

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

AGRICULTURE
Senator Collins, Chair
Senator Boyd, Vice Chair

MEETING DATE: Monday, February 6, 2023

TIME: 3:30—5:30 p.m.

PLACE: 301 Senate Building

MEMBERS: Senator Collins, Chair; Senator Boyd, Vice Chair; Senators Baxley, Berman, Grall, Mayfield, Rouson, Simon, and Thompson

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	Presentation by Commissioner Wilton Simpson, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services		Presented
2	Overview of Florida Agriculture by Jeb Smith, President of Florida Farm Bureau		Presented
3	Presentation on the Nursery Industry by John Conroy, Owner of Fish Branch Tree Farm		Presented
4	Presentation on the Aquaculture Industry by Tiffany Conner, Consolidated Fish Farms and Executive Director of the Florida Aquaculture Association		Presented
Other Related Meeting Documents			

2/6/2023

1

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

Rural & Family Lands

Meeting Date

Agriculture

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Bill Number or Topic

Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name **Wilton Simpson**

Phone **(850)617-7700**

Address **Plaza Level, 10**

Email **n/a**

Street

Tallahassee

FL

32399

City

State

Zip

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☒ Information

OR

Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

☒ I am appearing without
compensation or sponsorship.

☐ I am a registered lobbyist,
representing:

☐ I am not a lobbyist, but received
something of value for my appearance
(travel, meals, lodging, etc.),
sponsored by:

While it is a tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this hearing. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard. If you have questions about registering to lobby please see Fla. Stat. §11.045 and Joint Rule 1. [2020-2022 Joint Rules.pdf \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

This form is part of the public record for this meeting.

S-001 (08/10/2021)

②

THE FLORIDA SENATE
APPEARANCE RECORD

(Deliver BOTH copies of this form to the Senator or Senate Professional Staff conducting the meeting)

2/6/23

Meeting Date

Bill Number (if applicable)

Topic Overview of Florida Agriculture

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Jeb Smith

Job Title President, Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Address 310 W College Ave

Phone 850-222-2557

Street

Tallahassee

City

FL

State

32301

Zip

Email jeb.smith@ffbf.org

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☐ Information

Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against
(The Chair will read this information into the record.)

Representing Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Appearing at request of Chair: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Lobbyist registered with Legislature: ☐ Yes ☐ No

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S-001 (10/14/14)

FEBRUARY 6, 2023

John Conroy
Fish Branch Tree Farm
Presentation to the Senate Committee on Agriculture



AGENDA

- About Fish Branch Tree Farm
- Florida's Nursery and Landscape Industry
- Economic Impact
- Benefits to the Environment
- Impact of Hurricane Ian
- Call to Action



ABOUT FISH BRANCH TREE FARMS

- Established in 1988
- 350 acres in Zolfo Springs
- 50 team members
- Live oaks, Phoenix Sylvestris and a host of other cold hardy palms and woody ornamentals
- Quality trees distributed across the Southeast United States and Caribbean Islands
- \$2 million in damages from Hurricane Ian



NURSERY & LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY BY THE NUMBERS

- Florida accounts for 24% of total wholesale value of floriculture production in the United States.

- Florida exports \$112 million in nursery goods.

- Top exports are:

- Foliage
- Cuttings and Clips
- Bulbs, Tubers
- Roses
- Trees, Shrubs



\$31.4 BILLION ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

- 266,000 jobs for Florida families
- \$11 billion in wages and benefits
- \$609 million in state and local tax revenue

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS



- ✓ Absorbs Carbon Emissions
- ✓ Replenish Florida's Aquifers
- ✓ Reduces Erosion
- ✓ Provides Critical Habitat for Wildlife



HURRICANE IAN

- Trees cannot survive long in this state
- Reparations must begin immediately
- Or a lifetime of work will begin to die
- Right before your eyes...











Sun Bulb Company, Inc.

BETTER-GRO.







HURRICANE IAN IMPACT TO INDUSTRY

- \$300 million in losses to Florida's horticulture industry
- 25% in annual production losses



“Our greatest need directly after Hurricane Ian was immediate emergency funding via grants or loans. Our revenue stream had been completely decapitated and we were not able to make our first sale and begin generating limited revenue until 5 weeks after the storm hit.” – Jay Burke, Vice President & General Manager - Palmco



MATERIAL EXPENSES

Tree Stakes

Rope

Equipment

Irrigation

Fuel

Lumber

Generators

There are no State or Federal programs that are available for immediate aid in the expense of saving trees. The cost of straightening, lifting, and setting plant material – both field grown and containerized – is immense.

