

EMERGING TIMES

... growing toward the future

Class 5 learns about FFVA and current issues during second session



Class 5 toured Taylor Farms' processing facility and deli operations in Orlando on the final day of their session.

Two and a half days in FFVA's Maitland headquarters this week provided Class 5 of the Emerging Leader Development Program with the groundwork for the next 10 months together. The group met with FFVA staff and others to learn more about the association, the work it does on behalf of its members, and issues facing agriculture.

FFVA President Mike Stuart and Chief Financial Officer Alan Hair provided a history and overview of FFVA, its organizational structure and its finances. Staffers Mike Aerts, Mike Carlton, Lisa Lochridge and Jill Dunlop discussed crop protection, labor, media relations and food safety, respectively. Dr. Hannah Carter of the Wedgworth Leadership

Institute led the group through a team-building exercise and discussion on leadership. Other speakers also met with the class: Peter Chaires of New Varieties Development and Management Corp., Reggie Brown of the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, Joe Hodges of The Andersons Inc., Lisa Gaskalla of Ag in the Classroom, Frank Giles of Florida Grower, and Dr. Joy Rumble of the Center for Public Issues and Education.

Topping off the session was a tour of Taylor Farms Florida in Orlando, which processes and packs bagged and single-serve salads, veggie trays, snack and deli items.



Getting a closer look at FFVA and subsidiaries



by Leigh Ann Wynn
Warner University

After finishing a delicious potato bar lunch and salad (we realized FFVA takes its vegetables pretty seriously!), we heard from FFVA President Mike Stuart. He jumped right into quick facts about the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association and a look back at its long history.

FFVA's beginning dates to 1943, when it began as a committee of the Farm Bureau during World War II. By 1948, it was incorporated as an agricultural cooperative marketing association, and it has acted as a non-profit -- but not tax-exempt -- organization since then. Labor was part of the genesis of the taxpaying group.

Today, the association has four subsidiaries and related organizations: Third Party Registrations Inc., which administers 24(c) limited liability pesticide registrations; FFVA Mutual Insurance Co., which provides workers' compensation insurance for numerous industries, including agriculture; Florida East Coast Travel Services, and the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. FLECTS is

a travel agency that we quickly learned is not where we should call to book our next trip to the Bahamas. FLECTS is an H-2A/H-2B travel agency which works with foreign recruitment to transport contract workers back and forth from Mexico, Jamaica and elsewhere.

FFVA has 169 staff members, with the insurance division being the largest division, making up 121 of those. Stuart also described the organization of the Board of Directors, various committees and staff.

We also heard from Alan Hair, chief financial officer. Our group appreciated the transparency of the association, as he shared with us the breakdown of revenue and expenses. We learned what a bargain our membership dues are: for every dollar we spend in dues, we get \$4 in return added to the association's budget. What a deal!

He explained how revenue comes in from the dividends from the insurance company, rent of their Maitland facility, fees from associations they manage like the Florida Citrus Packers Association, investment, and member dues. Expenses include personnel, public relations, depreciation, professional fees and administrative costs like utilities.

Overall, we realized our association is in the right hands and being professionally handled as we get the best bang for our membership buck.

The Andersons keeps eye on challenges



by Ashley Layson
Farm Credit Florida

Founded in 1947, The Andersons group has served the agricultural community and beyond for nearly 70 years. With business interests in grain, plant nutrients, ethanol, railroad and retail, the company keeps a close eye on issues affecting the agricultural industry.

Joe Hodges, vice president of the Southern Region, says he believes there are four threats to agriculture today. Farmers are very familiar with the first two: GMO perceptions and citrus greening. But Hodges says there are two others the agricultural community should have on their radar: ammonium nitrate and nitrogen pollution in our water sources.

The Oklahoma City bombing along with the West Fertilizer Co. explosion in West Texas instantly made Americans aware of the tremendous damage this simple nutrient can do.

"Ammonium nitrate is a product that once we were able to synthesize it really kept us from starvation because we were able to generate nitrogen," said Hodges, "but that same technology has also been used in terrorist acts to make bombs and in World War II. So what is an essential nutrient is also a risky product to use."

Hodges also is keeping an eye on nitrogen pollution in our water with algae blooms along the Indian River and in area springs. Hodges said, "It's not all our problem, but we have to be more diligent to protect our natural resources."

