



UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

Florida Small Farms Alternative Enterprises Conference

<http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu>

"Sustaining Small Farms; Strengthening Florida's Communities"

August 1 & 2, 2009

Osceola Heritage Park, Kissimmee Florida

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Commissioner Spotlight: The Commissioner's Spotlight is from Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson and is about the Small Farms and Alternative Enterprise Conference being held in Kissimmee on August 1st and 2nd.

Last updated: 05/13/2009

Introduction

The vast majority of Florida's nearly 47,463 farms are classified as small farms. Calculated on an area or on an economic basis, nearly 90% of all Florida farms are small farms. Recent increased efforts to meet the educational needs of small farmers in Florida became visible through the work of the University of Florida/IFAS and Florida A&M University Small Farms Focus Team. Efforts have included the development of an extensive website specifically targeted at small farmer needs. The site (<http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu>) receives over 70,000 hits monthly and includes a calendar of small farms events. A series of regional small farms conferences were initiated in 2006. At least a dozen regional conferences are held annually and in addition, many other county or local programs are being held now. These programs are being attended by a few thousand people annually.

As the success of the local and regional meetings, became very apparent, a common question has also emerged from the small farmers. That question is how can we get more information and get to the "next level"? Although the

regional educational programs have been successful in satisfying many educational needs, all Florida small farmers are faced with similar challenges of (economics: land, gas, inputs) increasing regulatory pressures, challenges of marketing, etc. so that by coming together as a diverse group, solutions can be identified. This has brought us to the stage of starting a statewide small farms conference for Florida.

The Conference will be useful and important to small farmers, allied industry representatives, researchers, educators, institutional members, policy-makers, small farm commodity associations, foundations, and other interested in strengthening the small farm community in Florida.

The Conference includes many activities that benefit small farmers including:

- A general educational session to attract well known speakers on topics of broad interest.
- Concurrent educational sessions (presentations, workshops, hands-on demonstration, and discussion groups) will be provided to share results of groundbreaking research and provide educational support for producers to operate sustainable and profitable enterprises.
- A large exhibition area to introduce new products and technologies to small producers will be available. Industry suppliers, allied organizations, educational groups, funding agencies, foundations, and other allied industry representatives with services for small farmers will be encouraged to participate.
- Other activities will include other creative ways to facilitate farmer networking at the Conference.
- All these activities in total will help facilitate networking, dialog, and visioning among members of the Florida small farms community, and to increase awareness of the small farms industry to decision makers, supporting institutions, and the general public.

Go Green

We are excited to provide Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference participants the option to offset their carbon dioxide emissions as they travel to the conference. Visit www.carbonfund.org, and select "Start Offsetting Now", determine how much CO2 your tip will generate, and make a donation.

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For Further Information

Educational Program Content

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