

EVERGLADES AGRICULTURAL AREA

2018 PRE-HARVEST CELEBRATION



Learn more about our farming region, food supply and environmental record

September 30, 2018

Dear Friends:

As we enter the 2018-2019 harvest season, we want to take this opportunity to express our sincerest thanks and appreciation for the tremendous time and energy each and every one of you spend to make each harvest season more successful than the last given whatever Mother Nature throws our way.

Every year, the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) is counted on to provide America's tables with millions of pounds of wholesome, delicious foods. And, the truth is that Florida wouldn't be what it is today without you, the hardworking men and women in our industry that work from sunrise to sundown to harvest safe, fresh foods our nation relies on.

We all know firsthand just how unpredictable Mother Nature can be and we pray for an abundant harvest. We also pray for the protection of our local farmland and our communities.

Now more than ever, as the 2018-2019 harvest commences, our farming communities must stand united, remain resilient, and proud to be one of the nation's most important farming regions.

Again, we thank you! The EAA remains the nation's largest supplier of winter vegetables including sweet corn, radishes, green beans, lettuce and other leafy greens, Florida's largest producer of rice, and the nation's top producer of sugarcane because of you. We are grateful for your continued hard work and look forward to an exceptional harvest.

Sincerely,

EAA Farmers

EAA: The Most Fertile Farmland in the US

The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) provides families with homegrown cane sugar, grains and vegetables. The EAA is among the most fertile farmland in the United States, and our farming community is so proud to be the largest supplier of winter vegetables including sweet corn, radishes, green beans, lettuce and other leafy greens, as well as rice and sugarcane. Florida wouldn't be what it is today without the farms that grow wholesome, delicious food.



EAA Economics: By the Numbers

Agriculture is one of the three pillars that drives Florida's economy generating more than \$100 billion in economic activity. The EAA is one of the nation's most important farming regions due to its rich muck soils, flat topography, abundant rainfall and sunshine making it an almost perfect place to grow food.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The majority of the EAA lies within Palm Beach County, where agricultural sales generate more than \$11 billion, which is nearly 10 percent of all industry output in County.
- More than 118,000 jobs are provided by agriculture in Palm Beach County, which is 14 percent of the total job supply.
- Our sugarcane farming and manufacturing supplies nearly 23,000 jobs direct and indirect jobs in Florida and has more than \$3 billion in economic impact for the state.
 - + 4 raw sugar processing facilities
 - + 2 sugar refineries
 - + 1 sugar packaging and distribution center
- Sugarcane also provides value-added economic activity for our region including:
 - + Powering North America's largest renewable energy facility
 - + Tellus Products, which produces tableware products made from sugarcane fiber.
- The EAA is the winter vegetable capital of the US totaling \$386 million per year
- The EAA is known as the winter salad bowl for its leafy greens
- 10 fresh vegetable packing houses
- The EAA is home to the only rice mill in Florida that mills homegrown rice.
 - + Rice is grown in rotation as a cover crop and is harvested and processed adding additional value to the Glades agricultural industry and a home to natural wildlife.



Putting Food on America's Dinner Table

The EAA is one of the nation's most important farming regions and grows fresh foods sustainably for millions of American families!

Technology and scientific research are key to providing more food per acre to feed our ever-growing population. Florida alone has 1,000 people moving to the state a day.

Land mass is essential to capital investments in packing house, sugar facilities and value added businesses such as Tellus Products that make renewable food service products out of sugarcane fiber.

Proud to be partners in education and workforce training to grow our own workforce with skilled labor to meet food safety standards and implement Precision Agriculture practices.

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What's Homegrown in the EAA?

Sugarcane

Florida the nation's top producer of sugarcane producing 17 million tons annually. The industry supports 23,000 jobs in Florida has a \$3 billion economic impact.



Sweet Corn

The EAA is the nation's largest producer of fresh-market sweet corn. EAA farmers produce about 1 billion ears of sweet corn annually. Enough for almost every person in Florida to have an ear weekly! EAA farmers provide more fresh sweet corn to the nation on a year-round basis than any other region.



Rice

The EAA is Florida's only rice growing region and has its own rice mill. Farmers produce enough rice to feed 4.5 million people for a whole year.



Lettuce

The EAA leads Florida in production of lettuce. The EAA is 2nd in the nation behind California Farmers. Farmers supply enough lettuce to make 1 billion salads each year.



Cabbage

The EAA also is a major producer of cabbage. Farmers produce enough cabbage to make 250 million servings of coleslaw a year.



Green Beans

Farmers produce 350 million servings of green beans per year. Green beans take 45 to 60 days from planting to harvesting.



Celery

The EAA is Florida's top producer of celery. EAA growers produce roughly 20% of the nation's celery. Farmers produce 120 million stalks of celery per year.

