



FFVA  *2008 Annual Report*





Table of Contents

<i>Chairman's Letter</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>President's Letter</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>The Voice of Florida Agriculture</i>	<i>3-4</i>
<i>Meeting Legislative Challenges</i>	<i>5-6</i>
<i>Managing Workforce Needs</i>	<i>7-8</i>
<i>Protecting Florida's Crops</i>	<i>9-10</i>
<i>Safeguarding Critical Resources</i>	<i>11-12</i>
<i>Equipped for the Marketplace</i>	<i>13-14</i>
<i>Staying Connected</i>	<i>15-16</i>
<i>Sustaining Industry and Community</i>	<i>17-18</i>
<i>FFVA Board and Staff</i>	<i>19</i>



Leading, Not Following

What a year! A declining economy, soaring energy prices, the rising cost of fertilizer and fuel, and a nationwide salmonella outbreak. Thank goodness farmers are the most resilient, hard-working and industrious group of people to be found.

The news hasn't been all bad, however. Consider passage of the Farm Bill, Country of Origin Labeling (COOL), the historic U.S. Sugar deal, and the fact that we had some pretty good markets across the board for our products. The magnitude of the work that went into the Farm Bill is equaled only by the results that emerged from Congress. The legislation marks a sea change in the direction and priorities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We have long deserved a seat at the table, and now we are there.

In all of these challenges, FFVA has been out front as a leader, not a follower. COOL is a prime example of the strategic role our association must play. The regulations were opposed by our customers, yet desperately needed by the American farmer. Our association balanced its response and our role in the issue expertly, and as a result, we are regarded as a mature and reasonable player by all involved. In addition, FFVA is considered a

leader in the public eye through its involvement in education, housing and direct charity to improve the farmworker community.

On a personal note, most of you know I have retired from the tomato business and passed on the Taylor & Fulton name to a great group of people who will do it proud. Although I am stepping down as chairman of this fine association, I regard my tenure as a pinnacle of my career. I have been proud to be a part of this industry and of the leadership of this association. Thanks for everything.



R. Jay Taylor
Chairman

Charting Our Course

It's easy to see where FFVA has been as a 65-year-old organization with a long and rich history. But the question we should ask now is, "Where do we want to go?"

First, a look at where we've been this year: 2008 brought a sound victory for specialty crops with the long-awaited passage of a Farm Bill that addresses our priorities. Then there was the damaging blow to the tomato industry, blamed initially for a salmonella outbreak it did not cause. And the long-anticipated Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) regulations are to take effect on September 30, 2008. All of these were monumental developments for the fresh produce industry. As you will read in this annual report, throughout those developments and others, FFVA worked at the state and national level to advocate for our members and ensure that they stay competitive in the marketplace.

Now, a focus on the future: A team of board members and staff has been engaged in developing a strategic plan to guide FFVA over the next three to five years. The process has allowed us to articulate what we envision for the future and

to chart how we will get there, while remaining committed to our core purpose and values. The outcome-oriented goals we have set encompass leadership and advocacy, expert knowledge, member services and resources, and governance and organization.

It's important for FFVA to respond to the inevitable changes in our industry. It's even more critical that we are able to anticipate changes and trends – and get out ahead of them. Thinking and planning strategically on a daily basis throughout the organization will help us remain nimble and relevant to you, our stakeholders. Our focus is not just on what we do today, but what we must be doing in the future to be successful on your behalf.



*Michael J. Stuart
President*





The Voice of Florida Agriculture

The specialty crop industry scored big with the passage of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 – a landmark Farm Bill that for the first time addresses the industry’s diverse needs. Success came despite the bill’s stops and starts through Congress, a clerical error that sent the measure to President Bush with a title missing, and not one, but two, presidential vetoes.

Every major priority identified by the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance was included in the final Farm Bill. The legislation dedicates almost \$3 billion to the industry’s concerns, including increased access to fruits and vegetables for all Americans -- especially children; state block grants that focus on local and regional needs; targeted research programs; improved invasive pest and disease programs; expanded global competitiveness for specialty crops; and increased access to conservation programs. FFVA co-chairs the Alliance and helped to lead the three-year effort to include specialty crop industry needs in the Farm Bill.

