



# Fast Facts

Vol. 16 No. 10 Timely Communication For Farm Bureau Leaders September 19, 2008

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

## STATE BOARD NOMINATES HOBlick AND ROTH

Florida Farm Bureau's board of directors, sitting as the nominating committee, has nominated **John L. Hoblick** for re-election as president and **Rick Roth** for re-election as vice president. The election will take place at the Florida Farm Bureau annual meeting, Oct. 8-10 at the Peabody Hotel in Orlando. Hoblick, a Volusia county fern producer, was elected president in October 2006. He has served on the state board of directors since 1994 and was elected board secretary in 2000. Roth operates a vegetable and sugar cane farm and packinghouse in Belle Glade. He has served on the board since 1997 and as vice president since 2000.

## GROWERS URGED TO COMMENT ON SOIL FUMIGANT RULES

Florida Farm Bureau is urging Florida growers to submit comments to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting the agency reevaluate its proposed reregistration eligibility decisions for several important soil fumigants. The EPA has extended the comment period through Oct. 30. "Soil fumigants are vital tools for Florida farmers who raise food crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, strawberries, carrots and peppers – all important crops here in Florida," said **FFB President John L. Hoblick**. "An extension of the comment period gives growers an enhanced opportunity to present their side of the story, including the possible impacts on food prices and supplies, and to suggest modifications to the proposed rules." The rule on soil fumigants pertains to such pesticides as Chloropicrin, Dazomet, metam sodium/potassium and methyl bromide. Without the use of these fumigants, yields would be reduced, the labor needed would be increased and grower profitability would be decreased. The Federal Register notice can be found at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-16266.htm>. EPA has indicated that, based on the comments it receives, it may modify the rule or some of the mitigation measures it has published. Farm Bureau will file additional comments to the agency on the rules and their potential impact.

## FARM-CITY WEEK COST SHARE FUNDS AGAIN AVAILABLE

FFB Manager of Public Relations Programs **Kathy Richardson** reports that the state organization will again partner with county Farm Bureaus to promote Farm-City Week and Farm Bureau in general. As has been the practice for the past two years, Florida Farm Bureau is offering a 50-50 cost-share program where counties will be able to purchase advertisements (generally 1/4 page) in daily, weekly or community newspapers or radio spots in some markets. Ads must run the week before Farm-City Week or during Farm City Week. This year Farm-City Week is Nov. 21-27. Deadline to apply for the cost share is Oct. 17. Please contact Richardson at (352) 374-1533 or [Kathy.Richardson@ffbf.org](mailto:Kathy.Richardson@ffbf.org) for more information or to participate in this program.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THOSE GROWING ORGANIC CROPS

Florida Organic Growers (FOG), with support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is operating a program that provides free technical assistance to Florida farmers who commit to transition to organic production or reduce pesticide use. Participants are paired with crop advisors experienced in organic approaches to pest and disease control, soil fertility management and other important aspects of successful fruit and vegetable production. Participating growers can: • Attend field days at successful organic farms; • Access information from FOG concerning market opportunities for transitional and organic produce; • Attend informational workshops and seminars; • Receive answers to organic certification questions. To receive an application, call (352) 377-6345, e-mail [matt@foginfo.org](mailto:matt@foginfo.org) or visit <http://www.foginfo.org>.

## FOUR AMENDMENTS YOU WON'T FIND ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

A U.S. District Judge recently said that he would not overturn state constitutional requirements in order to put **Hometown Democracy amendment on the November 2008 ballot**. The initiative would have had voters deciding on all changes that elected officials made to local comprehensive plans. In related news, the Florida Supreme Court has **unanimously barred three proposed state constitutional amendments from appearing on the November ballot**. Amendment 5 would have done away with most school property taxes. The Legislature then would have had to come up with money from other sources, including higher sales taxes, to make up for the loss. Opponents had argued it would lead to increased sales taxes, endanger school funding and result in a major tax increase to those who don't own property. Amendments 7 and 9 dealt with the use of public funding for churches or sectarian institu-

tions, and permitted the use of public money for school tuition vouchers while requiring a certain level of school funding to be used for instruction. The amendments were floated by the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission, a panel that meets once every 20 years. Justices indicated they would not entertain a request for a rehearing.

