

# EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

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FFVA HEADQUARTERS



## Taylor Farms' value-added packaging operation impresses



By **Frankie Montalvo**  
Glades Formulating Corp.

The final stop for ELDP Class 7's "FFVA 101" session was at Taylor Farms' excellent facility in Orlando. Taylor Farms President Steve Ish presented the history of the company's multistate operations. Ish told the company's story, from its inception to the modern evolution of its product lines and operations.

Ish guided the class on a tour of the value-added deli operations of the business. We suited up in cold gear, smocks, sanitation, hard hats and hair nets (including

beard nets for the whiskered gentlemen) and entered the packing operation.

The wide variety of deli products produced was breathtaking. Taylor Farms' employees pre-package a considerable amount of deli products for stores including Wawa, Publix, and others.

The packaging lines produced dozens of different offerings, included sandwiches, salads, yogurt and fruit parfaits, all packaged within a short timeframe of delivery. Ish explained their goal is providing customers with product packaged less than 24 hours before consumption.

Taylor Farms' operation is nationwide, and the Orlando facility is an excellent example of value-added packaging operations. Our class is grateful to Ish and Taylor Farms for inviting us to their facility.

## CONTENTS

Benefits, services available to FFVA members are many .....	2
New Varieties provides vital support to intra-state citrus breeding programs.....	3
Stuart, Hair provide broad look at FFVA operations.....	4
On water policy matters, Florida ag must be at the table .....	4
Flawed H-2A guest-worker program is the only tool for growers now .....	5
It's important to plan for the worst in crisis prep .....	6
Finding out what makes us tick makes us better .....	6
Tomato industry faces tough challenges.....	7
Better results for Florida agriculture through exchanges .....	8
Sustainability is a shifting issue for producers .....	8
Hodges of Wedgworth's talks plant nutrition, sustainability .....	9
Botts discusses regulatory and non-governmental pressures.....	10
FFVA offers numerous ways to connect.....	10
Connecting growers and consumers.....	11
ELD News .....	12



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# Benefits, services available to FFVA members are many



By **Myles Basore**  
TKM Bengard

**C**lass 7 was very appreciative of the time spent by FFVA's core employees to better educate us as leaders during our session at the Maitland headquarters.

Sonia Tighe, director of membership, outlined the tools and resources that are available with an FFVA membership. In addition, she discussed FFVA's committees, including the Research Committee, which is focused on issues that specifically affect members. The committee created a list of research priorities to maximize the growth of the agricultural industry in the state with research dollars spent. One example Tighe mentioned was the tremendous success the Florida Specialty

A screenshot of the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation website. The header includes the organization's name and a navigation menu with links: LEADERSHIP, RESEARCH, EDUCATION, PHILANTHROPY, SUPPORT US, and BOARD. The main content area features a "LEADERSHIP" section with a description of the Emerging Leader Development Program, eligibility requirements, and a "Newsletters" link. Below this is a "THE PROGRAM:" section with a bulleted list of program benefits. To the right, there are three smaller images: a group of people in a field, a group of people standing together, and a close-up of tomatoes. Each image has a caption and a "View Photo Gallery" link.

Crop Foundation had by teaming up with Fresh From Florida to promote Florida-grown peaches.

Tighe also discussed Farmers Feeding Florida, a program that falls

under the umbrella of Feeding Florida, a network of food banks in the state. As we all know, in the agricultural industry there are times when we have distressed products or a saturated market, making it difficult to move our commodity. It is important to keep in mind the great organizations like Farmers Feeding Florida that will accept our product. Tax benefits for farmers and food provided across the state make this an easy concept to support in our companies.

Food safety requirements, labor and regulation change are only a few of the issues that the agricultural industry constantly faces. With the knowledge FFVA provides on these topics, the 98% renewal rate of its producer members proves this association to be a credible resource in the Florida agricultural industry.





# New Varieties provides vital support to intra-state citrus breeding programs



By **Maria Cavazos  
R.C. Hatton**

**D**uring our visit to FFVA headquarters, Peter Chaires, executive director of New Varieties Development & Management Corp., delivered an exceptional presentation during which he explained some of the issues and challenges Florida citrus faces.

