

Posted on Mon, Mar. 28, 2005

AGRICULTURE

State among top 10 for woman-operate farms

Of the 44,081 farms in Florida, 8,116, or 18 percent, were run by women, according to the 2002 Census of Agriculture.

BY SUSAN SALISBURY

The Palm Beach Post

Florida ranks in the top 10 states for farms that have a woman as principal operator, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

In observance of Women's History Month, the agency is recognizing the contribution women farmers and ranchers make to America's food and fiber system, said Jeff Geuder, deputy director of the Florida Agricultural Statistics Service, based in Orlando.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicated a 13.4 percent increase in the number of farms nationwide operated by women since 1997.

A total of 237,819 farms in the United States were reported as having a woman as the principal operator in 2002.

Of the 44,081 farms in Florida, 8,116, or 18 percent, were run by women, according to the 2002 survey.

The statistics include ornamental horticulture operations, not just farms that grow food such as vegetables.

The number of women heading agricultural operations has increased in Florida since 1997, when it was 5,384.

In Palm Beach County, according to the 2002 census, 782 principal operators were men and 328 were women.

In 1997, the county had 698 male operators and 157 female operators.

The principal farm operators for other South Florida counties included: Martin, 343 men and 75 women; St. Lucie, 409 men and 68 women; Indian River, 396 men and 84 women; Okeechobee, 560 men and 78 women.

Statewide, there is a high percentage of women in charge of plant nurseries, animal farms and aquaculture businesses, Geuder said.