Conference Session Descriptions

Session descriptions are grouped by topic. Please note times offered for each one. Reference the Agenda-at-a-Glance to view sessions by time.

SATURDAY

Business and Marketing

1. **Market Research at Your Fingertips: 11:00am-12:00pm.** Participants will learn how to make the most of the Florida MarketMaker website by actively exploring the website and its searchable database to collect market research for their businesses.

2. **Intro to Cooperatives (Co-ops): A beginner’s guide to business cooperatives for farming success: 1:30pm-3:00pm:** Participants will have the opportunity to interact with a panel of people who are part of cooperatives. Participants will learn what a cooperative actually is, and will learn about the different types of cooperatives, explore ways to start a cooperative, and discuss the pros and cons of using a cooperative as a business structure.

3. **Grow Your Bottom Line – Managing Processes to Increase Profitability: 4:30pm-5:30pm.** Participants will learn how to define those processes that are critical to farm operations in order to begin identifying opportunities for improved efficiency and developing business continuity strategies.

Policy and Regulations

1. **Food Policy Councils 101: 11:00am-12:30pm.** Local and state governments can be powerful partners for changing the food system. Learn how Food Policy Councils and Coalitions are engaging individuals to become allies in the local food movement. This session will include several discussions: what food policy councils are, the impacts they can have on community food systems, how to become involved, and current projects of the Florida Food Policy.

2. **Selling into Wholesale Markets, Part 1: Wholesale Success 2:00pm-3:00pm.** This is Part One of a two-part session covering successful wholesaling techniques for small to mid-scale farmers. The programming will inform farmers about what wholesale buyers are looking for as well as regulations and best practices in food safety, post-harvest handling, and packing. Participating producers will receive a FREE copy of the Wholesale Success Manual (a $50 value). This 256-page, four-color publication is a leading source of information to help farmers scale up and sell into wholesale channels.

3. **Selling into Wholesale Markets, Part 2: Meet the Buyers 4:30pm-5:30pm.** This is Part Two of a two-part session that provides a forum for farmers to develop new sales opportunities. Attendees will hear from a produce buyers’ panel regarding their businesses, current produce sourcing practices, future expectations, and local farms’ places within the sourcing network. Attendees will have opportunities to ask questions and network individually with buyers.
Protected Agriculture

1. **General Principles in Protected Agriculture and Types of Structures: 11:00am-12:00pm.**
   “Protected agriculture” is a general term used to describe any structure that protects the crop. This session provides an overview of experiences and lessons learned using a variety of structures including high tunnels, open shade houses, and greenhouses.

2. **Crop Management and Cultural Practices Under Protective Structures: 1:30pm-3:00pm.**
   From vegetables to fruit crops, protected structures are used throughout Florida to extend the season and produce high-quality produce. Learn about new research findings, get tips and tools for producing a successful crop, and get motivated with examples of low-cost structures for your farm.

3. **Managing Pests Under Protected Agriculture: 4:30pm-5:30pm.** Cultural practices are very important in controlling insects and diseases in protected systems. Insects, mites, and diseases reduce yield and quality of high-value crops and require additional labor to manage. Learn about proven practices and emerging new technologies to keep your fruits and vegetables looking spectacular.

Horticulture

1. **Irrigation and Nutrient Management: Keeping Water and Nutrients in the Crop Root Zone: 11:00am-12:30pm.**
   Efficient water management is key to effective nutrient management. The crop nutrients supplied either through organic amendments or through conventional fertilizers are highly water soluble in their available state. During this session participants will learn about small farm irrigation systems management (including drip irrigation systems). Attendees will also have an opportunity to ask questions of a panel of specialists.

2. **Growing and Marketing Specialty Tree Fruits: 2:00pm-3:00pm.** Interested in having a diverse produce portfolio? This session will feature UF-IFAS fruit crop specialists and a local specialty tree fruit grower. Information will be presented on the production and marketing of specialty tree fruits such as pomegranates and olives.

