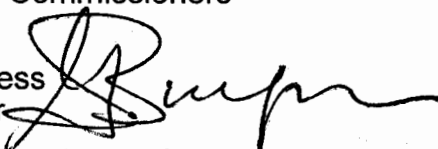


Memorandum



Date: March 3, 2006

To: Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
Honorable Chairman Joe A. Martinez and Members,
Board of County Commissioners

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager 

Subject: Agriculture and Rural Area Study Report

In March 1996, the Board requested a study on agriculture in Miami-Dade County to analyze the long-term economic outlook of the agriculture industry and to develop recommendations to preserve and enhance the industry's economic viability. To that end, a selection committee was subsequently appointed to recommend a consultant and, in October 2000, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (the "Consultant") was awarded a contract to conduct this study (R-1065-00). To further assist in this process, the Board established the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) (Ordinance #00-136). This 16-member committee was tasked with the following responsibilities: to serve as a two-way conduit of information between the consultants and community interests; to advise the consultants and County staff as to community views; to review and comment on draft work products; and to recommend information sources to the consultants.

With the Consultant on board and the CAC in place, work began on the Agricultural and Rural Area Study (the "Study") in May 2001 (see Attachment A for complete Study chronology). Under a separate contract with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the University of Florida (UF) conducted a significant portion of the primary data collection and research for the Study. The UF portion of the Study was completed in June 2002. Although the County was not a party to that contract, the research conducted by UF was integral to the work of the Consultant.

The Study laid out a programmatic and land use solution to retain land for future agricultural activities. In November of 2003, the CAC voted 7-5 to recommend that the report be rejected with prejudice. Some of the members of the CAC were concerned that the recommendations would negatively impact private property rights in the Study Area, and that they did not adequately address the economic viability of agriculture. Lack of consensus by the CAC members regarding the Study recommendations generated majority and minority reports (Attachments B and C, respectively) from the committee members.

Staff has, subsequently, met with the CAC and other community members to focus on, and further develop, those areas of the Study where consensus existed. We believe that these efforts have resulted in a better framework for

public policy to support the agricultural industry without imposing additional restrictions.

Key recommendations in the Final Recommendation Report (Attachment D) submitted to the CAC by the Consultant include:

1. Implementation of a Purchase of Development Rights Program in the Study Area to purchase and extinguish development rights;
2. Changing the existing Severable Use Rights Program to allow landowners in the Study Area to transfer their development rights to designated receiver areas;
3. Utilizing conservation subdivisions, clustering, open space mitigation fees, and other strategies for development in the Study Area;
4. Establishment of a building permit allocation system that reflects historic trends, and an interim development moratorium (18-36 months) to allow implementation of the recommendations;
5. Addition of a full-time staff position to serve as a representative of and a liaison to the agricultural community.

There was support from the CAC members for the creation of the Agricultural Liaison position; however they had concerns about adequately defining the role and the qualifications for the position. Staff from the Department of Planning and Zoning, working with the community and the Agricultural Practices Study Board, developed a job description for the position which was included in the 2004-05 Budget request subsequently approved by the Board. The new Agricultural Manager position in my office has now been filled.

With a great deal of support from the community, staff developed the recommendation to implement the Purchase of Development Rights Program and a \$30,000,000 allocation for the purchase of development rights to maintain agricultural lands has been included in the Building Better Communities Bond Program. The Department of Planning and Zoning will work with the new Agricultural Manager to implement this Program.

On February 9th, 2006, I met with the CAC members to thank them for the dedication and effort they have put into this process and to inform them that, via the transmittal of this report to you, the study phase has been completed and the

Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
Honorable Chairman Joe A. Martinez and Members,
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CAC effectively sunsetted. We will continue to investigate strategies to address the economic viability of agriculture and to achieve the Preliminary Performance Objective/Key Performance Indicator in Miami-Dade County's Strategic Plan of "No net loss of agricultural or environmentally sensitive lands".