Chaires explained that as the industry is getting smaller and smaller, the problems are more common and individuals can't tackle them alone. Water issues and food safety water testing requirements are some of the biggest concerns, he said.

Combating HLB has been one of the major challenges for Florida citrus. We need bactericides, improved nutrition and aggressive control of the Asian citrus psyllid. There has been a decline in demand for grapefruit trees, but demand for orange trees and orange tree production at the nursery level have remained



steadily. Grapefruit production continues to decline as we are losing more trees than we are replacing, Chaires said. Labor challenges have also affected the citrus harvest. Now the focus is on finding new varieties that will aim for higher quality, freshness, consumer-friendliness and tolerance to greening. The Legislature has been very supportive of new varieties development, Chaires said, and there is new funding for the upcoming year.

Other issues the citrus industry is dealing with include political pressure, limited resources, and the fact that nothing is fast enough because growers need answers right away, Chaires explained. Luckily, growers can count on NVDMC's programs that provide financial and strategic support of the intra-state breeding programs, as our highest and best hope lies in new promising varieties developed there.



New Varieties Development  
**NVDMC**  
& Management Corporation







## Stuart, Hair provide a broad look at FFVA operations

**P**resident Mike Stuart and Chief Financial Officer Alan Hair kicked off our session in Maitland, giving the class a broad overview of what makes up FFVA. Stuart discussed FFVA's structure, its staff and their roles, and what it means to be a member and the benefits that go along with it. Hair outlined FFVA's various revenue sources and how money is allocated in the best interest of membership.

FFVA has a long history. 2017 marks 69 years of being a major asset to Florida specialty crops, with a current staff of 170 between its different subsidiaries, which include insurance, H-2A farm labor and travel logistics, and pesticide registration for members. FFVA encourages strong involvement from its membership through seven different issues committees. These committees address agricultural policy issues that include, but are not limited to, labor, trade, water and food safety. Members can weigh in on issues and help to direct policy initiatives.

Hair showed in-depth the different revenue streams that FFVA uses to supplement dues income of its membership and outlined how funds are allocated. Stuart and Hair were both very gracious with their time to share with the new leadership class the many components that make up FFVA.



By  
**Adam Roe**  
**Wm. G. Roe**  
**and Sons**

## On water policy matters, Florida ag must be at the table

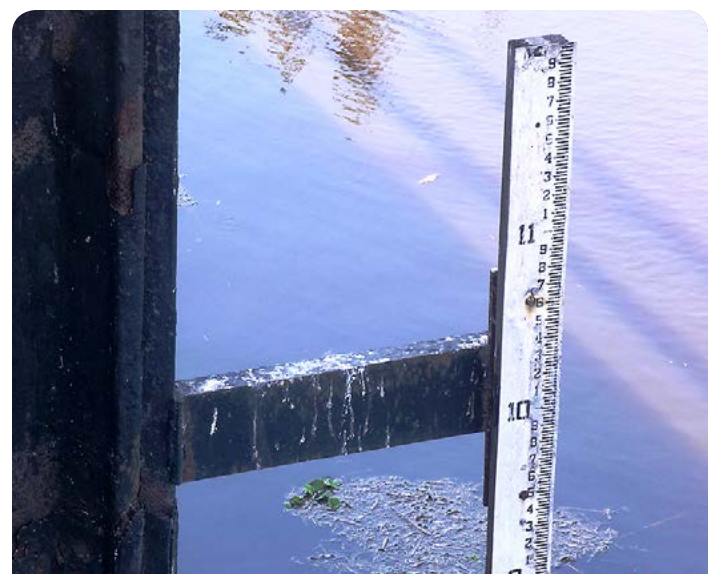
**K**erry Kates, FFVA's director of water and natural resources, wrapped up Day 1 at FFVA with a discussion of Florida's agricultural water policies. He spoke on the difficulties that lie ahead for all of Florida agriculture and the issues of water quality and water use. Kates opened up by describing the transformation of water policy over the years and how our current hybrid system came to be. This system uses permits that are doled out by the state's five water management districts. The permits last 10 to 20 years and must be beneficial and reasonable in order to be secured.

