

## News Story Abstract - 2025

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### **Title: Growing Agriculture's Future**

**Link to published article:** [Growing agriculture's future | Lifestyle | chronicleonline.com](#)  
(behind a firewall). A pdf of both the submitted article and published article are included in uploads.

### **Objectives:**

The news story "Growing Agriculture's Future" was written following the Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar program. The intent was to draw attention to the need for technologically savvy workers to meet the demand for agricultural professionals. The objective of the news story was to reinforce the objectives of the program which were:

1. Respond to local needs for an agricultural workforce.
2. Attract youth to careers in agricultural technology and production.
3. Share trade school and academic pathways to agricultural careers.

With direction from the local agricultural community, the program was created to provide opportunities for youth and young adults to explore career pathways related to agriculture.

### **Target Audience:**

The target audience for this news story were residents of Citrus County. The print version of the Citrus County Chronicle has a readership of 44,000 and the Chronicle Online has a readership of 60,000. Newspapers are available to students in the classroom through the newspaper in the classroom program.

### **Current Population:**

According to the United States Census, Quick facts, the current population of Citrus County as of July 2019, is 166,696 people, 14.7% of those being youth under 18 years old. Of those, 92.3% are Caucasian, 3.5% African American, 0.5% American Indian, 7.2% Hispanic/Latino and 1.6% Asian.

### **Methods Used:**

The news story was written in an inverted pyramid structure, with the most important information at the beginning of the new story. The headline was created to capture the attention of the audience, with active verb usage. The current situation in agriculture is the lead in the story and highlights the growing demand for agricultural productivity and the diverse skills needed in the workforce. The news story shared the Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar program with residents of Citrus County. This news story provided the reader with factual and objective information about the community. It provided the who, what, when, where, why and how in clear prose.

**Impact Results:**

The news story has had a profound impact with educators from the local school district and local colleges/trade-schools requesting information about the 2025 program. The school district superintendent and the coordinator of special academic programs for Citrus County, both attended the program and are collaborating with Extension to incorporate this program as a school-wide event. Financial support has been pledged by the local agricultural alliance and businesses. FFA advisors and 4-H volunteers have committed to provide educational stations and hands-on experiences at the 2025 program.

**Applicant Role:**

The applicant team wrote the news story and were the organizers and coordinators of the program "Expanding Agriculture: Workforce seminar". The team wrote the article to promote to the community the opportunities for careers in agriculture.

**Publisher's Requirements:**

The news story was published in the print version of the Citrus County Chronicle and in their online version at Chronicle Online. For the print version the news story was in the education section. News stories are submitted electronically and reviewed by the community editor. Submitted photos must include captioning and identify all individuals in the photo.

**Production Costs:**

The news story was written with Microsoft Word under the University of Florida license. There were no additional costs for producing the news story.

## **Growing Agriculture's Future**

Nationwide agricultural productivity continues to rise, with over \$500 Billion of value reported in the recent Census of Agriculture. As populations grow and urban communities expand, the future of agriculture will continue to advance and evolve. With that growth comes a greater diversity of future agricultural career paths. These careers build on a variety of interests to fill the needs for economists and business developers working behind a computer or databank, to the geneticists and microbiologists in laboratories and research institutions, and the hands-on ranch managers and agronomists working in the fields. Are you prepared to be in the next generation of agricultural leaders?

The future of agriculture begins today. Florida is a leader in the number of both new and beginning agriculturists, with 33.9% of producers in the state reporting 10 or less years in farming. Agricultural leaders in our community are building on this success and providing opportunities for young people to develop and expand skills for new fields (pun intended) of agriculture. Where does this begin?

The Agricultural Alliance of Citrus County in partnership with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Citrus County Extension office recently offered the inaugural "Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar". This interactive program offered participants the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of agricultural careers and explore the steps to a future in agriculture, in either a technical or college-based program. The one-day seminar was hosted by the College of Central Florida (CF) at the Wilton Simpson Conference Center in Lecanto. The CF campus offers a variety of career opportunities leading to certificates or degrees in agribusiness and the recent addition of the Vintage Farm to the Ocala campus has expanded hands-on experiences.

