



Exploring integrated solutions from the land for addressing food and energy production, economic development, biological diversity and climate change challenges.



Florida Climate-Smart Agriculture Initiative Announced

For Immediate Release

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GAINESVILLE, FL (April 18, 2019) – Florida agricultural leaders are calling for deeper exploration of farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners as suppliers of environmental protection as well as of food and fiber. The [Florida Climate-Smart Agriculture Work Group](#) has declared its ambitions to craft a plan for how the state's 26 million acres of agricultural lands can adapt to changing conditions and produce more clean water and air and other societal benefits.

The Work Group brings together agricultural, forestry, business, academic, government, and conservation leaders to focus on how to keep Florida agriculture profitable while providing nutritious food, clean energy, and ecosystem services such as water filtration and carbon sequestration.

"As a result of the Work Group's decision to pursue the development of a climate-smart agriculture action plan for the state, the stage has been set for ag thought leaders to advance practices and promote policies that can build a healthier, more resilient food system and a healthier, more sustainable planet," said Co-Chairs Lynetta Usher Griner and Jim Strickland.

Solutions from the Land (SfL), a non-profit that promotes farmer-inspired solutions to global challenges, in partnership with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), is sponsoring the initiative.



The project aims to assist Florida agriculture and forestry leaders in examining the vulnerabilities and opportunities created by changing climatic conditions in ways that are relevant to their daily lives and those of their customers. It will also seek to mobilize thought leaders to advocate for needed changes in land use practices, research, education, and policy.

"Solutions from the Land is working across the country to bring America's farms, ranches, and forests to the forefront of resolving food system, energy, environmental, and climate challenges and achieving global sustainable development goals," said SfL President Ernie Shea. "We are honored to be in Florida helping visionary agricultural leaders and their partners demonstrate the full range of goods and services they can deliver from the land."

Funded by a Turner Foundation planning grant, the project was initiated earlier this year when SfL and UF/IFAS held a climate-smart agriculture discussion with some of Florida's most

respected agricultural leaders. The discussion included a review of the impacts that extreme weather events and changing climatic conditions are having and are expected to have on the state's agriculture and forestry sectors.

Work Group members came to the consensus view that Florida agriculture was undergoing transformational change and that extreme weather events and changing conditions were a threat multiplier that required additional discussion. The group discussed a need for and benefits of developing an agricultural and forestry adaptive management strategy for the state based on climate-smart agriculture principles and agreed to develop an action plan for implementing the strategy.

At their second meeting in Gainesville on Wednesday, Griner and Strickland were affirmed as the inaugural co-chairs of the Work Group. Griner, along with her husband, Ken, owns and operates Usher Land and Timber, based in Chiefland. She is the 2018 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Ag Expo Florida Farmer of the Year. Strickland is the owner of Strickland Ranch and managing partner of Big Red Cattle Company and Blackbeard's Ranch in Manatee County, which was awarded the 2018 Florida Cattlemen's Association Environmental Stewardship Award and Florida Commissioner of Agriculture's 2018 Agricultural-Environmental Leadership Award.

"To make lasting changes in land management, we need the voice of those who actually work the land. Lynetta and Jim bring that authoritative voice," said Jack Payne, UF's senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources and head of UF/IFAS. "Jim and Lynetta's credibility among farmers and policy makers makes them the right people to lead efforts to devise a plan and then to translate it into real change and progress."

As for next steps, the Work Group agreed to:

- Conduct a climate opportunity and vulnerability assessment;
- Create a "futuring" document for Florida that identifies the specific vulnerabilities posed by increasingly erratic weather extremes and a changing climate;
- Develop a comprehensive adaptive management strategy for Florida agriculture;
- Develop and implement an ecosystem services action plan that will enhance the resilience of Florida agriculture.

At a time of multiple threats and challenges to Florida's agricultural and forestry systems, farmers, ranchers, and foresters can be at the forefront of providing sustainable solutions that benefit all of Florida's citizens.

About Solutions from the Land: *Solutions from the Land is a nonprofit corporation focused on land-based solutions to global challenges. Its mission is to identify and facilitate the implementation of policies, practices, and projects at a landscape scale that will result in land being sustainably managed to produce food, feed, fiber, and energy while protecting and improving critical environmental resources and delivering high value solutions to combat climate change. For more information, see www.sfldialogue.net/what_is_sfl.html.*

The mission of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is to develop knowledge relevant to agricultural, human and natural resources and to make that

knowledge available to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. With more than a dozen research facilities, 67 county Extension offices, and award-winning students and faculty in the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, UF/IFAS works to bring science-based solutions to the state's agricultural and natural resources industries, and all Florida residents. Visit the UF/IFAS web site at ifas.ufl.edu and follow us on social media at @UF_IFAS.