Dear Friends,

UF/IFAS Extension is a century-plus-old organization. So you might not characterize us as innovative, entrepreneurial or even daring. But walk into any UF/IFAS Extension county office, check out the Solutions for Your Life website (solutionsforyourlife.com) or visit our newest portal of information, blogs.ifas.ufl.edu, and you might be surprised to see new programs about best management practices for water use in production agriculture, being a food entrepreneur, 4-H youth working on an entrepreneurial business idea, and agents working on urban water quality.

We are an organization with a strong history of evidence-based knowledge on agriculture, community development, healthy eating, successful families and youth leadership. So it only makes sense that we lead the way in developing great programs on food systems, sustainability and entrepreneurship.

At the heart of it, that is what we’ve always done. We find solutions to the problems that our neighbors face — whether it’s in the fields with new methods of fighting against mid-winter freezes, teaching about new crops to grow when an invasive pest has destroyed your citrus grove, helping your community respond to hurricanes and other natural disasters, offering the best way to irrigate your fields during a drought, or managing the transition of your family farm from one generation to the next.

The theme for this year’s calendar is “Your Food System.” UF/IFAS Extension is involved in every stage of the food system cycle — from production to consumption and everything in between. And we are recasting the elements of the traditional food system to meet the needs of today so we are able to respond to the challenging and unknown needs of tomorrow.

Check out a sample of the innovative and entrepreneurial programs that are serving Florida residents in this calendar. Whether in 1918 or 2018, UF/IFAS Extension still brings new ideas to the table.

Sincerely,

Dean & Director, UF/IFAS Extension

A Message From UF/IFAS Extension

Dear Friends,

UF/IFAS has a proud legacy of responding to the most pressing needs of Florida residents. And UF/IFAS Extension faculty, agents and specialists are our “first responders.” With offices in each of Florida’s 67 counties and faculty in every UF/IFAS department at the Gainesville campus and at our network of research and education centers across the state, the UF/IFAS Extension team uses leading-edge science to help Florida farmers and families. They work with county, city and state leaders to bring science and knowledge to decision-making. These professionals partner with community agencies and faith-based organizations — with anyone as committed as they are to working hard and making a difference.

Extension faculty and agents get up every day thinking about how they can make your life better, with programs that can save you time, money and energy. They spend their days working on how to use less water in both rural and urban communities, how we can better manage our family finances; how we can make informed choices about what we eat and how to feed our families; and how we can raise our young people to be the leaders we all wish and know them to be.

You can read in these pages about some of the many successful programs in Extension that are working for you and for all of us. There is a great story in every month of this calendar — and there are hundreds of stories every day being created in your local UF/IFAS Extension county offices.

You can expect great things from UF/IFAS and UF/IFAS Extension! Sincerely,

Jack M. Payne
Senior Vice President
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Dean & Director, UF/IFAS Extension
Through field days, workshops and one-on-one consultations, UF/IFAS Extension faculty help producers increase food production in ways that are good for their bottom line, good for customers and good for the environment.

Boosting Agricultural Production

Agriculture drives Florida’s economy and employment while it feeds the nation and the world. Our unique climate supports thriving row crops, livestock production, specialty crops and fisheries — but not without risk, knowledge and hard work. Through field days, workshops and one-on-one consultations, UF/IFAS Extension works closely with Florida’s agricultural producers, putting the latest scientific research to the task of maximizing their economic yields, reducing water and other inputs, and lessening the impacts from disease, pests and climate fluctuations.

To learn more about Florida’s agricultural production, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
Pollinating organisms are vital to the health of all natural ecosystems, including agricultural systems. UF/IFAS Extension provides programming and resources that promote a diversity of native pollinators.

To learn more about pollinators, visit solutionsforyourlife.com.
Working with industry partners, UF/IFAS Extension provides training for food processing and handling workers to assure that the food we eat is clean and safe.

Assuring a Safe Food Supply

The safety of our food supply is of paramount importance to our citizens and our economy. To assure Florida consumers that the food they eat derives through a system that is clean and safe, the UF/IFAS Food Safety and Quality Program provides training for restaurant managers, food handlers and food processors. Many UF/IFAS Extension offices throughout Florida offer the ServSafe® curriculum, a food safety certification program designed to meet state and federal regulations. Florida Sea Grant provides national leadership to ensure the safety of our seafood through Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) training.

To learn more about food preparation and handling, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
UF/IFAS Extension faculty member Soohyoun Ahn (right) consults with new food entrepreneur Kathy Paiva in a communal kitchen in Marion County. Encouraging new businesses and economic growth is an important part of Extension’s mission.

The growing demand for specialty food items and the passage of Florida’s Cottage Food Law have created fresh opportunities for people to get creative in the kitchen and start their own businesses. To succeed in a competitive market, it’s important to have a good business plan and a basic understanding about food processing, packaging, marketing and regulations. That’s why UF/IFAS Extension offers food entrepreneurship workshops to help new entrepreneurs navigate the ins and outs of starting a new food business.

To learn more about starting a food business, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
For growers, reaching the right markets and getting a fair price for their produce can make or break their business. UF/IFAS Extension provides in-depth market analysis, agribusiness education and online tools to help producers find the best markets to compete successfully.

Getting Fresh Food to the Market

If you’re a farmer, getting your produce into the right market is as important as growing it. And in recent years the variety of markets available to food producers has expanded to include retail chains, specialty retailers, food brokers, direct online sales, CSAs, food hubs, global trade and local markets. To help farmers navigate this competitive new environment, UF/IFAS Extension provides market research information to help growers better understand their markets, and business planning education to help farmers and food business entrepreneurs reach the customers they need.

