

Agriculture and Food Security

Goal

Ensure the continued viability, sustainability, security, and accessibility for all to the food system in Alachua County in the face of climate change.

Promote locally produced foods and goods to reduce food distribution impacts, reach those most in need, and promote local economic benefits.

Introduction

Food System Defined

A food system encompasses all the steps and actors involved in producing, processing, distributing, and consuming food. This includes everything from farming practices and seed production to transportation, retail, and, ultimately, the consumption and recycling of food waste. It's a complex network that involves social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors. Ultimately, it depends upon the financial viability of the farm and a supportive environment of soil, water, and temperature.

Agriculture, Food, and Climate

Climate change significantly impacts the agricultural and food systems due to shifts in temperatures and precipitation, natural disasters, and the spread of diseases. Food systems are more than just the production that comes from a farm. They also include aggregation and distribution mechanisms, environmental support systems, and the consumer. Crises, like pandemics or climate change, are “complex, compound, and cascading”¹ and can result in wide-ranging failures and collapse. However, people, and their ability to react positively to impending crises and prepare, are the critical factor between a mere system’s component challenge and overall system collapse. Systemic agricultural policies that build up supporting infrastructure, communities, and people will be a critical investment to meet the coming challenges of a changing climate and ensure the food system's continued viability, future sustainability, security, and accessibility for all.

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/summary-for-policymakers/#Complex>,

Agriculture in Alachua County

Agriculture is essential to Alachua County's economy, history, and culture, but climate change's current and future impacts threaten it. According to the USDA 2022 census, Alachua County has 1,712 farms that cover 198,000 acres. The annual market value of these farms' agricultural products is \$146 M.² Agriculture is also a major employer: 3rd largest, 37,147 jobs.³

The Climate Vulnerability Analysis has provided vital insights into the potential future of agriculture and its place in a broader food system. Due to the increase in temperatures, some agricultural products currently grown in Alachua County may no longer be suitable or may have shortened growing seasons. Additionally, warmer nights and hotter days may increase the potential for more pests and weeds, resulting in additional pesticide and herbicide use that negatively impacts pollinators. There are also concerns regarding more intense weather events, including rainfall and droughts, that could disrupt harvests and cause economic struggles. These dramatic and increasingly frequent weather events will compound the interconnected problems of the supporting food system components: aggregation and distribution networks and consumers.

Long-term success in protecting agricultural resources and local food production within and around Alachua County requires comprehensive, interconnected strategies and a variety of crops extending beyond the current generation of farmers and ranchers.

Aging Farmers

Forty percent of the nation's agricultural land – 370 million acres – is owned or operated by seniors. As aging agricultural landowners prepare to retire, the future of the land they steward is at a critical turning point. How and to whom they transfer their land will enormously impact the next generation of farmers and ranchers and the opportunities available to them. Regional food systems, local economies, and climate change adaptations depend on a new generation's ability to access and steward the land well. Land permanently protected with an agricultural conservation easement, mainly when restricted to sell at agrarian value, is typically more affordable than unprotected land. This makes it especially appealing to new farmers and ranchers. At the same time, funds paid to landowners to protect the land are often used to make essential investments for the farm business, including aiding retirement for senior generations.

Supporting Producers

Food Systems are complex and multifaceted webs of dependencies. Policies that support climate action goals for agriculture and food security must recognize that farms must be economically profitable and offer flexibility in a range of options for producers, consumers, and distributors.⁴

²https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/Florida/st12_2_001_0

³ <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/media/sfylifasufledu/alachua/images/pdf/Economic-Impacts-of-Agriculture-in-Alachua-County.pdf>

⁴ 1000 Friends of Florida Webinar: Florida Wildlife Corridor Challenges and opportunities for Florida's agricultural lands, Feb 12, 2025, Mike Joyner, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association

Recent Alachua County Farm Trends: Loss of Small & Large Farms, Growth in Mid-Sized

Small farms (1 to 9 acres) in Alachua County saw approximately a 9% decrease from 2017. Statewide trends are worse as farms under 180 acres saw a 21% elimination or 3,027 farms gone. At the top end of farm size, Alachua County lost almost 10% of farms 1,000 acres or larger. However, farms between 180-499 acres saw a 12% increase over 2017.⁵