Mr. Jeb Smith, Florida Farm Bureau President and St. Johns County farmer, delivered a passionate and inspiring message for young people. President Smith has served as the Florida Farm Bureau president since 2021 and he represents over 134,000 members who produce 300 different commodities. In 2024 his family's farm was recognized as a Century Pioneer Family Farm honoring 100 years of farming. President Smith shared his personal path to agriculture producing potatoes, vegetables, and beef cattle, and the critical need for future agricultural leaders. As agriculture responds to increased needs in productivity, reductions in cropland, and changing landscapes, future agriculturists will need to have the tools, education, and cutting-edge technology to feed the world.

Participants rotated through presentations by Warner University, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC), Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (GCREC), Purina, College of Central Florida Agribusiness department and Vintage Farm, University of Florida College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), and the Green Jean Foundation. Dr. Dana Choi, GCREC, offered a glimpse into the use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a new tool for agricultural operations with her work on digital twins in strawberry production. Corey Reichert, Farm Credit of Central Florida, shared his experience in agriculture with "Be Like a Swiss Army Knife", to seek out opportunities and make a path of your own. Martha Moen, an animal nutritionist with Purina, encouraged participants to find a mentor, seek out internships, and keep on learning. Jereme Johnson, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia

County, demonstrated applications for drone technology in agricultural careers and operations with a hands-on workshop for all in attendance.

The Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar was made possible by the support of Farm Credit of Central Florida, Agricultural Alliance of Citrus County, Hernando-Citrus Farm Bureau, Representative Gus Bilirakis, Stable Faith Cowboy Church, Citrus County Chronicle, College of Central Florida Citrus Campus, UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County, Citrus County 4-H, and Citrus County FFA Chapters.

The take-away from Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar? Explore, investigate and ask questions because agricultural careers cover a wide range and diversity of opportunities to meet the needs of today's farmers and agriculturists, as they continue to produce the food, fiber, and renewable fuel locally, nationally, and around the globe. Watch for the announcements of the 2025 Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar.

UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension offers a wide range of educational programming to meet the needs in our community. Visit the Extension office at 3650 West Sovereign Path, Lecanto or reach out to the Extension agents by phone at 352-527-5722 or [citrus@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:citrus@ifas.ufl.edu). We offer programming in horticulture, agriculture, natural resources, families and consumer sciences, and 4-H volunteer and youth development. An Equal Opportunity Institution.

Captions for Photos:



Figure 1: Keynote speaker, President Jeb Smith from Florida Farm Bureau.



Figure 2: Faculty and student presenters from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.



Figure 3: Participants practicing their skills flying drones.



