

Conservation on the Ground - NRCS Helps Identify Niche Marketing Opportunities for Limited Resource Farmers



Calhoun Food Chain, with stores in Tuskegee, Selma, and Montgomery, AL, announced at the 112th Annual Farmers Conference held at Tuskegee University, February 26-27, 2004, that they will begin purchasing produce and specialty meats (goat and rabbit) packaged by Down South Foods. Down South Foods is a non-profit enterprise that operates from a small-business incubator near Selma, AL. Down South has done what many have encouraged struggling small farmers to do to survive: Find a market niche and try to fill it. It's the desire for food from "down South" that serves as the venture's niche.



Down South Foods has helped market fresh produce grown by limited resource farmers.

Down South Foods is sponsored by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ala-Tom RC&D Council; Tuskegee University; Tuskegee Cooperative Extension; and the Alabama Small Farm and Rural Economic Development Center. This is just one more effort to assist the limited resource farmer in finding a market for niche products.



Rabbit meat is a niche product made available by Down South Foods.

The Annual Farmers Conference was envisioned by Booker T. Washington as "the people's conference," the Annual Farmers Conference evolved over 100 years ago out of a need to improve the conditions of rural, Black farmers in the South. Today the Farmers Conference is an educational forum designed to address the emerging concerns of rural residents of Alabama and its neighboring states. The conference is sponsored by Tuskegee University and the Tuskegee Cooperative Extension with cooperation by various state and federal agencies.

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