



Florida Olive Report

April 2011

I recently returned from the Olive grower event in Lakeland, GA I told you of in my last email. I was surprised to see more than 100 people attending. Several UF IFAS agents were there in addition to farmers and other ag interests from Florida and Georgia. Kevin and Sam Shaw hosted the event - they operate a large commercial cotton and peanut operation in the area. They have about 50 acres planted in olives - trees are about two years old. Amazing growth as you can see in the pictures below. I did learn the average cost of installing a grove (less land costs) is about \$5k/acre. It takes 3-4 years to make a 4 ton/acre crop with a 12' x 20' tree spacing. Normal production is about 40 gallons of oil per ton of olives harvested. Retail price for extra virgin olive oil (EVO) is about \$15.00 for 500 milliliters (m/l). There are about 4000 m/l in a gallon. Of course, wholesale prices will be much lower - California growers get about \$250-350/ton) "farm gate" price for the raw olives.

There are still a number of unanswered questions - so due diligence continues. Since the US imports almost 99% of the olive oil we consume and the great majority of that consumption occurs east of the Mississippi - I believe olives might be a possible replacement crop for some citrus operations in Florida. I am going up to Washington in June to meet with the Florida delegation and explore how we might attract some federal dollars for the venture. I will keep you informed.