Best Management Practices for Florida Citrus

What are Best Management Practices?

Agricultural Best Management Practices (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 improve water quality while maintaining agricultural production.

Working with stakeholders, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) recently adopted a statewide citrus manual, replacing four region-based programs and updating the practices. The new Citrus BMP manual covers key aspects of water quality and water conservation. Typical practices include:

- **Nutrient Management** to determine nutrient needs and sources, and manage nutrient applications (including manure) to minimize impacts to water resources.
- **Irrigation Management** to address the method and scheduling of irrigation to reduce water and nutrient losses to the environment.
- **Water Resource Protection** using buffers, setbacks, and swales to reduce or prevent the transport of sediments and nutrients from production areas to waterbodies.

After Enrolling in BMPs

An important part of BMP implementation is documenting it through record keeping, as specified in FDACS rules and BMP manuals. This is sometimes the only way to confirm BMP implementation. BMP records should be accurate, clear, and well-organized. You may develop your own record-keeping forms or use the ones provided in the manual.

FDACS staff, UF-IFAS Basin Area Team Extension agents, soil and water conservation districts, and USDA-NRCS can assist producers with BMP implementation and record-keeping methods.

For assistance with enrolling in and implementing BMPs:

Call - (850) 617-1727 or Email - AgBMPHelp@FreshFromFlorida.com

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Why should I implement BMPs?

• Some BMPs can help you operate more efficiently and reduce costs, while you help protect the environment. Also, producers enrolled in FDACS BMP programs are eligible for cost-share, when available, for certain practices.
• Implementing (and maintaining) verified FDACS-adopted BMPs provides a presumption of compliance with state water quality standards for the pollutants addressed by the BMPs.
• BMP implementation provides protection under the Florida Right to Farm Act from duplicative local regulation.
• Producers who implement FDACS-adopted BMPs might satisfy some water management district permitting requirements. Check with your district.
• In areas with adopted basin management action plans (BMAPs), and some other designated areas, producers who implement BMPs avoid having to conduct costly water quality monitoring.
• 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 a free FDACS BMP manual and other BMP-related information.
2. Participate with the team member in a free assessment of your operation, to determine which BMPs apply to you.
3. Fill out a BMP checklist and sign the Notice of Intent (NOI) to implement the BMPs.
4. Keep a copy of the checklist and 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.
6. If you would like to receive a Certificate of Enrollment in BMPs, contact FDACS at (850) 617-1727 or email AgBmpHelp@FreshFromFlorida.com.

Examples of Citrus BMPs

Grove Development and Renovation

• Having a qualified person perform a wetland boundary determination before clearing native land
• Using sedimentation and erosion control measures as needed
• Stablizing bare soil areas with grass or vegetation after completing soil bedding to minimize erosion

Nutrient Management

• Choosing appropriate sources and formulations of fertilizer based on nutritional needs, season, and anticipated weather conditions
• Using UF/IFAS recommended fertilizer rates
• Calibrating and adjusting fertilizer application equipment
• Using split applications for soluble fertilizers

Irrigation Management

• Using available tools (may include water table observation wells, on-site soil moisture sensors, crop water use information, or weather data) to assist in making irrigation decisions
• Using appropriate irrigation scheduling to minimize application losses due to evaporation and wind drift
• Properly monitoring and maintaining irrigation system and utilizing Mobile Irrigation Lab if available

Drainage Management

• Installing and maintaining water table observation wells
• Keeping water velocities near drainage structures slow enough to reduce potential for soil particles to enter the drainage system

Sediment and Erosion Control Measures

• Maintaining non-invasive vegetation in water furrows, ditch and canal banks, and on bed “middles”
• Creating and maintaining sumps upstream of pump intakes within collector ditches

Water Resources Protection

• Installing and maintaining appropriate vegetated buffers
• Using backflow-prevention devices at the wellhead

Integrated Pest Management

• Appropriately storing and mixing/loading pesticides
• Using barriers, traps, screen devices, and debris baffles to control floating aquatic weeds