The Andersons group is participating in a program to combat this issue called the 4Rs: Right Source to match fertilizer type to crop needs; Right Rate matches amount of fertilizer to crop needs; Right Time makes nutrients available when crops need them; Right Place keeps nutrients where crops can use them.

Hodges concluded by saying, "We know what needs to be done. We know the challenges and where we have had problems. It's really if we can change the way we do business to support the increasing population who are counting on us to grow yields without impacting the environment."



FFVA President Mike Stuart and CFO Alan Hair welcomed the group and gave them a complete overview of how the association operates.



An introduction to the H-2A program



by Kevin Yue
Lipman Produce

The decline in reliable domestic labor has forced many employers in the agricultural industry to look abroad for workers to bolster their existing labor force. Class 5 met with Mike Carlton, director of labor relations in FFVA, to become more educated on the issues surrounding available labor for growing operations.

In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act divided the existing H-2 program into the H-2A and H-2B program. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, (<http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/elg/taw.htm>), "[t]he H-2A temporary agricultural program establishes a means for agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of domestic workers to bring non-immigrant foreign workers to the U.S. to perform agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature."

This visa program centers on a contract between a grower and an individual that states that the grower will provide transportation, housing, and wages, and the worker is required to provide labor for a determined time frame. The number of workers in the program nationally has increased in the past 10 years, and Florida recently became the No. 1 state where H-2A workers are being used, particularly in the citrus industry.

The program has been a challenging, complex, expensive and rigid process for those involved. For example, if a grower is forced to shorten the contract because of weather or other factors, the program is inflexible in accommodating that need. Many in the agricultural industry are pushing for reforms of the H-2A program to ease the difficulty in navigating the process. FFVA's Labor Relations group is in place to educate and assist growers with the program, including completing the necessary paperwork to bring the workers into the fields.

Foundation making a difference in agriculture



by Casey Simmons Runkles
Simmons Farms, Inc.

The Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association is a significant organization with many different entities that make up the group. One part is the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation run by Executive Director Sonia Tighe. It was founded in 1991 with a mission to benefit the general public through initiatives that provide solutions to challenges facing specialty crop producers and their stakeholders. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that has three main areas of emphasis: research, education and philanthropy.

The Emerging Leader Development Program is one facet of the organization. The program is molding young leaders in the agricultural community to be advocates for our industry. Currently in its fifth year, there are 12 young leaders in Class 5.

In another effort, the Foundation collaborates with Bayer CropScience and Farmers Feeding Florida to provide wholesome but unmarketable food to families in the Redlands Christian Migrant Association's programs. This allows the group to have access to fresh fruits and vegetables they may not otherwise have. The Foundation also facilitates research through federal Specialty Crop Block Grants. Thirteen grants have begun this year, with a total of 26 under way. One exciting new grant is a Food Safety Recall Workshop that will be available in two locations in October 2016. During the workshop, food safety experts will review the tools needed to handle a recall in the event one is necessary, including tips on how to handle media.

Tighe and the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation are working hard to make a difference in agriculture.

Dunlop highlights new food safety rules



by Dustin Lowe
Lake Catherine Blueberries

Jill Dunlop, FFVA's manager of food safety and sustainability, presented an overview of the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act. This act represents the largest reform to federal food safety law in over 70 years. FSMA's purpose is to ensure the U.S. food supply is safe through prevention of microbial contamination. The importance of this law should not be understated, considering that from 2010 through 2014 the five largest foodborne pathogen outbreaks in the United States involved fruits and vegetables.

The final rules and regulations for FSMA are being released now. The Standards for Produce Safety final rule and the Preventive Controls for Human Food final rule are the two that most growers and packers will fall under. It is very important to determine which rule their operation applies to. Additionally, the timeline for an operation's compliance with FSMA is determined by the size of the company. Guidance documents and FAQs released by the FDA to help with those determinations can be found at www.fda.gov/fsma.

If a farming or packing operation now uses a GAP or GFS third-party certification, most of its current policies and procedures should comply with the FSMA rules. One major difference is water quality and testing. Under the Standards for Produce Safety, during the first year of water sampling ground and surface water must be tested four times and 20 times, respectively. The results of these tests will determine the number of required water tests in upcoming years.

FSMA also requires FDA-approved food safety training to be completed. Dunlop will complete certification in January to be able to offer training classes to FFVA members in the near future. She is available to answer any questions or provide assistance to FFVA members with any FSMA issues.