### DEADLINE LOOMS FOR TEACHER GRANTS

**The deadline for the 2008-2009 Florida Agriculture in the Classroom teacher grants is Wednesday, Oct. 1.** The program strives to fund classroom projects that teach Florida school children about the importance of agriculture and introduce them to agricultural producers and representatives in their areas. Applications and guidelines can be found online at <http://www.agtag.org>. For more information contact **Melissa Thrasher** at (352) 846-1391.

### ST. JOHNS RIVER RESTORATION PLAN ENDORSED

**FFB Director of Government and Community Affairs Mary Ann Gosa reports that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Monday announced the endorsement of the Lower St. Johns River Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) by the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Executive Committee.** The plan, developed in partnership with local industry, cities, counties, the St. Johns River Water Management District, environmental groups and other stakeholders, is a comprehensive road map to restoring and protecting water quality in the Lower St. Johns River Basin. Its implementation will benefit the segment of the St. Johns River that flows between the mouth of the Ocklawaha River, its largest tributary, and the Atlantic Ocean. Public comment on the plan will be accepted through Sept. 30. For more information, go online to <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/northeast/stjohns/>.

### TIDBITS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Water and Natural Resources Advisory Committee** – Chairman **Tom Braddock** thanked **FFB President John Hoblick** for his help on the IFAS budget. Hoblick told the committee that he was just a voice for the many members who called, wrote letters and emails regarding their concern.

**Aquaculture Advisory Committee** – Proposed new policy on sturgeon farming: “We support the development of sturgeon farming through continued research on captive propagation and husbandry practices. ... We recommend amending the Endangered Species Act to allow free interstate and international commerce of legitimately grown or harvested sturgeon products. ...”

**Sugar Advisory Committee** – **Mary Ann Gosa** informed the committee of the latest lawsuit filed by Earth Justice forcing the state of Florida to set numeric nutrient criteria for all bodies of water. Currently, the state operates under narrative standards. **Andrew Walmsley** reported on energy and renewable fuel issues including Renewable Fuel Standards, Renewable Portfolio Standards and carbon credit trading.

**Dairy Advisory Committee** – **Dr. Geoff Dahl**, UF Animal Science Department, said that IFAS had a 6 percent budget cut that was closer to 15 percent at the department level. The Animal Science Unit lost nine permanent positions. Most of the cuts were in the area of clerical and support staff. Any further cuts will come in the area of upper staff.

**Sod Advisory Committee** – In addition to recommending modifications to several policies relating to sod and turfgrass, the committee is recommending one new policy relating to water: “We oppose legislation that would single out one agricultural commodity as a means to conserve water.”

**Peanut/Cotton Advisory Committee** – **Ed Barnes**, Cotton Inc., reminded producers to complete the cotton survey. It can be filled out online at [www.cottoninc.com/survey](http://www.cottoninc.com/survey). Proposed new policy relating to farm income: “Future farm policy should be based on or take into consideration production cost.”

**Vegetable Advisory Committee** – Proposed new policy relating to surplus farm products: “We strongly encourage the state to fund the Florida Association of Food Banks to utilize surplus Florida farm products to feed needy Americans.”

**Labor Advisory Committee** – **Joan Prado**, U.S. Labor Department, gave the committee a presentation on the department’s general enforcement program. Proposed new policy relating to insurance: “We oppose government mandated employer provided health insurance.”

**Beef Advisory Committee** – The committee expressed its concern about the unfair fine that has been placed on Central Meat Packing Plant in Center Hill and asked Farm Bureau to meet with DEP and explain how important this plant is to the survival to the Florida and Southeast beef industry.

**Forestry Advisory Committee** – Three new proposed policies: • “We support increasing truck weight limits to facilitate the movement of Florida ag and timber products from farm to market.” • “We support the forest management element of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in the Farm Bill and we encourage enhancement of landowner incentive programs.” • “We support the inclusion of timber and other renewable resources when defining biomass.”

**Citrus Advisory Committee** – Two new proposed policies: • “Slowing the spread of disease due to abandoned or unmanaged groves is an important issue to the citrus industry. Florida Farm Bureau should work with the appropriate agencies to find ways to address this issue without unduly infringing on private property rights.” • “Because of the exceptional nutritional value that Florida’s citrus products provide, we urge the use of fresh Florida orange and grapefruit juice in single serve plastic containers in the public school system.”