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FFVA Headquarters

EMERGING TIMES

... growing toward the future

Emerging leaders get a firsthand look at FFVA during second session



Class 4 toured Taylor Farms' processing facility and deli operations in Orlando on the final day of their session.



Members of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program met at FFVA's Maitland office for their second session in November, which focused on major issues facing the industry and the work of FFVA. Activities included an overview of how the association operates, presentations from staff members and activities designed

to help class members get to know themselves and each other better.

Class members wrapped up the session by touring Taylor Farms' Florida processing facility and deli operations in Orlando.



A comprehensive introduction to FFVA



by Meghan Pasken
Glades Crop Care

The first presentation of our Maitland trip was a comprehensive introduction to FFVA presented by President Mike Stuart and Alan Hair, CFO of FFVA. It felt as though we were a group of savvy investors in the board room of a corporate giant as we reclined in our leather chairs and were very respectfully welcomed into the FFVA inner circle. We were presented with detailed business specifics as we viewed flow charts of the different committee structures and pie charts reflecting revenue and expense summaries for the last year. We came to know the responsibilities of the board members and the roles of the 30 FFVA staff members, as well as many other organizational particulars. It was a lot of information to take in all at once, but some of the most enlightening discoveries were how much work FFVA is doing to plan for its future and the future of Florida agriculture. The business-like structure and partnerships that FFVA has established over the years have made and will keep making more resources available to its members.

Class 4 was surprised to discover that there were both a travel service and insurance company that largely contribute to the assets FFVA is able to make available to its members. FFVA Mutual specializes in providing workers compensation insurance and has experienced noteworthy growth and expansion into 10 states since its inception in 1956. Florida East Coast Travel Services (FLECTS), another FFVA subsidiary, has been providing seasonal workers for American companies for over 42 years. FLECTS processes temporary workers from Mexico, Jamaica, the greater Caribbean and South America. FLECTS served 305 agricultural employers in 17 states during the past year and processed over 8,000 H-2A farm workers in 2012.

The symbiotic relationships that FFVA has with FFVA Mutual, FLECTS, and its other



The first presentation was from FFVA President Mike Stuart and CFO Alan Hair who welcomed the group and gave them a complete overview of how the association operates.

subsidiaries afford the organization the flexibility of a diversified revenue stream that ultimately benefits its members by reducing dependence on member dues and fees. Stuart explained that FFVA is a non-profit organization but is not tax exempt, therefore expenses have to be managed as within any other business - another reason why it is important to spread risk and have partners in other industries.

Stuart also spoke about Third Party Registrations, which is a not-for-profit service FFVA provides that helps its producer members secure registrations for chemicals that could be used in specialty crops. FFVA facilitates communications between the grower and chemical manufacturer once a grower demonstrates the need for a particular product. The process provides protection to the pesticide manufacturer and distributor for any crop damage and non-performance liability in return for the right to register products for which Florida fruit and vegetable growers

have a critical need.

I believe I can speak for my peers when I say that we were blown away by the degree of transparency that Stuart and Hair shared with us. We were flattered that they were willing to share so many details of the inner workings of the association with us. The complexity of the organization was very intriguing but at the center it was all about being able to pursue the opportunities that provide the depth of knowledge and action-ready solutions that its members depend on.



Gen-Next Growers targets up-and-coming farmers



by Dan Bott
Premier Citrus Management

During our meeting with *Florida Grower* editor Frank Giles, he introduced the group to GenNext Growers, a social media site founded by the *American Fruit Grower*, *American Vegetable Grower* and *Florida Grower* magazines.

The GenNext Growers Initiative was founded in 2013 to help identify, inform and inspire the next generation of specialty crop growers who were born after 1970, have or are assuming farm leadership roles, are passionate about producing high-quality specialty crops and seek to be advocates for their industry.

The initiative aims to identify, develop and promote the best practices of the nation's most promising up-and-coming specialty crop growers, to help pull together and bring a national voice to the many national, state, and regional young grower programs currently under way, and to ensure a smooth generational transition and the long-term viability of America's fruit, vegetable and citrus industries.

