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## THE FARMER IS THE FIRST ENVIRONMENTALIST!

Since the beginning, farmers and ranchers have had a responsibility to protect the land. It has always been an important focus of farmers to make sure they take care of the land they farm, so that it will be there for years to come, to produce their crops and to pass on to future generations.

As better technology and science has evolved, so has farmer's knowledge and practices for caring for the land they love and rely on, for food and income. Farmers and Ranchers have a unique opportunity to have a nature walk each day, whether it is with the animals, with which they share their land or the crops that grow in the fields. There is such a sense of pride for farmers to see the miracle of nature, as they see their hard work together with the uncontrollable elements (such as weather), take a seed or small plant grow and produce crops or as a rancher watches their livestock grow, explore and learn. It is so important for those of us in Agriculture to keep Florida green and have open land.

Many farmers in Florida have voluntarily signed up to follow Best Management Practices (BMPs) as outlined by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences (IFAS). This is a program which helps protect the environment, the food and the workers. It helps make farmers and ranchers aware of potential risks and how to prevent them.

I meet with Dr. Rick Garrity, Executive Director of the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) to help build a solid bridge between the Agriculturalist and the Environmentalist. The goal is to keep each other informed on ways to improve environmental responsibility and challenges facing many farmers as guidelines are recommend, by those who don't understand Agriculture, which making farming impossible.

As Dr. Garrity has said, "environmentally responsible and sustainable farming practices, which keep the land green, not only are necessary as a source of our food, but can also play an important role in the delicate balance of maintaining clean air and clean water. In light of recent worldwide food supply issues, local sustainable farming practices are even more important."

I hope we continue to strive to make Hillsborough County a better place. Together we can!

Thanks and I hope you have a good month!

Dale McClellan HCFB Federation President