Compounding issues of farmer age and agricultural land loss, small farmers may face market challenges in moving crops to wholesale and retail destinations. A lack of regional processing, distribution, and aggregation facilities impedes market access. As an example of a systemic disruption that can impact producer access, the COVID-19 pandemic throttled the production of out-of-region meat processing facilities. During the crisis, small ranchers could not move livestock through the food system due to larger producers being able to monopolize the limited production capabilities of far-flung processing plants. More recently and locally, crop processing facilities, such as in Hawthorne, have closed. These facilities have specialized cooling and storage spaces necessary to preserve food until it is ready to be distributed to the market. A food system dependent on distant, centralized aggregation, distribution, and processing facilities can be a weak link for local consumers and producers. The lack of local processing, aggregation, and distribution facilities that can meet the needs of small to mid-sized producers on a regional scale makes the local food system more vulnerable to sudden shocks. It deepens the dependency on large-scale, out-of-region food suppliers.

Food in Alachua County

Food insecurity occurs when a household lacks assured access to healthy foods. As climate change worsens, food production and distribution disruptions occur, increasing food insecurity in many areas.^[1] Alachua County is not immune to this, as food deserts, or places where it is difficult to obtain healthy foods, persist throughout the county.^[2] Food waste is also a problem, with the EPA estimating that 1/3 of the food in the United States ends up in landfills.^[3] These “landfills are the 3rd largest contributor of methane in the US.”^[4] Both issues must be addressed to mitigate hunger and create a more secure, resilient, and viable agricultural community in Alachua County.

Food Security and Accessibility

Food insecurity and food deserts disproportionately impact marginalized communities. A study by the University of Florida found several food deserts within Alachua County in areas with high concentrations of low-income housing and impoverished children.^[5] Limited and inconsistent access to healthy food can cause higher levels of health issues, including obesity and cardiovascular diseases.^[6] Alachua County must continue to address food insecurity and the inequalities that catalyze them.

⁵ Ibid footnote 1

Past Actions

Comprehensive Plan

The 2019 evaluation, appraisal, and update of the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan included objectives, policies, and definitions addressing agriculture and food security. Specific areas addressed included encouraging, promoting, and supporting:

- Sustainable local food production and processing,
- Food security and resilience,
- A local foodshed and food economy,
- The use of locally grown and/or processed foods in County facilities where food is provided,
- Community gardens and edible landscapes,
- Local, sustainable agricultural practices, including organic farming,
- Educational strategies on the benefits of purchasing locally grown and/or processed foods,
- Access to healthy, affordable, and nutritious food,
- Food security and public health by encouraging locally based food production, distribution, and choice,
- Food banks, pantries, and other sources that help provide food assistance to low-income residents,
- Partnering with local organizations and developing standards to promote community food systems,
- Development of standards for produce stands, farmers' markets, and food cooperatives to facilitate the location of fresh produce providers within or near residential areas,
- Utilization of economic development tools, including public/private partnerships and site facilitation, to promote the location of grocery stores and Farmer's Markets in proximity to underserved areas,
- Working to implement the 2009 Hunger Abatement Plan and future updates and shall provide technical assistance for community food access studies. Seek to eliminate food insecurity in Alachua County by 2050, and in the next 5 years, increase community partnerships to meet food security goals,
- Edible landscaping (i.e., fruit trees and shrubs) for landscaping requirements through appropriate policy and standards of the ULDC,
- The use of schools as food distribution sites to increase food security for students and families, and
- The location and expansion of sustainable food production and processing industries as part of the County's economic development efforts.

Vulnerability to Climate Change

Alachua County has invested in researching how climate change will impact the agricultural sector. This research predicts what will happen to some of Alachua's most-grown crops through the Vulnerability Assessment. Corn, for example, is likely to experience a significant reduction in

yield due to heat and water deficit stress. Livestock will also be negatively impacted as they become more prone to heat stress. Dairy cow production is likely to decline as a result. Snap peas are expected to maintain yields until 2040, while Bahia grass⁶ grown for forage is expected to do well, with increasing yields.

Agricultural Runoff

Alachua County avoids pollutant fertilizers to minimize the effects of agricultural runoff. Notably, these policies do not impact bonafide agricultural operations, as local governments are precluded from regulating their use.⁷ However, from July through February, nitrogen fertilizers are banned for residential and commercial use. All nitrogen fertilizers must be at least 50% slow-releasing. The county has also prohibited the use of phosphorus fertilizers, only allowing them under exceptional circumstances. These actions help protect Alachua's soil and surface water, springs, and clean groundwater from algae blooms.

