



The Georgia Center of Innovation for Agribusiness Helps Turn Savannah's Sandy Soil Into Ginger Utopia

OVERVIEW

Verdant Kitchen is a gourmet and wellness company focused on the ginger and turmeric family of spices

CHALLENGE

When Australian native Ross Harding decided to start a ginger farm in South Georgia, he immediately faced a few issues. First, he needed to determine what kinds of ginger would grow in Savannah's sandy soil. After determining which crops to plant, Harding would need additional assistance as his business expanded into various food products.

SOLUTION

Harding knew to connect with the Georgia Center of Innovation for Agribusiness from previous experience with the Herty Foundation. Early on, Director Bo Warren and the COIAG connected Harding with industry experts at the University of Georgia to determine which type of ginger would grow in Georgia. As the business began to scale up, the Center introduced Verdant Kitchen to the Georgia Grown program, which would help open Verdant's doors. Bo Warren also helped Ross Harding apply for and attain a USDA Value Added producer grant, allowing Verdant kitchen to further establish their operations.

RESULTS

Verdant Kitchen now sells its more than 30 products in over 200 stores and markets around the country, as well as maintaining a web store, and selling on Amazon.com. In 2015, Verdant's Ginger Syrup and Ginger Infused Honey were included on Oprah Winfrey's year end Favorite Things list, which caused retail sales of their products to skyrocket.

The significant connections include:

- Connection to Industry experts to determine which types of ginger would grow best in Savannah's soil
- Introduction to Georgia Grown program, a marketing and economic development program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Assistance in applying for and ultimately attaining a USDA Value Added producer grant

Impact:

- Products sold in over 200 stores country-wide, including every state on the East Coast, a web store, and on Amazon.com
- Selection to Oprah's Favorite Things list for 2015, which drove sales significantly

What the Center of Innovation for Agribusiness offers businesses within the Industry:

- Technical industry expertise, collaborative research and partnerships.
- Collaboration of leaders from academia, business and government to assist in the commercialization of new products, processes and business models.

