

Initial Survey of Leafy Greens Growers in the Everglades Agricultural Area

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As part of a USDA specialty crops grant awarded to the Florida Lettuce Advisory Committee, the Everglades Research & Education Center, and Palm Beach County Extension for 2010 - 2011, research and extension activities specifically for leafy greens production within the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) will be conducted. Leafy greens are defined as such including all types of lettuces, endives, escaroles and spinach. This survey is designed to gauge the status of leafy greens production, identify the issues and problems facing the industry, and determine ways that IFAS extension agents and specialists can work with growers to address these problems. Also, there is a need to predict future issues that may affect the industry. It is important to document the current state of the leafy greens industry and again after project completion so that we can assess the effectiveness of research and extension projects in meeting the needs of growers. Please record your responses to questions and offer comments to questions.

Leafy Greens Industry Status

What is the acreage of your farm and acreage devoted to leafy greens?

What types of leafy greens are grown and their acreage?

How many part-time, seasonal, and full-time employees, including yourself, were employed by your firm? What were your firm's gross sales related to leafy greens last year?

What are the major issues facing the industry today?

How can IFAS help you in addressing these issues, and what specific research or extension projects are most necessary to address?

Has your farm been visited by extension agents or specialists, and would you like to have more site visits? How will site visits help your farm business?

Specific Issues Addressed by Leafy Greens Project

Nutrient and fertilizer management

What are your methods for applying fertilizers to leafy greens? Types, rates, methods, and sources?

Do you feel that current IFAS fertilizer recommendations are suitable for leafy greens grown on muck soils? If not, what changes are needed to the recommendations?

Describe issues related to nutrient management for leafy greens that you want to see addressed with the USDA block grant?

Weed management

List the major weed problems for leafy greens production, and what research areas you want EREC to focus on.

Plant Pathogen management

What are the major plant pathogen problems for leafy greens, and describe limitations to their control.

What should be the focus of research and extension efforts?

Insect management

Fill in the blanks in the following table to help us better target our pest management efforts:

Insect group	Rate each insect group from 1 to 5 in importance for needing work to develop better pest management (can use numbers more than once)*	Specify crops where these insect groups need additional work to develop better pest management	Specify part of season (or range of months) when these insect pests are the highest pest management concern
Aphids			
Beetles (e.g., cucumber beetles, yellow margined leaf beetles)			
Leafminer flies (larvae, adults or both)			
Lepidoptera (specify, if known)			
Thrips			
Wireworms			
Others (specify)			

*1=low importance, 2=moderately low importance, 3=moderate importance, 4=moderately high importance, 5=high importance.

Rate the importance of the following insect pest management strategies that need additional work and provide examples of insect pests and crops to better target with these strategies.

Strategies	Rating on 1 to 5 scale as above

Seed treatments for protection of roots and plants less than 4 weeks old	
Post-emerge foliar treatments	
Seed furrow or soil broadcast at plant	
Insecticide rotations targeting specific insect pests	
Insect-resistant plants	
Natural enemies (naturally occurring or augmentative releases)	
Insecticide rotations for broad spectrum control (i.e., more than one group of insects)	
Pre-plant or pre-bed sampling thresholds for wireworms	
Others (specify)	

Vertebrate pest management

What kinds of vertebrate pests do you have in the leafy greens fields, and what measures do you take to keep vertebrate pests out of fields?

What specific problems have you observed caused by vertebrate pests? Body parts, contamination through feces, damage to crops, etc?

Are there external factors, such as insects, that you feel attracts vertebrate pests to fields?

How many fields do vertebrate pests occur in? 0 – 25%, 26 – 50%, 51 – 75% or 76 – 100%?

Are vertebrate pests a greater problem in any particular leafy green type, and is there a time or season when the problem is more severe?

What research and extension activities would you like to see IFAS conduct in regards to vertebrate pests in leafy greens?

Long-term Issues

1. What are your major business and marketing concerns during the next five years?

Yes_____ No _____ Finding and keeping labor

Yes_____ No _____ Working with non-English speaking laborers

Yes_____ No _____ Professional development training for me or my employees (for example, computer courses or management training)

Yes_____ No _____ Business planning, including strategic planning and management

Yes_____ No _____ Finding new and alternative markets and customers and developing sound marketing plans

Yes_____ No _____ Financial management and profitability

2. What are your major productivity/efficiency concerns during the next five years?

Yes_____ No _____ Mechanization and automation, including utilization of computer technology (for example, acquiring proficiency with software packages including accounting software, geographic information systems (GIS), and global positioning systems (GPS))

Yes_____ No _____ Identification and production of new cultivars and species

Yes_____ No _____ Alternative crop scheduling and production approaches (for example, organic production, sustainability, value-added)

3. What are your major environmental management concerns during the next five years?

Yes_____ No _____ Nutrient management

Yes_____ No _____ Water availability and/or quality

Yes_____ No _____ Pesticide effects on ecosystems and non-target species

Yes_____ No _____ Wildlife, weeds, and invasive species management

Yes_____ No _____ Integrated pest management (IPM)

4. What are your major public policy concerns during the next five years?

Yes_____ No _____ Decreased availability of pesticides/pesticides removed from the market

Yes_____ No _____ Water use and water quality

Yes_____ No _____ Land use policy including zoning, urban sprawl, and urban/suburban interface (right to farm issues)

Yes_____ No _____ Free-trade agreements/global markets

Yes_____ No _____ Use of genetically-engineered crops

Yes_____ No _____ Negative public reaction to commercial fertilizer and pesticide applications

5. What are your major health and food system security concerns during the next five years?

Yes_____ No _____ Pesticides released into the environment

Yes_____ No _____ Pollution of the environment with over-application of nutrients

Yes_____ No _____ Large-scale contamination of an input such as water or fertilizer with an infectious agent

Yes_____ No _____ Farm, nursery, or greenhouse safety

Yes_____ No _____ Foodborne illness outbreaks that are the responsibility of the producer, such as those caused by contamination with *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, or other harmful bacteria and fungi

6. Those involved in agriculture, like many other industries, must employ environmental management practices. What educational programs might EREC conduct over the next five years to help farmers understand and implement these practices?

7. Agriculture is an important industry to the Everglades Agricultural Area. What type of EREC programs could help you in the future with business and marketing skills?

8. Having a highly productive and efficient agriculture enterprise is a goal for most agriculture businesses. What are major barriers to productivity and efficiency? What programs could EREC conduct to address these issues?

9. A well-informed public is key to good public decision-making. What are your concerns about the policies, such as the use of pesticides, water and land use, which affect agricultural production? What programs could EREC conduct over the next five years to increase the public's and decision makers understanding of public policy and agriculture?

10. Maintaining a safe food supply is a national topic of discussion. What programs could Cooperative Extension conduct to help people understand issues to maintain a safe food system?