That good news was followed by a severe blow, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention linked tomatoes to a nationwide salmonella outbreak. Harvesting and shipping in Florida ground to a standstill. To help salvage sales, FFVA worked with other organizations to have FDA clear tomatoes from Florida counties that were not associated with the outbreak. Though the FDA and CDC were slow to tap into industry expertise, FFVA helped to convey important information to assist with the trace-back investigation.

The FDA eventually turned its focus to jalapeno and serrano peppers from Mexico, but the tomato industry was left to deal with the aftermath. Florida accounted for as much as half of the more than \$100 million in losses. Two Congressional committees devoted lengthy hearings to the FDA and CDC’s handling of the outbreak investigation. Former FFVA Chairman Tony DiMare testified before the House Agriculture Committee.



Food safety legislation already has been proposed in Congress, and more measures are expected to be introduced before the fall 2008 elections. FFVA supports mandatory federal food safety standards throughout the produce supply chain. The association will work to support sound legislation that includes science-based standards that reflect the risks associated with individual commodities and production regions and that apply to all fruits and vegetables produced in or imported into the United States. In addition, FFVA will take an active role in developing solutions to improve future outbreak investigations.

In July 2008 the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued an interim final rule to implement mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) in the fall. The rule is a significant improvement from the proposed rule issued in 2003 after passage of the 2002 Farm Bill. It reflects the changes in the statute included in the 2008 Farm Bill, and it incorporates many of the provisions recommended by industry. FFVA is working with its members to ensure they understand details of the rule in order to comply.



“FFVA plays a leadership role in ensuring that the interests of Florida agriculture are heard and understood by policy-makers in Washington, D.C. That credibility brings significant value to our membership.”

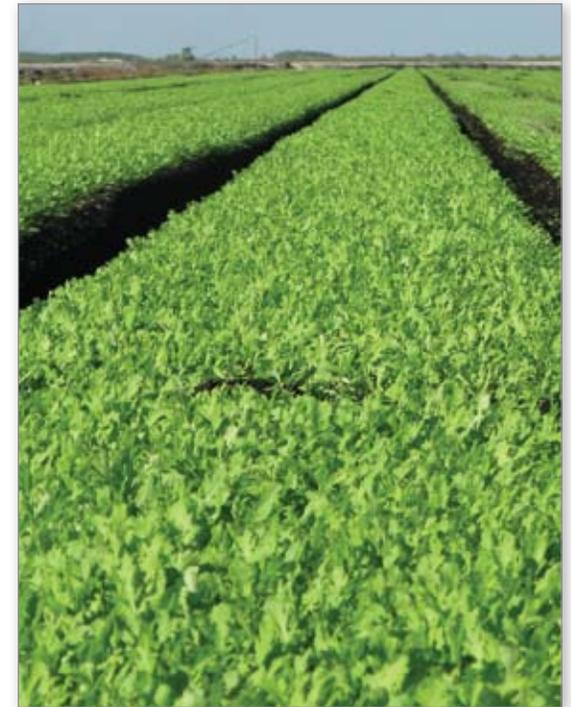
Billy Heller,
Pacific Tomato Growers

Meeting Legislative Challenges

The 2008 Florida legislative session was very trying for FFVA, UFIFAS and other members of the Agricultural Coalition. As the session drew to a close, the Legislature was forced to make some hard decisions, dealing out the largest budget cuts in modern times because of tax-revenue shortages. In the end, the Legislature approved a \$66.2 billion budget and passed only 313 of the 2,503 bills filed by legislators.

The session brought good news and bad news for agriculture. Among the good news, FFVA was instrumental in defeating more than a dozen unfavorable immigration bills. In addition, no bills increasing taxes were passed.

One bill that passed eases restrictions on moving over-width equipment from farm to farm. The new law exempts certain equipment from permits, fees and escorts as long as it has warning lights and a "slow-moving vehicle" sign. The Legislature also approved a very positive amendment to the Greenbelt law. The change revises the criteria that property appraisers must use to classify agricultural lands for Greenbelt by removing the minimum acreage requirement necessary to qualify for an agricultural assessment.



The bad news is that \$2 million in fee increases were approved for pesticide, feed and seed registration, and for fertilizer inspections by the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Manufacturers are sure to pass those increases along to growers.



