

A NEW LOOK AT AGRICULTURE

Redefining agriculture's role in our
economy, landscape, environment & social culture



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as a report to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group

This paper is called "A New Look at Agriculture." That's because there is a tendency in our planning and policy making, and even our every day lives, to think of agriculture as expendable ... if we even think of it at all.

This Paper:

- ✓ Explains why agriculture is important to each one of us
- ✓ Describes the obstacles faced by agriculture
- ✓ Suggests more than 250 ways to overcome these obstacles
- ✓ Proposes 20 priority actions for immediate attention
- ✓ Can be used to develop policy actions on a county, state and national basis.

Goals: The underlying premise of this paper is: "*WITHOUT PROFIT, THERE WILL BE NO AGRICULTURE.*" This, in turn, generated five goals that must be accomplished to retain and sustain agriculture's *commodity* and *resource* values. These goals are grouped under two major headings:

ECONOMICS

1. Improve profitability for producers.
2. Create a conducive business climate for the entire agriculture industry.
3. Ensure adequate infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENT

4. Enhance environmental compatibility.
5. Integrate agriculture into the landscape.

Priority Actions: These include action steps to address **PROFITABILITY** through *returning more of the retail food dollar to the producer*, encouraging *economic development*, improving *marketing*, addressing *trade imbalances*, controlling the spread of *exotic and invasive species*, addressing *loss of "minor crop" tools* and expanding *education*; the **BUSINESS CLIMATE** by *improving the regulatory climate* in which agriculture operates, looking at the impacts of *local government regulations and policy actions at all levels of government*, and *adapting federal programs to meet individual state conditions*; **INFRASTRUCTURE** through *transportation systems, labor and environmental restoration/regional water management*; **ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY** through *private stewardship and new thinking for the millennium* (determining what agricultural activity, if any, can take place on public lands and what public lands, if any, can be leased or sold back to ag producers); and **INTEGRATING AGRICULTURE INTO THE LANDSCAPE** by considering the impacts of *new development* on agriculture, improving the quality of life in *rural communities*, and addressing *tax issues* and *landowner equity* concerns that impact on the decisions landowners make about future land use.

Copies are available from the project web site at: <http://us-farm.com>. Copies also are available from Florida Stewardship Foundation, 621 N.W. 53rd Street, Suite 240, Boca Raton, FL 33487. Phone 561-995-1474. Email: info@us-farm.com