

Urban Myths and Misconceptions about Florida's Greenbelt Law

Compiled by Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Misconception: *Greenbelt is a tax exemption.*

Greenbelt classification is not a tax “exemption.” Properties that are “exempt” pay no taxes at all. Under the Greenbelt Law, properties that are *bona fide* agricultural operations are taxed according to the “use” value of those operations, rather than the development value. Generally, tax assessments for qualifying land are lower than those for other uses. But ... all owners of such property *do* pay taxes.

Misconception: *Developers use Greenbelt to avoid paying taxes on land targeted for development.*

For property to qualify for agricultural classification, land must be used in good faith for *bona fide* commercial agricultural purposes. Greenbelt classification is based on the current use of property, not on future use. Farm Bureau and the agricultural community do not condone abuse of the Greenbelt classification. Enforcement of the Greenbelt law is the responsibility of county property appraisers, who have adequate constitutional authority to curb abuse.

Misconception: *Greenbelt amounts to a subsidy of agriculture by taxpayers.*

Economic studies indicate government services to farmers amount to about 25 cents out of every dollar paid in taxes, whereas homeowners generally receive \$1.50 for every dollar they pay in taxes. That is because farmland and livestock do not require schools, garbage collection, libraries or other public services. In fact, by helping agricultural operations stay in business, Greenbelt allows agriculture to supply green spaces, buffers against development, water recharge and wildlife habitat – all benefits to the public, provided at no public cost.

Misconception: *As urbanization increases in a community, agriculture must almost certainly fade.*

This is demonstrably incorrect. In fact, each of the top three agricultural counties in Florida has a population in excess of one million. The agricultural products produced in these counties are high-value. High non-agricultural land values increase producers' borrowing power, enabling them to grow such commodities.