Several bills that FFVA supported passed the House of Representatives but died on the calendar in the Senate. They include the agricultural industry bill, the electricity sales tax exemption bill for packinghouses not on a farm, the Bert Harris Jr. private property rights bill, and the agricultural enclave/density bill.



The fall 2008 election will bring changes to the Legislature, with at least six new senators and 32 new representatives being elected to open seats and the possibility of a few incumbents being unseated. FFVA and other members of the Ag Coalition have traveled the state interviewing candidates. The Coalition is excited about the quality of new candidates who are seeking election and are prepared to work with incumbents and new legislators in the 2009 session to protect agriculture's interests.





Managing Workforce Needs

This year was marked by several very important developments related to immigration and agricultural workers. FFVA's Labor Relations Division monitored those developments closely throughout the year and provided important analysis and recommendations to the membership.

In August 2007 the Department of Homeland Security issued its so-called "no-match" rule, which requires employers who receive a letter reporting a mismatch between a worker's Social Security information and the government's records to resolve the issue within 90 days. After several organizations sued, a federal court judge in California blocked the rule. DHS submitted additional information to address the court's concerns, and in April 2008 the Social Security Administration began mailing no-match letters to about 9 million employees. The regulation has not been finalized, and a court hearing on the federal injunction is scheduled for September 2008.

In February 2008 the U.S. Department of Labor proposed far-reaching changes to the H-2A guest-worker program. Some of the changes would bring much-needed improvements, but others – such as



significant increases in fees – would make the program unworkable. FFVA urged the Labor Department to make H-2A a user-friendly process that will allow producers to hire foreign nationals on a temporary or seasonal basis when U.S. workers aren't available. The new regulations are expected to be published before November 2008.

In another important development, a regulation proposed in June 2008 would require any contractor providing goods and services to the federal government to use the e-Verify system to check the legal status of all employees who work on the contract. The order could affect growers who supply produce to the school lunch program, the U.S.

Department of Defense, and other federal programs and agencies. FFVA collaborated with the National Council of Agricultural Employers to file comments on the regulations.

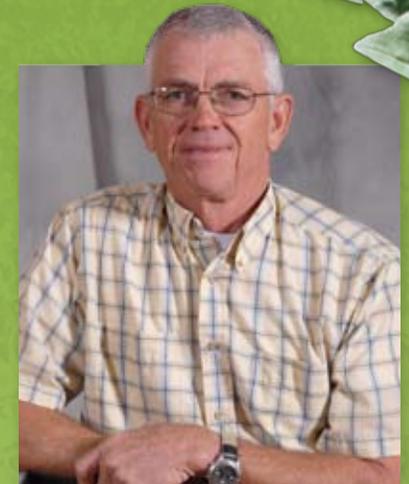
Florida producers continued to look to the H-2A program as a tool to help ensure a stable, legal workforce. FFVA processed 51 certification requests for producer members representing about 4,000 workers.

Florida East Coast Travel Services, Inc., an FFVA subsidiary, helps to meet the needs of farm and non-farm employers by processing and transporting guest workers through the U.S. Department of Labor H-2A and H-2B programs. The company handles worker entry requirements and coordinates transportation to job locations throughout the United States.

FLECTS served 305 agricultural employers in 17 states in the past year. Between January 1 and August 8, 2008, FLECTS processed 3,500 H-2A farmworkers, with another 4,500 scheduled to be processed through the end of 2008. Those workers harvest a variety of crops, including strawberries,

apples, pears and various vegetables. Most of the workers came from Jamaica and Mexico.

FLECTS served 50 non-farm employers this year, primarily in the hospitality and service industries, with some in the nursery and landscape industries. Between January 1 and August 8, 2008, FLECTS processed 1,600 H-2B workers, with 500 more scheduled for the rest of the year.



“Despite increased immigration enforcement, the labor situation in Southwest Florida has not been as severe as one would have expected. The hundreds of H-2A workers available with the help of FFVA have reduced the demand for non-H-2A laborers.”

Everett Loukonen,
Barron Collier / Silver Strand



Protecting Florida's Crops

The Environmental and Pest Management Division was engaged in a broad range of issues and activities during the past year. A major focus was providing direct input on several levels concerning the important role of soil fumigants for vegetable production in Florida's sandy soils. Division staff represented industry before national and international bodies regarding the future exemptions and use of methyl bromide, research into the efficacy and characteristics of alternatives, and ongoing risk-mitigation developments for all soil fumigants. This effort culminated in international approval of critical use exemptions for calendar year 2009 and the submission of additional exemptions for the 2010 Clean Air Act control period.