GenNext Growers Initiative is a national resource to recognize and foster the best practices of up-and-coming fruit, vegetable, and citrus growers. The goal of GenNext is to create a network of emerging leaders in the agriculture industry that will help young farmers open a dialogue across the nation within their emerging leader peer group to share ideas and become more engaged with issues facing the industry today and in the future.

True colors hones in on personality traits



by John Beuttenmuller
Florida Foundation
Seed Producers, Inc.

We were fortunate to spend an excellent afternoon with Dr. Hannah Carter, director of the University of Florida's Wedgworth Leadership Institute. Quite frankly, Dr. Carter proved to be the best post-lunch speaker! She led an interactive session that centered on personality discovery through use of the "True Colors" method. This method categorizes personalities based on four colors – orange, blue, green and gold. Although everyone possesses a little bit of each color in his or her personality, it was interesting to see that each class member had characteristics that put them into one of the color categories. Dr. Carter discussed the importance of understanding our own personality and those of others because they affect our decisions and interactions with each other.

Once we separated into our respective colors, we engaged in an exercise to develop a theoretical marketing campaign targeting new members for FFVA. After we developed our campaigns, we presented them to the rest of the class. This exercise was interesting, because each group's campaign had components that were directly related to the strengths of their personalities. Dr. Carter then walked us through a comparison of perceived strengths and weaknesses of each color or personality group. This process was very impactful, because it will allow each of us to consider each person's personality to leverage their strengths to build productive relationships and teams.

Dr. Carter concluded the session with a discussion that allowed our class to think critically about characteristics of leadership and the skills that are important for leaders to possess. This afternoon session was very informative and gave us all an excellent chance to better understand ourselves and each other as we continue to develop as leaders.

NVDMC helps citrus industry survive and compete



by John Alderman
Duda Farm Fresh Foods

On Day 2 of our introduction to FFVA in Maitland, we met Peter Chaires. He is the executive director of New Varieties Development and Management Corp. and executive vice president of the Florida Citrus Packers Association. His presentation "Restore and Maintain Competitive Position of Florida Citrus: Issues and Challenges of the Fresh Citrus Segment," was an overview of the new varieties that the NVDMC is researching and implementing. The organization researches and identifies new Florida citrus varieties on behalf of growers. It can also acquire varieties from a variety of outlets. The group analyzes, evaluates and licenses the varieties. Some of the varieties that really resonated with the group were the seedless, or mostly seedless, varieties of mandarin/tangerine types that can be grown in Florida to compete with the California and imported mandarin/clementine.

Variety development is not limited to fresh fruit varieties. There were a number of varieties in the presentation targeted for the processed side of the business as well. The presentation also detailed how the association helps growers implement trials through its FAST TRACK program. FAST TRACK is a way of moving experimental fresh fruit selection to the Florida grower for non-commercial evaluation. The program involves nursery participation and the royalty rates are fixed. It's a way for the grower to reduce future royalty rates and get a head start on a possible variety of the future. Chaires and the NVDMC provide an invaluable resource to the Florida citrus grower to compete and survive in an ever-evolving business.



Florida tomatoes: Present and future outlook



by Matt Griffin
Lipman Produce

Over the course of the few days the class spent at FFVA's office in Maitland, we were able to get a deeper understanding of the organization as whole. Along with that, we also got to hear about challenges and opportunities facing the industry.

Florida Tomato Exchange Executive Vice President Reggie Brown presented an overview of the tomato industry. The theme was supposed to cover the industry's present and future. However, Brown did more. Using humor and his wry wit, Brown laid out the history and foundation of the industry that we've been building on for years. As a new-comer to Lipman and the tomato industry, I took a lot away from this and I believe it helped put things into perspective for me.

The presentation also covered trade, genetics, food safety and social accountability.

