

## **Initiative 1: Increasing the sustainability, profitability, and competitiveness of agricultural and horticultural enterprises.**

Agriculture, horticulture, and related industries are vital components of Florida's economy. Florida's 47,500 farms produce nearly 300 different commodities on more than 9.2 million acres. Florida's agriculture and horticulture industries employ 750,000 people and contribute more than \$100 billion to our state's economy annually. These industries are extremely diverse. More than 90% of Florida's producers are small farmers, including limited-resource farmers. It is imperative that our agricultural and horticultural producers continue to be economically and environmentally sustainable, as these enterprises provide the products that increase our quality of life and provide access to safe and nutritious food.

Florida's agriculture and horticulture producers face increasing challenges, including rapidly changing technologies, local-to-global markets, climate extremes, varying consumer demands, and increasing regulations. Hence, Florida Extension's educational programs must provide farmers, ranchers, and producers with the research-based knowledge they need to improve sustainability and profitability. Adoption of new technologies, new production practices, alternative crops, new marketing options, and a trained labor force will result in viable agricultural and horticultural production that continues to be sustainable and profitable and contributes to the state's economy.

The number of farm and food entrepreneurs is increasing in rural and urban communities. Most communities do not have established food systems that can deliver food products from the farms to the consumers. Food system development includes farmers' markets, community gardening, food hubs, processors, and wholesale/direct market development. Food system development also includes programs like Farm to School and Farm to Institution. Florida Extension education programs that focus on farm food safety, beginning farmer and rancher classes, food manager certification, marketing/business planning, and consumer education are needed to enhance understanding of food systems in local communities and to ensure access to safe and affordable food.

### P1 – Sustainability of Production Systems and Alternatives

Maintain and enhance production systems of all types and scales by improving knowledge and adoption of production efficiencies and effectiveness, new technologies, good agricultural practices, integrated pest management, food safety and environmental stewardship.

- 1.1 – Animal Systems
- 1.2 – Food Systems
- 1.3 – Plant Systems
- 1.4 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

### P2 – Farm Economics, Entrepreneurship, and Management

Help producers and growers protect the economic sustainability of their operations by teaching about agricultural business planning, financial management and succession planning.

### P3 – Sustainability of Production Systems and Alternatives

Improving Floridians' knowledge about food systems, agricultural production, environmental services, and the environment through public education.