The division also provided direct comments on the proposed regulations and risk-mitigation options being considered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to prevent bystander and worker exposure to off-gassing from fumigation. The division also coordinated and chairs the Oversight Committee of the USDA Area Wide Pest Management Program for Methyl Bromide Alternatives.

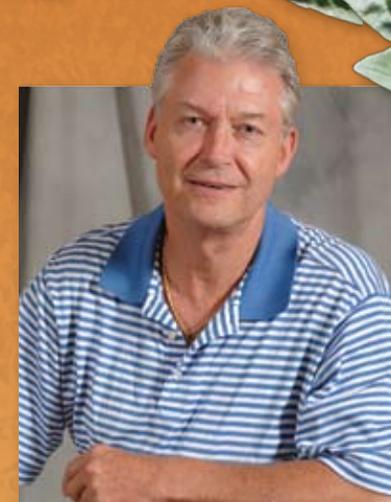


In addition to soil fumigants, FFVA's wholly owned subsidiary, Third Party Registrations, Inc., secured three new labels for crop-protection chemicals for use by FFVA members. The new labels included Chateau® herbicide for use in fruiting vegetable row middles, Cobra® herbicide for the same use, and expansion of the existing Dual Magnum® label for use on Brassica leafy vegetables. TPR also is developing the information necessary to obtain a label for legume vegetables grown in organic soils.

USDA's Foreign Agriculture Service awarded FFVA a Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops grant to develop a Web-based database for maximum residue level harmonization with Canada. This was done in cooperation and on behalf of the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance. While serving as chair of the Technical Committee of this coalition, the division was involved in outreach efforts with the European Community and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in a global effort to harmonize MRLs to prevent use of registered pesticides from becoming barriers to trade.

FFVA represents its members on several advisory and regulatory committees at the federal, state and regional levels. E&PM staff also serve in leadership roles on advisory groups as diverse as the North American Plant Protection Organization Industry Advisory Committee, the IR-4 Program at USDA, the Commissioner's Food Security and Food Safety Advisory Committee, USDA's NAREE Board's Specialty Crop Advisory Committee, the Florida Ag Council and Florida's Operation Cleansweep.

FFVA was instrumental in regulatory interventions that led to the use of several critical agricultural chemicals, including Section 18 Specific Exemptions for Topsin® on citrus and fruiting vegetables and Cabrio/Headline® for use on sugarcane. In addition, FFVA obtained an inadvertent residue tolerance for atrazine on leafy vegetables to mitigate an ongoing problem with wind-blown dust in the Everglades Agricultural Area. Other activities included support for several compounds during registration review, new product registrations such as endosulfan re-registration support, Movento® registration support, and organic certification for copper products.



“The crop protection expertise and services FFVA brings to the table are second to none. Through the association’s hard work, vital tools are available to growers in Florida. Thanks to FFVA and Third Party Registrations, I have more choices than I did 10 years ago.”

Rick Roth,
Roth Farms, Inc.

Safeguarding Critical Resources

Good summer rains and Tropical Storm Fay provided drought relief in many parts of the state, but Florida's expanding population continues to force water utilities and regional water authorities to develop additional supply to meet demand. While growers fear the consequences of having to compete for resources, the water management districts are taking important steps to minimize competition. Measures include new regulations to force utilities and water authorities to identify alternative sources and a variety of incentives and regulations to encourage conservation.

Agriculture has every reason to be concerned about future water availability; however, it is apparent that water management district governing boards and key regulatory staff understand that agricultural self-suppliers are largely dependent on traditional sources of water.

In December 2007, Florida's three largest water management districts took an extreme step by adopting special water-use rules for the five-county Central Florida Coordination Area. Those rules will force utilities and other users to develop alternative sources to meet all new demand for water after



2013. The rules likely will serve as a model for other regions of the state where there is not enough water to meet growing needs. The three districts also are working to develop a consistent year-round water conservation rule to restrict landscape irrigation. The rule eventually will be adopted by all five districts.