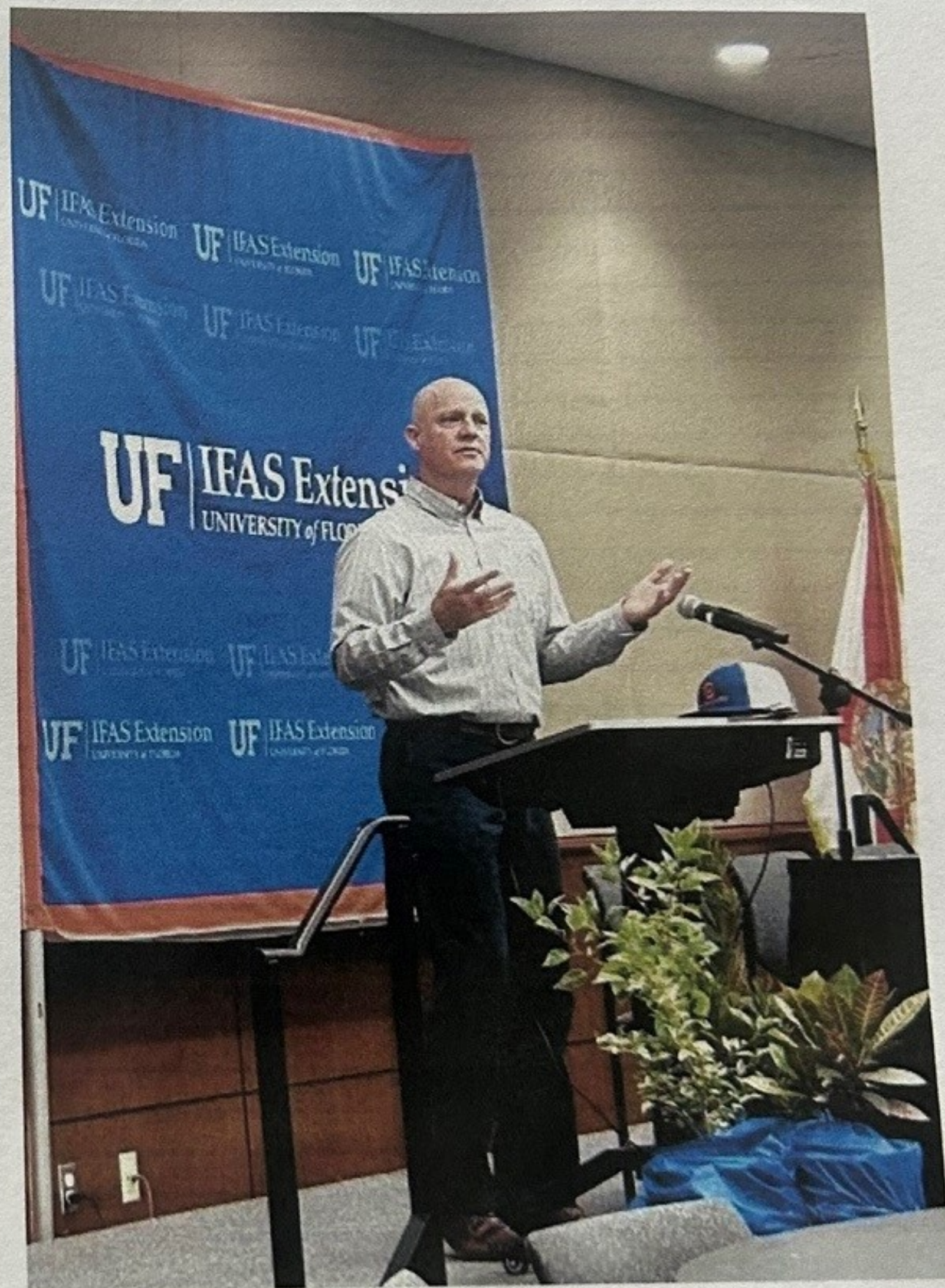
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## Growing agriculture's future

By MARNIE WARD UF/IFAS Extension  
Oct 29, 2024




Nationwide agricultural productivity continues to rise, meeting the demand of a growing population. With more than \$500 billion of value reported in the recent Census of Agriculture, careers in agriculture offer exciting opportunities. These careers build on the necessity for a workforce with varied skills and life experiences. Economists and business developers working at a computer or databank, or geneticists and microbiologists in laboratories and research institutions, and the hands-on ranch managers and agronomists working in the fields; all are essential to agriculture's future.




Keynote speaker, president Jeb Smith from Florida Farm Bureau.

Special to the Chronicle



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Did you know that Florida leads the nation in the number of new and beginning agriculturists? Here, 33.9 percent of producers report 10 or less years in farming. Agricultural leaders in our community are building on this potential and providing opportunities for young people to develop and expand skills for new fields (pun intended) of agriculture. Every year, county FFA and 4-H programs work to increase the exposure of young people to all aspects of agriculture, including workforce development, food security, business and agricultural stewardship. This year the decision was made to go the extra mile and reach youth and families on a new level.

