

The Many Values of Agriculture

An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural landscape. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by large, rectangular green fields, likely used for crop production. A winding road or canal cuts through the fields. In the distance, a small cluster of buildings is visible, and a large body of water, possibly a reservoir or lake, stretches across the horizon. The sky is a deep blue with scattered white clouds. The title text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

Courtesy of
Florida Water Management District

Some attributes of agriculture include:

Economics: agriculture is Florida's second most important industry, producing \$18 billion in economic value each year.

It is the foundation for all other contributing economic segments — such as food wholesaling and retailing — that add another \$35 billion to Florida's economy.

It also accounts for more than 500,000 jobs and generates a payroll of more than \$10 billion per year.



Open space: Almost 8 million acres of Florida's total land area of 35 million acres is in public ownership. Of the remainder, 66% is devoted to agriculture and forestry. These landowners control:

every acre to be used for future development,

every acre to be protected, and

every acre to remain in agriculture & forestry

These are the lands that will be needed to sustain the state's water resources, wildlife, open space and environment. They are the lands needed for future food and fiber production. And they are the lands that will provide the services for Florida's built environment.

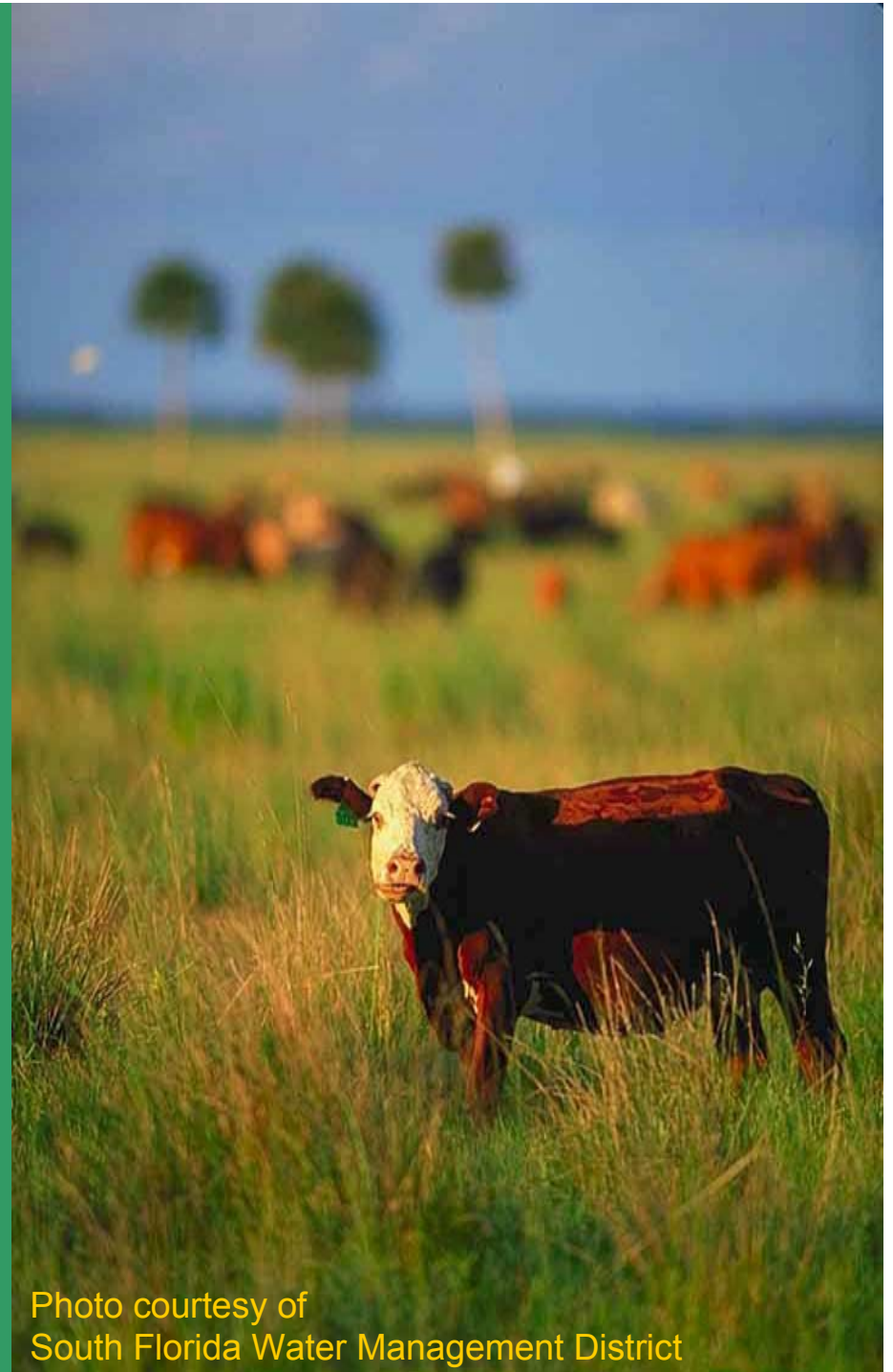


Photo courtesy of
South Florida Water Management District

Scenic views and other aesthetic values:

Next time you drive through the state and gaze across an open vista, think about what you are seeing: about half of the time you will be looking out over private agricultural and forestry lands.