In addition, there is no revenue coming in because until you can start standing trees up and getting them back on water, there is nothing to sell.



PROPAGATION / GREEN HOUSE DESTRUCTION



There is no list of expenses relating to rebuilding this structure – only a list of what it cost to have it torn down and removed from the property. We have relied on our in house propagation program for nearly all of our growing needs for over 30 years. This is the third green house we have built in 18 years and after weighing the expense, have chosen not to rebuild.

OFFICE BUILDING EXPENSES

Dry Wall

Paint

Commercial Dehumidifiers

Computer Repair

Flooring

Carpet Removal

Flooding was a major impact from Hurricane Ian and our offices were not spared.

Although fully insured, we are not in a flood plain and so not required to have flood insurance.

Every claim we filed was denied because the bulk of it was attributed to flooding, and the balance of the destruction was less than our \$20,000 deductible.



LANDSCAPING ENHANCES OUR QUALITY OF LIFE....





...AND BEAUTIFIES OUR ROADWAYS





“The AGI limitations present in most Federal disaster aid programs penalize companies who have planned and invested for their future. Those companies have the largest positive impact on their local communities and should not be handicapped for their resilience. New recovery programs will have the greatest benefit if AGI limitations are removed or greatly increased.”

**Kimberly & David Lott, Founders
Crop Disaster Recovery, LLC**



ASK

1 Protect the Long-Term Sustainability of Florida Agriculture

2 Funding for Hurricane Recovery

- Florida Infrastructure Relief Program
- Federal Block Grant Assistance Act

The Florida Senate
APPEARANCE RECORD

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(3)

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Meeting Date

2/6/23

Committee

Agriculture

Name

John Conroy

Phone

863-735-2242

Address

1680 Fish Branch Rd.
Street

Email

TREE@FISH-BRANCH
TREE FARM.COM

City

Zolfo Springs Fl.

State

Zip

33890

Speaking:

☒

For

☐

Against

☐

Information

OR

Waive Speaking:

☐

In Support

☐

Against

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S-001 (08/10/2021)