As with other commodities, genetics have allowed the consumer to have a broader selection to choose from at the grocery store. That was made evident by the diverse collection of tomatoes that Brown displayed. Truly, a large part of the success of the industry is the constant need and willingness to adapt and evolve and look for new opportunities in the area of plant genetics. In addition, Brown stressed the importance of good food safety practices. Food safety is a never-ending process for all who are involved in handling food that our parents, children, neighbors and friends eventually will enjoy. When there are foodborne illness outbreaks, it not only harms that company or sector but the industry as a whole. In terms of social accountability, today's consumers are demanding more knowledge about the products they're receiving. This includes wages and treatment of workers who help get produce from farm to plate.

It was a pleasure to pick Brown's brain about these topics and others and learn from his experiences and years of knowledge.



Dr. Hannah Carter got the class up and moving during their True Colors personality tests.

Class tours Taylor Farms' regional plant in Orlando



by Dustin Grooms
Fancy Farms, Inc.

Minutes from Orlando's theme parks lies Taylor Farms, which our class got to experience firsthand. We met with the Florida Division President Leonard Batti, General Manager John Millwater, and Business Development Manager Zach Phillips to discuss the operation. Founded by Bruce Taylor, former Fresh Express CEO, in 1995 with the goal of becoming "America's favorite salad maker," Taylor Farms ranks as the world's largest producer of fresh-cut vegetables. From bagged salads to freshly prepared meals, Taylor Farms supplies many of the largest supermarket chains and restaurants in the United States. Taylor Farms' headquarters in California has several strategically placed regional processing centers in the United States, along with one in Mexico.

Upon entering the processing plant we had to first secure a visitor badge. We then

proceeded into a room to wash our hands, grab a robe, don a hard hat and gloves, and dip our hands into a solution. Temperature control is paramount at the facility to maintain the integrity of the product. The processing facility operates at 34 to 38 degrees. All products are washed using a multi-stage washing system featuring Smart Wash™ technology to eliminate bacterial cross-contamination. It is also sold to the agricultural industry to help ensure food safety. The universal goal of the fresh food industry is to eliminate failures in food safety practices. That's why Taylor Farms implemented the SmartWash™ system. The SmartWash™ system is an enhanced wash system that has allowed Taylor Farms to raise the bar on food safety and the prevention of outbreaks. It is truly amazing that Taylor Farms developed this product as a need to help not only themselves but the industry as well.

It is absolutely remarkable that over a 24-hour period of time a warehouse can go from being completely full with three crews working to being completely empty, and then have to start all over again, every day, all year long. There are so many moving parts to this operation that have to flow like clockwork, especially on a perishable item. Taylor Farms has a full line of healthy vegetables for consumers to enjoy, and they make it easy to incorporate them a part of your daily diet.



Reggie Brown, manager of the Florida Tomato Committee, brought and displayed examples of the various types of tomatoes available to consumers at a typical grocery store.

Just let them grow!



by Paul Miller
Pioneer Growers Co-op

As one of the first to speak with ELDP Class 4, Dan Botts, vice president of Industry Resources, entered the room with a quiet, sort of serious demeanor as he set up his presentation and passed out a copy to everyone. At that moment, I thought the day would be jam packed with information and no nonsense. He was about to educate us on "Regulatory and non-governmental pressure in the global market" or as he would like to have put it "How to interact with non-farm experts who want to run YOUR business." After reading the second title projected on the screen, I gave a little smirk and knew we were in for a fun presentation with some sarcasm scattered throughout.

He started off by briefing us on various federal environmental statutes that have an impact on the agricultural industry. He spoke on who enforced the different statutes along with what each of them encompassed. He also talked about the Federal Insecticide Fungicide Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), and he gave us great insight on the rigid guide-

lines that must be met for a pesticide to get registered by the EPA at which point it can be used only for what the label specifically stated. Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) are an important factor of pesticides, and after jumping through so many hoops to finally get a product registered with the EPA for use on a certain crop, one would think MRL values would be set for all products that are exchanged within the international community. However, this is not the case and is an issue that is hindering international trade in some cases.

He touched on a few other statutes as well: Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc. before speaking about how individual states' regulatory framework is set up with an emphasis on Florida regulatory framework. Each state's regulatory framework pretty much parallels the federal system, but in most cases can be more restrictive than the federal system.

