

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS)
Office of the Senior Vice President
Agriculture and Natural Resources

PO Box 110180
Gainesville, FL 32611-0180
352-392-1971
352-392-6932 Fax

September 20, 2013

Dear Friends,

We write to share with you news about the future of the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) in Immokalee, Florida. Our hope is to clarify some information and correct some misinformation that is circulating in the community.

First, the SWFREC is not closing but transitioning to a new role.

UF/IFAS will continue to have a presence in the region and serve all agricultural stakeholders. Over the next year, an advisory committee consisting of external stakeholders and UF/IFAS faculty and staff will assess the needs of the local community and develop a plan to effectively serve those needs. One possibility is the creation of a UF/IFAS demonstration site.

At a demonstration site, we utilize multiple means to engage clientele in ways that help them learn about the latest varieties, methods, strategies and technologies that positively affect profitability and sustainability. It is clear from our existing demonstration sites (Hastings and Live Oak) that what makes this process effective is the collaborative spirit and approach that is adopted. This participatory engagement has been highly valuable for UF/IFAS Extension and our clientele where it has already been implemented. The impact of this transition is a shift in personnel. As the future plans for the operation are developed we will have a better idea of the complete personnel requirements.

UF/IFAS remains steadfast in its commitment to serving agricultural producers in southwest Florida and providing research based solutions to our most pressing problems. We believe that this new direction will result in better service to our community stakeholders. We remain committed to this region, to both residents and agricultural producers, and have no intention of wavering in that commitment.

Sincerely,



Jack Payne
Senior Vice President



John Hayes
Dean for Research



Nick Place
Dean for Extension