

Commonality of messaging will be very important when speaking to legislators about the Florida Food Freedom Act. The state legislature has adopted “guiding principles” for legislation in 2010. These principles are the statements in bold below. Make sure to hit on these points when discussing the bill with elected officials or writing editorials to your local newspaper.

CREATES A REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT THAT FOSTERS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION.

Family farms and farmland are decreasing in Florida. The economic, environmental and community impact of dwindling Florida family farms affects every citizen. The Florida Food Freedom Act proposed by Senator Carey Baker helps alleviate excessive permitting requirements on family farms and will in turn grow jobs and strengthen local economies.

There is a strong demand for locally produced agricultural commodities. This is evidenced by an increase of farmers markets, farm-to-school projects and community supported agriculture programs. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the number of Florida farms selling directly to the end consumer increased by 78% from 2002 to 2007. Additionally, the value of agricultural products sold by these farms increased by \$7 million from 2002 to 2007.

The Florida Food Freedom Act will allow family farms to remain profitable and viable by defining a short food distribution chain and exempting it from burdensome regulatory oversight that a longer, multi-layered food distribution chain should be required to have. The Florida Food Freedom Act permits a single link food distribution chain that starts with the food producer, or the producer’s agent, and ends with the consumer. The relationship between the producer and the consumer, including the producer’s integrity and the consumer’s interest in and knowledge of how the food is raised, harvested, and prepared provides sufficient oversight.

The Florida Food Freedom Act also opens up opportunities for agri-tourism and other new enterprises for Florida family farms. The Act sparks the entrepreneurial spirit, rather than squashing it with burdensome regulations and fees. Those new entrepreneurial businesses will make Florida a more attractive place for tourists as well as residents and open up new jobs.

When consumers are able to shop for food with local businesses and farmers, more of that dollar stays in the local community, providing what is known as the local multiplier effect of money. Buying local keeps money in the local community and helps farms and ranches remain economically viable. For every dollar spent with a local company (or farmer) 45 cents stays in the community. For every dollar spent with a corporate chain, only 15 cents is reinvested in the local community.

This frees up funding and staffing for Florida food safety inspection and permitting agencies and opens up opportunities for Florida family farmers to create new local businesses and create jobs, as well as feed the growing demand for locally grown food.

PROMOTES PUBLIC SAFETY.

Food safety is a priority shared by all. It is not compromised by the growing trend toward healthy, fresh, locally sourced vegetables, meats, and small processing •rms that are reinvigorating local food systems. Family farm businesses are not the same as commodity-

based agriculture that sell products into industrial-scale national and international markets. Regulations are needed for industrial processors that get raw ingredients from multiple locations (sometimes imported from other countries) and ship their products across the country.

The biggest threats to food safety—and the USDA agrees—are centralized production, centralized processing, and long distance transportation. Small farms and local food processors are part of the solution to food safety. Raising meat, dairy, eggs, fruits, and vegetables as close as possible to the kitchens of the end-user increases our food security. Lessening the regulatory burden imposed by the State of Florida will enhance the economic condition of family farms, improve public health, decrease environmental degradation and build a sense of community. Local food systems are inherently safer and more traceable

Additionally, The Florida Food Freedom Act requires all people selling directly to the end consumer to who produce food and sell direct to the consumer to become certified food protection managers. This certification is required of all food service managers in Florida who are responsible for the storage, preparation, display, or serving of foods to the public. This course gives basic, sound food handling information that further strengthens the producer's food safety procedures.

PROTECTS FLORIDA'S NATURAL BEAUTY.

Saving farmland and allowing Florida family farms to sell local food can also help the environment by reducing a meal's "food miles" or the distance it travels to reach the consumers' plate and the energy consumed in getting there. Produce from a supermarket travels 92 times farther than locally-grown produce.

Farm and ranch lands provide food and cover for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds and maintain air quality. They can absorb and filter wastewater and provide groundwater recharge. The Florida Food Freedom Act helps to preserve Florida's farmland by providing a viable economic opportunity for Florida family farmers. This in turn, will also help preserve Florida's wildlife, wetlands and watersheds.

