

The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, working in cooperation with the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA, is proud to present the 45<sup>th</sup> edition of *Alabama Agricultural Statistics*. The numbers contained in this publication are a testimony to the importance of agriculture in the State of Alabama. Agriculture receipts for 2002 total over \$4 Billion dollars, with over \$40 Billion dollars impacting the State's economy. Agriculture is the No. 1 Industry in the State of Alabama. We employ over 467,000 people, constituting over 21% of the State's workforce.

In this issue we pay tribute to the corner stone for agriculture in most communities, the farmers market. In Alabama one of the most important parts of the community is the local farmers market. Not only is it a place for people to purchase some of the best fruits and vegetables ever grown, it is also a place for friends and neighbors to congregate as their parents and grand parents did before them. In many parts of Alabama, without the local farmers market, many Alabamians would never be able to have fresh fruits and vegetables to eat. Alabama's farmers markets have and will continue to play a very active and critical role in every Alabama community.

Ron Sparks  
Commissioner

We are pleased to present the 2003 *Alabama Agricultural Statistics* bulletin, a joint effort by the Alabama Agricultural Statistics Service and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. The facts and figures contained in this summary are the result of voluntary reports from Alabama producers and agribusinesses. Without their cooperation, it would not be possible. Our appreciation is extended to Alabama farmers for their time and effort on our surveys.

To collect the information contained inside, our enumerator corps works tirelessly and with great enthusiasm. They are a vital link between the state office and the farming community. I would like to thank them as well as the office staff for their efforts in compiling the pages of the bulletin. This attractive summary continues to provide the agricultural industry and all of our citizens with a comprehensive picture of Alabama's leading industry.

Herb Vanderberry  
State Statistician