Food Waste and Food Insecurity Driving Food System Responses

Food waste and food insecurity are interconnected challenges within Alachua County's food system. The impact of food waste on the environment and the system's vulnerability to disruptions is evidenced by the increase in food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The County has key initiatives to address these challenges, including reducing food waste through the Zero Waste Initiative, supporting small farmers through grant programs, connecting local producers with institutional buyers through the Fresh Food Pathways Food Hub project, and developing the culinary workforce alongside support for small farmer value-added food production. These initiatives demonstrate a commitment to building a more resilient, secure, and accessible food system that addresses environmental and social concerns.

Zero Waste Initiative

Alachua has developed the Zero Waste Initiative in conjunction with the city of Gainesville to eliminate waste by 2040. Part of this is accomplished by “reaching out to learn more about the needs of businesses and food recovery organizations.” By supporting several policies and the Commercial Zero Waste Ordinance, progress has been made in establishing more sustainable practices. The climate implications and strategies to address organic food waste are more comprehensively discussed in the Waste Management and Resource Consumption Climate Action Plan. Food that is wasted contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and represents a resource that could address hunger in the community, especially during times of crisis.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity increased from 13.9% in 2018 to 15.4% in 2020. This need highlighted the community food system's vulnerability to sudden shocks. Alachua County created several responses to this crisis, addressing immediate food needs, workforce, new farmer development, value-added entrepreneurship, small farmer support grants, and an ongoing

⁶ Bermuda grasses are also used for hay production, but the report does not mention impacts to this variety.

⁷ Agricultural producers are regulated by FDACS and are encouraged to enroll in BMPs

study to establish a Food Hub. Food system insecurities continue year-round, and the county needs long-term, comprehensive strategies to address them.

Helping Small Farms Become More Productive

The Small Farmer Grant program financially supports small-scale agricultural producers with \$5000 mini-grants.⁸ Grants are used to invest capital and equipment to make these farms more financially viable. In 2025, Alachua County will distribute another \$100,000 in grants.

Linking Local Producers to Big Purchasers

The Fresh Food Pathways project aims to create a thriving food hub that benefits the community, local farmers, and institutional food purchasers.⁹ A food hub is an aggregation and distribution facility that emphasizes purchasing from local producers to sell to institutional purchasers, such as the Alachua County Public Schools, County Jail, UF, UF Health, and North Florida Regional Medical Center. Kicked off in 2025, this 30-month effort will create a roadmap to a potential public-private partnership and a strategy to target supporting capital grants and appropriation requests.

Culinary Workforce and Farmer Value-Added Product Development

The Food System Workforce program involves partnerships between Working Food, community partners, and other organizations to support farmers and create employment opportunities.¹⁰ Low-income youth are introduced to high-level culinary arts and certification programs. At the same time, local small farmers are given access to commercial kitchen space and business consultation to develop shelf-stable, value-added food products. Based on the December project update, the economic returns for the kitchen program in December 2024 were as follows: Gross revenue generated by farmers: \$8,466.48. This figure represents the total income generated by the three active farmers who utilized the Working Food Commercial Kitchen during that month.

Small Garden Plots and Community Gardens

The community's relationship with food is vital to culturally connecting and sustaining itself in food systems. A cultural relationship to food is essential to creating a resilient food system. As practiced in World War II Victory Gardens, growing food on a small scale in community gardens or backyard plots creates options for individuals while building an appreciation for the effort required to grow population-sustaining food. Across Alachua County, people utilize the UF IFAS Agricultural Extension Services, children participate in 4H Youth Clubs to learn best practices in food production, and Master Gardener volunteers work in community and school gardens.

Gainesville, Florida, boasts a vibrant community gardening scene, providing residents with green spaces to grow vegetables and engage in healthy outdoor activities. The City of Gainesville initiated its first Community Gardens Project in 1998 at Southeast Fourth Avenue. Since then, the

⁸ <https://alachuacounty.us/Depts/Sustainability/pages/ag-grant.aspx>

⁹ <https://procurement.opengov.com/portal/alachuacounty/projects/61829>

¹⁰ <https://pub-alachuacounty.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=31518>

program has expanded to include five gardens around Gainesville, thanks to the collaboration between the City of Gainesville's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Department and the dedicated efforts of Gainesville residents. These gardens are Dreamers' Garden in the Grove Street Neighborhood, Green Acres Park Community Garden, McRorie Community Garden, NE 31st Avenue Community Garden, and SW 40th Place and SW 30th Terrace Community Garden.

