



Fast Facts

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Timely Communication For Farm Bureau Leaders

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FIELD TO THE HILL A ROUSING SUCCESS

FFB National Affairs Coordinator Adam Basford reports that, earlier this month, 60 Farm Bureau members from around the state took time away from their farms, families and businesses to lobby their congressional representatives on issues that are important to Florida agriculture. And, quite impressively, members of the group managed to visit the offices of every member of Florida's 27-person congressional delegation. Said FFB President John Hoblick, "Our group of volunteer leaders and staff returned knowing that we made a difference."

LOOP PROGRAM SELECTS FIRST SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Loop Legislative Internship Program, established by Florida Farm Bureau in honor of Carl B. Loop, Jr., has selected its first scholarship recipients. They are: Ashley Allen of Fort Meade who is interning in Congressman Adam Putnam's District Office in Bartow; Vivian Christmas of Tallahassee who is interning in Congressman Cliff Stearns' Washington office and; Brady Revels of Bushnell who is interning with CropLife America in Washington, D.C. Full-time UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences undergraduate or graduate students who are interested in applying for assistance to support federal or state legislative internships during the fall semester can go online for an application and more information at <http://cals.ufl.edu/careerresources/>. The application deadline is June 26.

IFAS HAVING TO ABSORB CUTS

The good news is that in a year where the state of Florida was facing a \$6 billion deficit, cuts to the IFAS budget were much less than were projected at one time. In addition, IFAS was treated fairly and not cut disproportionately to the rest of the state university system. The less-than-good news is that IFAS received a 6 percent net reduction to its base budget equivalent to approximately \$7.7 million. This reduction is in addition to the more than 10 percent cut that occurred over the last two years. The cuts will impact research, Extension and teaching programs and will result in a significant loss in staff and faculty. The cuts will be implemented in a manner that has the least effect on priority programs. To help IFAS defer the impact of these cuts and ease the transition to its new lower base budget, it will receive \$8.9 million of non-recurring federal stimulus funding to be used over the next 12 months.

FARMERS URGED TO KEEP TRACK OF LOSSES

As a result of recent heavy rains in several areas of Florida, Florida Farm Bureau is urging farmers to take some immediate steps to begin establishing crop insurance claims. The disaster relief program contained in the new farm bill may offer some eventual assistance to stricken producers, but under the new administration, rules for that program have yet to be implemented. FFB Assistant to the President Pat Cockrell said there are four steps the farmers should take immediately; • contact the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in their county; • document damage by taking photographs; • prepare to file a claim if they have crop insurance; • contact district offices of their congressional representative as well as the offices of Sens. Bill Nelson and Mel Martinez. "Florida Farm Bureau has also contacted these offices and we are in close contact with the Farm Service Agency," Cockrell said. This will be the first time Florida producers have sought assistance under the disaster program set up under the new farm bill. Previously, disaster relief required congressional action and an appropriation. The new disaster process is aimed at making a pool of dollars available so producers would not have to go through the appropriation process.

BUCKLEY JOINS FAMA TEAM

Brian Buckley of Brooksville has joined the staff of the Leesburg-based Florida Agricultural Marketing Association (FAMA) as manager of the Direct Marketing Division. Buckley will oversee the Farm Bureau Buyers Club, which distributes agricultural products from Florida and other states to Farm Bureau members through county Farm Bureaus. Buckley, who is originally from Gainesville, holds a marketing degree from the University of Florida. He represents the seventh generation of a family that has been deeply involved in Florida's agriculture industry, from forestry to cattle production. He and his wife, Bertha, have a two-year-old daughter, Grace.

LIGHTSEY CHOSEN AS FARMER OF THE YEAR

Cary Lightsey, a Lake Wales man, has been named the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Ag Expo's 2009 Florida Farmer of the Year. The award recognizes Lightsey's outstanding accomplishments in producing

food and fiber, as well as his superior management of natural resources. As the Florida winner, Lightsey will be eligible for selection as the Southeastern Farmer of the Year. Nine other state finalists will compete with him for the coveted prize.

WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT APPROVES U.S. SUGAR PURCHASE

FFB Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs Charles Shinn reports that earlier this month the South Florida Water Management District governing board approved the revised purchase agreement with U.S. Sugar Corporation (USSC) with only one dissenting vote. The new agreement calls for the purchase of approximately 73,000 acres with options to purchase the remaining 107,000 acres of USSC's land during the next 10 years. The purchase price is \$536 million. Also revised are the lease terms with which USSC can lease back the property to continue to farm sugarcane. The new lease rate is \$150 per acre for seven years, with provisions to extend the leases up to 20 years. The lessee will be required to pay all property taxes and assessments, control the land for exotic and invasive plants and implement best management practices. The revised plan is still subject to bond validation and financing.

COLLEGIATE FARM BUREAU SELECTS LEADERS

Florida's Collegiate Farm Bureau has selected its 2009-2010 leadership team. Members are Jamie Fussell, president; Ashley Young, vice president ; Hilary Webb, secretary; Sarah Burleson, reporter and; Michael Rogalsky, treasurer. Congratulations to these exceptional young leaders.

HALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson has announced that nominations are now being accepted for candidates to the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2010. The deadline for submitting nominations is Sept. 1. "The Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame was created to honor Florida's agricultural pioneers and leaders," Bronson said. Nomination forms may be requested by calling (813) 628-4551, or by writing: Chairman, Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Foundation, 100 South Mulrennan Road, Valrico, Florida 33594. The fax number for nomination forms is (813) 385-5141. Nomination forms are also available online at <http://www.flaghalloffame.com>.

FARM TO FUEL CONFERENCE WILL HAPPEN THIS SUMMER

Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson has announced that he is hosting this year's "Farm to Fuel" summit from July 29-31 at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando. For the fourth year in a row, hundreds of industry leaders in agriculture, energy, academia, banking and finance and government will gather to hear from a broad array of experts. Last July, Bronson's third Florida "Farm to Fuel" summit attracted nearly 500 participants. Highlights of the summit will include a keynote address by Gov. Charlie Crist. Participants will hear about various efforts to produce biofuels and renewable energy as well as the role of agriculture and forestry in a reduced carbon economy. Bronson believes that Florida can lead the nation in the production of renewable energy as a result of its mild climate, abundant sunshine, ample rainfall and long growing season. Information about the "Farm to Fuel" initiative and the upcoming summit can be found at <http://www.floridafarmtofuel.com>.

YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS WILL MEET IN CRYSTAL RIVER

There's still time to register for the 2009 State Young Farmer & Rancher Leadership Conference scheduled for July 18-19 at the Plantation Inn in Crystal River. Registration is \$75 for adults and \$30 for children. The registration deadline is Friday, June 19. Financial assistance may be available. For more information, contact **Shaun Fulford** at (352) 378-8100, Ext. 1030.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

A workshop on the **USDA Value Added Producer Grant Program** is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, from 10 am-noon at the Hillsborough County Extension Office Auditorium in Seffner. This workshop will help participants learn more about value-added agriculture, opportunities that may exist locally, and how to apply for USDA Value-Added Producer Grants. This workshop is free but seating is limited. Please register by calling **Alayna Shiver** at (813) 272-5909. • • • **The Suwannee River Basin CARES program** will host a recognition dinner on June 25 at Dwight Stansel's farm near Wellborn in Suwannee County beginning at 5 p.m. For more information, contact **Scot Eubanks** at: (352) 384-2633. • • • Field trials, demonstrations of irrigation systems and meetings with seed company representatives are on tap for the **2009 Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition's Field Day** on Tuesday, July 7. The event will be held at the Expo's site in Moultrie, Ga. For more information, call: (229) 985-1968 or go online to <http://www.sunbeltexpo.com>. • • • UF/IFAS will host a **Conference on Small Farms** on Aug. 1-2 at the Osceola Heritage Park in Kissimmee. Florida Farm Bureau is a sponsor of this event. The theme of the conference is: "Sustaining Small Farms; Strengthening Florida's Communities." Regular registration for both days of the conference (by July 6) is \$120. Conference registration information is available by going online to <http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/>. For more information, contact **Frankie Hall** at 352-374-1542.