It all started with a partnership between the Agricultural Alliance of Citrus County and the UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension office to organize "Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar." UF/IFAS is the local connection with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.







Citrus County Extension agent with faculty and student presenters from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. From left: Marnie Ward, UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension agent, Dr. Andrew Thoron, Ben Pardue and Austin McMahon.

Photos special to the Chronicle

The one-day seminar was hosted by the College of Central Florida (CF) at the Wilton Simpson Conference Center in Lecanto. Named for Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture, it was an appropriate choice for a seminar devoted to agriculture. Our local CF campus offers a variety of workforce career development choices in the form of certificates or degrees in agribusiness. With the recent addition of the Vintage Farm to



the Ocala campus, there are expanded hands-on experiences. Here, students engage in interactive programs to explore the wide variety of agricultural careers, in either a technical or college-based program.

The seminar kicked off with an inspiring message for our young people. Representing more than 134,000 Floridians that produce 300 different commodities, Florida Farm Bureau president, Mr. Jeb Smith, opened the seminar.



President Smith, a St. Johns County farmer, shared his personal path to agriculture producing potatoes, vegetables and beef cattle, and the critical need for future agricultural leaders. In 2024 his family's farm was recognized as a Century Pioneer Family Farm honoring 100 years of farming.

As agriculture responds to increased needs in productivity, reductions in cropland and changing landscapes, future agriculturists will need to have the tools, education and innovative technology to feed the world. President Smith summed up the future of agriculture with, "Agriculture needs Ph.D.'s and people to change the tires." Translation? Future careers in agriculture will require a workforce with diverse skills and talents.





Participants practicing their skills flying drones. From left, Gwyn Pooch and Berea Pooch.  
Special to the Chronicle

