

Introducing the Certificate of Farm Labor Management

By Fritz M. Roka and Carlene A. Thissen

The Farm Labor Supervisor (FLS) training program has been in place since 2010. It was developed as an Extension program to bring awareness and to enhance compliance with farm labor regulations. The program has targeted crew leaders, labor contractors and farm personnel who supervise seasonal and migrant farm workers. Educational content has been organized around four broad topic areas:

- 1) Ensuring that farm workers are properly paid
- 2) Increasing awareness and preventing discrimination and harassment in the workplace
- 3) Enhancing agricultural safety
- 4) Maintaining safe vehicles that transport farm workers with drivers who are properly licensed and drive defensively

Since 2010, more than 800 farm labor supervisors have attended FLS training programs. Attendees received a “certificate of attendance” and several farm managers/owners have said that a certificate of attendance is valuable documentation of training, which is becoming more important in various third-party audits. Attendance certificates, however, do not document individual expertise and knowledge. Many farm labor supervisors already are very knowledgeable of farm labor regulations, and many of the FLS attendees have been “repeat customers” as they have re-enrolled in the annual FLS training offerings. Farm managers, and especially those supervisors who manage seasonal and migrant farm workers, should be recognized for their individual knowledge and awareness of farm labor regulations.

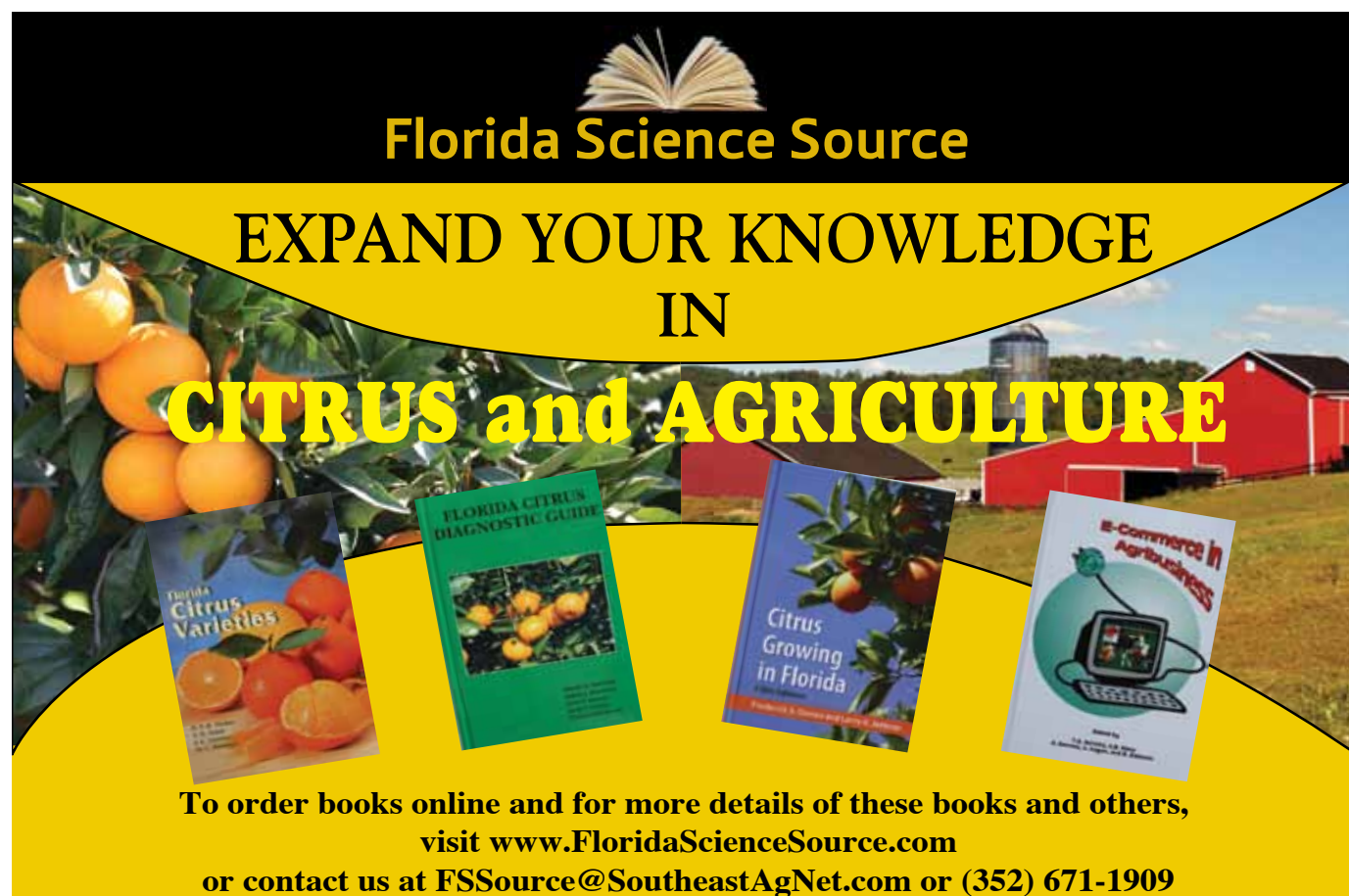
Toward that end, we want to initiate the “Certificate of Farm Labor Management” as part of the fall 2014 train-

ing agenda. This certificate of *achievement* will be earned by those attendees who complete the FLS curriculum and pass an assessment (yes, a test) for each topic unit. It is our hope that the Certificate of Farm Labor Management will recognize and professionally acknowledge those farm labor supervisors who are knowledgeable and experts in the area of farm labor regulations. Earning the certificate is strictly voluntary.

