



*Facilitating
Agricultural
Resource
Management
Systems*

Applicant Handbook

Mini-FARMS Cost Share Program

75% Reimbursement up to \$5,000

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer
Services

Southwest Florida Water Management District

October 2010

Applicant Handbook Mini-FARMS Cost Share Program

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1.0 Introduction

This handbook provides guidance information to applicants wishing to obtain funding under the Mini-FARMS Program. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) will work collaboratively to administer the program. The Mini-FARMS Program is administered throughout the 16 counties of the SWFWMD. The Mini-FARMS program was established to provide incentive for implementation of and enrollment in FDACS-adopted agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs). The SWFWMD and FDACS will reimburse growers for select agricultural practices that have potential water conservation, sediment control and water quality improvement benefits. Funding levels may vary year-to-year dependent upon the State of Florida program allocations.

2.0 BMP Benefits

BMP measures are not regulatory or enforcement-based. Growers are requested to maintain records and provide documentation regarding the implementation of all BMPs utilized and applied on their farm. Adequate records are very important for the documentation of BMP implementation. Benefits of BMP adoption include:

- Improved crop yield and quality
- Improved land and water resource protection
- Presumption of compliance with state water quality standards
- Reduced environmental impacts
- Opportunity to receive cost share reimbursements
- Opportunity for industry self-regulation.

3.0 Qualification Requirements

- Projects are limited to a maximum of 100 irrigated acres or 100 non-irrigated acres for cow/calf and equine operations.
- Projects must be located within the SWFWMD
- Property must have been actively used for agriculture in past 2 years.
- Cost share reimbursement is capped at **75%** of receipt verified cost on eligible items, with a maximum payout of **\$5,000** per application.
- Qualifying site must be in regulatory compliance to receive reimbursement. Program funding may not be used to purchase equipment necessary to satisfy regulatory requirements or permitting conditions.
- Applicant must enroll in an FDACS-adopted BMP manual in which a “Notice of Intent” (NOI) to implement BMPs will be submitted to the department. **The applicant must provide a copy of the NOI with their application.** See *Appendix E*, or visit www.floridaagwaterpolicy.com for enrollment information.
- Applicants proposing to implement water conservation BMPs are required to have a Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL) evaluation completed after application approval and prior to project inception. Contact FDACS field staff for MIL information. Most MIL evaluations are a free service to the grower through NRCS and/or the SWFWMD.

- Qualifying BMPs must be first-time, new installations; the Mini-FARMS program will not reimburse for like-kind replacements. Replacement items may be eligible if improvements to the system can be demonstrated to have environmental benefits.

Applications that qualify for funding will be based on review of each applicant's proposal and operation. A simple budget, *Appendix B* that corresponds with each line item BMP must be included with the application form in *Appendix A*. The department's staff will make every effort to assist applicants in competing and providing all necessary information.

A qualifying applicant will be required to sign a 2 to 3 year maintenance agreement, depending upon the type of project and service life of the project components. No project work should begin, and no expenditures for an approved project can be made until the applicant has received authorization and written approval to proceed.

Payments will be authorized upon the receipt of invoices with appropriate documentation. The Mini-FARMS Program can only reimburse for approved cost share items. Participation in this program is open to all eligible applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, and mental or physical handicap.

4.0 Cost Share Rates and Eligible Practices

Cost-share funds are available through this program for each of the practices listed below. The program cost share rate represents the percentage of the total cost to be paid through the program. **The maximum cost share amount available per application is \$5,000 with up to two applications per State fiscal year, and a lifetime maximum of five applications per individual or business.**

Table 4.0 Eligible Cost Share Practices and Maintenance Periods

| Practice | Maintenance Period (yrs) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Soil Moisture Probes/Tensiometers | 3 |
| Soil Testing to Determine Fertilizer Recommendations | NA |
| Water Table Observation Wells | 2 |
| Weather Station w/ET measurement | 3 |
| Data Logger/Telemetry Unit/Power Sources/Software | 3 |
| Culverts w/Riser Board Structures | 3 |
| EC / Salinity Measuring Devices or Equivalent Technologies | 2 |
| Irrigation Pumps, Controls, Filtration, Infrastructure | 3 |
| Totalizing Flow Meters for Systems Not Required to Meter by WMD | 2 |
| Closed-Pipeline Water Delivery/Tailwater Recovery | 3 |
| Water Quality Test Kit | 2 |
| Petiole Sap Test | 2 |
| Soil PH Testing Kit | 2 |
| Permanent Fertigation Facility | 3 |
| Wetland Exclusion Fencing/Temporary Fencing for Denuded Areas | 3 |
| Other Approved Water Conservation Projects | TBD |

