Economic Impact of Fresh Produce & the Floral Industry in Tennessee

From a study completed by the Produce Marketing Association (http://www.pma.com/) in 2006 regarding the economic reach and impact of the fresh produce and floral industry in the United States and in Tennessee:

For the U.S., the economic reach and impact of the fresh produce and floral industry in 2006 was nearly 1.7 million direct U.S. full time equivalent jobs and an additional 1 million jobs through industry and worker spending. Overall, fresh produce and floral industry sales and worker spending generates $554 billion in output within the U.S. economy. The reach and broader economic impact of the industry touches every U.S. state and legislative district.

Within Tennessee, the fresh produce and floral industry accounts for 30,755 direct full-time equivalent jobs. These direct jobs generate an additional 17,625 jobs for a total employment impact of 48,380 jobs. In total, these workers earn $1,209,120,857 and the total economic output is $9,536,221,697. Because the fruit and vegetable industry in Tennessee is comprised primarily of small acreage growers, often selling direct to the public, the true value of the industry is dramatically underrated by most people.

Food safety is one of the greatest concerns that growers have. Many wholesale growers are having to develop GAPs plans and undergo a third party audit as a condition of sales. More stringent regulations in this area are being considered by FDA and would probably already be in place if it were not for the governmental preoccupation with health care issues. It is just a matter of time before many of the proposals are expanded to include retail markets as well.

UT Extension has played a prominent role in food safety education. Growers are asking about the continuity in food safety training efforts following Bill's departure. They view this as one that is essential to their continued existence.