

SWFRPC Resolution #2014-02

**A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
SUPPORTING UF/IFAS BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE SWFREC**

WHEREAS, the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC), part of University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), was established as a UF support facility in 1958 and became a UF/IFAS station in 1986 after agricultural interests in southwest Florida convinced the state that the region needed its own center to serve the area's unique agricultural needs;

WHEREAS, the research and extension capacity at SWFREC has been and will continue to be an economic engine for the region and the state;

WHEREAS, the SWFREC serves Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Hendry and Glades counties, which produce almost 25% of Florida's citrus and nearly 80% of the tomatoes and other fresh vegetables sold during winter to northeastern U.S. markets;

WHEREAS, southwest Florida agricultural interests, including citrus, vegetable, sugarcane, and ornamental growers, along with cattle ranchers, collectively generate \$1 billion in farm sales annually, and are the core of an agribusiness and natural resource economy in southwest Florida that contributes more than \$6 billion of total annual economic activity statewide;

WHEREAS, in 2009, SWFREC ranked in the top 25% among the 29 departments within UF/IFAS in terms of competitive grants and refereed journal publications per faculty, two important metrics of academic productivity;

WHEREAS, in recent years, the SWFREC has lost funding for staff, faculty and research programs, limiting and endangering the ability of the SWFREC to promote and protect the health and productivity of southwest Florida agricultural interests; and

WHEREAS, the SWFREC is a valuable regional portal providing technology and science regarding the management of water, environmental issues, and natural resources to the region;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council supports the UF/IFAS budget request of \$4.9 million to restore the Southwest Florida Research & Education Center (SWFREC) programs to prior levels, including hiring a center director, restoring lost faculty and staff positions, and providing for the construction of new buildings to accommodate the increased staff, faculty, and students.

DULY ADOPTED by the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council this 16th day of January, 2014.

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL




Teresa Heitmann, Chair


Margaret Wuerstle, Executive Director