The full Study document is available on the County's website at http://www.miamidade.gov/planzone/ag/agras_home.asp.

c: Members, Citizens Advisory Committee for the Agriculture and Rural Area Study

Bill Johnson, Assistant County Manager

Charles LaPradd, Agricultural Manager

Diane O'Quinn Williams, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning

Attachment A

CHRONOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREA STUDY

March, 1996	Initial Scope of Services Committee established by County Manager (requested by Commissioners Ferre, Sorenson, Moss).
Aug. 22, 1996	Selection Committee appointed by County Manager.
Dec. 10, 1996	Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (Consultant) selected.
Dec. 19, 1996	Initiated negotiations with Consultant.
Sept. 15, 1998	BCC approved Resolution R-1079-98 authorizing grant agreement with DCA (\$100,000).
Jan. 12, 1999	Agricultural Practices Study Advisory Board passes resolution to support contract.
Oct. 3, 2000	BCC approved Resolution R-1065-00 authorizing County Manager to execute contract with consultant (Duany Plater Zyberk & Co.) for an amount of \$451,673.00.
October 3, 2000	Ordinance No. 00-136 creating the Citizens' Advisory Committee adopted.
March 20, 2001	BCC approved Resolution R-283-01 authorizing the County Manager's appointment of Citizens' Advisory Committee members.
May 14, 2001	First meeting of Citizens' Advisory Committee (22 meetings held between 5/14/01 and 3/4/04).
June 20, 2002	University of Florida final study presented at South Miami-Dade workshop.
December 6 – 10, 2002	Agriculture and Rural Area Study Charrette conducted at Miami-Dade Agriculture Center.
August 14, 2003	Consultant Final Report submitted.
November 17, 2003	Citizens' Advisory Committee votes 7-5 to reject the Consultant's report with prejudice.
February 9, 2006	County Manager meets with the Citizens' Advisory Committee to discuss the Study.

(Majority)

Attachment B

**Miami-Dade County
Agriculture and Rural Area Study
Craig Wheeling Report**

Were we directed from Washington when to sow, and when to reap, we should soon want bread. – *Thomas Jefferson*¹

Impact of Study

The Study fails because it does not recognize that in order for agricultural lands to be retained, Dade farm economics must be favorable.

Instead, commercial farmers view the study as one in a long line of government-related problems and, two, as the Dade County Planning Department trying to institute more destructive policies.

In fact, instead of saving agriculture, the Study will have the opposite impact of driving agriculture out of South Dade. Large, sophisticated agribusinesses can view a seven-year, half million-dollar study that negatively addresses land use, as a further incentive to move their operations offshore. The businesses that will leave are the primary drivers of Dade County farm marketing and research.

Smaller, row crop, farmers can look to middle Florida and South Georgia for a more favorable regulatory climate and mild weather.

Sophisticated agribusinesses are already moving in both of these directions. Jobs, agricultural leadership, research, and charity money follow when businesses move out of Dade County.

Background

The cost of the Agriculture and Rural Area Study (**the Study**), including work done by the University of Florida, totals \$1,031,673. The original Scope of Services for the Study was drafted in 1996. Thus, the Study represents over seven years of work.

In 1998, every major, commercial agricultural organization in Miami-Dade County expressed concerns about the Study. The initial Scope of Work for the Study was revised after an intensive public participation process that included over fifty hours of public meetings. As a result of this and other public processes, the following major changes were made to the Study:

¹ The population governed by Miami-Dade County and colonial America were similar at about 2.5 million.

- 1) The name of the Study was changed from a “Plan” to a “Study.” This change reflected the belief that an inquiry should be made as to the status and problems of Miami-Dade Agriculture prior to development of a land use plan that might make things worse.
- 2) A Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Study was established by the County Commission. A mix of representatives from various agricultural, business, and environmental organizations were included as members in the CAC. The CAC was required to review and comment on the consultants’ draft and all deliverables, including recommendations on policies, programs, and strategies.
- 3) Requirements for additional economic analyses were added to the Study.
- 4) The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) was authorized to conduct a half a million-dollar economic research study (The UF Study) of Miami-Dade County agriculture.

The UF Study was completed first. The UF Study concluded that “The economic returns to [South Dade farm] operators and landlords are currently insufficient to keep large acreages of row crop and grove land in agriculture, and the long-term prognosis is increasingly grim.”²

Next, the CAC completed a report (attached) advising the Study’s consulting team on areas of concern to South Dade agriculture. The CAC Report included the following conclusions based on the UF Study and projections based on trends in agricultural land use in South Dade.