South Florida's water-supply situation remains critical. The prolonged drought has left Lake Okeechobee at record low levels for the past two years. To further complicate matters, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has adopted a new regulation schedule that will keep the lake low while it repairs the Herbert Hoover Dike. The new schedule will hurt water supply in the region and has forced the district to establish a new rule to prevent an increased demand on the system. The regional water



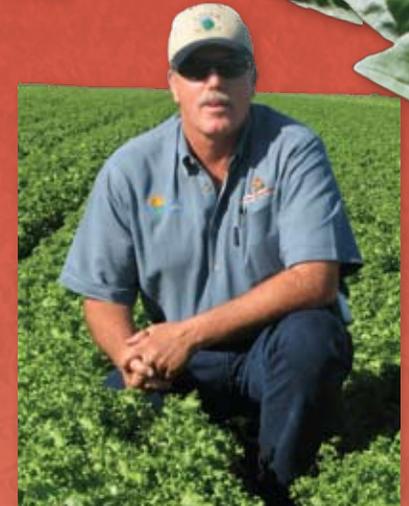
availability rule language is expected to be adopted just before renewals begin for Lake Okeechobee Basin permits in October 2008.

The buyout of U.S. Sugar by the South Florida Water Management District also will dramatically change the region's future water-supply picture.

On the water-quality front, growers continue to implement best management practices that are designed to improve quality and meet their obligations under the Clean Water Act. FFVA is participating in an effort to develop an additional BMP manual for the production of tropical fruits, blueberries, brambles, pecans, peaches and other specialty crops. Draft text is nearly complete, and FDACS' Office of Agricultural Water Policy expects the manual to be adopted by the end of 2008.

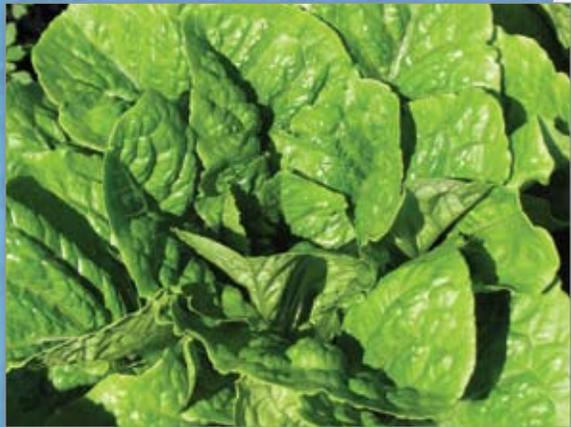


Photo courtesy of SFWMD



“FFVA provides unity and collective strength to our industry. Through FFVA, our voice is heard and our interests are communicated in both the legislative and regulatory processes as water and land-use issues are debated.”

Paul R. Orsenigo,
Orsenigo Farms, Inc.



Equipped for the Marketplace

The Marketing and Membership Division implemented new membership contact management software this year to improve communication between association staff and FFVA members. This robust application also will streamline internal processes such as invoicing and event registration, and members will be able to manage their own information conveniently by logging into the membership area of FFVA's Web site, www.ffva.com.

On the food safety front, the Florida Vegetable Exchange formally approved food safety guidelines for the production and harvest of lettuce and leafy greens grown in the Everglades Agricultural Area. The guidelines include metrics that focus on water use, soil amendments, work practices and field sanitation for this unique growing region. In addition, through a grant awarded by the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation, the group began water sampling and monitoring for microbial levels. FFVA's Exchange Management Group also administers other exchanges for producers, including the Florida Sweet Corn Exchange, the Sweet Corn Growers Exchange, the Florida Green Bean Exchange and the Quincy Tomato Growers Exchange.



A strong marketing program for fresh Supersweet corn resulted in sales of 8.3 million crates during the 12-week reporting period, an increase of 19 percent over last year. The program was supported by several components, including print and broadcast consumer publicity, advertising and retail promotions. Those included:

- A February news release that was published in more than 300 newspapers with an estimated readership of more than 15 million. It also appeared on 790 Web sites, reaching an additional 8 million consumers.
- The syndicated 7-Day Menu Planner, which featured a recipe and photo from the Fresh Supersweet Corn Council. More than 40 newspapers publish the planner, reaching an estimated readership of more than 5 million.
- A new 90-second Mr. Food segment that aired on 150 television stations nationally to an audience of more than 6 million viewers in May. It included video from the South Florida fields and recipe ideas for fresh Supersweet corn. A second national television placement aired in April on Univision's morning show, Despierta America, with Chef Pepin.



