

# Local Working Group Workshop

## Meeting Minutes

Date: 4/16/2024

Time: 1:30 P.M.

Location: Conference Room #2, Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center, 4509 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33875

### **Changes need to be made to the Farm Bill:**

- Need to increase payment cap per Farm Bill (greater than \$450k EQIP, \$200k CSP)
- Remove AGI limitations from Farm Bill. Corporate farms make the largest impact, pay more in taxes, are regulated on a larger scale... yet do not qualify.
- Change Nitrogen management priority to overall nutrient management (including phosphorous)

### **Changes to be made at State level:**

- USDA cross training of staff – FSA & NRCS or at least presence in the county. NRCS to support FSA via eligibility paperwork and understanding/knowledge of programs – work together.
- For coordination with FSA - When CRP comes to Florida (for groves) please also include specialty crops as eligible lands.

### **Staffing needed – at least 2 more NRCS program employees in Highlands County**

### **More widespread funding is needed for Plant Pest Pressure to fight invasive plant species and invasive bugs.**

- Pastures are still riddled with smutgrass, cogongrass, tropical soda apple, Brazilian pepper trees, ceasarweed, etc.
- Groves are abandoned and now breeding grounds for invasive weeds and pests all over Central and South Florida because of citrus greening.

**Would like a payment scenario for pest management on cropland (citrus) for clearing abandoned groves, including Weed Management for 3-5 years and Nutrient Management for 3-5 years.**

- This goes along with the statewide CHRP program which will allow you to maintain your agricultural land classification for up to 5 years – assuming the land use does not change.

**Payment scenario for Fencing (permanent and temporary) on cropland to allow grazing as part of a crop rotation to improve soil health.**

**Forage and biomass planting – payment rate insufficient**

- Need 2 herbicide treatments
- 3-4 disking
- Freight is higher

**Ramp up outreach to inform of changes and increase awareness of programs – too much for a 1-person office to accomplish, especially if the help coming in is straight out of college and in need of training.**

- We were unaware of the changes that were made as a result of the last round of LWGs.