

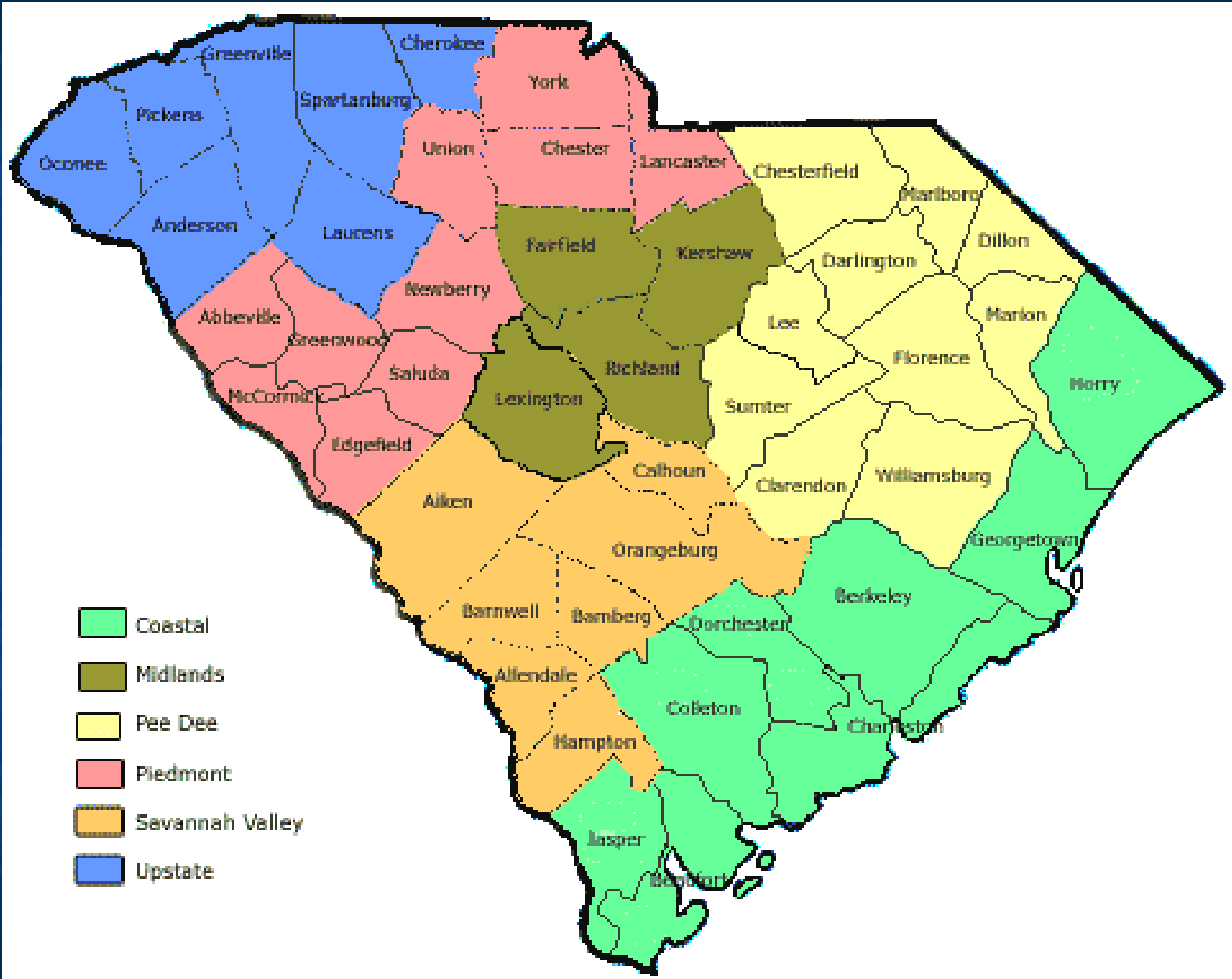
# **Reflections From The Field: South Carolina's Edisto Region**

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# My Role in Extension

- The Edisto Farm Management Association is a non-profit organization and Extension program sponsored by Clemson University.
- Member farmers pay annual dues for financial services, including recordkeeping, reporting, analysis, and planning.
- Consultants conduct statewide producer education workshops and work with Extension agents to present local programs.



# South Carolina's Edisto Region

- Diverse commodity base:
  - Row crops [Corn, Cotton, Soybeans, Wheat, Peanuts]
  - Also beef, produce, and timber
- Average age of producers is 57-58.
- Many producers have off-farm jobs.
- Rural area, but within 70 miles of 4 cities.
- Low to moderate technology adoption.

# Producer Challenges

- Weather-related yield risk / variability
  - 1998 – 2002: Drought
  - 2002 – 2003: Flooding
  - 2004: Ice storm, Variable rainfall
- Profitability and sustainability
  - Very few farms generate *enough* cash flow
  - Problems: marketing, costs of production, and limited size
  - Opportunities for niche marketing, expansion, specialization
- Decline in FSA program payments would be devastating.
  - Operating profits are often less than payments.

# Producer Challenges

- Focus on business management
  - Understanding their financial situation
  - Developing a feasible strategic plan
  - Marketing and risk management
  - Evaluating production decisions
- Information overload
  - Meetings
  - Newsletters
  - Information services

# Role of Extension Specialists & Committees

- We have a limited number of agents & specialists.
  - Ideally, we'd replace some of the lost personnel
  - More realistically, need to more efficiently utilize what we have
- We need tools to bridge the "information gap".
  - Interactive self-paced DVD modules
    - Determining cost of production from limited records
    - Impact of improved marketing
    - Cost-benefit analysis of production decisions
  - Producer meetings... via satellite (?)