- Changes in South Dade land laws and regulations should “do no harm” by further restricting farmers’ ability to sell their primary asset, land, when the Dade farm industry is in serious decline.
- Dade County farming is large (over 50-acre farm size) farming. Profit margins are not good for much of food crop agriculture. The County should not burden large, low-margin farm operators with endless plans and committee meetings.
- A plan should be developed by Dade County to deal with approximately 30,000 acres of excess farmland by 2025, to maximize land values, while retaining the land’s rural character and ecological sustainability.

² University of Florida. Miami-Dade County Agricultural Land Retention Study: Summary and Recommendations, Robert L. Degner, Thomas J. Stevens, III, and Kimberly L. Morgan (eds.), p. 56.

- If Miami-Dade County is serious about helping local agriculture, the County should improve the road network and use its powers to prevent flooding of the northwest and western ag areas.
- At the 1998 Miami-Dade County Economic Summit (to which agriculture was not invited), a recommendation was made that the County should fund a position for an agricultural liaison to the County Mayor's Office. To date, this position has not been created.

Finally, the Final Recommendations for the Study were produced in August 2003.

Final Recommendations

There are two overarching problems with the Study's Final Recommendations as presented by the consultants.

First, the Final Recommendations try to present a land usage solution to the economic problems of agriculture. And second, the Final Recommendations are flawed and unworkable, despite advice presented by the CAC during preparation of the documents.

A detailed analysis of problems in the Final Recommendations follows:

Problem Areas

- 1) The economic viability of South Dade agriculture is not adequately addressed in the Study. When asked about this at the September 15, 2003 CAC meeting, a consultant mentioned that "The land use component is an economic strategy." However, the land use component of the Final Recommendations does not qualify as good economic policy for South Dade farmers, does not comport with the CAC's recommendations to "do no harm" to farmland values, and does not provide positive incentives for businessmen to continue farming in a tough economic climate.
- 2) The impact of the opening up of trade with Cuba is not factored in. The UF report states, "A resumption of full trade and commercial relations between the United States and Cuba would completely alter the nature of competition in the U.S. fresh fruit and vegetable industry once again. Traditional vegetable, fruit and tropical crops of importance to Miami-Dade agriculture will be particularly affected."³

The CAC Report further states that: "The implications to Dade County agriculture of having to compete with a low-wage, relatively well-educated work force farming on better soils with access to selective microclimates, and

³ Ibid., p. 59

a port approximately 90 miles from the U.S. are negative and will impact the profitability of many food crops in South Florida.”⁴

- 3) The analysis of the full costs and benefits to Agriculture and related uses and recommended alternatives as per 2(d) of the Scope of Work appear to be missing. This is a serious oversight.
- 4) The analysis of the full costs and benefits to the current and future condition of agriculture as per 2(d), Scope of Work, are missing. Again, this should be fully delineated.
- 5) The positive and negative consequences of each individual scenario on existing landowners as per 2(d), Scope of Work, are not fully delineated.
- 6) Page 4 of the Final Recommendation mentions “preserving significant agricultural and rural open space in perpetuity.” Should we have also preserved streetcar manufacturers in perpetuity. We should preserve agriculture only as long as it is profitable to farm owners.
- 7) Page 4 (2) of the recommendations mentioning facilitating operational adjustments to retain a viable agricultural. Does the County really want to get into farm operations? This will surely finish off agriculture. Witness, the County port, airport, building department, and schools.
- 8) Page 4 (3) of the recommendations appear to place a percentage of ag retention costs on farmers.
- 9) The recommendations mention that South Dade agriculture will transit to a Service Economy.

The UF Study says that direct production ag will be supplanted with sourcing, import, and transportation logistics and distribution. You do not need South Dade farmland to provide these services outside the U.S. Therefore, if we are moving to being an Ag Service Provider outside the U.S., growth controls on Dade ag land are superfluous.

- 10) The Final Recommendations mention new mitigation fees and doc stamp increases. These are taxes that will reduce land demand and hurt farm asset prices. This is unacceptable and contrary to CAC recommendations.
- 11) The proposed building permit restrictions are obviously anti-growth and will depress farmland values from levels that would occur without these limitations.

⁴ Miami-Dade Agriculture and Rural Area Study, Citizen’s Advisory Committee Executive Summary, p. 3.

12) Page 6 (2) of the Final Recommendations calls to “level the international playing field” with respect to trade policies, environmental regulations, food safety and phytosanitary policies, and farm protection. Yet, the UF Study says that “US agricultural trade policy is driven by the interests of major grain-producing states with little regard for U.S. producers of import sensitive products. “ (Pg. 60, UF Summary). Thus, the UF Study contradicts the Final Recommendations.