One thing that surprised me was as you dive from federal to state to county, you start to see these regulations layer on top of each other with more restrictions. Each one of these statutes and regulations creates a different set of challenges for growers to consider before ever putting a seed in the ground. It was at this point I started contemplating why growers continue to feed America?

Marketplace pressure was the next topic discussed with the class. Even though it may be a small percentage of the whole population, consumers are the ones spearheading

a majority of the pressure behind many of these issues. Retailers or "middle men" like to redirect the pressure on to the growers who eventually end up having to comply in some sort of way. Being someone on the sales desk, these were issues I could relate to since I speak with consumers and retailers about some of the same topics already. The first topic is one that I personally receive calls on from consumers all the time, GMOs. In my opinion, this highly debated topic will be one that we look back upon and ask ourselves why there was so much resistance. Another hot topic discussed was the local food movement that has been gaining traction in recent years. Consumers seem to be equating local with fresh, which isn't necessarily true all the time, but since consumers are the ones purchasing the product, retailers continue to push that pressure onto the growers.

As the presentation started to wrap up, I again came back to the question of why growers continue to jump through hurdles and the never-ending pressures around them. Farmers have been raising crops for hundreds of years with a fraction of today's regulations and pressures, so why not let them feed the world without trying to make their jobs impossible. When do we say enough is enough? Just let them grow!



Labor challenges



by Meghan Pasken
Glades Crop Care

Thursday morning Mike Carlton, director of Labor Relations Division, spoke to us about the challenges of developing a reliable labor force. Carlton is responsible for coordinating members' use of the H-2A guest worker program and assisting with compliance efforts with labor laws affecting agriculture. He began by stating the obvious, that Americans don't have the physical endurance and are not interested in pursuing fruit and vegetable harvesting as their "real jobs." It has been hard for agriculture to find friends in Washington with regard to immigration policy because it tends to be a polarizing and very party-specific issue. In 1986 an Immigration Act was passed that legalized 1.2 million farmworkers but shortly after gaining citizenship the legalized workers quickly left the fields for jobs in retail and other sectors. This act did not protect the future flow of illegal immigrants and the interests of the growers. Guest worker programs like H-2A were

developed to provide growers with a legal alternative to hire seasonal workers from outside of the United States. In 1996 another H-2A reform bill failed and there have been many others since that haven't passed. Carlton doesn't believe that the executive action that Obama took will help the agriculture industry right now, but that the Republican majority in the Senate should cause us to be more optimistic.

Several of the class members had questions about specifics of the H-2A requirements and Carlton shared details on the arduous process of filing all the paperwork and the responsibilities that the farmer has to provide food, housing, and transport for his contracted workers. The seasonal nature of the work is often the biggest challenge because growers can be faced with having to provide benefits like health care that are afforded to fulltime employees. But it just doesn't make sense in this short-term contracted worker scenario. It seems that the H-2A program is the only legal option that Florida fruit and vegetable growers are currently afforded for employing non-American seasonal workers. H-2A is in no way a perfect system and folks like Carlton and others at FFVA are doing their best to find friends in Washington who are interested in looking out for the interests of the agriculture industry.

Foundation supports research, education and philanthropy



by John Alderman
Duda Farm Fresh Foods

During ELDP Class 4's session with FFVA in Maitland, we were met with a familiar face in Sonia Tighe. Tighe is FFVA's director of membership and serves as executive director of the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. Her presentation detailed the many hats that she wears for FFVA. The Foundation's priority functions are research, education and philanthropy. Tighe heads up the Foundation's funding and block grants for researchers, managing as many as 20 grants at one time working in conjunction with the University of Florida and USDA. Grants are not limited to disease research and labor issues. They can include marketing and nutrition subjects such as fresh fruits and vegetables in the school cafeteria and the Kids in the Kitchen program. "Each year we work with about \$1 million of grant money that comes in," she said. The grant program is an invaluable resource that FFVA and Tighe provide. The philanthropy side of the Foundation also is significant. It supports the Redlands Christian Migrant Association with food drives, scholarships and special fundraising events, such as its Christmas card program, providing a huge lift to RCMA and its goals. "RCMA is critical to the support and service that they provide our workforce," Tighe said. The Foundation also has several education initiatives. The Emerging Leadership Development Program is now in its fourth class. The ELDP is a one-year program that includes education sessions, a legislative field trip to Tallahassee and farm tours in both Florida and California. Tighe and the Foundation also participate in the National Ag Marketing program at UF.