Radish

The EAA is the nation's top producer of radishes. Radish grows quickly and radish can be harvested 3 to 6 weeks after planting.





Our Farming Best Practices

Farm families and our communities are proud to be stewards of our environment as we sustainably farm fresh food for millions of America's families!

We are a community that loves the land and works every day to protect the environment. We are proud of our more than 20 year record as partners with the State of Florida in a collaborative process to restore the Everglades south of Lake Okeechobee.

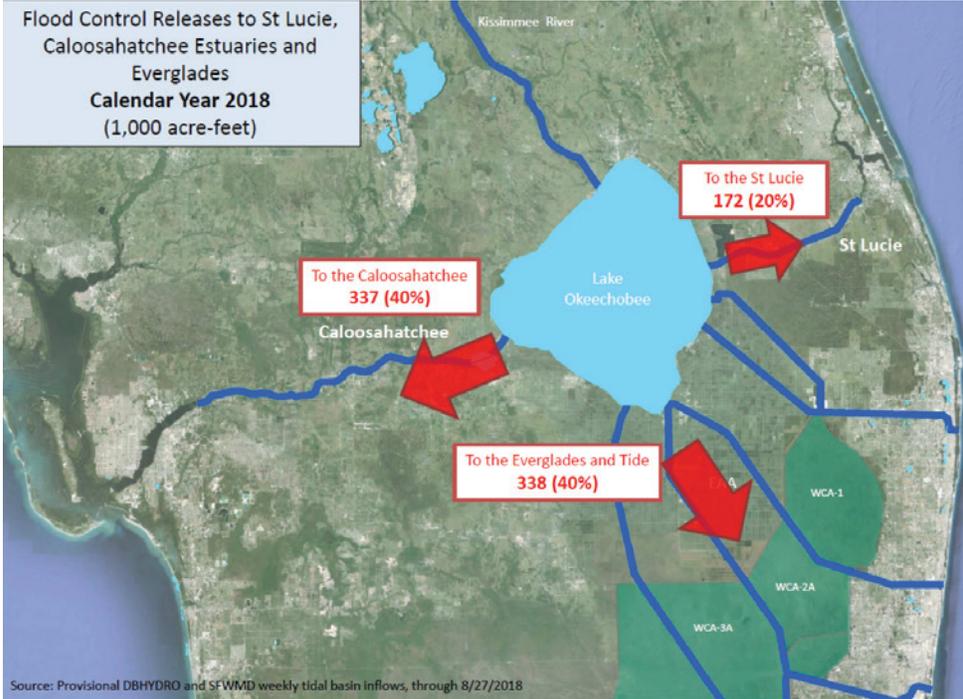
Through our science-based Best Management Practices (BMPs) and our use of precision agriculture to ensure data-driven decision-making, we are growing our crops in the most eco-friendly way to ensure the water leaving our farms is cleaner than when it arrived.

Our BMPs together with the restoration projects built on more than 100,000 acres of farmland have succeeded, as Everglades National Park is in full compliance and the rest of the southern Everglades system is more than 90 percent restored.



**EAA practices have resulted in a 66% phosphorus reduction this year!
More than two times better than the state's 25% reduction goal.**



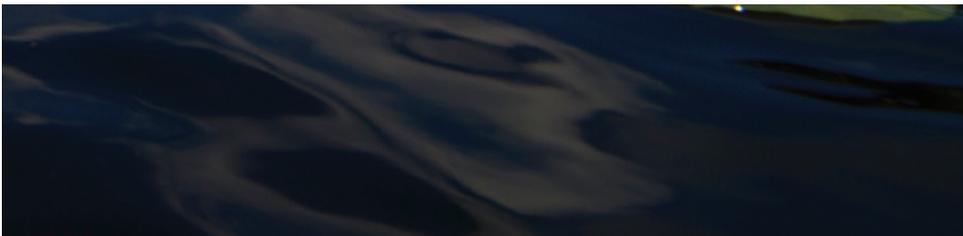


Our Commitment to the Environment

EAA farmers are committed to ensuring the health of Florida's air, land and water. Many people have asked us about the facts of what causes the coastal algae blooms and red tide.

Our farming region, the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), is the most environmentally sustainable farming basin in the nation and does not contribute to algae or red tide in Florida's coastal waterways.

Consider the flow of water in our region of the state: Water flows south from Orlando into Lake Okeechobee; Lake Okeechobee water then flows south to EAA farms, and the EAA's water flows south to the Everglades.





Frequently Asked Questions

About Lake Okeechobee

Why do Lake Okeechobee discharges take place?

Beginning in Orlando, the 5,000-square mile drainage basin's water and nutrients flow south unrestrained through the Kissimmee River and other tributaries into Lake Okeechobee. ***Water enters Lake Okeechobee from the northern basin 6 times faster than it can be released south, east and west.*** Lake Okeechobee water is sent south year-round, through our farming basin to the Everglades. But, when the lake rises too quickly, to prevent flooding discharges are also made to the east and west coasts.

