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DADE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Today, give thanks for Miami-Dade growers

By Katie A. Edwards
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Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. This holiday brings me to the family ranch in Okeechobee. We'll gather around the table, tell old family stories and share a delicious homemade supper.

Our family tradition is to tell of what you are most thankful for this year. I've put some thought into it, and I know exactly what I'm going to say.

I'm thankful for Miami-Dade's vegetable farmers for providing the nation's winter vegetables. Have you ever stopped to think about what we would do without them? We would be reliant on other countries for the corn, beans, tomatoes, squash and eggplant that we sit down to enjoy today. Picture a Thanksgiving dinner with no beans or squash!

I'm thankful for the Miami-Dade nursery growers who grow the lush plants, trees and foliage that make South Florida the tropical paradise we call home. Imagine living in a city without trees or shrubs.

I'm thankful for Miami-Dade's tropical fruit growers for growing an array of exotic fruits that grace the groves of the Redland and make Miami-Dade the most diverse growing region in the Southeast.

I'm thankful for Miami-Dade's fish farmers for raising the gorgeous Koi and African Cychlid that make our tropical retreat truly an oasis.

I'm thankful for Miami-Dade's beekeepers for proving an invaluable service to the community by raising the bees that pollinate our plethora of crops.

When you stop to think about it, our community is so fortunate to have these growers.

I'm thankful for the tenacious spirit of the growers who are committed to rebuilding after hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma struck a huge blow. I'm proud of the agricultural industry, which suffered more than \$800 million in crop losses and structural damage, for doing what they do best -- growing for America.

So, when you sit down for Thanksgiving dinner, remember the Miami-Dade growers. They are truly something to be thankful for.

Katie Edwards is executive director of the Dade County Farm Bureau, www.dade-agriculture.org.