USING EXTENSION TO INCREASE ADOPTION OF WATER-SAVING TECHNOLOGIES ON FARMS

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OVERVIEW

• Extension – What is it and how can we help
• More demand, less water – what to do?
• Methods
  • Funding and equipment
  • Education: One-on-one
  • Education: Field days
• Results and growers’ perceptions on adoption of water-saving technologies
EXTENSION
What is it and how can we help?

*Extension* is a *partnership between state, federal, and county* governments to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to the public.
MORE DEMAND, LESS WATER
What to do?

- Increasing pressure on water use in agriculture
- Programs available for grower adoption
- Tools available to improve water management
- On-farm demonstrations
- Growers’ trust

SRWMD Trend in % irrigated land 1987-2012
Florida Statewide Agricultural Irrigation Demand 2016-2040 Agricultural Water Demands
Methods

- Funding/probes
  - BMP Minigrant (FDACS)
  - NFREC-SV (Bob Hochmuth, Charles Barret)
- Vendor
  - BMP Logics
- Equipment/platform
  - All-in-one Sentek probe
  - Irrimax Live
- Demos
- Field days - surveys

Farms – Alachua Co.

The Family Garden
Brown’s Farm
Farm to Family
Rogers’ Farm
Frog Song Organics
Davis Farm’s
Education: One-on-One

Data interpretation
Crop management
Education: One-on-One

- Understanding the soil
- Nutrient management
- Pest
- Disease
- Data analysis and interpretation
Education: Field days

The Family Garden
Brown Farms
RESUL TS

- Attendance: 42 participants.
- Audience: Growers, MGs and university personnel.
- Intention to:
  - Adopt SMS (16% n=26 and 57% n=16),
  - Use irrigation scheduling (50%, n=16)
  - Self-evaluate water use (50% n=26, 57% n=16).
- Knowledge gain: 18% to 36%.
GROWER’S ADOPTION

• Three growers applied for a cost-share program to acquire the sensors.
• Two were indifferent and one was in disagreement with the adoption of SMS on small, diversified farms.
• Three farmers adjusted their irrigation practices while using the sensors and all of them reported water savings.
• Additional efforts are needed to educate farmers on tools available for water conservation and increase the adoption of best management practices.
Thank you