Licensed farm labor contractors (FLCs) will *not* have to earn the certificate in order to renew their state and federal FLC licenses, and those who attend any FLS training program will continue to receive an attendance certificate. The primary purpose of the achievement certificate is to bring professional recognition to those farm labor supervisors who have developed an expertise in the area of farm labor regulations.

REQUIREMENTS

To earn the Certificate of Farm Labor Management, one must complete eight FLS classes and pass a test for each class. Three classes will be required: Wage & Hour, Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance and one class related to worker safety. The remaining five classes will be the choice of the individual student. Current FLS classes are listed in Table 1 (see page 35) along with the times and locations of classes as of August 1. Each class will be scheduled at least once at the Southwest Florida Research and Education (SWFREC) in Immokalee. Times and locations of all classes will be finalized by September 1 and posted at the SWFREC website (swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu). Additional classes and locations can be scheduled as demand dictates. Growers, crew leaders and other



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interested folks are urged to contact their local cooperative Extension agent to request training sessions in their respective areas around the state. A new class will be set up in whatever topic if at least 10 people commit to attend. All classes can be taught in both English and Spanish. Most classes will last about two hours. A few classes, such as the Worker Protection Standard Train-the-Trainer, will require four hours of instruction. There will be a registration fee for each training session. Fees will vary by the type of program. Please consult the SWFREC website for those details.

Assessments, or tests, will be a necessary part of earning the Certificate of Farm Labor Management. Successfully completing each assessment signals individual accomplishment and understanding of the relevant material. The format of each test or assessment will vary according to the topic. In some classes, the test will be question and answer. For such a test, one will need to correctly answer 75 percent of the questions to complete the assessment. For other classes, such as CPR, one must perform the necessary skills to demonstrate that he or she adequately understands the core concepts of the class. For anyone who suffers from “test-phobia,” we want to strongly emphasize that the goal of each test is *not* to eliminate people from earning the Certificate of Farm Labor Management, but *to* document knowledge and expertise. The expressed goal is to award the Certificate of Farm Labor Management to anyone who is willing to spend the time and

effort. This means that any person who does not successfully pass an individual assessment the first time can retake that test until such time that he or she is successful.

Florida fruit and vegetable growers rely on seasonal and migrant farmworkers to do the labor intensive activities necessary to successfully produce marketable crops. Crew leaders, farm labor contractors and farm labor supervisors are the lynchpins in the complicated process of recruiting, organizing, transporting and supervising these workers. Farm labor supervisors who can accomplish the necessary field tasks with their respective crews and stay in compliance with the numerous farm labor regulations that exist should be professionally acknowledged. The objective behind the Certificate of Farm Labor Management is to enhance the professional stature of those farm labor supervisors who embrace the daily challenges of agricultural production and successfully manage farm workers in accordance with all the associated rules and regulations.

For any questions about FLS training classes and earning the Certificate of Farm Labor Management, please contact Fritz Roka (239-658-3428, fmroka@ufl.edu) or Carlene Thissen (239-658-3449, carlene@ufl.edu).

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Table 1. Farm Labor Supervisor classes, training dates and locations for fall 2014.		
Class Title and Outline	Training Date	Location
WAGE AND HOUR Compensable hours, terms and working conditions, minimum wage	September 30 October 21 October 29 November 5	Belle Glade Bartow Immokalee Arcadia
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMPLIANCE Preventing/eliminating discrimination and harassment in agricultural environments	September 30 October 21 October 29 November 5	Belle Glade Bartow Immokalee Arcadia
BASICS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION Expressing and motivating expectations to your crew	September 30 October 21 October 29 November 5	Belle Glade Bartow Immokalee Arcadia
ADVANCED DOT COMPLIANCE – WOULD YOU PASS AN AUDIT? Hours of service, drug and alcohol testing, driver qualification files, vehicle maintenance files	September 23	Immokalee
DRIVER AND VEHICLE PREPAREDNESS, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REGULATIONS Focused on drivers, vehicle inspections and driver preparedness	September 24 October 15 October 22	Lake Alfred Immokalee Arcadia
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND PERSONAL SAFETY	October 7	Immokalee
WPS TRAIN-THE-TRAINER Worker protection standards for trainers	October 21	Immokalee
CPR/AED	October 28	Immokalee
AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT AND FIELD SAFETY	November 4	Immokalee
SAFE DRIVING TECHNIQUES Defensive driving principles: space, anticipation, adjustments, distractions, plus distracted driving	November 18	Immokalee
FIRST AID	TBA	TBA
FLC ADMIN BASICS Licensing, I-9 forms, surviving inspections, H-2A basics	TBA	TBA
FARM WORKER HOUSING State and county health standards	TBA	TBA