



## FLORIDA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

THE VOICE OF AGRICULTURE

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March 12, 2019

The Honorable Francis Rooney  
120 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Rooney:

As our state's largest agricultural organization, we strongly and respectfully disagree with your characterization of agriculture in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) as a "menace." This is simply inconsistent with the values and contributions of agriculture to Florida's economic and cultural wellbeing.

According to data compiled by researchers at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, farms in the EAA and surrounding areas generate an enormous economic contribution for local communities. Recognized as the winter breadbasket of the nation, EAA growers harvest large volumes of nutritious foods such as rice, leafy greens, corn, bell peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, herbs and other vegetables. Without their abundant production, U.S. consumers would be more dependent upon foreign imports for their daily meals between December and April.

Furthermore, most of the farm operations in the EAA and throughout South Florida are family-owned and operated. Many of them live on properties that have been carefully maintained for multiple generations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that 95 percent of all agricultural properties in our state are family-owned. The goal of these family farms is sustainability in business as well as in natural resource management. They must achieve this dual goal to survive, and they have implemented advanced techniques to enhance water quality and reduce water use, as well as slashed the phosphorus content by 70 percent.

We recognize that there is more to do – by all residents. The water issues we face are collective challenges. They are not a problem caused simply because of the presence of farms in the EAA or in any other part of South Florida.

I sincerely hope you will consider an opportunity to meet with me and our staff, as well as the growers in your district, to produce shared solutions for our state's ongoing environmental challenges.

Best Regards,

John L. Hoblick  
President