

REQUEST FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT AT SWFREC

\$4.9 million

This budget request is intended to restore the UF/Southwest Florida Research & Education Center (SWFREC) to the level of programs and capabilities that existed in the early 1990's. The research and extension capacity at SWFREC has been and will continue to be an economic engine for the region and the state.

Funding Objectives - Enhance research and extension capacity to:

- Confront invasive plant pests and diseases that challenge vegetable, citrus, and sugarcane growers.
- Develop natural resource innovations such as bioenergy crops and ecosystem services on farm lands.
- Enhance forage production from native ranges and ranch pastures.
- Improve effectiveness of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality and increase efficiency of water and fertilizer inputs.
- Interact with county extension to serve small farm operations.

The SWFREC serves the 5-county area (**Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades**), which produces almost 25% of Florida's citrus as well as nearly 80% of the tomatoes and other fresh vegetables sold during winter to NE US markets. Citrus, vegetable, sugarcane, and ornamental growers along with cattle ranchers collectively generate **\$1 billion in farm sales annually** and are the core of an agribusiness and natural resource economy in southwest Florida that contributes more than **\$6 billion of total annual economic activity statewide**.

In 2009, SWFREC ranked in the **top 25% among the 29 departments** within UF/IFAS in terms of competitive grants and refereed journal publications per faculty, two important metrics of academic productivity.

SWFREC has recently been in the forefront of developing:

- The first CHMA, citrus health management area, to control Asian citrus psyllids
- Nutritional and horticultural treatments to sustain greening (HLB) infected citrus trees
- Diagnostic and management protocols for serious plant diseases such as tomato yellow leaf curl virus, watermelon decline, and HLB
- Peaches and blueberries as alternative specialty crops in southwest Florida
- Horticultural wastes as compost for vegetable and citrus production
- Improved fertilizer management including controlled-release fertilizers for nutrient use efficiency
- Payments for environmental services on farm land such as water treatment and storage
- Farm worker safety and compliance training workshops
- Mechanical harvesting systems for juice oranges
- The Florida Master Naturalist program

In order to meet present and future objectives, the following is requested:

Personnel, Recurring funds:

Faculty

Center Director	\$150,000
Four Faculty positions	\$440,000
Small Farms Specialist	<u>\$ 60,000</u>
Subtotal	\$650,000 (incl. benefits)

Staff

4.5 Senior Biological Scientists	\$260,000
2 Admin support	\$ 90,000
2 Farm/Building Support	<u>\$ 90,000</u>
Subtotal	\$440,000 (incl. benefits)

Total Personnel \$1,090,000

Operating funds \$ 110,000

Total Recurring funds \$1,200,000

Critical Deferred Maintenance (Non-recurring) \$1,200,000
(Facility, lab, and farm equipment repairs and renovation)

Total Recurring and Non-recurring Request \$2,400,000

New Space

Due to the increase in program activities at the SWFREC, particularly in the area of graduate education, additional space is needed. Two buildings have been identified to meet this need.

- o 6,000 sq. ft. annex to the current office and lab complex (building 7712) \$2,000,000
- o Multipurpose grad student support building \$ 500,000

TOTAL NEW SPACE \$2,500,000