Regarding water quality, in Florida we have a numeric nutrient criteria which is a quantitative water quality standard for nitrogen and phosphorous. This is unique as Florida is the only state with these numeric standards. These rules define the excess loading of nitrogen and phosphorous as nutrient pollution that leads to algae blooms and other problems. It is a one-size-fits-all approach despite the fact that Florida's waters are so drastically different from north to south. Farmers use Best Management Practices to reach – and surpass – these quantitative water quality standards.

Kates emphasized the necessity for Florida agriculture to be at the table during discussions regarding water supply as it is something we as farmers simply can't do without.



By **Daniel Rifa**  
**U.S. Sugar**  
**Corporation**







## Flawed H-2A guest-worker program is the only tool for growers now



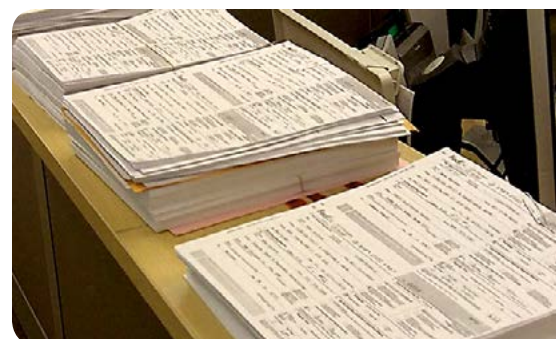
By **Philip Grigsby**  
Premier Ag Finance

The introductory session was an extremely productive learning experience as we got to know more about the ins and outs of FFVA, its staff, and all of the services they provide. On Day 2 we heard from Mike Carlton, FFVA's director of labor relations. His focus these days is assisting members with the H-2A guest-worker visa program.

Labor is one of the most important issues these days among FFVA members in that the shortage of domestic labor as well as the poor quality of those domestic workers is a major limiting factor to production. The H-2A guest worker program, which allows

foreign-born workers to work in the United States for a specified period, has many upsides for producers. It provides a consistent labor force that is more productive, and allows for seasonal workers instead of having to keep workers on full time.

Unfortunately many aspects of this program make it challenging for producers to stay within the guidelines and maintain eligibility. It's expensive, the application process is lengthy, and the regulations are too restrictive. In addition, there are inefficiencies at every level of the process to get these much-needed workers into the state. In 2010, there were 4,500 H-2A workers in Florida; in 2017, the number is around 25,000. With more than five times the workers coming into the state as there were seven years ago, Carlton has his hands full. He and his staff assist with more than 25 percent of all guest workers that come into Florida.



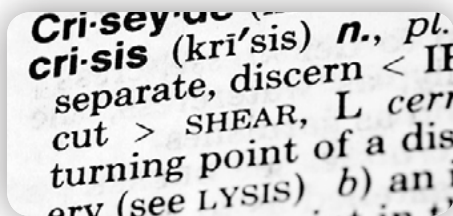


## It's important to plan for the worst in crisis preparation



By **Brent Johnson**  
FMC Corporation

Throughout history Florida agriculture has been confronted with crises that have impacted the industry on various levels. These crises have come in many forms: hurricanes, labor shortages, food safety incidents that negatively impact Florida markets, and regulatory issues. The ability of the ag industry to manage such crises has allowed it to survive and flourish. One of the major reasons for the industry's ability to manage such



crises is the support of FFVA.

During our session at FFVA headquarters in Maitland, ELDP Class 7 met with FFVA Director of Public Affairs Lisa Lochridge. Lochridge spoke about her role with FFVA to share and promote the produce industry's voice on critical issues, helping to build support for a pro-ag government policy, as well as monitoring media coverage of the industry in order to provide counsel to FFVA's president, board of directors,

committees, employees, and members.