The Florida Supersweet Corn Council worked closely with retail chains to increase sales of Supersweet corn, particularly in April and May during peak volume. Retailers were out early with feature ads in April and continued a strong push for fresh corn from Florida through Memorial Day. Volume deals also were used to draw customers. Produce departments used large, prominent displays to help drive store sales increases that ranged from 10 percent to 100 percent. To support promotion efforts, the council developed a new consumer tear-off pad to accompany other point-of-sale materials offered to retail chains. Other promotion activities included display and sales contests, and staff training for handling and displaying fresh Supersweet corn.



Staying Connected

FFVA prepared to unveil its new and improved Web to offer more opportunity for easy interaction between members and staff. Besides a bright, easy-to-read design, the site will offer several new features. FFVA members will be able to manage their membership information online, register for events, contact their legislators, specify how they would like to receive FFVA newsletters and bulletins, and more. In addition, reporters will be able to access FFVA's online news center, with its news releases, fact sheets, photographs and other key information. And as always, the site features the latest information and resources on labor issues, crop protection, food safety, water management, regulatory compliance and legislation – all important issues that affect our members' bottom lines.



A nationwide salmonella outbreak thrust Florida's tomato industry onto front pages and into nightly newscasts nationwide for more than two months. FFVA worked hard to communicate the industry's story to print, broadcast and online journalists. When the outbreak became public, FFVA activated its crisis communication plan that had been developed specifically for a food-borne illness outbreak. In the weeks after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced the outbreak, FFVA worked with the Florida Tomato Exchange to field hundreds of media phone calls and arrange key interviews with daily newspapers, wire services and all of the major television news outlets. FFVA kept its membership updated frequently via news



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Anger Rises Over Salmonella Probe

Tomato Investigation Stymies FDA, as Farmers, Distributors Face Mounting Losses

By JANE ZIANG, ZULEY JARONOV AND A.J. MIRANDA

More than 11 weeks into a salmonella outbreak that has sickened hundreds across the U.S., government regulators still have little idea where the outbreak originated. That is causing rising anger among the farmers, distributors and others slammed by changing sales of tomatoes, the outbreak's prime suspect.

As consumers abstain from tomatoes or find alternatives, one growers association called over the weekend for Congress to investigate the Food and Drug Administration, the lead agency on the case. The National Restaurant Association, the industry's main trade group, says the outbreak has cost the food industry at least \$100 million. And as some crops rot on the vine, the problem is threatening to reignite a long-simmering trade dispute between tomato growers in Florida and Mexico.

Investigators from the FDA have fanned out across farms in Mexico and Florida, two top growing regions, and into irrigation, packing, washing and storage facilities in search of the virulent salmonella Saintpaul strain responsible for the outbreaks. All 3,700 samples they collected were negative, the FDA said in a joint conference call on Friday with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The regulators said they can't pinpoint a region, or even a country, where the outbreak might have started. It might even be possible, they said, that tomatoes aren't to blame. Many victims ate tomatoes combined in dishes such as salsa and guacamole. "We continue to keep an open mind about the possible source of this outbreak," Patricia Griffin, the branch chief of enteric diseases epidemiology at the CDC, said on the Friday conference call.

Dr. Griffin added: "It's very frustrating to all of us to be so far along in an investigation and to not have an answer."

The outbreak's size—it is the largest produce-linked salmonella outbreak in the U.S., according to the CDC—and its duration have prompted a sometimes-erudite shift in consumer behavior. In Austin, Texas, restaurateur Tony Villagón says he has experimented with pico de gallo, a traditional Mexican condiment made with onions, peppers, cilantro and fresh tomatoes, only without the tomatoes. "It was just green and white," said Mr. Villagón. "It tasted really bad, unless you really like onions."

The mystery, and the resulting economic hardship, stems from the sprawling nature of the U.S. food chain, especially the system of distributing fresh produce. In recent years, fruits and vegetables have been responsible for larger-scale outbreaks than meat, poultry or average.

