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| University of Florida IRB-02  Protocol Template Guidelines  High Tunnel Organic Vegetable Production for the Southeast  The “protocol” is similar in form to a brief research proposal. It should be as concise as possible. It should, however, contain all information relevant to the proposed research project not specifically covered in the SmartForms. (Not every item will be relevant for every project, of course, and you may limit responses as appropriate in such cases, but if you’re uncertain as to what to include, be “inclusive” as that makes it less likely we’ll have requests for additional information.) |
| 1. **Background:**   The long-term goal of the project is to develop sustainable high tunnel systems to promote the growth and expansion of organic vegetable production in the Southeast. This integrated project will systematically address the major challenges and key issues with organic high tunnel production and management identified through the initial planning project. By building a strong partnership with organic producers and other stakeholders, this project will target long-term environmental and economic sustainability. |
| 1. **Specific Aims:**   The objectives of this project are:   * 1. To create an expanded network of farmers, farmer organizations and stakeholders that can share and access information about high tunnel organic vegetable production.   2. To have continuing farmer and stakeholder participation in research and extension about high tunnel organic vegetable production.   3. To increase our understanding of farmer and stakeholder decision making.   4. To increase the adoption of the management options generated by this research. |
| 1. **Research Plan / Study Description:**   Grower Assessments: We will ask farmers or agricultural service providers with experience using high tunnels for organic production to participate in field research assessments of our research toward the end of the growing seasons in years 1, 2, and 3. The research assessments will take place at two locations - the Plant Science Research and Education Unit in Citra, FL (years 1, 2, and 3) and at the University of Georgia Coastal Plain Station in Tifton, GA (years 2 and 3). We start the research assessment with an individual assessment where each evaluator uses a packet of forms that we develop to make specific observations in the research plots. The specific observations will depend on the specific treatments included in any given experiment, but typically include things like insect or disease damage, plant growth and vigor, bloom set, and fruit set. After completing the individual observations, a researcher leads a structured discussion similar to a focus group in which the evaluators share their observations and provide recommendations for the research as a group. We may ask additional follow-up questions based on the dynamics of the discussion, but these questions will be directly related to the observations participants made about the experimental treatments. If we are time constrained, we may eliminate questions in order to stay on schedule. Note takers will take notes on a provided recorder’s guide. We will use the assessment results to make incremental changes in research design and data collection during the project life, improving the overall quality and utility of research findings.  An Active Advisory Panel: We will form an advisory panel of organic producers using high tunnels to provide the research team with a wide range of perspectives about the research treatments and procedures and make targeted recommendations to improve research and Outreach activities. All panel members will recommend farmers for on-farm trials, recommend participants for the annual research assessments, review results of on-station and on-farm trials, and make suggestions for annual adjustments to procedures and protocols. We will ask specific questions to ask the Advisory Panel identified by the researchers based off the research being conducted in the project. We may ask additional follow-up questions based on the dynamics of the discussion, but they will not go outside the scope of the research conducted in this project. We will provide written reports of recommendations made through the assessments and other panel activities and panel members will receive copies of all annual reports for review. The research team will digitally record and take notes during the panel meetings. We will host one panel meeting per year over the life of the project (four years). |
| 1. **Possible Discomforts and Risks:**   This study poses no more than minimal risk. The risks associated with participating in this study are no more than those encountered in discussions about farming and agricultural research at field days, in conferences, and other venues where agricultural research is discussed.  Only the researchers will have access to the information collected in person. The completed forms will be kept for no more than three years and will be filed under lock in Dr. Mickie Swisher’s office. We may use the information provided in reports and journal publications, but we will NOT identify specific participants as the source of the information. |
| 1. **Possible Benefits:**   There are no direct benefits to the participant. |
| 1. **Conflict of Interest:**   There are no real or potential conflicts of interest for any of the investigators with regard to this specific research project. |