

PASSION FRUIT: AN EMERGING CROP IN FLORIDA

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Situation

From 2020 to 2023 agricultural land prices and production costs increased significantly in Florida and especially so in North Central Florida. Consequently, these economic conditions create substantial challenges for new farms to begin and existing farms to expand. Passion fruit is an emerging crop that can be grown on small acreage in the region, opening new agricultural opportunities.

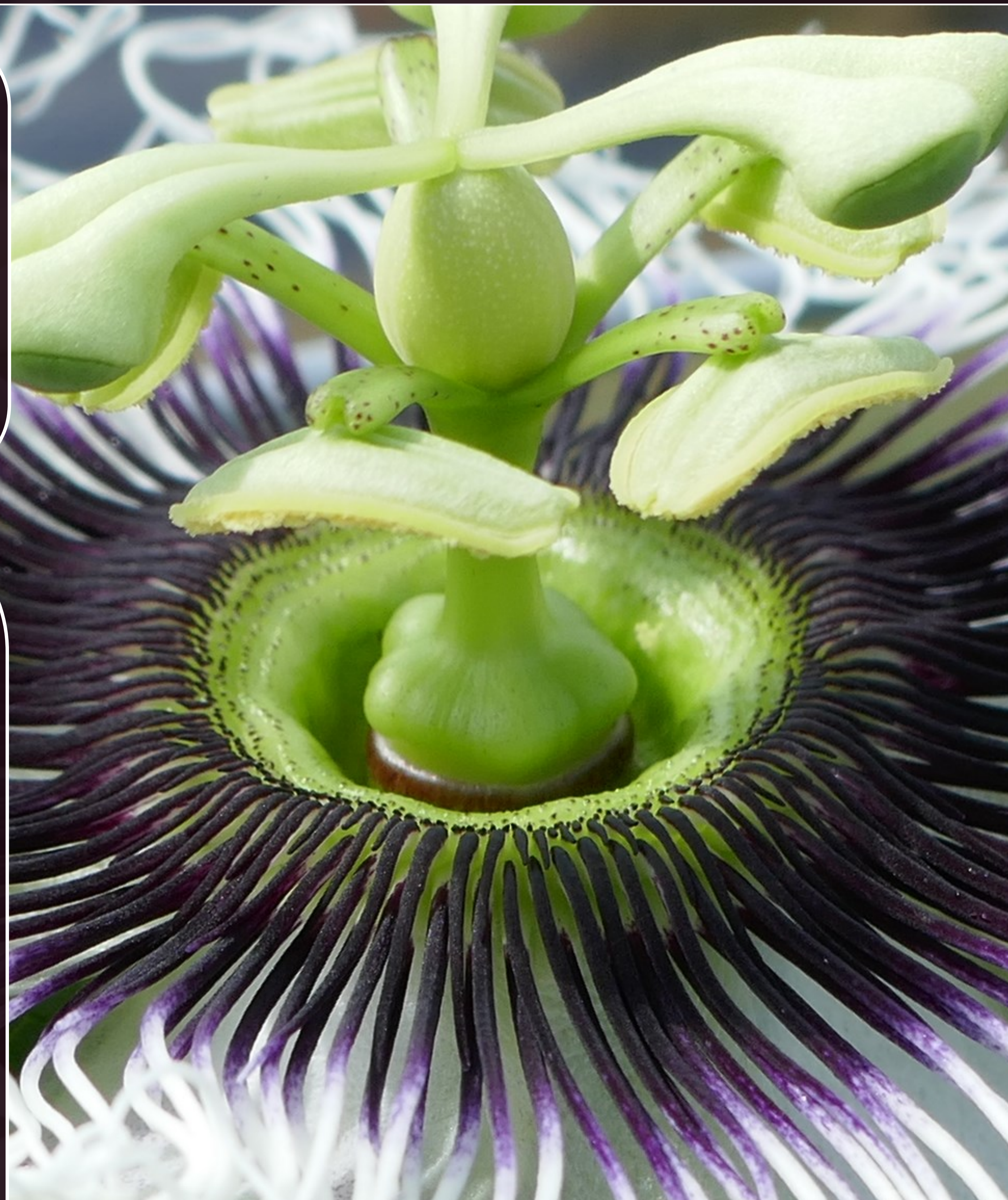
Objectives

The combination of sustainable and reliable production methods, post-harvest, and marketing research can help farms of an size begin, grow, and become profitable with passion fruit production.



Methods

In order for growers to plant passion fruit as new crop on their farms, they must know the marketing potential of passion fruit. Until now, no recent passion fruit marketing research has been conducted by UF/IFAS. A sensory evaluation of passion fruit was conducted to evaluate public perceptions and buying interest. A production guide has been published to support current and prospective growers. Two production meetings have been held from 2022 to 2023 where participants provided needs assessment surveys. Additionally, growers are directly supported with a recurring site visits, diagnostic services, and regular updates to on-going research. A SARE and SEEDIT grant have supported passion fruit crop development beginning in 2023.