Furthermore, Dade County is not going to address farm worker protection in, for instance, Guatemala.

13) Page 6, Final Recommendations. The average Dade agricultural producer is not going to “engage in multi-national product/supply and marketing strategies to transcend international boundaries.” This is more consultant speak.

14) Page 7, Final Recommendations. Dade agriculture cannot reduce pest infestation at the “point of origin.” The APHIS Department of the USDA is legally responsible for invasive pest protection. So far, Congress has not shown any desire to pass the funding to protect U.S. borders. And, entry standards are loosening, not getting stricter for items like Mexican avocados, which compete with Dade County avocados.

15) Page 7 (4), Final Recommendations. We should stop agricultural flooding, not monitor and minimize. This was the number one concern of the CAC, yet it is barely mentioned in the Final Recommendations. Flooding that kills tree farms and damages nurseries are a clear economic problem for South Dade agriculture.

16) Page 7 (5), Final Recommendations. A private entity in Dade County is perfectly capable of patent protecting ag technology, using it offshore, and not allowing its use in Dade County. Thus, the Final Recommendations statement on patents is not realistic.

17) Page 7 (6), Final Recommendations. More consulting speak. What specific scientific research is essential to address continuing problems created by conflicting environmental and labor regulations and trade policies?

18) Page 7 (7), Final Recommendations. The weather information situation has been drastically improved of late, with hurricane information on the Internet, and private forecasting. It would be better to direct these resources elsewhere.

19) Page 7 (8), Final Recommendations pushes for improved product standards. Yet, the UF Study (pg. 83) says that it’s not likely that additional marketing orders will be approved. (USDA Marketing Orders are the primary means to improve product standards.)

- 20) Page 7 (8), Final Recommendations. The report does not offer a way to get past the “Free Rider” problem mentioned in the UF Study. (Free riding occurs when ag importers in “the new service economy” draft behind marketing techniques and spending of local producers.)
- 21) Page 7 (9). You are not going to get collaboration if virtually every commercial farm and commercial farm group opposes the Final Recommendations. This was the case with the Scope of Services of the Study in 1998.
- 22) Pages 8 and 9. The Final Recommendation quotes the UF Study’s expectation of a shift toward an import-related Service Economy for South Dade agriculture. One consequence of such a shift is those leading edge firms making the shift do not need expensive Dade County farmland with the attendant high labor, insurance, and regulatory costs. The Study’s Final Recommendations are erroneous.
- 23) Page 6 (4). The Final Recommendations err in using historic rates for building permits. The current market demand is much higher than historic norms.
- 24) Page 6 (6). The economic impact of restrictions on building permit issuance is not calculated. This is a serious oversight.
- 25) Page 10 (1). The Final Recommendations do not support the CAC recommendations that any changes in land development regulations should not restrict farmers’ ability to sell their land when agriculture is in decline.
- 26) Page 10 (3). A study started in 1996 and ongoing in 2003 does not meet the CAC Conclusion: “The County should not burden large, low-margin farm operators with endless plans and committee meetings.” This is just bad government practice.
- 27) Page 10 (3). The Final Recommendations do not adequately address farm profitability. The Study is short on specifics and long on wishful thinking.
- 28) Page 10 (3). The Final Recommendations do not protect land values. Adding costs and taxes and limiting permits actually decreases land values. This contradicts the CAC Summary.
- 29) Page 12. If South Dade agriculture is moving towards a service economy and the trend is away from direct production, removal of development rights is not required.

