

## Colloquium Field Trip

### Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC)



Contact Hanlon, Edward A, JR [\[mailto:eahanlon@ufl.edu\]](mailto:eahanlon@ufl.edu)

### and Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)



<http://www.ciw-online.org/about.html>

### Learning Objectives:

#### SWFREC

- Describe the research aspects of our local food and agricultural economy.
- Discuss the water quality and quantity issues related to food production.
- Explain how farmers treat for pests.
- Explain how farmers fertilize for effective crop nutrition and water management.
- Discuss the economic factors that affect food production.

#### CIW

- Describe the issues regarding
  - fair wages,
  - creating a respectful work environment,
  - housing, and
  - stronger laws and enforcement for worker's rights.

## Key Concepts:

### SWFREC:

- **Pathogens affecting citrus crops and their treatment:**

Citrus greening, one of the most serious citrus disease in the world is a bacterial disease (spread by two species of psyllid insects) that greatly reduces production, destroys the economic value of the fruit and can kill trees.

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/plant\\_health/content/printable\\_version/faq\\_citrus\\_greening.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/plant_health/content/printable_version/faq_citrus_greening.pdf)

Citrus canker is a bacterial disease of citrus that causes premature leaf and fruit drop. It is highly contagious and can spread rapidly across all species of citrus. Current treatments include cutting back the foliage and spraying nutrients directly on the leaves.

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/canker/faqs.html>

Water conservation innovations have come about as a result of grant-funded research that explores the application method and timing of water, as well as the use of alternative water sources. Efficient water use for commercial crop production keeps production costs down and stabilizes to some extent the vagaries of weather. Lower water use with better timing to enhance yield also means less farm runoff and reduced nutrient movement.

Fertilizer conservation is a priority because of the considerable cost to the grower in recent years and is a major section of Best Management Practices, implemented by approximately 80% of all growers throughout Florida. Nutrient management does not stop with the controlled use of fertilizers, but must involve good water management to hold nutrients in the soil for subsequent plant uptake.

Economic factors that affect food production: The cost of food production is a small component of the price we pay at the grocery store. The average loaf of bread or box of cereal contains between \$0.03 and \$0.10 of farm-supplied raw materials. The manufacturing, distribution, and display make up the primary costs. Vegetables have a higher percentage of the sale price going to growers, but these markets are quite variable, despite the fact that grocery prices do not change appreciably. Recent global issues including population pressures, loss of water resources, soil erosion, desertification, and climate change will all increase food costs dramatically in the next few years. Changes in diet in developing countries moving to the consumption of more meat will also increase pressures on food production. In the US, these changes are already in evidence, but are considerably less than in other countries. For example, cans and boxes are smaller than the traditional sizes, while the cost of the smaller container of food has remained relatively flat.

## **CIW:**

- **Coalition building efforts in the larger community & the Campaign for Fair Food.**

Fairer wages and working conditions are being implemented as a result of the Campaign for Fair Food, which seeks to harness the purchasing power of leading food corporations to improve conditions in the fields. Part of the Campaign is a demand for a “penny-per-pound” premium paid directly by food corporations to farmworkers. At around 32 pounds per bucket of tomatoes, the penny-per-pound premium could potentially double the earnings of the average worker.

- **Conditions in the fields:**

The average piece rate today is 50 cents for every 32-lbs of tomatoes they pick, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged since 1980. As a result of that stagnation, a worker today must pick more than 2.25 tons of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday -- nearly *twice* the amount a worker had to pick to earn minimum wage thirty years ago, when the rate was 40 cents per bucket. Most farmworkers today earn less than \$12,000 a year.

In a January 2001 letter to members of Congress, the U.S. Department of Labor described farmworkers as "a labor force in significant economic distress," citing farmworkers' "low wages, sub-poverty annual earnings, [and] significant periods of un- and underemployment" to support its conclusions.

In the most extreme conditions, farmworkers are held against their will and forced to work for little or no pay, facing conditions that meet the stringent legal standards for prosecution under modern-day slavery statutes. Federal Civil Rights officials have successfully prosecuted seven slavery operations involving over 1,000 workers in Florida's fields since 1997, prompting one federal prosecutor to call Florida "ground zero for modern-day slavery." The CIW's Anti-Slavery Campaign is a worker-based approach to eliminating modern-day slavery in the agricultural industry. The CIW helps fight this crime by uncovering, investigating, and assisting in the federal prosecution of slavery rings preying on hundreds of farmworkers.

## **For more information:**

### **SWFREC:**

- The Southwest Florida Research and Education Center is part of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), Land Grant services in Immokalee, Florida. For instructions to IFAS go to: <http://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/> and click on DIRECTIONS.

## **CIW:**

- “The CIW is a community-based organization of mainly Latino, Mayan Indian and Haitian immigrants working in low-wage jobs throughout the state of Florida.
- We strive to build our strength as a community on a basis of reflection and analysis, constant attention to coalition-building across ethnic divisions, and an ongoing investment in leadership development to help our members continually develop their skills in community education and organization.
- From this basis we fight for, among other things: a fair wage for the work we do, more respect on the part of our bosses and the industries where we work, better and cheaper housing, stronger laws and stronger enforcement against those who would violate workers' rights, the right to organize on our jobs without fear of retaliation, and an end to involuntary servitude in the fields.”
- Links: <http://www.ciw-online.org/index.html>