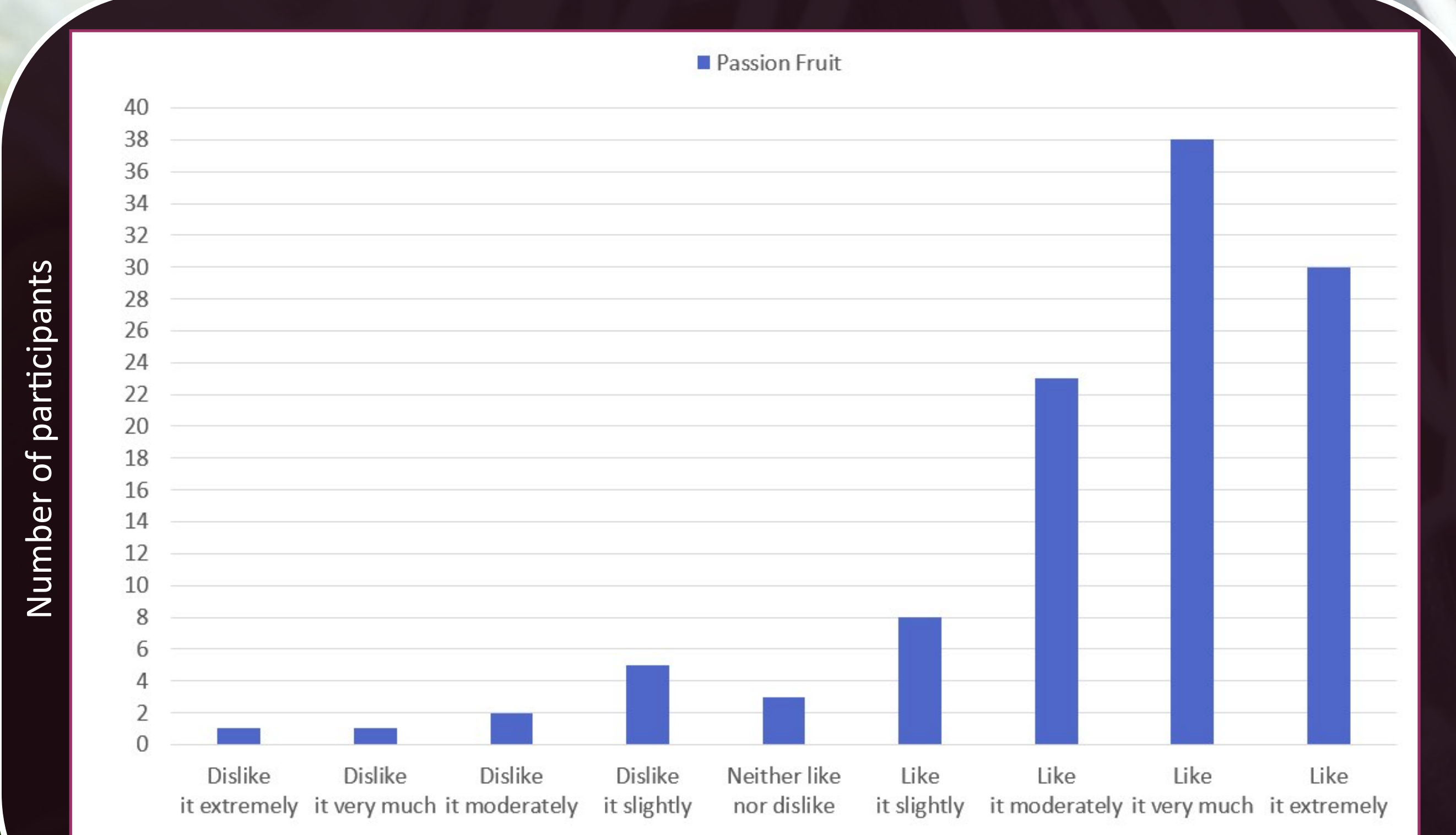


Results

Small farms (N=12) in North Central Florida have planted passion fruit or are in the process of planting small acreage. Small farms have harvested passion fruit after one year of planting and some have initially achieved profitability. Sensory evaluations were completed (N=111) and indicated very strong favorability of the flavor and aroma as well as an interest in buying passion fruit products and fruit.



Fresh passion fruit recently harvested. Passion fruit shelf life can last weeks.



Passion fruit sensory evaluation demonstrates high ratings for over all "likability".



Passion fruit sensory evaluation sample, consisting of half a fruit and juice.

Conclusions

Growers that are seeking alternative crops now have the option of passion fruit. It is an emerging alternative crop that has significant growth potential to generate profitability for Florida and similar growing regions.