Another aspect of Lochridge's job is assisting FFVA members in developing crisis management and communication plans for a variety of emergencies. According to Lochridge, there are crises that cannot be prevented such as weather events; others can be prevented or at least mitigated with proper planning. Lochridge noted that proper crisis planning during a non-crisis situation allows for policies to be implemented that could potentially prevent a crisis altogether. Planning also allows for a crisis management team to be assembled and jobs to be assigned so that in an actual time of crisis the issue can be handled in a proper manner, reducing potential damage to the company and its stakeholders.

## Finding out what makes us tick makes us better



By **Shane Rogers**  
J&J Family of Farms

Class 7's "FFVA 101" session at FFVA's Maitland office was kicked off by Dr. Hannah Carter of the University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences.

We began by learning that Florida agriculture is facing a void in leadership – a concerning problem that affects the future of our industry. Understanding this, FFVA has been actively working to cultivate and develop leaders through the Emerging

Leader Development Program.

Carter challenged us to determine who we are as individuals and as leaders so we can effectively work together for the betterment of ourselves, our operations and our industry.

As a class we were led through an exercise called True Colors, a model for understanding yourself and others based on your personality temperament. The colors of orange, gold, green and blue are used to differentiate the four central personality styles of the True Colors model. Each of us has a combination of these True Colors that make up our personality spectrum, usually with one of the styles being most dominant. By identifying and understanding our individual personality and the person-

Know thyself...  
and learn about those around you

With personality type (True Colors) you can:

- Understand yourself better.
- Understand others better.
- Improve communication and team atmosphere.

**You have all four colors in you. Learn how to use them.**

alities of others, one can gain insight into different motivations, actions and communication approaches.

Aside from this exercise being highly entertaining, we were surprised at how our class broke out into each of the four personality styles. The majority of our class was grouped in gold: responsible, loyal and organized. Next was green: analytical and logical. We had one blue: compassionate and communicative. And one orange: actionable and exciting.





# Tomato industry faces tough challenges with imports, labor



By **Justin Pettit**  
Blue Hammock Farms

**R**eggie Brown of the Florida Tomato Committee spoke about the "Present and Future of the Florida Tomato Industry." Twenty years ago, Brown said, the tomato industry offered only four kinds of tomatoes to consumers. During that time, two-thirds of tomatoes were produced in the United States. Now there are at least 18 different SKUs (product bar codes) in the grocery store, and companies rely on fancy packaging to catch

the consumer's eye. Seven of these 18 choices are imports.

The state of Mexican tomato production is jeopardizing the U.S. industry, he said. "Europe has been selling greenhouse technology into Mexico, and Mexico has built up enough greenhouse capacity to supply the country with tomatoes," he said, adding that greenhouse production is attractive, reliable and predictable. In the greenhouse environment, Brown said, tomatoes are "widgets" in one side of the greenhouse and out the other side.

With this kind of capacity and reliability of production outside of the United States, the future of the Florida tomato industry's ability to compete is



threatened if NAFTA can't be changed during the current renegotiations.

Another issue with the tomato industry is labor, which is a problem now and will remain one in the future because of a shortage of younger people wanting to do harvesting work. Because of this, the industry is looking into changing from the traditional staked tomatoes to a more compact high-yielding plant that can be mechanically harvested. This could be one remedy to help ensure the future of the industry.





## Better results for Florida agriculture through exchanges

**E**LDP Class 7 sat down with Mike Aerts, FFVA's director of production and supply chain management to talk about the history of agricultural exchanges and why they are so important to Florida growers. Aerts also leads FFVA's Agricultural Exchange Management Group.



By **Shane Rogers**  
J&J Family of Farms

In an increasingly competitive landscape, Florida agriculture can work together for the benefit of all.

At one time, antitrust laws put Florida growers at a disadvantage to effectively market their product. The Capper-Volstead Act, signed into law by President Harding in 1922, allows agricultural producers to lawfully unite to collectively market their products through the formation of cooperatives and exchanges.

Through exchanges, members can join together to determine how to market their product, how to advertise, when to time their promotions and what pricing strategy to approach the market with. Ultimately, an exchange allows members to act as one focused organization with common goals rather than smaller groups commonly in competitive odds with one another.