Mike Carlton, FFVA's director of labor relations, spoke to the class about the ongoing issues with the H-2A program and brought along some paperwork to illustrate just how much goes into each application.



Florida's water world



by Nathan Decker
Monsanto

Kerry Kates is the director of Water and Natural Resources, representing FFVA member interests regarding compliance with state and federal water laws across four of the five designated Florida water management districts. In his presentation to Class 4, Kates focused on water supply and water quality. They sound like simple issues, but what both involve and the amount of regulations governing them is almost overwhelming.

There are two types of water rights that have been developed in the United States. The Riparian System is applied in the Eastern United States where water is more abundant. The system is tied to land ownership water rights and the "reasonable use" of water. The Prior Appropriations System is more of a "first in time, first in line system," which is used in the West. This is where priority is assigned when shortages arise.

When it comes to Florida law, we use a hybrid of the two systems. For water consumption outside of domestic use, users must get a Consumptive Use Permit. Water allocations are the exclusive job of Florida's five water management districts. Every five years they must draft a water supply plan based on a 20-year horizon. These plans include basin-specific information, recommendations, assessments and evaluations of alternative water sources. Florida's largest consumers of water are the public and agriculture, so it is imperative that each district has a water management plan to address any foreseeable water consumption issues.

Some areas of the state have restricted water use or are designated "water use caution areas." The designation stems from rapid depletion of the water supply, which can cause major issues such as sinkholes, reduced flow of streams and springs, deterioration of wetlands and saltwater intrusion. Because of Florida laws and our water management structure, those in agriculture have taken it upon themselves to be examples of what responsible water use looks like.

Water quality has become a topic of focus in Florida, especially the level of nutrients in

water bodies. Under threat of lawsuits, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency adopted limits on nitrogen and phosphorus levels in waterways known as numeric nutrient criteria, or NNC. NNC's are quantitative water quality standards. Rising nutrient levels in Florida waters can cause excessive vegetative growth, algae blooms and low dissolved oxygen. The main issue is that the proposed NNC would have determined that 80 percent of Florida's waters were "impaired." The agriculture industry strongly objected because there was questionable science, no method of implementation and no transparency or stakeholder involvement. The initial cost to Florida alone to comply would have been upwards of \$3 billion. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection petitioned the EPA to allow the state to set the nutrient criteria. In 2013, the EPA handed power back to the state. The state has since continued to work with growers to develop the standards for Total Maximum Daily Loads, or TMDLs. Growers in Florida have complied and implemented continuous water testing to make sure they are using Best Management Practices to not exceed the TMDL of pollutants entering our water sources.

Water is one of the most vital resources for Florida agriculture. So it is of the utmost importance that FFVA has a seat at the table to justify agriculture's water use here in the state.

Navigating the modern media maze



by Paul Miller
Pioneer Growers Co-op

Our final speaker, Lisa Lochridge, is the director of the Public Affairs Division at the FFVA. Lochridge and her team handle FFVA's communication with its members and the media on topics ranging from food safety to immigration reform. They are also responsible for the association's website, monthly e-magazine, weekly newsletters, and member bulletins. Before coming to FFVA, she was vice president of CBR Public Relations based in Orlando, and prior to that, she spent 21 years as a journalist for the Orlando Sentinel. With many years of experi-

ence, her tremendous resume speaks for itself.