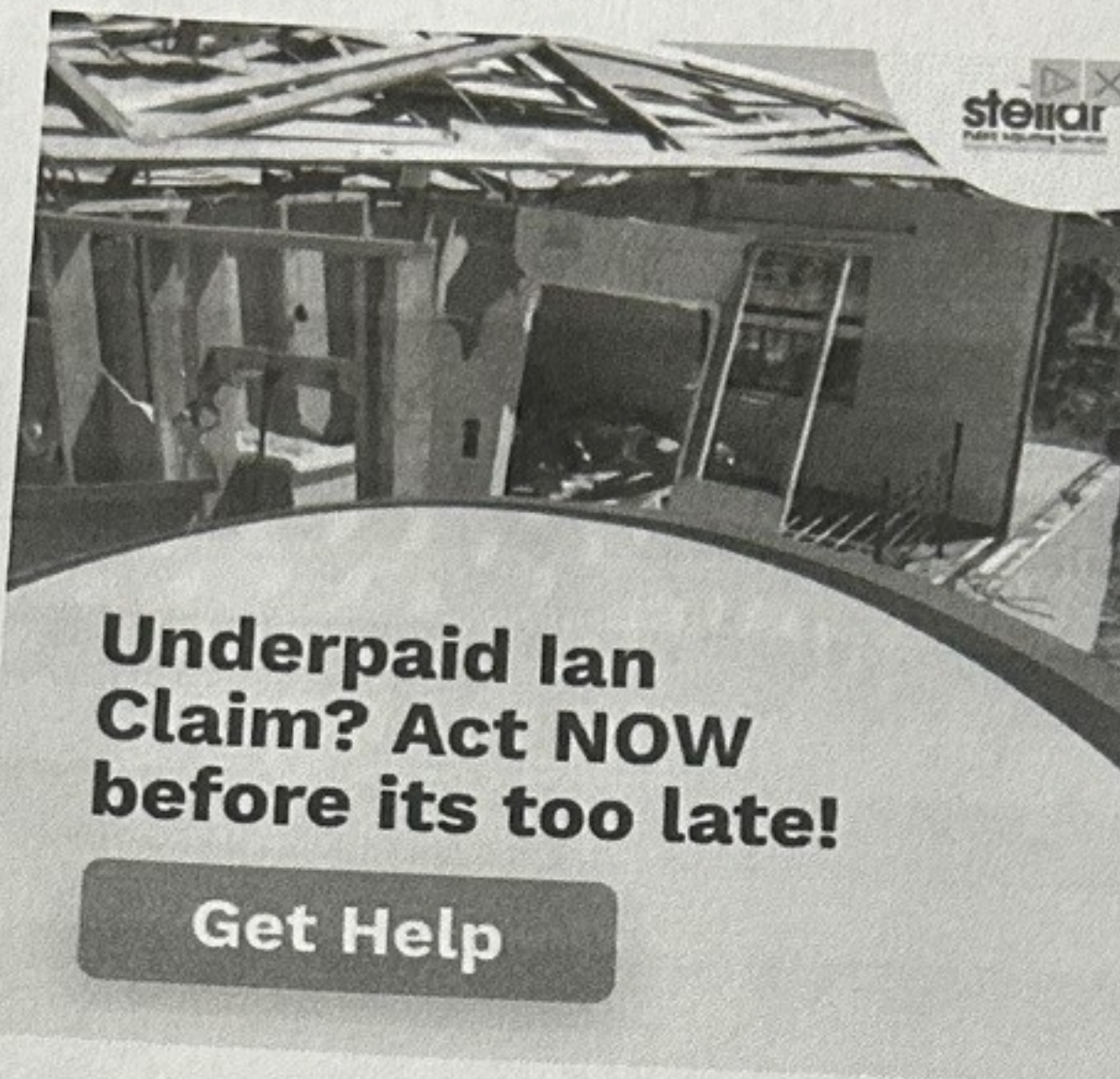
Participants were able to select and rotate through interactive presentations. Abby Crawford, Agriculture Program coordinator with Warner University, shared how internships are a key step in building work experience. The Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) was represented by Dr. Andrew Thoron, department chair for Agricultural Education and Communication. He focused on the skills (leadership, management, technology, etc.) practiced through agricultural education programs.



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Martha Moen, Ph.D., an animal nutritionist with Purina, encouraged participants to find a mentor, seek out internships and focus on learning the technical skills for the future. Martha shared that she is "better able to help farmers and consumers, because she has spent time in the research labs developing products to meet the needs of farmers and ranchers."

Hands-on and interactive workshops were offered by many of the presenters. Dr. Dana Choi, Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (GCREC), offered a glimpse into the use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a new tool for agricultural operations with her work on digital twins in strawberry production.

Jereme Johnson, UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County, showed applications for drone technology in agricultural careers and operations with a hands-on workshop for all in attendance. Jacob Dorland, College of Central Florida (CF) Agribusiness department, highlighted agricultural drones and their applications for pesticide and fertilizer applications. These emerging technologies will be critical to the future of agriculture and the development of workforce skills.



Presenters also included Dana Lipson, Florida Department of Agriculture; Corey Reichert, Farm Credit of Central Florida; Jay Capasso, Regional Water Agent UF/IFAS; Marie Davidson, CF Vintage Farm; and Matt Palmer and Logan Cutts, from Green Jean Foundation.

The "Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar" was made possible by the support of Farm Credit of Central Florida, Agricultural Alliance of Citrus County, Hernando-Citrus Farm Bureau, Representative Gus Bilirakis, Stable Faith Cowboy Church, Citrus County Chronicle, College of Central Florida Citrus Campus, UF/IFAS Extension Citrus County, Citrus County 4-H and Citrus County FFA Chapters.

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Watch for the announcements of the 2025 Expanding Agriculture: Workforce Seminar. UF/IFAS Citrus County Extension offers a wide range of educational programming to meet the needs in our community.

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