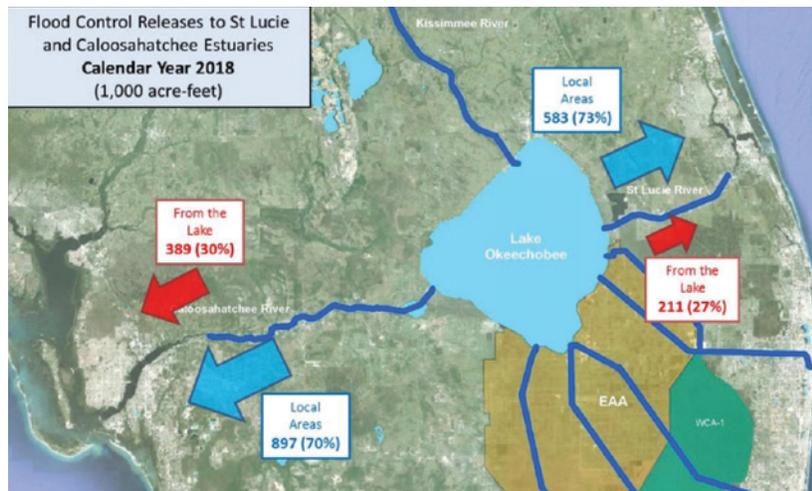
Do EAA farms "back pump" their water into Lake Okeechobee?

Farmers have no ability to pump water into Lake Okeechobee. Further, ***zero water has been back pumped from the southern basin into the lake this year.*** The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) sometimes pumps water into the lake from the southern basin as part of its flood-control responsibilities for the health and safety of the tens of thousands of citizens in the rural Glades communities, who have a right to the same services as residents of coastal and urban communities. Over the decade during the worse hurricane years, the EAA accounted for only 4% of the water in Lake Okeechobee.

What can be done to prevent algae and curb discharges?

Comprehensive solutions must be implemented to preserve Florida's waterways. The EAA has a long track record of supporting plans that will help restore Lake Okeechobee and the coastal waterways.

We are steadfast advocates of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Solutions to the coastal discharges have been part of CERP for nearly 20 years, with the most effective options being to store and treat the water north of the lake, where it originates, before it pollutes the lake. ***After being put on hold for a decade (2006-2016), the Army Corps of Engineers and the SFWMD now have a plan, which was released for public input this summer. The tentatively selected plan has been shown to reduce discharges to the estuaries by nearly 60%.***



Frequently Asked Questions

About Algae & Red Tide

Where does the water on the east and west coasts come from when algae is occurring?

The majority of the water and nutrients in the St. Lucie River and Estuary, east of Lake Okeechobee, as well as a majority of the water and nutrients in the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, west of Lake Okeechobee, are from local runoff from those communities, according to data from SFWMD. **No water from EAA farms, south of the lake, goes to those basins.**

Why are algae blooms prevalent in those areas?

While it is true that the lake has blue-green algae blooms, the coastal estuaries also experience blooms even when discharges from Lake Okeechobee are not occurring due to the high level of nutrients in their local basins.

Heavy freshwater inflows from rainfall flush nutrients and other waste from local basins into the rivers and estuaries. When nutrients are present in the water, it feeds the algae forming the blooms are they become more prevalent in dead-end canals where water isn't well circulated. University research studies have shown nutrients from human waste and runoff are a major issue in Martin County, as more than 20,000 septic tanks are in use along its waterways and leach nutrients into the water when it rains. Algae consume those nutrients as food and the blooms worsen.

Has Lake Okeechobee discharges to the Gulf of Mexico caused Red Tide?

According to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission red tide is not caused by nutrients or associated with the fuel blue green algae in the Caloosahatchee Estuary. In contrast to many Red Tide species *K. Brevis* has no direct link to nutrient pollution. Florida Red Tide develops 10-40 miles offshore, away from man-made sources. Red Tide occurred long before human settlement. This year's Red Tide was first observed in October 2017—long before any lake discharges were made. The effects of Red Tide moving toward the shorelines of southwest Florida caused the fish and other aquatic animal kills and the stench observed by local residents.



Stand with our Farming Communities

The EAA works from sunrise to sunset to produce the fresh and healthy food families enjoy at every meal. Agriculture has been the economic backbone of the Glades communities and we are proud to be a part of the rural way of life we all enjoy on the shores of Lake Okeechobee rooted in the muck soils.

Protecting farmland in the EAA – with the nation’s most productive soils – is critical to our food supply. If we don’t want to become reliant on imported food from foreign countries over American products, we must protect the local agriculture, homegrown food, and rural jobs businesses in the EAA.