When Florida family farmers are free to produce and sell food directly to the consumer, then the farm becomes more sustainable and the farmer is less likely to sell the farmland into development. This provides the farmer's local community with a sounder tax base, improves the local economy, and helps improve the environment

Preserving farmland helps local governments prosper as well. The cost of public services used by open land or farmland is much lower than the cost of public services provided to land used for residential purposes. The median cost for every dollar of revenue raised (taxes collected) for working/open land use is just 36 cents in public services. On the other hand, for every dollar residential land use provides in taxes, it uses \$1.16 in public services. A community can more easily balance the budget when it has more farmland.

BACKGROUND FACTS AND SOURCES:**Direct sales facts:**

http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Florida/st12_1_002_002.pdf

92% of Florida's farms are family-owned farms (either through sole proprietorship or as a family corporation).

In the ten years between 1997 and 2007 1,428,207 acres of farmland have disappeared. Between 1978 and 2007 3,784,718 acres of farmland disappeared, more than half of that, or 1,428,207 acres disappeared in the last 10 years.

Large farm tracts are disappearing and smaller farm tracts are increasing, all with the overall effect of total loss in farmland. In 1978 there were 5,912 farms that were 1-9 acres in size. In 2007 there are more than double that number - 12,184 farms from 1-9 acres in size. The same trend holds for all size farms. The overall number of farms is decreasing and the size of each farm is also decreasing.

The average age of Florida farmers in 2007 was just over 58 years of age and only 44% of those farmers didn't have off-farm jobs. Most farmers have off-farm jobs because their farming efforts don't provide the income they need to live comfortably – 56% of farmers work two jobs – the farm and another one to generate income or benefits. 65.4% of farms earn less than \$10,000 a year from their farming efforts.

Farm Characteristics

FROM: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Statefacts/FL.htm> and http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Florida/st12_1_001_001.pdf

As Florida's second largest state industry, agriculture has an economic impact of \$62 billion annually.

FROM: <http://www.fl-aglaw.com/>

Net farm income is dropping: from \$1,996,652 in 2007 to \$1,740,832 in 2008.

FROM: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Statefacts/FL.htm>

Fiscal Stability for Local Governments

New development requires services such as schools, roads and fire/police protection, whereas privately owned and managed agricultural land requires very few services. [Cost of Community Services \(COCS\) studies](#) (PDF) show that, nationwide, **farm, forest and open lands more than pay for the municipal services they require**, while taxes on residential uses, on average, fail to cover costs.

FROM: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/protection/default.asp>

Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies

SUMMARY: Median cost for every dollar of revenue raised (taxes collected) here's the average each kind of land use takes back in to provide public services.

- Working/open land use - pays a dollar, takes 36 cents in public services.
- Residential land use – pays a dollar, takes \$1.16 in public services
- Commercial/Industrial land use – pays a dollar, takes 27 cents in public services

If the 700,000 acres in farmland lost between 1996 and 2005 went into residential use, AND each acre was taxed \$1, then we've lost \$56,000,000 by paying out more services to residential use land and not having the "slush" of 64 cents in taxes that the open use land paid, but didn't use in public services – a total of 80 cents for each tax dollar. Struggling communities need to preserve farmland, not encourage its development to residential use.

FROM: http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/27757/FS_COCS_11-02.pdf

Local economic impact

Buying local keeps money in the local community and helps farms and ranches remain economically viable. For every dollar spent with a local company (or farmer) 45 cents stays in the community. For every dollar spent with a corporate chain, only 15 cents is reinvested in the local community.

FROM: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/go-local/the-local-multiplier-effect>

AND

FROM: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/environment/local.asp>

Environmental Impact

Local food can also help the environment by reducing your meal's "food miles" or the distance it travels to reach your plate and the energy consumed in getting there. Produce from a super market travels 92 times farther than locally-grown produce.