- 30) Page 13. Acquisition and land protection costs cannot be “implicated” under the Preferred Development Scenario.
- 31) Page 14. The positive contributions of land sales were not counted in Exhibit I. These are: federal income taxes, social security taxes, business profits, farmland sale profits, capital gains taxes. Without positive contributions, the Exhibit I analysis is useless.
- 32) Page 15. Krieger’s report, page 31, states that “Paying for a retention program through taxes to local government may be unacceptable to many households.” However, a mitigation fee is a tax. Thus, the reports are self-contradictory.
- 33) Page 16. The burden of saving farmland should not fall on current property owners at all. They are currently having to deal with a failing South Florida farm economy.
- 34) Page 16. If a service-based economy does not need land, then it is not important to retain an agricultural/rural land component within the economy and society of Miami-Dade County.
- 35) Page 17 states “The governments’ purchase of merely the development rights attached to the land is much less expensive than outright fee simple acquisition.” As land values increase and agricultural profits decrease, this statement becomes more and more untrue.
- 36) Page 18. Krieger’s report does not mention that the public is receptive to the types of programs espoused in the Final Recommendations.
- 37) Page 19. Purchasing eastern lands first blocks development to the interior and negatively impacts farmer land values.
- 38) Development right figures are significantly off because the farmland value of \$22,000 per acre is erroneous. Assuming an eastern per acre value of \$50,000 per acre less five times ag cash flow ($\$500 \times 5$), development rights purchases should cost \$237,500, not \$47,500.
- 39) Page 20. Pursuit of a 130 million dollar general obligation issue is contradicted within the Study as Krieger’s report finds “strong negative reaction among focus group respondents to any increase in taxes” (pg. 22).
- Furthermore, the \$130 million number is wrong due to factors mentioned in item 38 above.
- 40) At the September 15, 2003 CAC meeting, Krieger stated that further work was needed in a tax situation. Because of citizen opposition to taxes, he changed his work to a donation concept. Yet, the Final Recommendations ignore this

and posit fees, taxes, and a general obligation bond. The Study is not internally consistent.

- 41) Page 20. The farmer who sells his development rights into a declining farm economy which is transiting to a service-based economy bears a huge risk. What happens to him/her when their farm specialty declines? They have little land equity to ride out rough years.
- 42) Page 20. A revenue bond secured by an open space mitigation fee is both hurtful to the land seller and a tax which is opposed by Krieger's focus groups.
- 43) Page 21. Mitigation fee revenues cannot serve as a primary funding source when the County is limiting development by limiting building permits and trying to go to a 1 to 20 acre plan.
- 44) Page 21. Added costs (mitigation fees) reduce demand and hurt sellers. This is not factored in the report.
- 45) Page 22. "Fee amounts will be tied to a sliding scale based on the proportionate impact of the proposed impact of development on open space." How will this be calculated? Won't this fee get very expensive if development is restricted?
- 46) Page 22. The FRPP funding should be excluded due to this source being unpredictable.
- 47) Page 23. The State is very short of money. The Florida Rural and Family Lands Act is unfunded and funds can go statewide. This is not a reliable source of funding.
- 48) Page 23. How can you square imposition of an increased doc stamp Tax with Krieger's focus group's finding of "broad distrust of local government." (pg. 31)?
- 49) Page 24. The major user of SUR's in the East Everglades stated the SUR program was hard to use and SUR's were hard to sell (phone conversation w/A. Acosta on September 9, 2003). Thus, why are we using SUR's?
- 50) Page 26. How do you get a return on development rights "roughly equal to the difference between the land's agricultural value and its developed value." If ag land is worth five times rent of \$500/acre and has a market price of \$30,000 plus per acre, who is going to pay \$137,500 per SUR to get 1.5 times the number of dwellings on five acres?

- 51) Page 26. Why would local cities support higher densities when the SUR money goes to South Dade landowners?
- 52) Page 26. Why would cities want higher densities on U.S. 1 corridor when the benefit of the zoning change goes to South Dade landowners?
- 53) Page 27. Why would South Dade farmers want their land values tied to a complex SUR plan which is based on a projection of future market pressures versus allowable urban densities? Concurrency, roads, mortgage rates, the local Miami economy, and neighborhood opposition all impact the projected price of SUR's.
- 54) Page 28. Why should local municipalities designate lands as receiving areas for SUR's as stated in the Study?
- 55) Page 28. Are developers and landowners in the rest of Dade County going to support elimination of all other means of increasing on-site density as mentioned in the Study?
- 56) Page 28. What is the middle man cost of selling SUR's? Will farmers have to pay middle men like they did for the East Everglades SUR's?
- 57) Page 28. Does not a delay in expansion of the UDB hurt the ability of farmers to sell their primary asset and retirement plan (land) when the Dade farm industry is in serious decline. (CAC Summary, pg. 5).
- 58) Page 29. A charrette is not useful in a complex economic process. What percentage of charrette participants are South Dade landowners, local, commercial farmers or even knowledgeable in economics or agribusiness? The Charrette summary even called for "eliminating international trade barriers and disincentives."⁵ This would cripple Dade agriculture.
- 59) (a) Page 29. There is no evidence that one house to five acre residential users do not conflict with commercial farmers. Horses? Sprays? Late night irrigation?
- 60) Page 29. How is the least sensitive portion of property determined? Does the homebuilder have to bow to the County on this? How will this effect farm land value?
- 61) Footnote 29, pg 29. Why should Krome Avenue be maintained in its current dangerous state? Failure to widen Krome hurts the Service Economy we are transiting to.

