

## **Tuskegee University Organic Research and Production Farm**

The history of organic agriculture at Tuskegee University began in 2002 on the Small Model Farm at the George Washington Carver Agricultural Experiment Station. The first studies were focused on cover crops and crop rotations in Barbour, Bullock, and Macon Counties. On October 28 and 29, 2011, the organic farming research faculty organized the very first statewide organic forum in Alabama with the aim of developing a close collaboration in organic agriculture across the three land-grant universities (Tuskegee University, Alabama A&M University, and Auburn University) in the state. We brought along with us, relevant stakeholder groups to identify together barriers and constraints to marketing organic produce and to formulate a common strategy that will enable the universities to provide research and extension supports needed to expand in-state organic production and to create economic opportunities for limited-resource organic producers. In 2016, the organic and research production activities on the farm were relocated to a new site on Counsel Drive because of the use of mineral fertilizers and pesticides on the Small Model Farm.

The present research farm is a 20-acre piece of land specialized in mixed vegetable research and production. The research farm is dedicated to conducting research on popular vegetable crop varieties appropriate for Alabama and the Southeast, testing Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI)-approved pesticides, and organic fertilizer application rates on sweet potato and other vegetable crops. The production farm provides our community members with fresh and safely grown produce. The farm was organic certified in 2019 and contains several varieties of blueberries. The farm has an irrigation system that draws water from a drilled well on the farm with its water tested every year for coliform. The farm also has a greenhouse, a storage shed, and a steel building that houses washrooms, two coolers, a vegetable wash station, a freezer, and light farm equipment.

A multidisciplinary team of faculty (in Soil Science, Crop Physiology, Food and Nutrition Sciences, Resource Economy, and Entomology) directs the farm research orientation and constitutes the pillar of the Tuskegee University Organic Agriculture Institute endowed in 2022 by Clif Bar and Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research with a mandate to popularize organic fruits and vegetables in Alabama and the Southeast. The faculty team is supported on the farm by staff, students, and interns. The farm also serves as a training ground in

the summer for Tuskegee University and Macon County school students who spend 8 weeks (about 2 months) on the farm as interns every year to learn and practice organic agriculture.