

**October 15, 2008 survey of  
Oconee County Citizens**

**Dear Oconee County Citizens:**

**How do you want Oconee County to look in the future?**

**A local group called the Oconee Partnership for Farmland Protection has been working to help protect Oconee farmland for future generations. There is a national trend of farmland loss that is directly impacting Oconee County. “Farming on the Edge”, a report from the American Farmland Trust, identified Oconee County as having high quality farmland and high development pressure. The state of Georgia ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for loss of prime farmland to development (USDA-NRCS National Resources Inventory Report).**

**The United States has the most affordable and safest food in the World. Agriculture is the number one industry in Georgia, providing about 16% (\$57 Billion of the States \$350 Billion economic output. Oconee County farmland produces a variety of products including dairy, beef, poultry, fruits vegetables, horticultural plants and trees, cotton, grain crops, forestry etc. In 2006 Oconee’s agriculture produced over 109.2 Million dollars in farmgate value, ranking us 24<sup>th</sup> in the state in Agricultural Production although we are the 13<sup>th</sup> smallest of Georgia’s 159 Counties. Farmland doesn’t impose a tax burden on the County since farmland requires less cost of services than it pays in taxes. In addition to food and fiber, Oconee farmland provides wildlife habitat, open space, water/air and soil quality benefits and helps maintain our cultural heritage.**

**The Oconee Partnership for Farmland Protection has attracted funding from a combination of Federal, State, Local and Private sources to help protect farmland. A total of 295 Acres of Oconee Farmland has been permanently protected on 3 farms. The total value of this land protection program (easement value) was approximately \$2.5 Million. Farmers donated over 25% of this total value. The Federal USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program provided approximately 50% of the total, and State Local and Private funding provided the rest. Although a total of only \$225,000 of County funds went into this program, this funding provided the match, which is needed to attract all the other funds. We have been able to leverage County funds as much as 20 times for a given project. We are currently working on 3 farms to protect another 150 Acres, farmer donations, federal and local matches have already been approved.**

**Oconee County has been ranked twice (2005 and 2006) by Progressive Farmer Magazine as one of the best rural places to live in the Country. In 2006 they ranked us the best rural place to live in the South. Watch for the February 09 issue where we again will be ranked because of our agriculture and rural character. The entire**

**Southern portion of Oconee County has recently been designated as Agricultural Preservation on our Land Use Map.**

**We need your help!! To help provide a continual source of funding for Farmland Protection in Oconee County. County funding is necessary to attract outside funds. Please take 2 minutes to fill out this survey.**

**Thank you!!**

Bullet points

- The U.S. has the most affordable, safest food in the world.
- Farmland is being lost to development all over the Country.
- Georgia ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Country regarding rate of loss of farmland.
- Oconee agriculture produced \$109.2 million in farmgate value in 2006, ranking 24 of all 159 Georgia Counties.
- Oconee is the 13<sup>th</sup> smallest of Georgia's 159 Counties.
- We have permanently protected 295 Acres of Oconee's highest quality farmland
- We have multiplied County funds for farmland protection by up to 20 times by attracting Federal, State, and private funding.
- We need a stable source of funding in order to continue to attract outside funding sources.
- Oconee is one of the best Rural Places to live in the Country.
- **WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!!!!**