Over the years, exchange membership has produced meaningful results for growers, and today we see exchanges banding together by specific commodity groups and by region within the state.

Aerts and his team at FFVA administer several commodity exchanges for producers, including the Florida Sweet Corn Exchange, the Sweet Corn Growers Exchange and the Florida Vegetable Exchange. By providing administration for the exchanges, FFVA helps members stand together as a team and remain accountable to each other and to their goals.

## Sustainability is a shifting issue for producers of food

**J**ill Dunlop, FFVA's manager of food safety and sustainability, discussed these two key issues with our group. Right now, she said, she spends the majority of



By **Daniel Rifa**  
U.S. Sugar Corporation

her time on food safety issues, but in the future plans to spend more efforts on sustainability.

The industry is still trying to define sustainability and there are several initiatives that focus entirely on the sustainability of food, she told the group. Most of these initiatives are related to larger markets such as pork, poultry and row crops. Adding to the confusion, retail and food service sectors are setting their own standards for sustainability. Some of the metrics being used to determine sustainability include water use, energy use, nitrogen and phosphorous use, soil organic matter, and waste. Dunlop said the future of sustainability lies in technology, including GMOs and new types of equipment to reduce waste.

To demonstrate how we are using sustainable practices, Dunlop said producers need to do a better job of telling our stories to show that we are people and not evil corporations.



Regarding food safety, Dunlop described the new landscape created by the Food Safety Modernization Act – especially its Produce Safety Rule. This new rule sets the standards for farm operations that grow, harvest, pack, and hold products for human consumption with a few exceptions, including produce that is rarely consumed raw. The focus of these new rules is training workers on practices surrounding soil amendments, domestic and wild animals, water, post-harvest sanitation, and facilities – all in order to make our products safer for the consumer.







# Hodges of Wedgworth's talks plant nutrition, sustainability and stewardship



By **Adam Roe**  
Wm. G. Roe and Sons

**J**oe Hodges met with the new leadership class to talk sustainable farming and plant nutrition. Hodges works for Wedgworth's Inc., which operates three fertilizer production facilities in Florida – two liquid and one dry. He addressed the topic that is heavy on the minds of all farmers in Florida: Hurricane Irma. Irma wreaked havoc on Florida's spe-

cialty crops and the effects will not be soon forgotten. It was extremely important for Florida farmers to know that Wedgworth's was standing by in the wake of the hurricane to provide advice and recovery solutions to get crops back on track.

Hodges also spoke on ResponsibleAg, an initiative to create safer storage and handling for fertilizer facilities. This initiative is very important for creating public trust and transparency that will help allow the farming industry to continue using products that are vital to crop production.

Wedgworth's is a committed industry leader in both safety and

sustainability, Hodges explained. One way the company is embracing the process is through a Local Emergency Planning Committee program called "Operation Fertilizer," a fire/explosion exercise that prepares invested parties in case of any emergency.

Hodges also shared with the class the 4 R's in Nutrient Stewardship: applying in the Right source, at the Right rate, during the Right time and in the Right place. This initiative is meant to improve production while contributing to social well-being. Wedgworth's is aiming to be at the forefront on industry initiatives that promote leadership, safety and sustainability.

## 4Rs OF NUTRIENT STEWARDSHIP

Economically, Environmentally & Socially Sustainable Crop Nutrition



The 4Rs promote best management practices (BMPs) to achieve cropping system goals while minimizing field nutrient loss and maximizing crop uptake.

### 4R Principles of Nutrient Stewardship



**RIGHT SOURCE**  
Matches 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.



## Botts discusses regulatory and non-governmental pressures in global market

**D**an Botts, FFVA's vice president of industry resources, spoke about "Regulatory and Non-Governmental Pressure in the Global Market." FFVA has a technical support group with a vast amount of industry resources to provide support to producers in Florida. Botts stated FFVA has "credibility because of the expertise behind us." FFVA has created several committees with expertise in specific areas, and the association's staff members are recognized nationally and internationally for what they do.