⁵ Charrette Report from Dade County, Item 4 (b).

- 62) Page 29. To my knowledge there is no local South Dade group favoring cluster housing. Why would a buyer want to drive to a rural area and be in a cluster housing area? Doesn't this zoning hurt farmer land values?
- 63) Page 30. How is the amount of open space preserved greater for cluster housing than 1:5 density? Is there not the same amount of open space preserved?
- 64) Page 30. How would an orchard be operated by different residents in a cluster development? Who makes decisions? Is the orchard on the cluster resident's yards or in the balance of the open space?
- 65) Page 30. What infrastructure requirements are at issue for cluster housing? This should be spelled out in the report
- 66) Page 30. The Right To Farm Act does not prevent suits from litigious neighbors who can nit pick a farmer's management practices.
- 67) Page 31. Is the cost of installing a 150-foot buffer on one acre, two sides, \$90,000? What size trees and irrigation should go in? (200 ft. + 200 ft. x 150) - 50 sq. ft. x \$75). If so, \$90,000 in landscape costs for a corner, one-acre lot will kill demand.
- 68) Page 31. What are the maintenance standards for the 150-foot buffer?
- 69) Page 31. A cluster and buffer requirement would hurt farm values. The County should not waste time with it.
- 70) Page 30. What evidence is there of a lack of disclosure? What good does disclosure do when the farmer gets sued over a sick horse?
- 71) Page 30. What are the LOS standards for rural areas? These should be spelled out.
- 72) Page 30. Setting up an allocation system for building permits does not preserve land values.
- 73) Page 32. A permit allocation system based on location and environmental factors is not "reasonable" to the farmer who is limited? This will negatively impact farm values.
- 74) Page 32. Who decides allocation criteria? The County has trouble performing even simple governmental functions.

- 75) Page 32 (4). Farmers have had problems participating in various County plans including, initially this Study. How commercial farmers can be guaranteed participation should be spelled out.
- 76) Page 33. Adoption of Recommendations into "Land Use" will adversely impact farm values.
- 77) Page 33. The original recommendation to fund a position for an agricultural liaison to the County Mayor's Office was necessitated by the lack of County support for agriculture. The Study twists this request by the Dade County Farm Bureau into a land planning position.
- 78) Page 33, (1). The Coordinator cannot facilitate the transition to a service-based economy when the labor and land are outside the U.S.?
- 79) Page 34 (2). The Planning Department has problems directing County ag matters to the Ag Practices Board which it oversees. Communications may get worse under the Rural Communications Coordinator.
- 80) Page 34 (3). The County currently cannot change avocado property tax values from \$3,200 per acre to \$1,400 per acre due to simple computer problems. How are they going to oversee SUR transfers and lobby funding for agriculture?
- 81) Page 34 (5). Commercial ag interests liked the Dade Planning Department so much that they sent the UF Ag Economic Study to Tallahassee. The Coordinator is not going to overcome this distrust in working with Property Owners?
- 82) Page 34 (6). The statement: "Thus far, the agricultural community has lacked specific representation in that discussion" is incorrect.
- 83) Page 34. How is the coordinator going to do everything from lobby at all government levels, know the "Florida System of Growth Management," develop markets, act as a liaison, manage the Ag Practices Board, and manage SUR's?
- 84) Page 34. The liaison with the Mayor's office has been left out. This was the original request by the farmers.
- 85) Page 35. Now, the coordinator will also focus on land use, flooding, and environmental concerns. This is too much to do well. (See 83 above.)
- 86) Page 35. What does the sentence, "Although land use matters are incidentally at issue, agricultural practices require expertise," mean?