5.0 Application and Reimbursement Procedure

Step 1: The applicant should schedule a pre-application meeting with FDACS see contact info below:

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service

Office of Agricultural Water Policy

Polk, Manatee, Hardee, Highlands, Sarasota, Desoto, and Charlotte Counties

Noel Marton, P.G. Environmental Specialist III

Office: (941) 377-3722 *Extension 6516*

Fax: (941) 373-7660

noel.marton@swfwmd.state.fl.us

Office of Agriculture and Water Policy

Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, Sumter, Citrus, Marion, and Levy

Jessica McCoy Stempien, Environmental Specialist II

Office: (813) 985-7481 *Extension 2125*

Fax: (813) 987-6747

mccoyj@doacs.state.fl.us

- Step 2: Complete the “Application for Mini-FARMS Cost Share” (*Appendix A*), indicate the BMPs to be implemented, provide an itemized project budget similar to the example in *Appendix B*, and any additional information necessary.
- Step 3: Provide a copy of your “Notice of Intent” (NOI) to implement BMPs or contact FDACS field staff to arrange for enrollment in an FDACS-adopted BMP manual.
- Step 4: Following successful qualification and approval, a maintenance agreement (*Appendix C*) will be signed by applicant and administrator. Execution serves as authorization to proceed in accordance with the cost-share agreement.
- Step 5: Participant will notify program staff of project completion and schedule an inspection to verify implementation of qualifying BMPs. and complete a “Request for Cost Share Payment” form (*Appendix D*). The reimbursement process will be initiated by staff after inspection.
- Step 6: Program staff will periodically conduct site visits to verify BMPs are being properly maintained. Program participants will be required to reimburse the State on a pro-rated basis for cost share funding received for any practice that is improperly maintained, removed, or destroyed before the end of the maintenance period.

APPENDIX A - APPLICATION FOR MINI-FARMS COST SHARE

Date: _____
 Owner/Business _____
 Mailing Address: _____
 _____ County: _____
 Phone/Email: _____
 Location: Parcel ID _____
 Project Acreage: _____ Crop(s): _____ WUP #: _____

Are you receiving additional funding for this project? Y/N

If yes, Program Name: _____
 Items Funded: _____ Amount: _____

Check (✓) boxes below to indicate practices you are requesting cost share funding.

| ✓ | BMP Items | Estimated Cost |
|---|--|----------------|
| | Soil Moisture Probes / Tensiometers | |
| | Soil Testing to Determine Fertilizer Recommendations | |
| | Water Table Observation Wells | |
| | Weather Station with ET Measurement | |
| | Data Logger/Telemetry Unit/Power Source/Software | |
| | Culverts with Riser Board Structures | |
| | EC / Salinity Measuring Devices or Equivalent Technologies | |
| | Irrigation Pumps, Controls, Filtration, Infrastructure | |
| | Totalizing Flow Meters for Systems Not Required to Meter for WMD | |
| | Closed-Pipeline Water Delivery/Tailwater Recovery | |
| | Water Quality Test Kit | |
| | Petiole Sap Test | |
| | Soil PH Testing Kit | |
| | Permanent Fertigation Facility | |
| | Wetland Exclusion Fencing/Temporary Fencing for Cow/Calf and Equine Operations | |
| | Other Approved Water Conservation Projects | |
| | TOTAL ESTIMATED COST | |
| | 75% ESTIMATED REIMBURSEMENT | |

Application must include

- 1) Itemized project budget and copies of vendor quotes
- 2) Copy of NOI

Submit application to

Office of Agricultural Water Policy
Polk, Manatee, Hardee, Highlands, Sarasota,
Desoto, and Charlotte Counties
 Noel Marton, P.G.
 Office: (941) 377-3722 Ext. 6516
 Fax: (941) 373-7660
noel.marton@swfwmd.state.fl.us

Office of Agricultural Water Policy
Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Levy,
Hernando, Sumter, Citrus, Marion,
 Jessica McCoy Stempien
 Office: (813) 985-7481 Ext. 2125
 Fax: (813) 987-6746
mccoyj@doacs.state.fl.us

APPENDIX B - SAMPLE ITEMIZED BUDGETS

Awesome Ag Products, LLC

PUMP STATION FOR SURFACE WATER IRRIGATION

| Item Description | Number | Cost/Unit | Cost |
|---|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| Surface Water Pump & Motor | 1 | \$1,500.00 | \$1,500.00 |
| Control Switch | 1 | | \$325.00 |
| Pump Filter | 1 | | \$500.00 |
| Check Valve | 1 | | \$1150.00 |
| 4" PVC Pipe | 500 feet | \$1.09/feet | \$545.00 |
| Elbows, fittings, glue | | | \$329.00 |
| Lagoon Return Pipe | | | \$40.00 |
| Totalizing Flow Meter | 1 | | \$1,200.00 |
| Total Estimated Cost | | | \$5,489.00 |
| Estimated Cost Share Reimbursement at 75% | | | \$4,116.75 |
| Estimated Grower Cost | | | \$1,372.25 |

***REIMBURSEMENT BASED ON ESTIMATED TOTAL COST**

Bushy Farms Produce, Inc.

