Climate Change and Urban Farming

By Richard Tyson, Extension Agent IV, Seminole County-Central

Have you ever walked through a hot city street in the middle of summer and then strolled into a park loaded with grass, trees and shrubs? Notice the change in air temperature? So have Florida scientists at FSU’s Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies (COAPS) when comparing rural and urban temperatures. Average annual temperatures in most areas of Florida with extensive agricultural land have actually cooled since 1900, whereas urban districts have warmed during the same period. Examination of temperature data from weather stations in Georgia and Alabama have revealed the same distinction between rural and urban areas (http://www.coaps.fsu.edu/).

Agricultural lands, parks, and other green space not only provide economic benefits to local communities but also provide many other environmental benefits in addition to cooling, including wildlife habitat, storm water retention, and aquifer recharge. An economic analysis of agriculture in Hillsborough County, Florida, showed that agriculture received only 25 cents in services for each dollar they pay in taxes. The Hillsborough County Commissioner’s recognized this discrepancy and the benefits farmland provides to the county and approved the Agriculture Stewardship Program which offers grants equal to 75% of the county land taxes in exchange for keeping the land in agriculture for 10 years. There are currently 222 farmers with 9,000 acres enrolled in the program.

State, regional, and local government entities should carefully consider the laws and regulations they pass and their potential impact on agricultural land. Once forced out of business by overregulation and competition from foreign countries, there is only one use left for these lands…to sell them for development which contributes to urban sprawl.
Can we affect climate change by maintaining successful small farms in and around urban centers? Only if they are profitable. Check out the upcoming workshop in Seminole County for the latest information on how to operate and successfully market your small farm products near urban centers.

URBAN FARMING WORKSHOP – Grow Local / Buy Local
October 29, 2008, $10 Registration includes lunch
Seminole County Extension Auditorium
250 W. County Home Road
Sanford, FL  32773
407-665-5554  rvt@ufl.edu

Agenda

10:00 – 11:00  **Homegrown – How to Grow Local / Buy Local** – Learn how to start your own transplants, produce your own food, use drip irrigation, and market what you grow.
Dr. Richard Tyson, Seminole County Extension, Sanford

11:00 – 12:00  **Growing and Marketing Trends for Organic Growers in Florida** – The latest techniques to grow and market organic fruits and vegetables.
Dr. Danielle Treadwell, University of Florida, Gainesville

12:00 – 12:45  **Lunch and View Demonstrations**
12:45 – 1:45  Suwannee Valley Research and Demonstration Highlights for Small Farm and Alternative Agriculture Enterprises – The latest results from Florida’s premier research station working on small farm issues. Bob Hochmuth, Suwannee Valley Research & Education Center, Live Oak

1:45 – 2:00  Break

2:00 – 2:15  Small Farm Livestock Opportunities in Central Florida – Overview of small farm livestock opportunities. Dennis Mudge, Orange County Extension, Orlando

2:15 – 3:00  Successful Small Farm Grower Panel Discussion
Melanie Corun, Waterkist Farm, Sanford
Bob Braun, Rest Haven Farm, Geneva
Karen Stauderman, Oak Haven Farm, Sorrento
Herbert Felder, Winter Park Farmers Market, Winter Park
Dennis Mudge, Livestock Agent, Orlando

3:00 pm  Adjourn