- 87) Page 35. Paragraph 2. How is the Planning Department going to gain trust of Commercial farmers who are already hostile to the Recommendations?
- 88) Page 36. There are almost no organic farms in Dade County due to climate. (It is too humid.) Contrary to the statement in the Study, organic farms and small tropical fruit groves use pesticides and chemicals, especially in Dade County. Liability insurance for other accidents is not considered.
- 89) Page 36. Post 9/11, insurance companies appear to just ban activities outright or pull out of farming altogether (Zurich American). Insurance companies are not likely to offer infrequent coverage.
- 90) Page 36. If agritourism is so great, why are so few Florida farmers doing it? Callery Judge (a large grapefruit outfit that has extensive agritourism) advised Brooks not to do agritourism because of County interference in zoning matters.
- 91) Page 36, last sentence. With regard to grades and standards, the UF report says that, "it is not likely that additional (marketing orders) will be pursued". Therefore, grades and standards are probably not going to be enforced.
- 92) Page 37. Growers are not grappling with country-of-origin labeling. This issue is primarily for large packing operations.
- 93) Page 37. Reed Olszack, a CAC member, mentioned that the last state sponsored tropical fruit marketing program did not function. Why is it going to work in the future?
- 94) Page 37. Watershed separation is not a "must consider" for one to five acre home sites in South Dade.
- 95) Page 37. If the County "must consider" . . . "(3) the impact of pesticides on the existing environment", does this mean that further County regulations are needed? How are these regulations impacted by SB 1660?
- 96) (a) Page 38. How does preserved farmland of any kind "protect habitat for critical species and natural systems? How many critters are running around in shade houses and plastic mulched, row crop fields?
- 97) Page 38. Who is "clearly" going to weigh the use of pesticides? The County? If so, farming in the County will suffer. Is this recommendation illegal under SB 1660?
- 98) Page 38. Where does the UF report say farmers should communicate within the industry to share ideas for dealing with invasive pests? What good will this do?

- 99) Page 38. How, specifically, should U.S. federal law be strengthened to “level the playing field” between domestic and foreign competitors? The above actions can violate previous international/WTO commitments by the U.S. government.
- 100) Page 38, last paragraph. The conclusion, that solutions to international policies are beyond the scope, is an incorrect reading of the UF study.
- 101) Page 38. How do local producers join NFACT which is not an industry coalition?
- 102) Page 39. How are State programs going to be passed over opposition of commercial farming interests?
- 103) Page 39. After all other areas of the job description, how is the Coordinator going to gain expertise in the very complex Everglades restoration area? This is not going to happen unless Coordinator has specific science background.
- 104) Page 40, first two sentences. The UF study states that “The economic returns to operators and landlords are currently insufficient to keep large acreages of row crop and grove land in agriculture and the prognosis is increasingly grim?” The consultant’s recommendations ignore the UF Study assessment.
- 105) Page 40, second paragraph. Again, you do not need local farmland in the Service Economy?
- 106) Krieger should have used focus group questions like: “If all of Dade commercial agriculture opposed a County plan to regulate agricultural property land use, because farmers felt the economics of farming were bad and UF said the “prognosis is increasingly grim”, would you support such a plan with increased tax dollars?”
- 107) The Final Recommendations for new County regulation and taxes do not square with page 22 of the Krieger study: “The strong negative reaction among focus group respondents to any increase in taxes led to the decision to use the donation payment structure”?
- 108) Should we infer from the Krieger report that 24.1% of a population with a median income of \$35,966 would be willing to donate at least \$400? This does not pass a common sense test.
- 109) The Krieger study is not random considering the lack of Hispanic language response.

- 110) Should one of the pictures in the Krieger study show a row crop, farm equipment auction? Burning lime trees? Guatemalan mangos sold on a Miami street corner in Florida mango season?

There is a sampling bias in the Krieger study because of the low level of respondents and the way the questions were asked.

- 111) The Krieger study probably is wrong in that more people are worried about loss of farmland than school crowding or increased crime.
- 112) Pg. 23, Preferred scenario. South Dade is critically short of high schools. This high school would be instantly filled up.

Why is Local Source revenue 17% rural residential versus suburban residential? (pg. 25 Preferred Scenario). This equates to one-home/5 acres versus 4.5 homes to one acre, or 4.4%.

- 113) Pg. 16. Conservation subdivisions do not preserve “significant net open space.”
- 114) Farmers should not trust SUR’s when Community Councils won’t allow zoned development inside the UDB.
- 115) The Final Recommendations ignore SB 1660’s impact on County regulation of farmland.