Community gardens have grown in purpose, especially during the pandemic. They serve as a vital way for residents to connect with nature and each other while maintaining safe distances. Gainesville has at least 12 community gardens across the city, demonstrating their importance in fostering community interaction and providing fresh produce.

These gardens are not only about food production; they are spaces where residents can cultivate friendships and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening. They offer an educational opportunity for families to teach their children about gardening and support local agriculture, enriching the community's social fabric and promoting sustainable living practices.

Additionally, Gainesville supports agriculture through farmers' markets and pick-your-own farms, further enriching the community's access to fresh, local produce. Markets like the Haile Village Farmers Market and Union Street Farmers Market, along with farms offering organic fruits, vegetables, and blueberries, provide residents with various options to engage in local agriculture. Based on these successes, farmers' markets and farm stands can now be found throughout Alachua County.

These initiatives highlight a commitment to engaging in agriculture in a way that promotes a culture of sustainability, health, and community development. They serve as models for other cities to create productive, inclusive spaces.

Agricultural Land Protection Strategies

The Board of County Commissioners, in its 2023 Strategic Guide, identified “Invest in and Protect Our Environment” as a guiding principle and has named “Continue Wild Spaces and Public Places and include agricultural lands as well” as a program action in support of this principle. These strategies recognize that development pressures and climate change impacts threaten both ecologically significant and farming lands.

Over the past 50 years, Alachua County has lost over 50% of its farmland, and much of the remaining agricultural land is at a high risk of conversion to housing and suburban development. The conversion of these agrarian lands impacts local food production networks and remnant wildlife habitats, increasing stormwater runoff, pollutants transported by runoff, and water consumption. Furthermore, much of the remaining agricultural land in the western part of Alachua County contains sandy, high-recharge soils, which are essential for the future viability of the Upper Floridan Aquifer that provides fresh drinking water and feeds the springs and rivers contained within Alachua and neighboring counties.

Through action by the Board of County Commissioners during a Special Policy meeting on February 7, 2023, an agricultural land protection strategy has been included in future land conservation priorities in Alachua County. Agricultural land protection was identified as a complement to the County's geographic-corridor-based land conservation strategy, serving to strengthen existing ACF program priority corridors, expand protection of water quality and aquifer recharge, and enhance protection of local food production systems through increased acquisition of conservation easements on agricultural lands.

The current framework and process for conservation land protection through the Alachua County Forever program prioritizes environmentally significant lands that protect water resources, wildlife habitats, and natural areas suitable for resource-based recreation based on ranked and prioritized program "project areas." This framework includes protecting working agricultural lands that meet the ACF program mission due to location, connectivity with existing conservation lands, or other natural resource values. Expanded addition of agricultural land protection into the county's land conservation program requires a separate and defined process developed with agricultural land protection as the focus, and with farm landowners' and stakeholders' involvement and input.

In September 2024, following a year-long community engagement and strategy development process, the Board of County Commissioners approved and authorized the Agricultural Land Protection Strategy for implementation through the Alachua County Forever Program. Strategy implementation is defined through Board resolution, and initial funding and staffing for the strategy was approved by the BOCC for fiscal year 2024-25. The strategy mission

Agricultural Land Transfer and Succession Planning

Recognizing the multi-generational aspect of agricultural land protection, particularly regarding lands with agricultural easements, Alachua County has been awarded a grant from the American Farmland Trust to participate in the AFT Land Transfer Navigator Program beginning in 2024. Staff from participating Navigator organizations will be trained in land access and farm/ranch transfer facilitation to provide tailored assistance to farmers, ranchers, and landowners. Capacity grants are awarded to these entities to assist farmers, ranchers, and landowners, support their training, and build institutional capacity to invest in their land access and transfer work.

Navigators train to -

- Provide technical assistance to facilitate farm and ranch transfers.
- Reduce language, legal, cultural, and other barriers to accessing or transferring agricultural land or businesses for historically underserved farmers and ranchers.
- Connect farmers, ranchers, and landowners with regional service providers.
- Increase the role agricultural conservation easement programs and partner organizations play in facilitating the transfer of farms to a new generation.

