

Position no. 0001-4097

Agriculture (Dairy) Regional Specialized Extension Agent II or III

University of Florida/IFAS Extension at Okeechobee County

Okeechobee, FL (South Extension District)

Application deadline: 4 weeks after initial posting date

University of Florida/IFAS Extension and Okeechobee County seek to fill a 12-month, permanent status-accruing Agriculture (Dairy) Regional Specialized Agent (RSA) position. The regional focus of the position will encompass the south Florida dairy-producing counties of Okeechobee, Hardee, Highlands, and DeSoto. The position will be based at the UF/IFAS Extension Office in the city of Okeechobee.

Duties and Responsibilities

The RSA will plan, develop, implement, teach, evaluate, and report on educational programs beneficial to dairy producers. The successful candidate will work with other county extension faculty in the South Florida Beef-Forage Program (<http://sfbfp.ifas.ufl.edu/>); animal science, forage, and soil and water specialists at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center (<http://rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu/>); and animal science, dairy, and forage specialists at the University of Florida campus in Gainesville and at the North Florida Research and Education Center in Marianna. The successful candidate is expected to maintain an effective program advisory committee and establish a system for accountability and public information to all relevant individuals, groups, organizations and agencies. Educational topics will include manure management, animal nutrition, winter forages and supplements, native and improved pasture management, weed identification and control, soil sample analysis, herd health, and reproduction management. The incumbent will spend ample time on farm visits, facilitating regularly scheduled dairy producer peer discussion meetings to hear and understand client needs. Regulatory issues, particularly TMDLs on phosphorus loading, have tremendous impacts on dairy producers and the amount and types of fertilizers they can use in pasture, forage and silage production. This agent will help producers interpret the rules and will work with water experts to help provide solutions. Some applied research and training of county agents on dairy issues is also expected.

The South Florida dairy production area is very diverse in production practices (tunnel barns, free stalls and vibrant pasture based systems), has many third generation farmers in their young adult years farming with parents and grandparents, and is likely to continue growing in production. Okeechobee, Hardee, Highlands and De Soto counties are home to more than 45% of the total 124,000 adult dairy cows in Florida. Okeechobee County ranks first in the state in the dairy industry with 12 dairy farms and more than 31,000 head of dairy cattle. This county also has three grazing dairy farms and many more are interested in converting to grazing dairies. Hardee County has the second highest total of adult dairy cows of any county in Florida with 14,100 and also has several pasture-based dairies. De Soto County is slated for dairy expansion by one of the Hardee dairies whose current land extends to the border of those two counties.

More milk is produced on fewer farms each year, and that milk is handled by fewer people. Dairy farmers have to find new and innovative ways to increase outputs while decreasing inputs. Outputs per cow and total milk production have moved upward, driven by genetic, technological, and production management improvements. The dairy industry is continuously looking for new and emerging ways to make dairy farming more profitable, but at the same time more sustainable for the environment.

Qualifications

This position requires a master's degree with a strong academic background in animal science (preferably dairy), agronomy, and forage production plus a minimum of 3 years of extension experience or equivalent. The successful applicant should also have experience working in agricultural industry. A background check and drug test will be required prior to employment. Experience working in multicultural settings and coursework/training on multicultural topics are also desirable.

The office for this position will be located at the county extension office (<http://okeechobee.ifas.ufl.edu/>) in Okeechobee County (<http://www.co.okeechobee.fl.us/>) on the northwest side of the city of Okeechobee. This city has a population of almost 40,000 and is situated in south-central Florida about 40 miles west of Ft. Pierce and the Florida Turnpike.