For the past 25 years UF/IFAS Extension has partnered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Suwannee River Water Management District and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop systems and best practices that help Suwannee Valley watermelon growers conserve water, fuel and fertilizer.

$88 MILLION watermelon industry statewide

NEARLY 1/3 of all Florida watermelons are grown in the Suwannee Valley area

RESEARCH-BASED BMPs have led to an industry-wide shift from overhead irrigation techniques on open soils to a more efficient system of drip irrigation under plastic mulch.

Suwannee Valley Area RESULTS

Less water used
2.1 billion gallons in annual water savings—roughly equivalent to the water use of 65,000 Florida residents

Less fertilizer applied
180,000 lbs less nitrogen applied annually

Less fuel expended
120,000-270,000 gallons in diesel fuel savings per year

Greater watermelon yields
50–60,000 lbs watermelon harvested per acre annually—compared with 25–40,000 lbs/acre in the early 1990s