

Farm to Table

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On Saturday, June 22nd, the Crop Genetics and Genomics REEU group took a trip to the Athens Farmers market in Bishop Park. Previously we had visited a local organic farm, the Sundance Farm, and enjoyed the experience of harvesting potatoes and touring the farm. While there, students learned that organic farmers aimed to lessen their impact on their environments through sustainable farming practices and the use of natural pesticides, such as Neem Oil. Although better for the environment, natural pesticides still face similar problems like the ones commercial pesticides face: loosing effectiveness as pests change and adapt to overcome the pesticide. In addition to growing fruits and vegetables, the farm also raised livestock and poultry such as goats, chickens, turkeys, and a pig. After visiting the farm, it was now time to see where local farmers sold their produce to the public. Some farmers, like local organic farmer Josh Johns from Hickory Hill Farm have been participating in the Athens farmers market for years. While talking to farmer Josh, we learned that a lot of the process of growing organic is learning through trial and error. Being at the farmers market also provided an opportunity to learn about the different problems that farms face from drought, overwatering, insects, and other pests that eat or damage crops. Farm produce ranged from okra and tomatoes to baby watermelons and blueberries. There were also vendors selling clothing, cookies, jams, jewelry, woodwork, and dream catchers. A band also provided live music, giving the market a fun and festive atmosphere. While at the farmers market, students had the opportunity to assist setting up produce stands and selling fresh produce to Athens locals. Students interacted and aided with customer sales and provided assistance preparing goods to be sold.