3. **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA): 4:30pm-5:30pm.** Interested in establishing or managing a successful CSA? This session will build upon information learned in earlier sessions and will feature information about crop scheduling and crop rotations to effectively supply product for your CSA throughout the growing season. The speakers are UF-IFAS extension agents and successful CSA operators in Florida.

Livestock

1. **Stocking Rate: The Key to Successful Livestock Production: 11:00am-12:00pm.** Determine and achieve optimal stocking rates for your pastures based on your operation’s available forage, fertilization, production cycle, and class of animals.

2. **Weed Control for Small Acreages: 1:30pm-3:00pm.** Manage and control weeds that rob pastures of quality forage through best management practices. Identify the resources (biological or chemical) needed to manage them.
3. **Game Bird Production on Small Acreages 4:30pm-5:30pm** Produce quail, pheasant, and eggs on a small farm operation for game bird releases.

**Live Animal Exhibits**

**Organic and Sustainable Farming**

1. **Advancing IPM and Sustainable Agriculture Practices on Your Farm: 11:00am-12:30pm.** Florida growers interested in advancing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies won’t want to miss this session. See examples of advanced IPM systems, learn about conservation programs and technical support for those programs from NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service), and enjoy a question and answer session with expert speakers.

2. **Using Mycorrhizae Fungi to Improve Water and Nutrient Management: 2:00pm-3:00pm.** Mycorrhizae are naturally occurring soil fungi that colonize the roots of crop plants forming a mutually beneficial relationship. Participants will learn about the benefits of mycorrhizae including: improved nutrient and water uptake, soil quality and stability, and increased tolerance of drought, salts, heavy metals, and root pathogens. These benefits are essential to soil management. This session also will cover the use of mycorrhizae in applied research, ecological restoration, and phytoremediation practices.

3. **Agricultural Equipment for Small Vegetable Farms: 4:30pm-5:30pm.** Learn about essential equipment for tillage, planting, cultivation, pest control, and harvesting in organic farming. Participants will learn from a local farmer who will share insights on the roles of equipment in sustainable agricultural systems.

**SUNDAY**

All sessions are 9:00-12:00 and feature farmer-to-farmer discussions and a mid-morning break.

1. **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Roundtable:** For beginning farmers, designing a marketing strategy requires knowledge of production costs and competitive price setting in order to maximize profit and attract customers. Activities and group discussion will cover these topics and more. The Sunday session will be different from the pre-conference Beginning Farmer and Rancher event.

2. **Birds, Bees, and Bats Can Really Help Your Bottom Line:** This session will include discussions of exciting new research demonstrating the benefits of attracting birds, bees, and bats to production areas. Farmers will share their experiences and the group will discuss practical approaches to attracting these valuable pollinators and predators to their farms.

3. **How to be Heard in a Noisy World:** This hands-on workshop features three segments. First, we will discuss farm branding. We’ll explain how to create a brand that accurately represents your farm, products, values, and practices with the goal of establishing a cohesive, positive
reputation in the marketplace. Next, we’ll discuss basic public relations skills and the ways in which they relate to branding and marketing. Finally, we will discuss social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, and the ways in which these tools can benefit your farm’s public relations, marketing, and sales efforts.

4. **Selling Produce and Value-Added Farm Products: Do I Need a Permit?:** This session will address current regulations and on-farm processing for value-added products and cover current food safety regulatory updates. Additionally, a panel discussion of farmers who have completed the permitting process will provide insight and helpful hints on how to get started and comply with new regulations. Lastly, this session will include these concurrent information exchange break-out sessions: food labeling requirements, leasing facilities for agricultural goods processing, and food preservation techniques and regulations.

5. **Future Opportunities and Challenges of Protected Ag in Florida:** A forum for growers interested in learning from one another, this session emphasizes grower-to-grower interactions to discuss critical issues and opportunities in Florida’s protected agriculture systems.

6. **Ag Exemptions, Right to Farm, and Other Regulations:** This session will feature two panel discussions. The first will guide producers through taxing, zoning, permitting, and ordinances relative to small farm livestock production. The second will feature a panel discussion on marketing, processing, and labeling livestock products.