



SERVING AGRICULTURE STAKEHOLDERS AND RESIDENTS OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA: A NEW VISION FOR UF/IFAS SOUTHWEST RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

Background

UF/IFAS operates the Southwest Research and Education Center in Immokalee, Florida focusing on citrus, vegetable, horticulture, entomology, soil and water science and plant pathology research and Extension programs. There is currently duplication of resources at the Immokalee Center, Lake Alfred, Gulf Coast and Indian River Research and Education Centers. There is also a desire to better serve stakeholders by consolidating research and education programs at other RECs in south Florida and evaluating what programming best serves southwest Florida interests.

A Vision for the Future

- The SWFREC will be transitioned to become an UF/IFAS Extension demonstration area, addressing key issues and needs of the agricultural community and related areas in the region.
- The new UF/IFAS Extension demonstration area will be built on a model paralleling the successful programs in Hastings and Live Oak.
- To be successful, the future vision for the UF/IFAS resources at Immokalee should have strong stakeholder input and buy-in.
- An Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Charles Vavrina, UF/IFAS District Extension Director and Scott Taylor, Director of Operations UF/IFAS Hastings Partnership, and consisting of agricultural and community stakeholders will be appointed to craft and refine the vision for the Center moving forward.
- The advisory committee will be appointed in fall 2013 and charged to submit recommendations by early spring 2014.

Next Steps

- **Timing:** To accommodate the programmatic, infrastructural, and personnel transitions, the center will cease operation as a Research and Education Center as of September 1, 2014. This would enable trials to be completed, most of the graduate student projects to be completed, and for staff to have the opportunity to find alternative employment or new residency.
- **UF/IFAS Human Resources:** HR will work with all staff to ensure the best possible transition.
- **Faculty:** Faculty will be reassigned to other research and education centers as appropriate.
- **Leadership:** John Arthington will provide leadership at the center during this transition.