An agricultural lesson from Florida Ag in the Classroom



by Ben Lahr
Driscoll's

Lisa Gaskalla and Becky Sponholtz from Florida Agriculture in the Classroom have been teaching agriculture to students and teachers by creating an awareness that most people today have not experienced. With a student base ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade, their courses and lessons are as varied as their students. For our class, they included several fun and educational lessons which ranged from seed identification to produce poetry. That's right -- they had us rhyming about fruits and vegetables and, while it may sound unconventional, it is certainly effective.

Also effective are Florida Ag Tags. The FAITC license plate program helps generate funds to get these and other lessons to the public. Of the \$25 tag fee, \$20 goes back into the program to help educate consumers on the importance of Florida's agricultural industry. Aside from financial support for agriculture, these plates also help show residents and non-residents the importance of agriculture through Florida's roadways.

Another program is Ag Literacy Day. On April 26, 2016, members of the agriculture industry will join classrooms from kindergarten to fifth grade to read students nonfiction books about Florida agriculture. With thousands of industry participants and tens of thousands of students, this will be a great way to spread the message about Florida's agriculture.

FAITC also spreads the message by helping set up school gardens and teaching about gardening for nutrition. They have awarded more than \$400,000 in teacher and volunteer grant money and have sponsored more than 20 county workshops.

In recent generations, we have taken for granted the farms and ranches that provide us with food and fiber. FAITC is working to remedy the situation and bring us back to a "new" awareness of where these resources come from. For more information on FAITC and the work it is doing, please visit FAITC.ORG.



Class members got to personally experience some of the lessons offered to teachers from Florida Agriculture in the Classroom. Bradley Ferguson and Ashley Layson participate in a seed-matching relay.

PIE Center presentation serves up useful data



by Leigh Ann Wynn
Warner University

I knew we were in for a lesson when I saw Dr. Joy Rumble of the PIE Center on our agenda for Thursday morning. After spending the past two years in the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Ag and Natural Resources program and hearing regularly from Dr. Alexa Lamm, associate director of the PIE Center, I was well aware of the insightful data coming out of this research tank.

The PIE Center is not where one goes to taste the latest tasty guava or apple concoction. It stands for the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources, and it is leading the charge on the research, education and outreach efforts to the public regarding agricultural issues. The mission of the PIE Center is to "conduct and disseminate objective interdisciplinary research and educational programs to increase

public understanding of and engagement in agricultural and natural resources issues."

We were "joyed" to hear from Rumble, assistant professor working within the PIE Center in Gainesville. She and doctoral graduate student Keegan Gay presented "Connecting Growers and Consumers: Five Years of Collaboration."

Rumble reviewed some of their latest findings -- research on consumers' opinions of the blueberry industry. It was interesting to hear that only 16 percent of consumers said they knew when Florida blueberries were in season and their guesses on which months that would be. They were, however, aware of the perceived health benefits of blueberries, including improved memory, preventing heart disease and strengthening eyesight.

Their research also stated the top states consumers preferred to purchase their blueberries from, with Florida coming in first, followed by California. Stats showed the number one reason some consumers don't buy more blueberries was their availability, with price being second.

We know we only got a glimpse into the interesting work that the folks at the PIE Center are accomplishing, but we look forward to this research helping extension agents around the state better relate to their public audience.



True colors and a call for increased advocacy



by Marshal Sewell
Seminis Vegetable Seed

We had the outstanding opportunity to participate in a leadership development workshop titled "What Makes Us Tick." This workshop was presented by Dr. Hannah Carter of the University of Florida, director of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Carter focused on the unique nature of individual leaders and the significant differences in personality traits and characteristics. From this, we transitioned to a discussion of how these traits ultimately affect our innate thought processes, preferences and decisions. In order to truly gain a better understanding for these individual characteristics and preferences, our group was tasked with participating in a personality-based test called "True Colors." After delving into our personal colors and their corresponding traits, our group then looked more closely at ways in which we could continue growing as leaders and serving as agricultural ambassadors. Carter also informed our class about the "Sayfie Review," a political news and analysis site for Florida leaders, and stressed the importance of having more involvement from agricultural leaders. At the end of this session, my fellow classmates and I were challenged to discover new ways of raising awareness for agricultural issues and to continue serving as advocates for our industry.

Group develops new citrus varieties



by John Evans
Maury L. Carter & Associates, Inc.