SOIL MOISTURE PROBES AND IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

| Item Description | Number | Cost/Unit | Cost |
|---|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| Soil Moisture Probe | 4 | \$865.00 | \$3,460.00 |
| Cellular Modem System (Data logger) | 1 | | \$1,500.00 |
| Weather Monitoring station | 1 | | \$800.00 |
| Irrigation Gauge | 1 | | \$316.00 |
| Irrigation Management Software/Network Management Fee | 1 | | \$400.00 |
| Irrigation Automatic Shut off valve | 1 | | \$325.00 |
| Laptop/surge protector/CPU | | | \$1,300.00 |
| Estimated Total Cost | | | \$8,101.00 |
| Estimated Cost Share Reimbursement at 75% | | | \$6,075.75 |
| Estimated Grower Cost | | | \$2,025.25 |

***REIMBURSEMENT BASED ON ESTIMATED TOTAL COST**

APPENDIX C - MINI-FARMS COST SHARE AGREEMENT

Project No. _____

PARTICIPANT LISTED BELOW AGREES TO IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN IDENTIFIED BMPs IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE STANDARDS FOR THE IDENTIFIED MAINTENANCE PERIOD ESTABLISHED BY THE MINI-FARMS BMP COST SHARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR. THE LEVEL OF FUNDING REQUESTED IS BASED ON ESTIMATED COST AND IS CONSISTENT WITH THE COST SHARE PERCENTAGE INDICATED IN THE APPLICANT HANDBOOK.

Owner/Business: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Project Physical Address: _____

Phone: _____

Type of Operation: _____

County Located: _____

Property Folio #: _____

1. Items and materials funded by the cost share program will remain the property of the ADMINISTRATOR until the established maintenance period has expired.
2. Participant is responsible for replacement of any program-funded property held in their possession that may be is lost, damaged, or stolen.
3. In the event of property sale or change of land use, the participant shall notify the Administrator who may elect to recover reimbursement from the participant in an amount equal to the full cost share reimbursement stated in this contract, less depreciation calculated on straight-line basis per year for the number of years equal to the maintenance years listed in Table 4.0 of the applicant handbook.
4. The Administrator will relinquish to the participant all rights, title and interest in the cost share items at the end of the maintenance period unless a previous demand has been made for the return of program-funded items.
5. Upon 48-hour notice, the Administrator shall be given access to examine or audit all project related records and documents during or following the term of this Agreement. The Participant shall maintain all such records and documents for at least five (5) years following the expiration or termination of this Agreement. All records and documents are subject to the Public Records Act, F.S. Chapter 119.
6. Both parties understand and agree that the provisions in Nos. 1 and 5 above will survive the termination of this Agreement for any reason.

Check (✓) boxes below to indicate practices requested for cost share assistance.

| ✓ | Approved Cost Share BMPs | Maintenance Period (yrs) | Estimated Project Cost | Estimated Grower Payment |
|---|--|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Soil Moisture Probes / Tensiometers | 3 | | |
| | Soil Testing to Determine Fertilizer Recommendations | NA | | |
| | Water Table Observation Wells | 2 | | |
| | Weather Station with ET Measurement | 3 | | |
| | Culverts with Riser Board Structures | 3 | | |
| | EC / Salinity Measuring Devices or Equivalent Technologies | 3 | | |
| | Irrigation Pumps, Controls, Filtration, Infrastructure | 3 | | |
| | Totalizing Flow Meters for Systems Not Required to Meter for WMD | 2 | | |
| | Closed-Pipeline Water Delivery/Tailwater Recovery | 3 | | |
| | Water Quality Test Kit | 2 | | |
| | Petiole Sap Test | 2 | | |
| | Soil PH Testing Kit | 2 | | |
| | Permanent Fertigation Facility | 3 | | |
| | Wetland Exclusion Fencing/Temporary Fencing for Cow/Calf and Equine Operations | 3 | | |
| | Other Approved Water Conservation Projects | TBD | | |
| | TOTALS | | | |

Each party designates the following individual as its respective Project Manager. Project Managers shall assist with BMP implementation coordination and shall be the party's prime contact person.

