

Dear Editor:

Virtually everyone recognizes that our state and its people have been in the throes of economic recession for several years. The lost jobs in most economic sectors, the family suffering and the waste of human talent are painfully apparent.

Despite this overall economic decline, the foundation of our material life has remained stable, harvesting a bounty of food, fiber and material for renewable fuels. Production agriculture remains a powerful engine of private enterprise while it continues to perform its invaluable service of maintaining green space, wildlife habitat and freshwater recharge areas.

Florida Farm Bureau has launched a new initiative to build upon agriculture's contributions to our general society. Known as "Strengthening Family Farms and Communities," this initiative highlights the support Farm Bureau members provide for the quality of life in our state. According to a study by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, the statewide economic impact of production agriculture exceeds \$76 billion each year. Approximately 1.6 million Floridians earn a living from agriculture-related employment.

But Farm Bureau members do more than help sustain communities through their purchases of goods and services and the sale of their farm harvests. They also participate in community activities, including an impressive range of civic, charitable and educational programs. They are leaders as well as independent business people. Farm Bureau's diverse membership is united behind the collective goal of making our communities places where future generations can live and work as successful citizens in our state.

[Paragraph on production agriculture's economic contribution at the county level].

On behalf of the members of (Your) County Farm Bureau, I invite your readers to join us in this worthy initiative. I am certain that we all want to create new opportunities and an improved quality of life for all Floridians. I am equally sure that production agriculture will play a major role in achieving that goal.

Sincerely,