Peter Chaires, executive director of the New Varieties Development & Management Corporation, delivered an outstanding presentation to the Emerging Leader Development Program during our visit to the FFVA Maitland headquarters.

The mission statement of the NVDMC is to "Provide the Florida citrus grower timely and affordable access to new citrus varieties." In today's challenging growing climate, NVDMC plays an important role in providing new varieties to the citrus industry that have the potential to combat the challenges facing that industry. Recent developments include varieties that are being bred (or are in development) to be resistant to many diseases like citrus greening, black

spot and canker. Additionally, the development of new fresh fruit varieties is focused on the ever changing palate of consumers. In other words, what tastes best? And what will sell the best?

His presentation discussed many facets of what challenges the Florida citrus industry faces. Obviously, the biggest hurdle has been combating greening. One of the largest challenges in today's fresh fruit industry is combating a decline in taste quality. Another factor has been in dealing with the size of fruit. Many varieties have shrunk to a size that is difficult to market.

The Florida citrus industry faces many challenges and it is lucky to have NVDMC as such a powerful asset. The NVDMC is continually fighting for the Florida citrus industry for renewed and continued success.



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



Making the most of a media interview



by Lauren Graham
The Andersons, Inc.

Lisa Lochridge, FFVA's director of public affairs, provided Class 5 with a wealth of knowledge regarding communication. The main focus of her presentation was educating the class on building public support of Florida agriculture through effective communication. Effective communication is key, whether it is internal or external.

Lochridge explained the variety of outlets FFVA uses to communicate to the public and provided her expertise on how to handle the media and monitor media coverage.

She explained the importance of understanding the type of outlet your story is being funneled through, the audience that will be receiving the information and who you are being interviewed by. These circumstances could ultimately affect the outcome of your interview, which could be good or bad. It is important to make the most of your media interview. She outlined procedures to properly respond to a reporter's call, how to prepare for an interview and develop messaging that will effectively express your thoughts. Many factors have changed the way news is delivered, which means agriculture must learn how to properly address these changes.

She also went into detail regarding the importance of having a crisis communication plan prepared prior to a crisis, which coincidentally is a membership benefit of the FFVA. A perfect example of this would be a food safety recall and the negative effects it could potentially have on a business.

Tomato industry's challenges: domestic and international



by Amanda McClure
West Coast Tomato/
Building Cleaning Solutions

Reggie Brown of the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange spoke on the growing concerns facing the tomato industry. These problems are both international -- namely increased relations with Mexico -- as well as domestic.

Before the North American Free Trade Act took effect, Florida produced about 60 percent of domestic tomato consumption. After NAFTA was enacted, Florida production dropped to a mere 40 percent, with the remainder coming from imports.

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers also has had a significant impact on Florida tomato producers. In the early 2000s, the group coordinated boycotts of different fast-food restaurants throughout the county to promote its "Penny A Pound" campaign. The negative publicity from the boycotts threatened the chains' brands. In 2005, Taco Bell became the first company to agree to pay the extra penny that would go to farmworkers.

In late 2010, the coalition and the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange signed an agreement that resulted in the Fair Food Program. This program has helped foster working relationships between growers and farmworkers. Brown also spoke about the fact that the coalition's agenda may spread to other crops/industries. Hopefully, other growers can benefit from the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange's experience to develop the best way to implement future programs.

Understanding chemical residues in a global market



by Kevin Yue
Lipman Produce

In today's ever-changing marketplace, more emphasis has been placed on ensuring that chemical residues are monitored and effectively managed. Mike Aerts, director of production and supply chain management with FFVA, introduced the nuances of maximum residue limits (MRLs) and other regulatory hurdles to Class 5. Aerts explained the areas his group is responsible for within FFVA, which ranges from crop protection and worker safety to regulatory challenges, and working with producers in effectively responding to the changes of our industry.

Producers are having a more challenging time with the moving target of MRLs in marketing their products internationally. The primary challenge is in how producers need to minimize the impact of a chemically related disruption of trade. MRLs are limits imposed onto the produce supply chain, but are not globally applied, as each jurisdiction has its own MRL -- or no limits, in some cases. If a producer is not vigilant in what is being delivered to market, shipments can be turned around at the national borders and fines can be imposed. Fresh produce has limited shelf life; delays caused by violations will affect a producer's ability to deliver product to its final destination. Violations caused by detections of residues in samples taken from produce also can result in sanctions for the entire industry. It is vital that producers maintain an awareness of MRLs and stay ahead of regulations.