FROM: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/go-local/the-local-multiplier-effect>

AND

FROM: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/environment/local.asp>

Protection of the Environment

Farm and ranch lands provide food and cover for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds and maintain air quality. They can absorb and filter wastewater and provide groundwater recharge.

FROM: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/protection/default.asp>

Fresh, Healthy Food and Strong Communities

Farms closest to our cities, and directly in the path of development, produce much of our fresh food—an astounding 91% of our fruit and 78% of our vegetables. And for many Americans, compelling reasons for saving farmland have to do with protecting the quality of life in their communities—scenic and cultural landscapes, farmers' markets, recreational opportunities, local jobs and community businesses.

FROM: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/protection/default.asp>

Food safety:

When there is a long, opaque food supply chain, inspection by third parties (government officials) is necessary. The consumer cannot provide oversight. Most food borne illness outbreaks (an outbreak is defined as affecting two or more people) happen in large, impersonal food systems. <http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/global.pdf> provides information about food safety around the world. When reading it – remember to watch for the word “estimate” as it is not the “real” numbers, but extrapolations based on the reported or “real” numbers. For instance, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) has two sets of statistics. One for reported food borne diseases and deaths and another for estimated diseases and deaths caused by food borne illness.

For example:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol5no5/mead.htm>).

“To better quantify the impact of foodborne diseases on health in the United States, we compiled and analyzed information from multiple surveillance systems and other sources. We estimate that foodborne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the United States each year. Known pathogens account for an estimated 14 million illnesses, 60,000 hospitalizations, and 1,800 deaths. Three pathogens, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, and *Toxoplasma*, are responsible for 1,500 deaths each year, more than 75% of those caused by known pathogens, while unknown agents account for the remaining 62 million illnesses, 265,000 hospitalizations, and 3,200 deaths. Overall, foodborne diseases appear to cause more illnesses but fewer deaths than previously estimated.”

Keep reading the report and you’ll find the math they used to reach these oft-quoted numbers.

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5822a1.htm?s_cid=mm5822a1_x

“CDC collects data on foodborne disease outbreaks (FBDOs) from all states and territories through the Foodborne Disease Outbreak Surveillance System (FBDSS). This report summarizes epidemiologic data on FBDOs reported during 2006 (the most recent year for which data have been analyzed). A total of 1,270 FBDOs were reported, resulting in 27,634 cases and 11 deaths.”

Here are the actual numbers – from which they extrapolated the much more alarming numbers. These numbers are hardly ever quoted.

Further, the CDC produced studies that show death caused by excess weight is 26,000 per year. By contrast, researchers found that being underweight results in 34,000 deaths per year (Kolata, *New York Times*, 4/20). CDC Previous Research released in March 2004 that found about 400,000 deaths a year were due to obesity. Either way, according to the CDC they estimate that obesity causes more death than death they estimate caused by food borne illness. FROM: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/23210.php>

In a short farmer to consumer food system the chance of food borne disease drops – in most cases the farmer is eating the same food themselves. Further, if there is a disease problem in the food, the “outbreak” won’t be as wide spread as in a centralized food distribution system. The Florida Food Freedom Act requires all people selling who produce food and sell direct to the consumer to take the Food Safety Manager Class and pass the test. This course gives basic, sound food handling information that further strengthens the producer’s food safety procedures.

Remember too, that while important, food borne illness and or death is one of the least likely ways Americans die. Far more Americans die as a result of obesity than food borne illnesses. Here are some statistics to put it in perspective:

- 2006 Automobile incidents: 6.42 million accidents
 - about 2.9 million injuries
 - 42,642 deaths
- 2006 Cancer deaths 543,000 (30% lung cancer)
- 2003 29,000 deaths related to firearms (non-war related)
- CDC reported in July 2009 Hospital Acquired Infections at
 - 1.7 million people get sick each year
 - 99,000 people die of these infections each year
- National Weather Service reports
 - An average of 300 injuries per year caused by lightning
 - An average of 62 deaths each year.
- 2006, *CDC reported 1,270 food borne disease outbreaks*
 - 27,634 cases of food borne illness*
 - 11 deaths*