Please turn to page A14

Coast-to-Coast Mystery
 Number of people infected with the outbreak strain of Salmonella Saintpaul, as of June 25

- 1-4 cases
- 5-25 cases
- 25-75 cases
- 75 or more cases

HURRICANE WATCH
Insurers Criticized For New Rate Models
 By M.P. McQUEEN
 Scientists say the jury is still out on whether rising sea temperatures will cause more hurricanes.

The Chips Are Down
 Revenue at the Las Vegas Strip, in millions

Feds Press Swiss Bank To Name U.S. Clients
Tax Officials Target An Alleged Dodge; UBS Caught in Bind
 By EVAN PEREZ

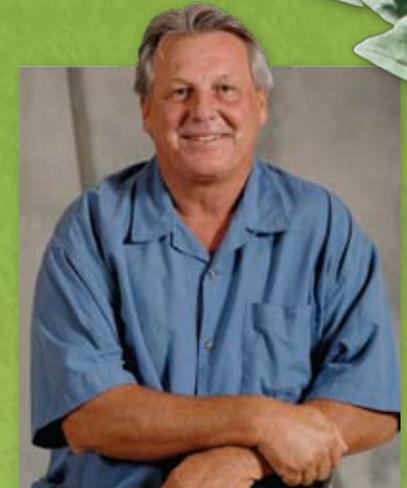
bulletins any time key information was released by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The FFVA Web site was updated almost daily during the FDA's traceback investigation, and traffic to the site increased in June and July by 47 percent.



The Public Affairs Division also worked throughout the year to tell agriculture's side of the story on other issues. The division facilitated member interviews with outlets such as CNN, CNBC and the BBC on stories about issues such as comprehensive immigration reform and the rising costs of inputs. FFVA continues to be regarded as a trusted, credible source of information to the

media, evidenced by hundreds of reporter inquiries during the year about a wide array of issues. Those contacts and relationships with key members of the media resulted in almost 100 news and feature stories in national, state and trade publications.

In the coming year, FFVA will continue to reach out through various channels, using technology to solicit information from members and tailor the association's communication to specific member groups.



"It's critically important that agriculture speaks out on key issues. FFVA has the important expertise and media relationships that help us to tell our side of the story."

John Stickles,
Florida Pacific Farms



A young girl with dark hair in two pigtails, wearing a red polo shirt, is smiling and painting on a white canvas at a blue table. The background is a stylized illustration of a brown hillside with green basil plants at the top left.

Sustaining Industry and Community

The Florida Specialty Crop Foundation this year continued to build on its mission of supporting research, education and community outreach.

With a new invasive pest or disease estimated to hit Florida every month, the Foundation recognizes the need to arm growers with effective tools to mitigate or eliminate these threats. Toward that goal, the Foundation awarded more than \$56,000 to fund three University of Florida research projects in the coming year. The projects are designed to:

- *Develop ecologically safe management technologies for reducing the damaging impact of yellowmargined leaf beetle in production of crucifer crops.*
- *Develop induced resistance as a management strategy for controlling Phytophthora blight in squash.*
- *Assess the present and future culture and management sustainability of deciduous fruit crops exclusive of commercial citrus.*

In addition, to help industry meet future crop-health challenges, the Foundation became a major sponsor of UF's Plant Medicine Program. The multidisciplinary graduate program leads to a Doctor of Plant Medicine degree.



This year marked the second year for the Foundation's George F. Sorn Scholarship program for children of specialty crop farmworkers. Lupe Cisneros, a top graduate of Homestead High School, is the 2008 recipient of the four-year award. She is attending the University of South Florida and majoring in nursing. The program also is providing education assistance for 2008-09 to Daniel Guillen, a Durant High School graduate, and Reina Villegas, a student at Edison Community College.

The ninth annual Benefit Auction sponsored by the Foundation raised \$43,000 at FFVA's 2007 convention in Boca Raton to help the Redlands Christian Migrant Association provide quality early education and child care services. For fiscal 2007-08, the Foundation also provided \$168,321 in grants and contributions to several community and industry service and education programs.



“RCMA’s mission, simply stated, is to open doors to opportunity for farmworkers’ children. That door opened a little wider this year, thanks to the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation. The Foundation’s support shows that farmworker advocates and agribusiness can work together toward common goals.”

Barbara Mainster,
Redlands Christian
Migrant Association

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