Now think what it would be like if all of this land was developed.



Photo by
David Maehr

**Wildlife habitat/habitats for
threatened and endangered species:**

**75 percent of the nation's threatened
and endangered plant and animal
species are found on private
agriculture and forestry lands.**

**Some endangered plant species in
Florida are found only on private
agricultural lands.**



Photo by
David Maehr

Agriculture offers many other values to society as well, including:

- Buffers between natural areas and urban areas
- A positive cash flow from ad valorem taxes due to ag's low demand for services
- An economically viable growth management tool that offers an alternative to public land purchases and the current tendency to develop every square foot of Florida



Photo by
David Maehr

When carried out with environmental compatibility in mind, agriculture also can provide:

- **presence of wetlands**
- **water storage**
- **ground water recharge**
- **water filtration**
- **flood control**
- **purification of air**
- **carbon sequestering**
- **generation of oxygen**



Photo courtesy of
South Florida Water Management District

Plus:

- soil conservation
- soil creation and soil health
- forests and woodlands
- ambient healthful living conditions
- traditional rural character
- rural culture and values
- quality of life

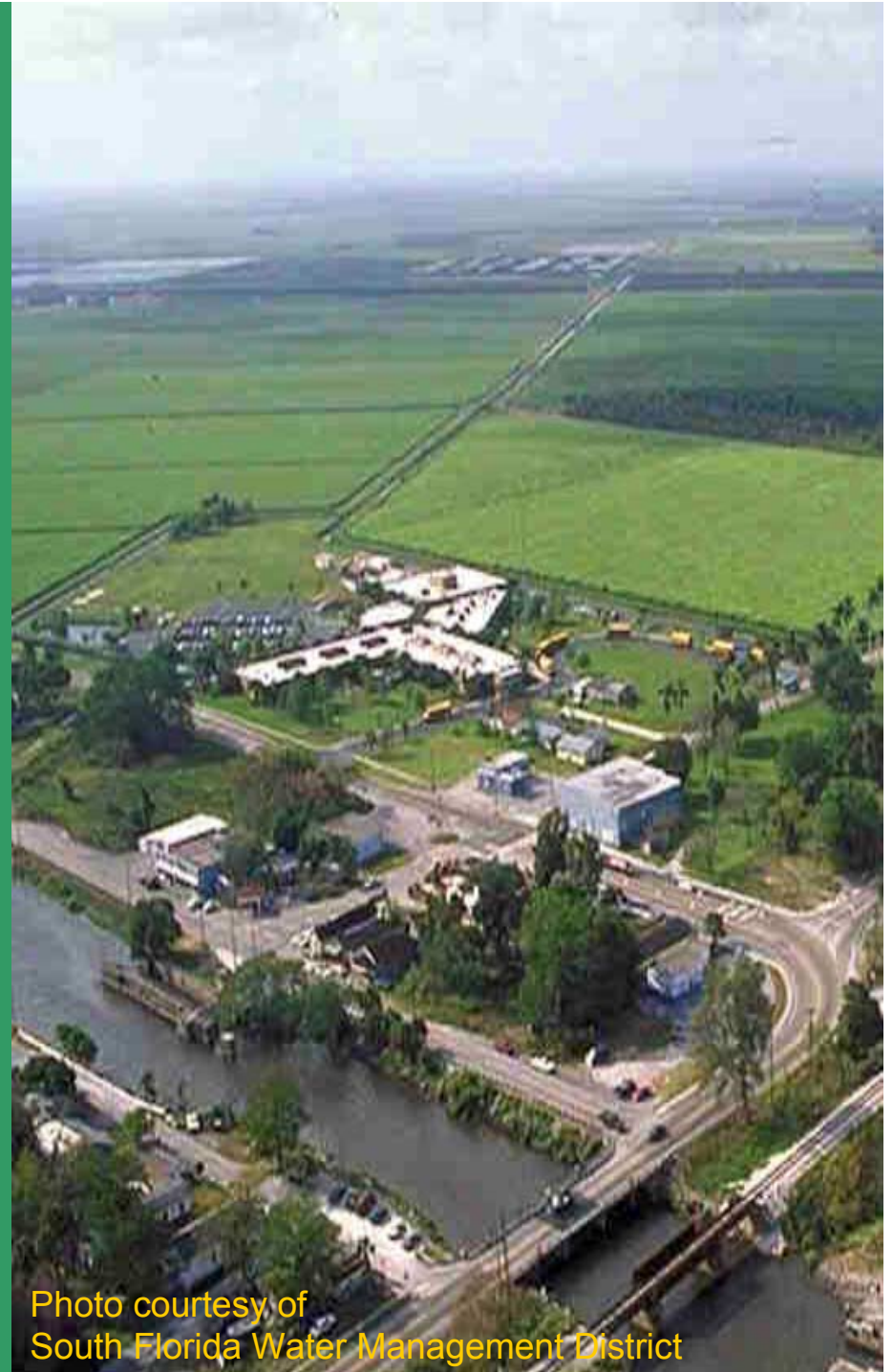


Photo courtesy of
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Hence, agriculture produces not only our food and fiber and horticultural products, but can accommodate many important resource values as well.



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