



# Fast Facts

Vol. 17 No. 2 Timely Communication For Farm Bureau Leaders February 20, 2009

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

## FLORIDA FARM BUREAU WINS FBACT TRAVELING TROPHY

FFB National Affairs Coordinator Adam Basford reports that Florida Farm Bureau earned the American Farm Bureau Federation FBACT (Farm Bureau's Agricultural Contact Team) traveling trophy that will be proudly displayed in the FFB executive office for the next two years. The trophy was presented to FFB President John Hoblick at the recent AFBF Joint National Leadership Conference in Sacramento. This trophy is presented to the state Farm Bureau that shows the most participation in the FBACT program. FBACT is the system used by constituents to contact members of Congress on issues and proposed legislation.

## FARM LABOR INSPECTIONS TAKING PLACE

FFB Assistant Director of Ag Policy Joshua Craft reports that producers should be aware that the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) has placed 16 investigators throughout the state to conduct routine checks, inspections and investigations of farm labor contractor employees including field sanitation, payment of wages and passenger vehicle safety. The number one priority of the Bureau of Farm Labor is to ensure the protection of farm workers from harmful work situations and exploitation. The investigators are assigned to the following areas: Homestead, Ft. Pierce, Ft. Myers, Belle Glade/Clewiston, Immokalee/Labelle, Sebring/Wauchula, Tampa, Orlando, Gainesville, and Quincy. There is a link to the Florida Farm Labor Contractor Study Guide that is listed on DBPR's Web site. Information in the Study Guide can answer questions regarding DBPR's responsibilities. Go to [http://www.myflorida.com/dbpr/reg/documents/florida\\_farm\\_labor\\_contractor\\_english.pdf](http://www.myflorida.com/dbpr/reg/documents/florida_farm_labor_contractor_english.pdf). For additional information, contact Craft at (352) 538-5807.

## CONGRESSMAN ROONEY TO MEET WITH FARM BUREAU MEMBERS

FFB Assistant Director of Field Services Tom Hill reports that a time has been set when Farm Bureau members can meet with their newly elected Congressman Tom Rooney. The get-together is scheduled for April 7 at 7 p.m. at the Indian River Research and Education Center in Fort Pierce. In order to get a large turnout of ag folks for the meeting with Rooney, Farm Bureau board members in the surrounding counties are being asked to bring friends and relatives along with them. Membership applications will be available for those who are not Farm Bureau members. For more information, contact Hill at (352) 317-6535.

## EUBANKS AND BRASWELL JOIN FFB STAFF

Scot Eubanks and Staci Braswell are the newest members of Florida Farm Bureau's staff. Braswell is the new Director of Local Governmental Affairs. She is originally from Highlands County and is a graduate of the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the Levin College of Law. Eubanks is a new assistant director of ag policy. He is working with the beef, sod and aquaculture committees as well as being the point person for those commodities. A seventh generation Floridian, Eubanks is a 2006 graduate of the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

## 2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE RELEASED

Jeff Gueder, director of the Florida Agricultural Statistics Service, visited with Florida Farm Bureau staff earlier this week to talk about some of the findings of the recently released 2007 Census of Agriculture. Among the findings are an 8 percent increase in the number of farms in Florida since the last census was released five years ago. And although the number of farms has increased, agricultural acreage in the state has declined by about 11 percent during the same time period. In 2007 the census counted 47,463 farms in Florida comprising a little over 9.2 million acres. In 2002 the correlating figures were 44,081 farms covering about 10.4 million acres. Gueder pointed out several interesting results of the census, including one statistic that showed the number of family farms in Florida had increased more than 7 percent during the past five years. Family farms, as defined by U.S.D.A., comprise nearly 84 percent of the total number of farms in Florida. For more information and access to an online version of the census, click to <http://agcensus.usda.gov>.

## WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT PERMIT DEADLINE APPROACHING

FFB Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs Charles Shinn reports that if you are using Lake Okeechobee Service Area surface water for irrigation purposes, you must submit a

**permit application to the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Water Use Department by February 27 or run the risk of losing the right to use water and miss the opportunity to obtain a water use permit with 20 year duration.** Failure to renew a water use permit could also result in enforcement action that could include fines and a requirement to obtain the necessary permit. If an application is received prior to the permit expiration, the permit will remain in force past the expiration date until final agency action on the application is taken. Additional information is available by calling the SFWMD Permitting Hotline at (800) 462-5260.