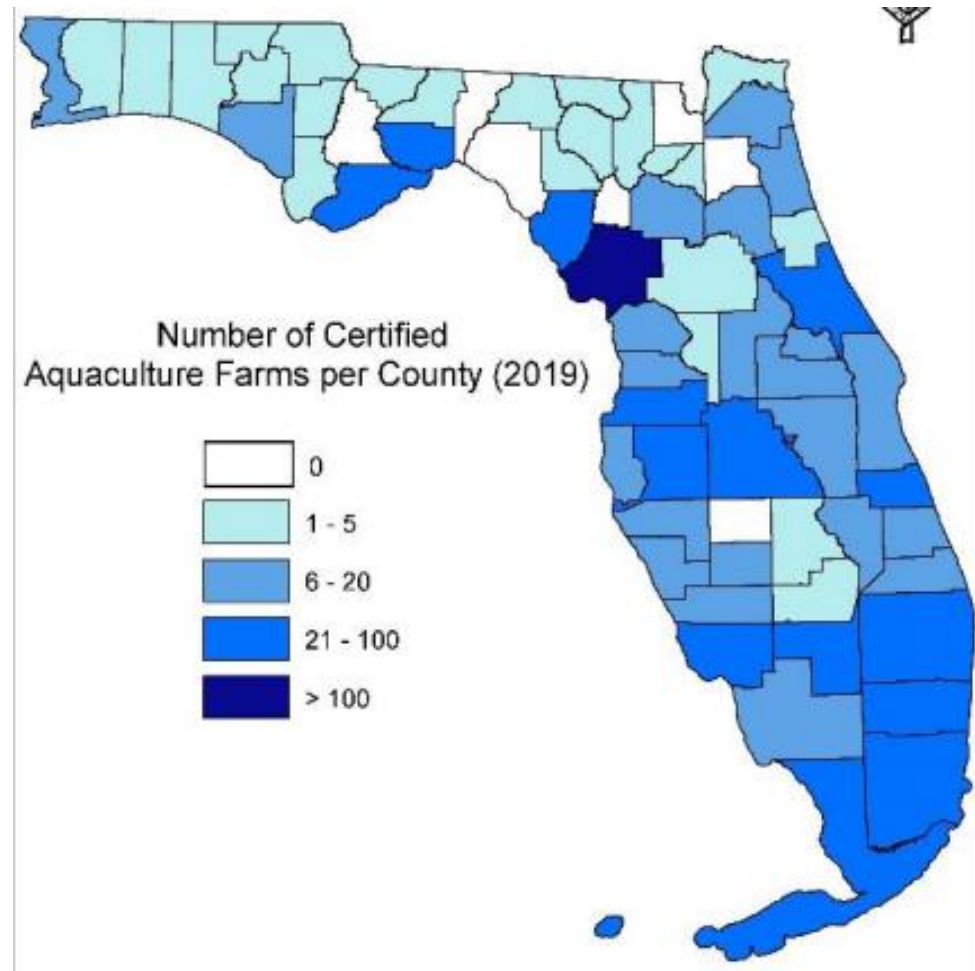
Florida's Aquaculture Industry

*Tiffany Conner
Florida Aquaculture Association
Executive Director*



The Scope of Florida's Aquaculture

- Over 1,000 certified farms
- \$71.6 million farm gate value
- Ranked 9th in overall value in 2018 (USDA Census)
- Commodities include:
 - Food fish, plants, shellfish, alligators, ornamental fish, and more



Florida's Aquaculture Commodities

Commodities	Alligators	Aquatic Plants	Food Fish	Ornamental Fish	Shellfish
Values	\$4.07 Million	\$17.6 Million	\$3.96 Million	\$28.7 Million	\$14.3 Million
Uses	Hide, meat	Aquariums, ponds, restoration	Human Consumption	Aquariums, Ponds	Human consumption, restoration
Facts	Most farms will collect their eggs from the wild and are required to have special permits from FWC	Domestic production of sea vegetables and microalgae for food has greatly increased	Species include: tilapia, catfish, sturgeon, pompano, kampachi, salmon	Florida has consistently outranked every state in production and value	Red Tide and hurricanes are devastating to this industry but many farms are looking more towards restoration efforts

Florida's Aquaculture Issues

- Aquaculture Review Council Approved Project Funding
 - Program that provides funds for research to improve current and future methods of farming
 - No projects have been funded since FY2016
 - Potential reoccurring funds would allow for more timely funding of projects & entice new research efforts to enhance and support the industry

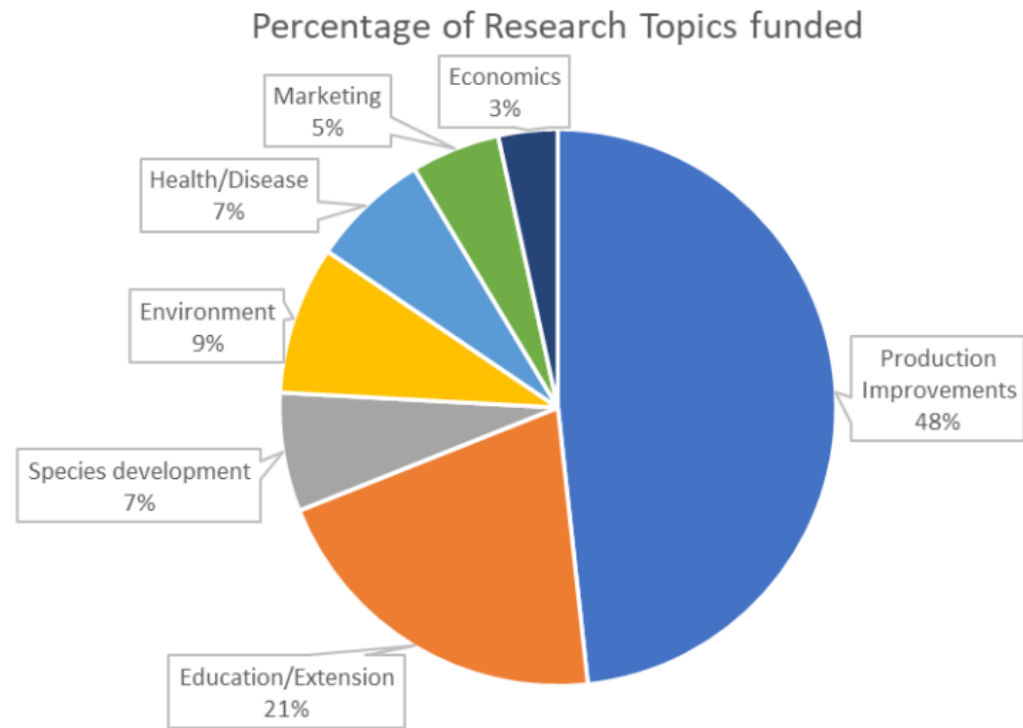


Figure 5. Relative percentage of project research topics for projects funded by the State over all fiscal years. FDACS Division of Aquaculture ARC Report

Impacts of Hurricane Ian on Florida's Aquacultur e Industry



gatoramafun



Hurricane Ian Update:



**We will be closed Wednesday and Thursday
due to Hurricane Ian.**

**Please stay tuned and we will re-evaluate on
Thursday for the remaining days of the week.**

Join us in praying for all God's creatures safety!