The global market has many key components which not everyone always



By **Justin Pettit**  
**Blue Hammock Farms**

agrees on because of the perception of agriculture and how people assume we farm today vs. actual reality. Botts stated, "Some of these perception issues are our own fault because we haven't been telling our story and letting people know what agriculture really is." Botts and his team work on a variety of key issues that the public often has a skewed perception of, including pesticides and crop production technology, breeding technology, nutrient management, precision agriculture, and land use. These components are becoming increasingly important as our population increases.

Botts talked about pressures affecting

the global market, which are constantly changing. These can be environmental pressures such as pollinators, or they can be societal perceptions and misperceptions that affect demand.

Pesticides are one of the most regulated areas of agriculture, Botts said, and the majority of people don't quite understand the truth about how they're used in production agriculture. Botts discussed pesticides and the regulatory process affecting them. The U.S. system is very federally centralized, unlike other areas of the world. The details of regulation are very complex, and FFVA is an excellent resource for information or clarification or to help with issues. Having a staff of veterans such as Botts is vital to production agriculture in Florida.

## FFVA offers numerous ways to connect



By **Catherine Cellon**  
**Duda Farm Fresh Foods**

**A**lyssa Badalamenti, FFVA's communications manager, sat down with ELDP Class 7 to talk about the different engagement opportunities and online content FFVA offers its members. A tool that I found useful and convenient was FFVA's mobile app. This app can be found in the iTunes store by searching FFVA and is set up in a very user-friendly way. My favorite feature is the headlines section, which is a quick way to get the latest news and top stories for that day.

The app also has links to FFVA's social media sites, upcoming events and the member directory.

Badalamenti also gave us an in-depth look into FFVA's website. I was very impressed to learn about all the

different services FFVA has available.

These services include government advocacy, developing and implementing food safety plans, filing applications for the H-2A guest-worker program, and much more. An exciting new resource in testing phase is FFVA Connect. This site will be a private online community for FFVA members to discuss issues and share ideas. Within the community you can directly message members or start private group discussions. The site is set to launch in February 2018.







# Connecting growers and consumers: Seven years of collaboration



By **Frankie Montalvo**  
Glades Formulating Corp.

**G**rowers in the Florida specialty crop industry have taken many approaches to marketing their products. Under brands such as Fresh From Florida and Sunshine Sweet Corn, growers connect with consumers in many ways. Dr. Joy Rumble and the University of Florida's Center for Public Issues and Education (PIE Center) conduct research on how to connect growers with the interests and demands of consumers.

Local food movements are growing in importance to consumers, presenting an opportunity for Florida growers to fill an ever-expanding niche.

Rumble's research focuses on many such opportunities to position Florida specialty crops.

The PIE Center's research indicated that the term "local" is very flexible, and that convenience generally drives food purchasing. For example, a South Florida consumer would consider sweet corn from the Everglades Agricultural Area local, but may also consider Georgia pecans local – it simply depends on availability and how local products can be.

Rumble discussed how the center did research to evaluate the knowledge of retailers and consumers about Florida-grown blueberries. It conducted a 31-state survey of consumers, retailers and producers. Some consumers did not know blueberries were grown in Florida, and fewer knew when the correct season is. The PIE Center worked with Florida blueberry



**Center for Public Issues Education**  
IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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growers to educate retailers and consumers using easy-to-read infographics and materials. This helped improve brand understanding of Florida blueberries by consumers.

Dr. Rumble educated our class about the benefits of targeted research for specialty crop marketing. Increased research into consumer preferences can help the Florida specialty crop industry grow our brands within and outside of Florida.





## ELDP News



**1 Jennifer Lytch (Class 1)** was recently promoted to director of marketing for Wedgworth's Inc.



**2 Amber Maloney (Class 2)** and her husband, Matt, are expecting their second child in June 2018.

**3** Beau Ashton Norman was born to **Clayton (Class 3)** and Candice **Norman** a month early on Nov. 25. He weighed 5 pounds, 10 ounces and was 18.5 inches long.



Thank you to Wedgworth's Inc.  
for being our dinner sponsor!

