

FLORIDA CFO – ALEX SINK *Deep Roots in Agriculture*

by Jim Frankowiak

The lifeblood of Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink's family is deeply rooted in agriculture. Raised on a 600-acre farm in Mt. Airy, North Carolina, her family grew tobacco, hybrid seed and corn, in addition to raising hogs and cattle. In 1962, her family was awarded the "Master Farm Family" for the United States by the Progressive Farmer Magazine. Alex's father was president of Pork Producer's Association, President of the North Carolina Foundation Seed Producers, President of the North Carolina Crop Improvement Association and a member of the North Carolina Cattlemen's Association.

Alex learned the life of a farmer, paying the farm bills at an early age and learning the importance of crossbreeding both corn and animals. She was the Teen Cook of the Week and Vice President of Future Homemakers of America, in addition to being a prizewinner in cooking and sewing at the Surry County Fair.

Alex knows the importance of giving back to the farm community. She has been a dedicated community leader, including her services with the Beth-El Farm Worker Ministry and Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

IN THE FIELD recently had the opportunity to pose several questions to CFO Sink. Here are those questions and her answers:

What is your philosophy on insurance for windstorms and hurricanes relative to ag interests?

Farming played an essential role in my family's livelihood. Growing up on a 600-acre farm in Mt. Airy, North Carolina, I learned at an early age the important impact farming has on our economy.

In Florida, where the agriculture industry contributes over \$97 billion a year to our state's economy, it is important that we understand the challenges and opportunities facing this economic engine. From the current lack of available and affordable insurance coverage for greenhouses to the impact of assessments on insurance costs, many Floridians in the agricultural community are faced with the challenges of living in a

hurricane prone state.

Our legislators are currently working on a number of reforms to our property insurance policies. One thing I am promoting to help reduce our state's insurance exposure is mitigation. Florida needs a culture of mitigation in our state including our farming community. Mitigation is an important tool to reducing exposure on homes, business and farming structures while also ensuring more access to affordable insurance.

The impact of higher insurance costs on those in the agricultural industry is also of deep concern to me. Furthering my concern are the potential assessments, taxes, Floridians and business owners may be responsible for when the state faces another major storm.

As Florida's Chief Financial Officer, I'm concerned that our current hurricane insurance exposure doesn't make good business sense for our state or good sense for the agriculture community. That is why I am promoting legislation to reduce the amount of discounted reinsurance sold through Florida's Hurricane Catastrophe Fund. This plan would save Floridians from paying yearly assessments of \$184 million per year for 30 years. That's a tax savings for Floridians of approximately \$5.5 billion. Forty percent of these assessments will fall upon business owners, including Florida's farmers, who will bear a disproportionate burden when we have a large storm.

How would you operate state-owned lands?

I sit as one member of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. We are entrusted not only in administering, managing and buying state owned uplands, but managing sovereignty



ALEX SINK

submerged lands as well. Florida embarked on the nation's largest and progressive land preservation program back in 1990 when it created Preservation 2000. In the intervening 18 years, through that initial program as well as its success program, Florida Forever, the state has been able to buy and protect 213 million acres of environmentally important land from willing sellers. I am a big supporter of this land buying program because citizens understand the importance of preserving parts of our natural world and data shows that property adjacent to protected lands or green spaces increases in value.

I also support the creation of a successor land preservation program after Florida Forever is concluded. This is essential so that we can continue ensuring that not only our habitat is preserved but that our native species can exist.

continues on page 52

...continued from page 51

Along with Agriculture Commissioner Bronson, I would like to see the state pay more attention to and spend more to effectively manage land. This, of course, includes exotic species control as well as routine prescribed burns. It is predicted that Florida will continue experiencing droughts in the near future and we have seen the devastation that can occur when forest fires get out of control. When lands are routinely burned, not only does the native vegetation flourish, but leaf litter and debris is diminished. This helps reduce the likelihood of creating high intensity fires that easily burn out of control. Neighboring residents need to be educated about the importance of pressure burning.

Of great important to me is pursuing the concept of conservation easements, which provide for protection of our green spaces and open lands while keeping land in the hands of private owners who will exercise proper stewardship.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your position as CFO?

The most rewarding aspect of serving as Florida's Chief Financial Officer is the unique ability it provides me to meet and work with Floridians from all walks of life. My life on the farm along with more than 20 years experience in the banking community allows me to serve as an effective fiscal watchdog for everyday citizens, identifying waste and government inefficiencies. Since taking office, I have halted faulty contracting procedure and worked to develop best contracting practices for state government. The people of Florida have put their trust in me to keep their best interests in mind, and bringing about common sense changes for taxpayers brings me great joy. •

Congratulations!



Congratulations to Ron O'Connor on the birth of his grandson! *Michael Robert O'Connor*
Born 2/07/08 2:08 p.m. Winter Haven, FL.
6 lbs 13 oz. 19" long

Need any ag, turf or ornamental pesticides for your farm?

We most likely have it in stock and ready for delivery!

- Full Service Turf Ag & Ornamental Pesticide Supplier
- Crop Consulting Available
- FREE DELIVERY
- Open Mon.-Fri. - 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sat. - 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.



Joshua and Celia Young



Crop Protection Services of Florida, Inc.

AFFILIATED WITH TRIANGLE SUPPLIER

Tel: 813.754.3083 • Fax: 813.754.3896
2607 Sammonds Rd., Plant City, FL 33563



813.643.1999

1611 SR 60 E. • Valrico, FL 33594

COUPON



Valrico, FL

FREE WINDSHIELD

with purchase of new or used golf cart

(Must present ad, \$125 value)

Expires 4/15/08

www.midfloridagolfcars.com