Threats to the Florida's Aquaculture Industry

Commodity	All estimated value losses combined	Percentage of estimated total value losses combined
Alligators and Aquatic Turtles	\$60,000	1%
Bivalve shellfish (incl. leases and/or hatcheries)	\$1,690,655	20%
Food fish (incl. shrimp)	\$904,200	11%
Live rock	\$20,500	<1%
Multiple	\$24,500	<1%
Ornamental fish	\$5,521,900	67%
Other (Coral)	\$33,500	<1%
Other (Gambusia sp.)	\$1,000	<1%
Research	\$1,000	<1%

Source: FDACS Division of Aquaculture

Florida Aquaculture Association

www.flaa.org

Tiffany Conner

tiffany@flaa.org

813-438-3522



THE FLORIDA SENATE
APPEARANCE RECORD

④

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2/6/23

Meeting Date

Bill Number (if applicable)

Topic Aquaculture

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Tiffany Conner

Job Title Executive Director - FL Aqua Assoc.

Address P.O. Box 2974

Phone 813-624-2204

Street

Riverview

FL

33508

City

State

Zip

Email tiffany.@flaa.org

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☒ Information

Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against
(The Chair will read this information into the record.)

Representing FL Aquaculture Association

Appearing at request of Chair: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Lobbyist registered with Legislature: ☐ Yes ☐ No

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S-001 (10/14/14)

CourtSmart Tag Report

Room: SB 301

Case No.:

Type:

Caption: CSenate Agriculture Committee

Judge:

Started: 2/6/2023 3:30:43 PM

Ends: 2/6/2023 4:51:26 PM **Length:** 01:20:44

3:30:42 PM Chair Collins calls meeting to order
3:30:55 PM Roll Call
3:31:10 PM Quorum is present
3:31:20 PM Pledge of Allegiance
3:31:35 PM Senator gives committee meeting instructions
3:32:00 PM Presentation by Commissioner Wilton Simpson, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
3:32:29 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:38:14 PM Commissioner Simpson concludes presentation
3:39:18 PM Senator Collins
3:39:45 PM Questions:
3:40:00 PM Senator Mayfield
3:40:17 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:41:18 PM Senator Mayfield
3:42:18 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:42:41 PM Senator Collins
3:43:41 PM Senator Berman
3:43:55 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:44:58 PM Senator Berman
3:46:02 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:46:14 PM Senator Collins
3:46:20 PM Senator Boyd
3:46:36 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:47:10 PM Senator Thompson
3:47:36 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:48:17 PM Senator Thompson
3:49:17 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:49:30 PM Senator Thompson
3:49:44 PM Senator Collins
3:49:51 PM Senator Berman
3:50:11 PM Commissioner Simpson
3:50:38 PM Senator Collins
3:51:54 PM Overview of Florida Agriculture by Jeb Smith, President of Florida Farm Bureau
3:52:45 PM Jeb Smith
4:13:05 PM Jeb Smith concludes presentation
4:14:06 PM Senator Collins
4:14:12 PM Questions:
4:14:29 PM Senator Rouson
4:14:44 PM Jeb Smith
4:15:08 PM Senator Collins
4:15:22 PM Presentation on the Nursey Industry by John Conroy, Owner of Fish Branch Tree Farm
4:15:23 PM John Conroy
4:39:29 PM John Conroy concludes presentation
4:41:01 PM Questions:
4:41:04 PM Senator Boyd
4:41:43 PM John Conroy
4:42:55 PM Senator Collins
4:43:26 PM Presentation on the Aquaculture Industry by Tiffany Conner, Consolidated Fish Farms and Executive Director of the Florida Aquaculture Association
4:43:27 PM Tiffany Conner
4:49:30 PM Tiffany Conner concludes presentation
4:50:32 PM Senator Collins

4:50:49 PM Without objections, meeting adjourned.