



SOUTHEAST

TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

SE TOPP NEWS

CULTIVATING CHANGE IN SOUTH FLORIDA: ORGANIC FARMING WORKSHOP IN HOMESTEAD

On August 19th, farmers, agricultural professionals, and community members gathered for the “Organic Farming Strategies for Tropical Crops in South Florida” workshop in Homestead, Florida. Hosted by Florida Organic Growers (FOG) and UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County, the half-day event was more than just a learning opportunity, it was a celebration of organic agriculture and community-driven innovation.

The day kicked off with a warm welcome, setting the tone for a morning of collaboration and discovery. Attendees were then immersed in a series of expert-led sessions that tackled the unique challenges and opportunities of organic farming in South Florida’s tropical climate.



Dr. Qingren Wang Presenting on UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County Programs

The workshop featured a dynamic lineup of experts who shared practical strategies and resources tailored to South Florida’s organic farming landscape. Dr. Qingren Wang and Jeff Wasielewski talked about how the Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC) can provide support for growers through their vegetable production guidance and tropical fruit expertise. Dr. Jonathan H. Crane followed with region-specific insights into managing organic tropical fruit crops, while Dr. Xiaoying Li highlighted the benefits of cover crops for soil health and weed suppression.



Dr. Xiaoying Li Presenting on Cover Crops in Organic Farming

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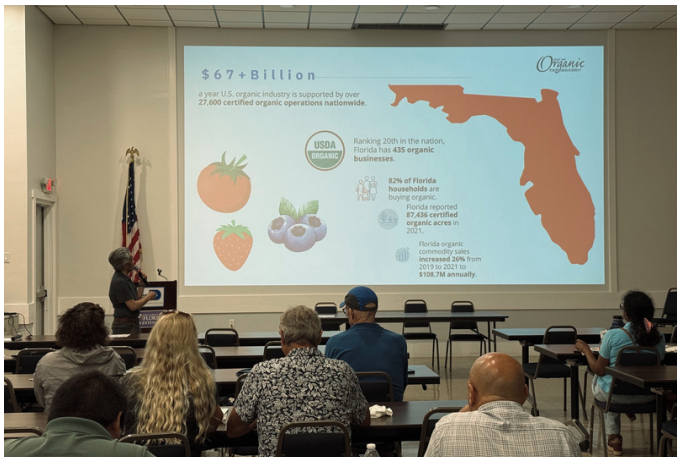


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Dr. Juan Carlos Rodriguez Presenting on Organic Certification Considerations for Florida Farmers

Their stories underscored a powerful message: organic farming is not just a method, it's a movement rooted in resilience, innovation, and community.

The workshop wrapped up with a networking lunch, empowering attendees with new connections and resources. Events like this workshop are planting the seeds for a more sustainable and connected organic and sustainable agricultural future. Stay tuned for upcoming workshops and opportunities to grow with us.

Dr. Dakshina Seal offered sustainable pest management techniques that avoid insecticides, proving that eco-friendly practices can still deliver strong yields. Additionally, Dr. Juan Carlos Rodriguez clarified the organic certification process and connected farmers with essential tools to help them succeed in their transition to certified organic production.

One of the most impactful segments of the day was the farmer panel, where seasoned organic growers shared their journeys, challenges, and triumphs. Colleen Swingle of Paradise Farms, Marc Ellenby of LNB Groves, Margie Pikarsky of Bee Haven Farm, and Peter Fedeles of Lion Farms offered candid insights into transitioning to organic practices, sparking lively discussion and heartfelt connection among attendees.



Farmer Panel Participants Pictured (Left to Right)
Dr. Juan Carlos Rodriguez, Marc Ellenby, Colleen Swingle, Peter Fedeles, Margie Pikarsky.

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