Alternative Ways to Preserve Agriculture

Commercial farmers on the CAC do have recommendations on how to improve the operating climate of Dade agriculture. These recommendations may not alter the end result of agriculture’s ultimate demise in much of Dade County, but they will slow agriculture’s exodus, and, provide a more sustainable farm business model.

Recommendations

1. Improve the Public School System. In order for Dade agriculture to compete with low-wage producers, it will need a better-educated work force. Furthermore, high quality agribusiness executives are reluctant to move to a County where the school system is a joke.
2. Fund and Empower a Farm Ombudsman to Deal with the County. Miami-Dade County comes up with one problem after another for Dade agriculture to deal with. Most of these problems reflect an urban county’s uneducated attempts to get involved with farm issues. Fixing County regulatory problems uses up tremendous amounts of

farmers' time and money. Hiring an ombudsman with some power to get things done would help here.

3. Buy 1,000 acres of South Dade park land while land values are cheap. Because farm economics are poor and farm values are low versus land-market values, a park purchase will not be much more expensive than development right purchases. Besides, Dade County has few parks in South Dade and money would be injected into some farming operations via land purchases.
4. Improve the South Dade Road System. Four lane Krome Avenue. Pave secondary and tertiary roads so produce does not have to bounce to market.
5. Reign in the Dade County Planning Department. Farmers have long memories of the Dade County Planning Department's attempts to down zone agricultural land to one house to twenty acres; limit debate on ag issues; and failure to bring measures before the Ag Practices Board as required by County ordinance.

Intelligent commercial farmers will not invest capital where the local government works against their businesses.

6. Protect Dade County commercial farmers from having to spend excessive time away from their businesses due to repetitive, useless, expensive studies. A seven-year project that ends up with severe problems wastes a lot of farmer time. Farmers as businessmen/women also do not like to attend all day county meetings where little to nothing is accomplished and public employees severely outnumber the businessmen. Also, taxpayer money is wasted.
7. For County farm studies to produce results, the consultants should have some agribusiness background.
8. Stop flooding. The issue of highest concern to the CAC was flooding of Dade ag lands. For over twenty years, Dade farmers have been burdened by floods which have destroyed their farms. The problem has worsened in the late 1990's. Miami-Dade County has done a very poor job protecting one of the County's largest businesses, agriculture, from this problem.

The CAC recommends that the County Mayor and Commission make flood protection of farmland a priority issue. The Mayor and Commission should push the federal government to quickly provide this flood protection. Further, the Mayor and County Commission should lobby the Dade Congressional delegation on this matter.

Playing zoning games with farmland that is subject to disastrous flooding caused by the inability of the federal government to build a water control system in conjunction with Everglades Restoration, is poor government policy.

9. The Planning Department should plan. As per the CAC conclusions, creative solutions should be developed to deal with the expected 30,000 acres of excess farmland. Such solutions might include 2½ acre estate zoning, golf course development, equestrian development, and County park land.

(Minority)
Attachment C

1/8/2004

**Agriculture and Rural Area Study
Citizens' Advisory Committee Report**

Any Miami-Dade ordinance aimed at preserving agricultural lands in the Homestead agricultural area will only be successful if it meets the support and general agreement of the landowners and the agricultural community. Judging by the response of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Agriculture and Rural Area Study - Recommendations, the alternatives presented fall short of meeting this test.

Nevertheless, the goal of preserving agricultural lands in South Miami-Dade County, while difficult to achieve, is not totally out of reach. The Citizens Advisory Committee responded with enthusiasm to the Scenario D presented by Mathew Kaskel at the November 17, 2003 committee meeting. This proposal has many features in common with the clustering concept presented in the Recommendations. Scenario D differs from the Recommendations in two important ways:

- 1) Scenario D offers a density premium to the landowner who decides to cluster his development rights.
- 2) Scenario D provides a degree of local control through the "Greenbelt Cooperative".

It appears that a real possibility of reaching consensus on an agricultural land retention strategy exists. For this reason it is our recommendation that Miami-Dade County continue to pursue the goal of agricultural land retention through a committee process structured to achieve broad consensus. The CAC views with interest Matthew Kaskel's greenbelt proposal, and asks the Planning & Zoning Department to consider it as a voluntary and only voluntary program for landowners in Miami-Dade County.