To learn more, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
Ramon Angeles of Lake Butler sets up his produce stand at a farmers’ market in Alachua County. UF/IFAS Extension helps Floridians to better understand where their food comes from and how thriving food systems strengthen local economies.

Shrinking the Distance Between Farm and Table

When you buy food from a local grower at your farmers’ market, roadside stand or food hub, you’re not just supporting their business, you’re also supporting your local economy, maintaining genetic diversity of food crops, improving your health and preserving natural resources, rural land areas and wildlife spaces. UF/IFAS Extension supports farm-to-table programs in communities and schools throughout Florida, bridging the gap between farm and table to help people understand where their food comes from and support local food producers and distributors.
UF/IFAS Extension is helping to solve the problem of food insecurity in Florida’s rural and urban communities by connecting growers with food desert areas and teaching residents how to grow their own vegetable gardens.

Eliminating Food Deserts

It’s estimated that more than 2 million Floridians live in urban and rural areas with insufficient access to fresh, healthy food. People living in such “food deserts” experience higher rates of obesity and are more likely to suffer from diabetes, diet-related cancers, stroke and liver disease. UF/IFAS Extension works with local growers and service organizations to bring mobile farmers’ markets to food desert communities. Florida Master Gardener Program volunteers also lend assistance in developing gardens that help schools and communities grow their own fresh fruits and vegetables.

To learn more about food security, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
UF/IFAS Family Nutrition Program helps families receiving financial assistance find sources of healthy food, and provides free nutrition education.

Improving Family Nutrition

Gaining access to healthy food is only one part of fighting food insecurity. It also involves having the financial resources to buy healthy foods and understanding the fundamentals of good nutrition. UF/IFAS Extension’s Family Nutrition Program (FNP) empowers Floridians with limited resources to take control of their health. By offering free nutrition education in schools, childcare centers and communities, FNP teaches people how to eat healthy on a budget and be physically active in order to reduce their risk of obesity and chronic disease. FNP also helps people receiving financial assistance gain access to fresh healthy food.

To learn more about FNP, visit uffnp.org
Supermarket tours coordinated through Florida 4-H clubs guide youth ages 5-18 through real-life situations where they learn how to make informed decisions about the food they eat.

Empowering Good Food Choices

The fourth ‘H’ in 4-H stands for health, and for more than 100 years, the UF/IFAS Extension 4-H Youth Development Program has been using scientific research to develop hands-on projects for youth, giving them the knowledge and confidence to make healthy food choices on their own. In 4-H clubs, along with school enrichment programs throughout the state, caring volunteers and teen leaders work with youth on projects dealing with nutrition, physical fitness, substance abuse and safety, as well as social and emotional wellness.

To learn more about 4-H and healthy eating, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
Whether you're cooking a holiday meal or tailgating before the game, food safety is important for the health and well-being of you and your loved ones. Florida 4-H uses fun activities to demonstrate the fundamentals of safe food preparation, cooking and storage.

Fostering Food Safety

Learning how to store, prepare and cook food safely is as important to our health as good nutrition. To educate youth about food safety, Florida 4-H uses fun, hands-on group learning activities such as the 4-H Tailgating contest, a statewide competition for youth ages 11-18. In a safe and supportive environment, youth learn the fundamentals of outdoor fire-building, meat selection, cooking safety, cooking equipment and methods of smoking and slow-cooking meat. It's just one of the many ways Florida 4-H is helping youth become healthy, confident and well-informed citizens.

To learn more about Florida 4-H, visit florida4h.org
Composting is a great way to recycle food waste, and results in nutrient-rich organic matter that you can put back in your garden — to grow more food for your table. UF/IFAS-trained Master Gardener volunteers have tips for composting and much more.

Reducing Food Waste

For a food system to work, it has to be sustainable. That means that after food completes its journey to our pantries and tables, what’s unused isn’t wasted but is instead returned to the soil or put back into circulation to feed ourselves and others. There are many ways to reduce food waste, including gleaning excess produce, composting and donating to local food drives. UF/IFAS Extension faculty and volunteers help support food recycling efforts by organizing and working with local agencies on food drives and gleaning events, and by teaching home and community gardeners how to turn their discarded food waste into nutrient-rich soil by composting it.

To learn more, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
UF/IFAS Extension works in partnership with other state, local and federal agencies to develop best management practices to conserve and preserve the quality of our natural resources.

Supporting Safe, Sustainable Agriculture

The chief principle behind agriculture is to use natural resources wisely so that they’re renewable from one season to the next. Technological advances such as fertilizers, irrigation, improved plant and animal varieties, and pest control make modern agriculture possible, but unless they’re managed carefully they can deplete the very resources food needs to grow. That’s why UF/IFAS Extension works directly with agricultural producers and with state, local and federal agencies to develop safe, sustainable management practices that conserve the quality and abundance of our natural resources.

To learn more, visit solutionsforyourlife.com
For the full annual report, visit www.ifas.ufl.edu/annual-reports.shtml
Florida’s climate makes it ideal for growing a wide variety of food crops, including citrus, sugarcane, tomatoes, peppers, watermelons, peanuts, snap beans and potatoes. To find out what’s in season any time of the year, visit the UF/IFAS Extension website at SolutionsForYourLife.com.