### **WOMEN'S CONFERENCE SLATED FOR APRIL 3-5**

**FFB Women's Coordinator Shaun Fulford reports that the 2009 State Women's Leadership Conference has been scheduled for April 3-5 in Coral Springs.** The conference will kick-off with a county women's chair luncheon and training session led by Matt DeMarco of the American Farm Bureau Federation. A welcome reception will be held for all conference attendees on Friday evening. On Saturday participants can attend two workshops designed to empower Farm Bureau women as a strong voice for Florida agriculture. Attendees can tour South Florida agricultural areas during the afternoon. Saturday night's banquet will be the setting for the presentation of the Women's Fund Awards. On Sunday, after a devotional, a discussion of the Florida Ag In The Classroom program is planned. The conference will conclude with an inspirational keynote address from Jane Jenkins Herlong entitled "Bury Me With My Pearls." Farm Bureau has arranged for bus transportation from Gainesville to Coral Springs on Friday morning for those women attending from the north end of the state. More information will be forthcoming regarding conference registration. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Fulford at: (352) 378-8100, ext. 1030.

### **AG ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP NOMINATIONS SOUGHT**

**The deadline for submitting nominations for Commissioner Charles Bronson's 2009 Agriculture Environmental Leadership Awards is April 1.** Now in its 16th year, the awards recognize environmentally innovative farming practices of the state's growers and ranchers. The program honors agricultural producers who demonstrate a dedication to preserving the environment and conserving natural resources while helping ensure a continuing supply of food and fiber. Since its inception, the awards program has recognized cattle, dairy, fruit and vegetable, small grain, sod, nursery, tropical fish, citrus and timber producers. The selection process begins with a nomination form. Nominees then are judged by an independent committee that includes representatives from major agricultural groups, environmental organizations and government agencies. To obtain a nomination form or to receive more information about the program, visit <http://www.florida-agriculture.com/agenvironmental/index.htm> or contact Stacey Dallis Reese at (850) 488-3731.

### **NEW FARM BUREAU INSURANCE RACING WEB SITE**

**Want to know a little bit more about Florida Farm Bureau's NASCAR sponsorship?** Then click on to <http://farmbureauinsuranceracing.com>. There is a lot of interesting stuff on the site including videos, photos, race information, downloads of computer wallpaper, kids coloring pages etc. While there you can even sign up for the Farm Bureau Insurance Racing Newsletter.

### **EMPLOYEE VERIFICATION RULE DELAYED**

**A rule that revises the list of documents eligible for use in the I-9 employment verification process has been delayed.** The rule, which was originally to be effective Feb. 2, will now take effect on April 3. The U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services has reopened the public comment period until March 4. The interim final rule represents a further step by Homeland Security (DHS) in tightening requirements for employers and prospective employees in the hiring process. The revisions eliminate certain acceptable documents from the list of "A Documents" (those establishing both identify and work authorization). More importantly, the rule that states that DHS will no longer accept expired documents and the rule may require employers to re-verify employees whose documents have expired. Information about the changes, including a copy of the Employer's Handbook, may be found at: <http://www.uscis.gov/>.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**The Dade County Agri Council Agricultural Tour is scheduled for Feb. 25, leaving from the Dade/IFAS Cooperative Extension Office in Homestead.** A luncheon is also scheduled at the Redland Golf and Country Club. For more information call (305) 281-6602. • • • **Farm Bureau Day** is scheduled for March 17 at the Leon County Civic Center in Tallahassee. For more information contact **Chris Scovotto** at (850) 222-2557. • • • **The Field to the Hill** trip to Washington, D.C., is scheduled for May 11-13. For more information, contact **Adam Basford** at (352) 378-8100, ext. 1449. • • • **The Florida Agriculture in the Classroom's 2009 State Teacher and Volunteer Workshop is scheduled for June 18-20 at the Daytona Beach Resort & Spa.** The deadline to register is May 22. For more information contact Lisa Gaskalla, (352) 846-1391.