Lochridge was there to give our class a crash course on "Media Training". She began by giving us some background information on how much the media has changed over the years with the introduction of cable television and the Internet. Those two entities pretty much gave birth to a never ending media monster. News is now readily accessible 24 hours a day and seven days a week. News agencies continue to feed this monster with the next breaking story that can be reported on. This can be seen as either a good or bad situation based on one's opinion of the news. On one hand, I enjoy watching the news only when it comes from a very objective point of view and just reports on the story without any other outside messages trying to be portrayed. As I have gotten older and wiser (I'd like to think), I try to avoid the news as much as possible. I feel as though every time I catch myself watching any major news broadcast, about 90% of the time it is something sad, tragic, or depressing. For some twisted reason tragedy seems to sell when it comes to the news. Once in awhile, they will throw in a curveball of something uplifting which keeps me coming back every so often. This is why Lochridge came to speak and give us some insight on media interviews, so that we would not become a media tragedy (Bill Cosby) one day!

She then helped us understand how important it was to gather information about who wanted to interview you, who they worked for, what if any facts they already knew, and if there was a deadline for the interview. These were important pieces of information one needs to consider before even agreeing to do an interview. Once you have agreed to go forth with an interview, try to do it on your time in a setting that makes you feel comfortable. Always expect and demand fairness from the interviewer throughout the process. Remember that preparation is paramount before sitting down to do any interview, so that you are not blindsided by any rogue questions that you may not want to be asked. Lochridge continued to give helpful tips throughout the presentation that could be used for any interview situation. I would definitely recommend any company looking to educate its staff on media training to call the FFVA offices and have Lisa Lochridge give one of the most beneficial presentations I've been through.



Important letters in alphabet: MRL and TPR



by Dustin Grooms
Fancy Farms, Inc.

We met with Mike Aerts, FFVA's director of production and supply chain management, to discuss industry issues. Of the top regulatory problems, Aerts chose to address maximum residue levels (MRLs) and the work of Third Party Registrations, a subsidiary of FFVA also known as TPR.

Growers can be within legal limits for pesticide residue in the United States but be outside of legal limits abroad. MRL violations in export markets can trigger sanctions on the entire industry. When there is a violation, an investigation will be launched and possible stiffer penalties may occur. It is best for growers to support their explanation with spray records, labels, residue testing samples, and to inform the industry.

The goal of MRL harmonization is to minimize disruption in trade. The industry is making MRL harmonization a priority. Farmers are educating themselves and their shippers by recognizing MRL differences among countries, sharing information, and engaging with the major players. MRL harmonization also calls for engaging when a foreign country proposes a major adjustment to its policies, monitoring MRL changes, and working with the registrants. Out of all the top specialty crop markets, Canada is No. 1 for the United States and worth \$5.2 billion. It is also Florida's No. 1 exporter worth \$736 million. Canada is conducting a major overhaul in its tolerance process which could take seven to 10 years. To learn more information about MRLs and tolerances, databases are available online.

Third Party Registration Inc. is a service for producer members of FFVA launched in 1987. TPR secures registrations through the 24c special local need section of the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act. It provides protection to the registrant in return for the right to register a product for a

particular need. There is an extensive process to obtain a registration along with strict participation requirements. An indemnification to the registrant, as well as grower indemnification to TPR, needs to be followed. Through TPR, FFVA has been instrumental in getting several labels.

Aerts and all the staff at FFVA are working hard every day to accomplish growers' concerns and needs. With MRL's know your market destination and refer to the databases available. Special local need registrations are an uphill battle that can be won with persistence and attention to detail. This is a small piece of the pie that is worked on daily at FFVA.

Class 4 meets for its third session in January. Look for those stories in the next issue.

The class will also be collecting food items for RCMA centers to be donated during that session.

If you would like to join them in this endeavor please email Sonia Tighe for information: sonia.tighe@ffva.com

ELDP NEWS

... updates from Class 1, 2, 3 & 4



Teddy McAvoy

Congratulations to the McAvoy family on the birth of Vaughn Benjamin McAvoy! (above)



Clayton Norman

Clayton Norman welcomed growers to the 9th annual Florida Ag Expo at the Gulf Coast Research Center. (left)

Elton Baldy

Congratulations to Elton Baldy for being awarded North Carolina Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award this year.



Amber Kosinsky

Wish Farms was the recipient of the Kid's Choice Award at PMA for their strawberry hazelnut chocolate flatbread. Kids voted for their favorite recipe based on taste, presentation and aroma. (left)