Regulations will only continue to increase in number, and they are usually promulgated before actionable guidelines are introduced. Having producers, EPA, USDA, embassies, and others working together to harmonize MRLs and educate the industry on the importance of MRLs will help mitigate the impact on international trade. For more information, go to: <http://www.globalmrl.com>.



Seeking ways to better serve FFVA members



by Marshal Sewell
Seminis Vegetable Seed

Sonia Tighe led our group in a final discussion on FFVA membership and involvement. In addition to serving as ELDP director, Tighe is FFVA's director of membership. After we spent time all week learning about the size and scope of the association and the opportunities it offers, Tighe hoped to draw ideas from our group on how the FFVA could continue serving its members. From assistance with food safety audits to crisis communication planning, there are a wide array of services offered that are not currently capitalized on by most members. The FFVA directors are available to producer members to assist with questions and issues on labor, water management, crop protection, food safety and other areas. If any member would like to learn more in regard to the programs and benefits offered by the FFVA, please feel free to contact Sonia Tighe or even one of our ELDP members. Similarly, we would also like to hear of any suggestions as to how the FFVA can better serve its members.

GenNext Program: Covering Florida specialty crops



by Bradley Ferguson
Florida Pacific Farms

Frank Giles, editor of Florida Grower Magazine, spoke to Class 5 about the magazine's GenNext Program. The GenNext growers initiative aims to identify, develop and promote the best practices of young specialty crop growers by helping to pull together and provide a national voice for the many regional young growers programs. Another goal of the program is to help facilitate a smooth generational transition and the long-term success of America's fruit and vegetable industries.

Giles challenged the group for ideas on increasing grower participation in GenNext and which major issues to focus on for the future. One of the major challenges of increasing grower participation is increasing awareness of the program. The GenNext grower's website can be found by going to growingproduce.com and clicking on the GenNext growers tab at the top. There you can find many stories about GenNext researchers, farm management practices, food safety, agricultural job classifieds, and other current issues GenNext growers are facing.

A look at 'America's Favorite Salad Maker'



by Casey Simmons Runkles
Simmons Farms, Inc.

Taylor Farms was founded in 1995 with the goal of becoming America's Favorite Salad Maker. The company is the world's largest producer of fresh-cut vegetables, and our group had the opportunity to see this massive facility located in Orlando. Leonard Batti, president of Taylor Farms, and Marc Webber, food production manager, gave the group a behind-the-scenes tour of the processing facilities.

After a brief introduction to the company's product lines and companies that they supply—including grocery stores, convenience stores and food service restaurants, we headed into the sanitation area. Before entering any Taylor Farms facility, visitors are required to sign in, complying with all of the company's food safety practices. We donned orange "visitor" hard hats and headed to the robe room to get hair nets, beard nets, a robe and gloves. Once decked out in proper gear, we again sanitized our hands and walked through the shoe-cleaning zone. Because it is a cold storage facility, the temperature quickly dropped to between 34 and 37 degrees -- a nice change from 80-plus-degree weather outside the doors.

We were shown how product comes into the facility through its massive tracking system, which allows the company to track produce back to the farm where it was harvested. This raw product is stored until it is ready to be washed, chopped and bagged. The facility runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Two crews and a sanitation team make up the workforce.

Taylor Farms has also expanded its operation from bagged salads to include many new products. They include chopped salad kits, organic salads, classic and organic vegetables, vegetable trays, snack trays, pasta and ready-to-eat sandwiches. Many of these items can be found in your local grocery store, convenience store or restaurant.

Class 5 will join FFVA staff and board members in Tallahassee for the next session in January. Look for those stories in the next issue.



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ELDP NEWS



1: Ryan Atwood (Class 3) was presented with Florida Farm Bureau's Excellence in Crop Advising Award in late October.

Nathan Decker (Class 4) and his wife, Susan, and **Derek Orsenigo** (Class 2) and his wife, Lauren, both found out they are expecting baby girls in late April.

Justin Roberson (Class 1) and his wife, Ashley, are excited to announce they are expecting their first child, a baby boy, in April.

Rachel Walters (Class 1) has changed positions at Bayer CropScience and now serves as the market manager for SeedGrowth, insecticides and nematicides. The family recently made the move from Indiana to North Carolina and is excited to be back in the South.