Applicant Project Manager

Print Name _____
Phone _____

FDACS/SWFWMD Project Manager

Print Name _____
Phone _____

Any changes to project representative status must be provided in writing to all parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto, or their lawful representatives, have executed this Agreement on the day and year set forth next to their signatures below.

FDACS/SWFWMD Project Manager Name _____

By: _____
Administer Signature Date

Applicant Project Manager Name _____

By: _____
Applicant Signature Date

APPENDIX D - REQUEST FOR COST SHARE PAYMENT

| REQUEST FOR COST SHARE PAYMENT | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|---------|------------|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Landowner/Operator Information</u> | | | | | FEID or SSN: | | |
| Name: | | | | | Contractor and Contract #: | | |
| Operation Name: | | | | | Payment #: | | |
| Mailing Address: | | | | | FDACS Evaluator: | | |
| NOI# or Date of Signature: | | | | | | | |
| BMP # or Name | BMP Description | Unit Cost | # Acres | Total Cost | % Eligible for Cost Share | Amount Reimbursed | Verification Method |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Grand Total | \$ | |
| VERIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE | | | | | | | |
| I certify that the BMP(s), as indicated on this form, have been implemented on the property described herein. | | | | | | | |
| _____ | | | | | _____ | | |
| FDACS Evaluator Signature | | | | | Landowner/Operator Signature | | |
| Date | | | | | Date | | |

APPENDIX E - AGRICULTURAL BMPS ENROLLMENT INFO

WHAT ARE AGRICULTURAL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs)?

- ❖ Agricultural BMPs are practical measures that producers can take to reduce the amount of fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste, and other pollutants entering our water resources. They are designed to benefit water quality while maintaining or even enhancing agricultural production.
- ❖ The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Office of Agricultural Water Policy develops and adopts BMPs for most commodities. The BMPs can be found at: www.floridaagwaterpolicy.com

WHY DO WE HAVE AGRICULTURAL BMPs?

- ❖ Florida law allows farmers to reduce their water quality impacts by implementing FDACS-adopted BMPs that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has verified as being effective in reducing pollutants.
- ❖ FDEP is developing Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) for impaired waters, to meet adopted water quality targets called Total Maximum Daily Loads.
- ❖ Where FDEP adopts a BMAP that includes agriculture (and in some other areas designated by statute), producers must either implement verified FDACS-adopted BMPs or monitor their water quality.

HOW DO I BENEFIT BY ENROLLING IN BMP PROGRAMS?

- ❖ Some BMPs can help you operate more efficiently and reduce costs, while you help protect the environment.
- ❖ Implementing (and maintaining) verified FDACS-adopted BMPs provides a presumption of compliance with state water quality standards for the pollutants addressed by the BMPs.
- ❖ The Florida Right to Farm Act generally prohibits local governments from regulating an agricultural activity that is addressed through rule-adopted BMPs when farmers implement them.
- ❖ Producers who implement FDACS-adopted BMPs might qualify for exemptions from water management district surface water permitting, and/or satisfy some district permitting requirements. Check with your district.
- ❖ BMP participation demonstrates Agriculture's commitment to water resource protection, and helps maintain support for this alternative approach.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE IN BMPs?

1. Schedule a meeting with a BMP team member, who will provide an FDACS BMP manual and other BMP-related information (*See contact information below*).
2. Participate with the coordinator in a free assessment of your operation, to determine which BMPs apply to you.
3. Fill out the BMP checklist and sign the Notice of Intent (NOI) to implement the BMPs.
4. Keep a copy of the checklist and the signed NOI in your records.
5. Implement and maintain the applicable BMPs and keep adequate records, to maintain a presumption of compliance with state water quality standards.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH A BMP TEAM MEMBER?

Contact the FDACS Office of Agricultural Water Policy at (850) 617-1727 or AgBMPHelp@doacs.state.fl.us OR the following regionally based OAWP staff, who will assist you in scheduling a meeting with a team member:

| | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| SFWMD Region | Bo Griffin | (863) 462-5883 | griffid@doacs.state.fl.us |
| SJRWMD Region | Jody Lee | (386) 329-4812 | jlee@sjrwmd.com |
| SWFWMD Region | Jessica McCoy Stempien | (813) 985-7481 x 2125 | mccoyj@doacs.state.fl.us |
| SRWMD Region | Darrell Smith | (386) 362-0431 | smith_d@srwmd.state.fl.us |
| NFWMD Region | Charlie Rosborough | (850) 482-9915 | rosborc@doacs.state.fl.us |

FDACS/OAWP 4-21-09