



# Fast Facts

Vol. 18 No. 8

Timely Communication For Farm Bureau Leaders

July 30, 2010

Published by Florida Farm Bureau • P.O. Box 147030 • Gainesville, FL 32614-7030 • (352) 378-8100 • <FloridaFarmBureau.org>

## EFFORTS ONGOING FOR ESTATE TAX REFORM

FFB National Affairs Coordinator Adam Basford reports that Sens. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., continue to press for consideration of their amendment to raise the estate tax exemption to \$5 million and reduce the top rate to 35 percent. The amendment allows for the phasing in of the exemption and rates over a 10-year period after which it will be indexed for inflation. Sen. Kyl's office reports that there continues to be no agreement on how to move forward with the amendment. At press time, the Lincoln/Kyl amendment was being blocked by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Farmers, ranchers and other family-owned businesses can't afford to wait for estate tax relief. The heirs of people who died this year still don't know their estate tax liability, which makes it difficult for them to settle estates and operate their businesses. If Congress doesn't take up estate tax relief, the result will be the scheduled \$1 million exemption and a top rate of 55 percent, effective Jan. 1, 2011. Farm Bureau will continue to vigorously push for estate tax reform.

## DEADLINE FOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS IS SEPT. 2

County Farm Bureaus have been mailed information packets outlining the procedure for nominating persons to serve on one of Florida Farm Bureau's 15 Advisory Committees. These committees provide advice to the Florida Farm Bureau board of directors on policy or related issues. All nominees must be active Farm Bureau members who are producers of the commodity they are nominated to represent. Nomination forms and full details are available online at <http://floridafarmbureau.org/issues/>. Click on "State Advisory Committee Guidelines" at the bottom of the page. The deadline for submitting nominations is Thursday, Sept. 2. Nominations must be signed by the county Farm Bureau president and submitted by this deadline, as they will be presented at the Sept. 14-15 state board of directors meeting for approval. For more information contact Frankie Hall at (352) 374-1542.

## SMALL FARM LISTENING SESSION SCHEDULED FOR AUG. 3

FFB Assistant Director of Ag Policy Joshua Craft reports that the second and final small farm listening session will be held Aug. 3 from 10 a.m. until 12 noon at the Doyle Conner Building, Eyster Auditorium in Tallahassee. The Florida Food Safety and Food Defense Advisory Council is charged with assessing the food safety requirements for food permits that govern small farm facilities permitted as food establishments. The Council is looking at regulations impacting the sale of goods to the end consumer (farm stand, farmers' markets etc). Two listening sessions were scheduled to gain input from small farmers. The first one was held in Gainesville on July 22. For more information contact Craft at (352) 378-8100 ext. 1091.

## RMA EXPANDS INSURANCE AVAILABILITY

FFB National Affairs Coordinator Adam Basford reports that the Risk Management Agency (RMA) has expanded its Pasture, Rangeland and Forage (PRF) plan of insurance of the 2011 crop year. Under the Rainfall Index plan of insurance, RMA will expand its coverage to all Florida counties. You can visit your crop insurance agent for more information. If you do not have an agent you can find one online by visiting <http://rma.usda.gov/> or by contacting any USDA Service Center.

## ONLINE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE FOR THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING

The 69th Annual Meeting of the Florida Farm Bureau Federation will be held Oct. 13-15 at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort in Daytona Beach. Registration deadline is Sept. 10. You can register and pay online this year at [http://floridafarmbureau.org/annual\\_meeting/](http://floridafarmbureau.org/annual_meeting/). Our theme this year is "Strong Family Farms – Strong Florida," driving home the message that Florida Farm Bureau is the organization that speaks for our family farms. Please make hotel reservations directly by calling (866) 536-8477 or (386) 254-8200. Room rates are \$138 plus tax. You can also make hotel reservations by clicking through to a website from the link listed above. Deadline for hotel reservations is Sept. 17. Contact Shaun Fulford at 352-378-8100, ext. 1030 or [shaun.fulford@ffbf.org](mailto:shaun.fulford@ffbf.org) for further information.

## OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY OIL SPILL

FFB Staff Accountant Becky Barclift reports that the Florida Department of Revenue has announced that taxpayers who have been impacted by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and who are struggling to pay Florida taxes that are due, can visit or call a local service center to discuss options that are

**available on a case-by-case basis.** Some options that may be available are: • Taxpayers may enter into a stipulated payment plan with the department; • the department may waive late filing penalties; • unemployment taxes can be paid by installment plan; • taxpayers may inquire into the applicability of the tax amnesty program that is running from July 1, 2010, to September 30, 2010. Additionally, payments made by British Petroleum to businesses to settle claims for lost revenue are not subject to sales and use tax. These payments are considered to be a claim for damages. Further information for those directly affected by an emergency is available on the department's website: <http://dor.myflorida.com/dor/disasters/>.

### **FFB COUNTY ACTIVITIES OF EXCELLENCE DEADLINE**

**FFB Manager of Public Relations Programs Kathy Richardson reports that the deadline to enter the County Activities of Excellence contest is Sept. 3.** County Farm Bureaus wishing to enter can access program information and applications online at: <http://www.fb.org/programs/countyx/>. For more information please contact Richardson at (352) 374-1533 or [kathy.richardson@ffbf.org](mailto:kathy.richardson@ffbf.org).

### **USDA ANNOUNCES CRP GENERAL SIGN-UP**

**Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that a general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will begin on Aug. 2 and continue through Aug. 27.** During the sign-up period, farmers and ranchers may offer eligible land for CRP's competitive general sign-up at their county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. CRP is a voluntary program that helps farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers use their environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolling in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers in exchange for rental payments, cost-share and technical assistance. CRP protects millions of acres of America's topsoil from erosion and is designed to improve the nation's natural resources base. Participants voluntarily remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production by entering into long-term contracts for 10 to 15 years. In exchange, participants receive annual rental payments and a payment of up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing conservation practices. For more information, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

### **NOMINATE YOUR CERTIFIED CROP ADVISER**

**FFB Manager of Public Relations Programs Kathy Richardson reports that instructions and nomination forms for the 2010 Certified Crop Adviser award are now available.** The winner will be honored at the Florida Farm Bureau annual meeting Oct. 13-15 at the Daytona Beach Hilton. Get information and forms by contacting Richardson at (352) 374-1533 or [kathy.richardson@ffbf.org](mailto:kathy.richardson@ffbf.org). The deadline for submission of nominations is Sept. 1. Completed nomination forms should be sent to: Kathy Richardson, Florida Farm Bureau Federation, P.O. Box 147030, Gainesville, FL 32614-7030. They can also be e-mailed to Richardson at the above address or faxed to (352) 374-1530.

### **USDA REPORT: 98 PERCENT OF U.S. FARMS ARE FAMILY OPERATIONS**

**A report just released by USDA notes that most U.S. farms – 98 percent in 2007 – are family operations, and even the largest farms are predominantly family run.** Large-scale family farms and nonfamily farms account for 12 percent of U.S. farms but 84 percent of the value of production. In contrast, small family farms make up most of the U.S. farm count but produce a modest share of farm output. Small farms are less profitable than large-scale farms, on average, and their operator households tend to rely on off-farm income for their livelihood. The full report, "Structure and Finances of U.S. Farms: Family Farm Report, 2010 Edition" is available online at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB66/>.

### **ORIENTEERING FESTIVAL AT FLORIDA AG MUSEUM**

**The Florida Agricultural Museum and Florida Orienteering are hosting an Open Orienteering Festival on Aug. 14 from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.** Orienteering is the sport of navigation with map and compass. No pre-registration is required. Just show up and have fun. Admission is \$2 per person. There is also a map fee of \$4 for groups of up to 4 people. The compass fee is 50 cents with \$20 deposit against non-return of compass. If you want to buy your own compass before the event, the Museum recommends one with a transparent base plate and liquid fill. The Polaris compass made by Silva costs about \$10 and is readily available in most sporting goods sections. The Museum is located in northeast Flagler County on the corner of Old Kings Road and U.S. Highway One. For more information contact Museum personnel at (386) 446-7630.

### **HEMPHILL HANGS UP HIS GLOVES**

**After 25 years of helping ensure that the "Voice of Florida Agriculture" is heard throughout Florida and beyond, FFB Director of Public Relations Rod Hemphill is retiring from his position effective July 31.** He leaves behind a legacy of fighting to keep Florida's commissioner of agriculture elected, thwarting an ill-conceived tax on Florida's sugar growers and communicating the message that agricultural research is a fundamental necessity. We wish him and wife, Miriam, a long and happy retirement.