

## Extension Helps Residents; Customer Satisfaction High 2000<sup>1</sup>

---

Glenn D. Israel and Anne M. Fugate<sup>2</sup>

The Florida Cooperative Extension Service (FCES) provides residents with programs on a wide variety of useful, timely topics, including agricultural production and marketing, environmental landscape management, hurricane preparedness, child development, and financial planning. Residents may also call or visit the Extension office to get answers to individual questions. As part of FCES' ongoing effort to improve program quality and information delivery, volunteers and staff in eleven counties surveyed customers about their satisfaction with services provided.

### Survey Procedures

A sample of county Extension offices throughout the state conduct surveys annually. Most recently, Extension offices in eleven counties recorded the name, telephone number, and address of all the people who called or visited for educational information, or who attended planned programs. After recording the contact information for 30 days, each Extension office selected a sample of 60 persons and sent a postcard alerting them to the upcoming phone interview. Agents, secretaries, advisory

committee members, and volunteers then conducted the phone interviews, which gathered a total of 524 usable responses (an 82% response rate). Of the total of 524 customers, 50% had participated in formal programs such as workshops or field days, 38% had called, and 12% had visited the office.

### Survey Results

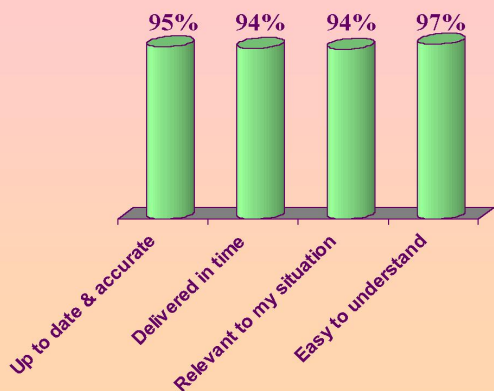
Results showed that whether the customers attended a workshop or a demonstration, called on the phone or dropped by the office, they were impressed by the quality of the information Extension provided (Figure 1). Nearly all said the information they received was up to date and accurate (95%), delivered in time to be useful (94%), relevant to his or her situation (94%), and easy to understand (97%). Several customers said they had sought information with businesses or other organizations first, but had gotten the information they needed only after calling Extension. One customer commented that whenever he has a problem, he calls Extension for "the correct information."

At the time of the survey, nearly three-quarters of the customers, had used the information Extension

- 
1. This document is AEC 342, one of a series of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date September 2001. Reviewed August 2007 and October 2010. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
  2. Glenn Israel, Professor; Anne Fugate, Technical Writer, Program Development and Evaluation Center, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

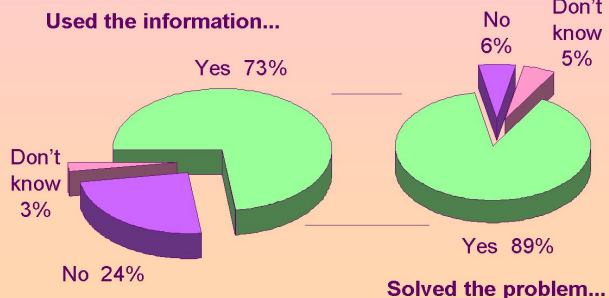
The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Millie Ferrer-Chancy, Interim Dean

Figure 1. Extension’s information was...



provided (Figure 2). Some of these customers said that they were still in the process of using the information they had received, that they were waiting for plants to mature, or had signed up for a class that started later in the year. Of the customers who had not used the information, some said they had not had a chance to read the literature, while others plan to use the information in the coming months.

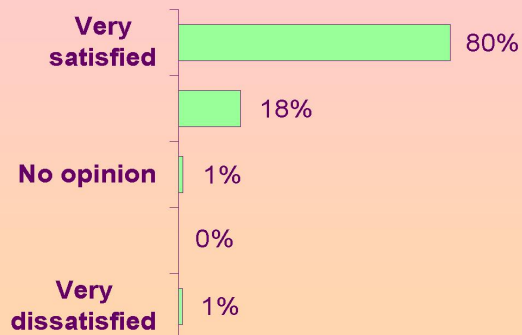
Figure 2. Respondents had the opportunity to use the information and it solved the problem or answered the question



Most of the customers who had used FCES information reported that it worked for them: 89% said they had learned new information, adopted a new practice, or solved a problem. For example, armed with Extension's recommendations, customers were able to adjust soil pH, safely apply a pesticide, develop a budget, reduce the monthly grocery bill, reduce fat and sugar in the diet, and apply for a home loan. One customer who called about dairy goat feed said that by following Extension's recommendation, he will save \$4 per 100 pounds. Another customer said that she uses Extension's recommendations almost every day on her four-acre vineyard.

Almost all of the customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they had received (Figure 3). Customers described the service as “friendly,” “prompt and accurate,” “cooperative,” “outstanding,” and “beyond expectations.” Several customers commended a particular agent. For example, one customer praised the agent who taught the nutrition course she attended, saying the agent was “patient and well-informed...and made every question sound important.” Several customers also mentioned a long history of satisfaction with Extension. One customer said he has “been a fan of Extension for about 20 years,” and another, who said he has used Extension for 38 years, remarked that he has always appreciated Extension's involvement with 4-H.

Figure 3. How I feel about the service provided by the Extension office...



More than two-thirds of the customers shared the information with someone else, including family members, neighbors, students, other producers, and coworkers and employers (Figure 4). One customer noted that the information about lawn care that he shares with his neighbors is a great help to northerners who are not used to Florida's environment.

Customers were very satisfied with the timely, useful information and friendly, competent service they received from their county Extension office. The feedback from this survey enables county agents to continue to improve their information delivery. It enables them to perform consistently and build long-standing relationships with customers, the kind of relationship that prompted one customer to say, “I can't praise Extension too much.”

Figure 4. Respondents shared information with someone else . . .

