

A Vision for the Southeast Climate Consortium Extension Program
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ABSTRACT

The Southeast Climate Consortium mission is to use advances in climate sciences, including improved capabilities to forecast seasonal climate, to provide scientifically sound information and decision support tools for agriculture, forestry, and water resources management in the Southeastern USA. As a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional team, the SECC conducts research and outreach to a broad community of potential users and forms partnerships with extension and education organizations to ensure that SECC products are relevant and reliable. The outreach component that focuses on the agricultural industry is the most developed component of the consortium. A web-based decision support system (<http://www.agclimate.org>) has been developed and information and tools related to climate and agricultural commodities are available to help producers mitigate production risks associated with seasonal climate variability. The development of AgClimate was the result of an extensive assessment of climate impacts and stakeholder needs in the agricultural sector of the Southeastern USA. In order to increase the likelihood of successful diffusion and adoption of SECC products, its leadership defined at the early stages of the project that a climate extension component dedicated to support its mission would have to be created. Currently there are two climate extension specialists in Florida, one with the Agricultural Engineering Department at the University of Florida and one with the Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies (COAPS) at the Florida State University. Two additional climate extension specialists are to be based at the University of Georgia in Griffin, GA and at the University of Miami. This significant expansion of extension programs required the development of a strategic vision for the extension component of the consortium. This paper describes the strategic approach for the implementation of the SECC extension component; defines a vision, goals, functions and activities as well as institutional roles. A timetable for its implementation is also presented with a projection of the expected balance between development of new "decision aid tools" and outreach activities in the near future, staffing needs and funding requirements.

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