



## Building on a Legacy Serving Small Farmers in Alabama and Beyond

The Carver Integrative Sustainability Center (CISC), launched in 2010 at Tuskegee University, is a regional, national, and international leader in agricultural and environmental sustainability focusing on challenges of socially disadvantaged and minority communities and small farmers in the South and in low-income countries. CISC builds upon the legacy of research and service initiated at Tuskegee University by George Washington Carver in 1896.

More than 40 faculty and staff from six of the university's eight schools and colleges participate in eight transdisciplinary teams to support goals and progress around four pillars of sustainability: ecological, economic, social, and health/wellness. These teams engage representatives from the university, community-based organizations (i.e., Federation of Southern Cooperatives, various farmer and farmers market associations throughout the Alabama Black Belt, economic development organizations, county commissions and various faith-based organizations), as well as U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies (i.e., Natural Resource Conservation

Service, Forest Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development).

CISC successes include adaptive irrigation and solar energy technologies that have enhanced small farmer production efficiencies as well as the development of small to large producer and landowner clusters to increase marketing opportunities, profitability, and economic development in poor and rural communities. A transdisciplinary team of research and Extension experts have targeted the benefits of orange-flesh sweet potato from a whole plant perspective. Human disease due to a lack of nutrients (i.e., anemia and Vitamin A deficiency) can be mitigated by the nutrients found in orange-flesh sweet potato. Initiating the project in Ghana, the team focused product enhancement across the value chain (production, processing, and preparation) to increase intake. The effort proved successful, generating a sweet potato flour used in breads that were well received. The team is working toward similar success in the United States to promote sweet potato use by poor communities.

Tuskegee University believes strongly in equality of opportunity and recognizes exceptional talent is often hidden in students whose finest development requires unusual educational, personal, and financial reinforcement. Tuskegee serves the global society as well as the regional and campus community and beyond by developing outreach programs that are compatible with the university's educational mission, improve understanding of community problems, and help develop relevant alternative solutions.

Learn more: <http://www.tuskegee.edu/academics/colleges/caens/cisc.aspx>



Regional clusters of small and large scale farmers get first-hand experience on a commercial grower's operation at a field day sponsored by the National Black Growers Council.