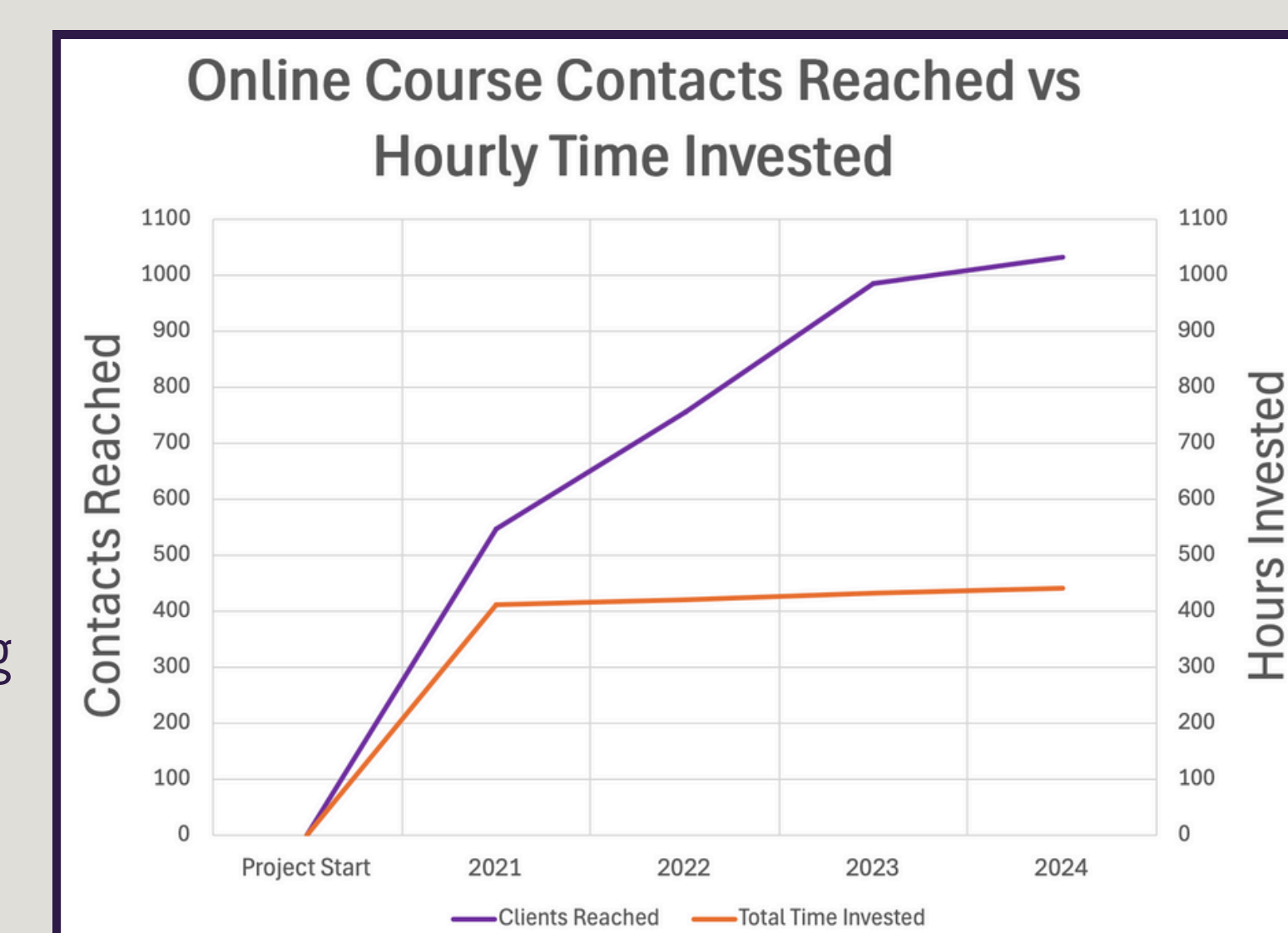
DIRECT INSTRUCTION

The course provides 4,984 hours of direct instruction which typically would have been in-person programming

2,064
HOURS

INDIRECT INSTRUCTION

Total reading material and additional resources provided by the online course



Graph 1: Online courses reach significantly more people and can free up an agent's time after the initial course creation

FUTURE OUTLOOK:



Traditional in-person Extension programming still plays an important role in educating the public and delivering research-based information. However, taking advantage of technological advancements is crucial to reaching people and reducing the overall workload on Extension agents, thus reducing the likelihood of burnout.

Clemson Extension Horticulture Program Team intends to expand upon these methods and activities by:

- Creating additional online courses and webinars to focus on specific fruits, vegetables, and cut flowers
- Hybrid programming including hands-on demonstrations
- Podcasts - SC Grower Exchange
- Strategic coordination of programming between agents