Baseline & Targets

Alachua County Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan establishes several baselines and targets for the agriculture and food sectors. The following are excerpts from the plan:

OBJECTIVE 1.8 Increase the use of locally grown and/or processed foods in County facilities where food is provided and encourage other local government facilities to do the same.

Policy 1.8.2 Alachua County shall work to facilitate partnerships between local farmers and local government organizations such as the Alachua County School Board to implement the 2009 Alachua County Hunger Abatement Plan and future updates and provide healthy, fresh foods in local schools and other institutions.

Policy 1.10.3 Work with IFAS and local agricultural groups to encourage use of sustainable agricultural practices that maximize carbon sequestration, conserve energy and water, minimize soil erosion and protect ecosystems and water quality.

Policy 1.3.1 Alachua County shall promote access to healthful, affordable and nutritious food.

Policy 1.3.1.1 Promote food security and public health by encouraging locally-based food production, distribution, and choice in accordance with the Future Land Use Element.

Policy 1.3.1.2 Alachua County shall consider programs to encourage property owners to make use of vacant properties as community gardens.

Future Strategies and Action Items

Strengthening Local Food Systems

Expand and strengthen local food systems to increase food security and reduce reliance on long-distance transportation.

Table 1.1: Strengthening Local Food Systems			
Action Plan Components	Jurisdiction	Pros	Cons
Support the development/ expansion of additional regional food hubs and processing facilities to improve local farmers' access to markets.	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with local farmers, institutional food purchasers, non-profits, and the private sector)	Creates local jobs, improves food security, reduces transportation emissions, and strengthens the local economy.	Requires significant investment and may face challenges in securing adequate funding and finding suitable locations.
Food as Medicine: Increase access to healthy, affordable food for all residents, particularly in underserved communities.	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with the Health Department, Hospitals & Clinics, non-profits, and the private insurers)	Improves food access, promotes healthy eating habits, and strengthens community resilience.	May require ongoing funding and community engagement to ensure program sustainability.
Create a program that incentivizes and compensates producers for enhancing	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership	Enhances the economic viability of farms. Keeps local farms in production. Aligns	May require ongoing funding and community engagement to ensure

ecosystem services on farming lands via climate-smart strategies, high-efficiency water resource management, and the use of recycled organic materials from the waste stream in lieu of synthetic fertilizers.	with local farmers, institutional food purchasers, non-profits, and the private sector)	to and compliments the County's agricultural easement initiatives.	program sustainability.
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Building Upon Workforce & Entrepreneurship Programs

Expand pilot workforce development programs to address emerging needs within the local food system, focusing on skills development, entrepreneurship, and climate adaptation. Promote and support the development of local food enterprises, particularly those owned by underrepresented populations.

Table 1.2: Building Upon Workforce & Entrepreneurship Programs

Action Plan Components	Jurisdiction	Pros	Cons
Expand the Food System Workforce Program as a high-skill jobs pipeline; include training modules on topics such as, but not limited to, food entrepreneurship, food safety certification, climate-smart agriculture, water conservation, and adapting to changing weather patterns.	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with CareerSource, Children's Trust, Alachua County Public Schools, UF/IFAS Extension, local community colleges, and private sector partners)	Develops a skilled workforce, supports local food businesses, and enhances the resilience of the local food system.	Requires ongoing funding, effective partnerships, and continuous evaluation to ensure program effectiveness.
Expand an "Agribusiness Incubator" program: Provide mentorship, business planning assistance, support ag-tech parks, best climate-smart	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with Food	Supports local farmers and businesses, emerging locally produced agricultural technology, creates jobs, and strengthens the local food economy.	Requires careful program design, risk assessment, and ongoing monitoring to ensure program effectiveness

practices, UF/IFAS Farm Plan adoption, and access to resources for aspiring small-scale farmers and food entrepreneurs (e.g., farmers market vendors and value-added food producers).	Incubators, SCORE, UF/IFAS Extension, local community colleges, and private sector partners)		and financial sustainability.
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Commercial Organic Waste Composting & Local Fertilizer Use

Reduce landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions: Diverting commercial organic waste (food scraps, yard trimmings) from landfills reduces methane emissions and conserves landfill space.

Enhance soil health: Composting creates high-quality organic fertilizer that improves soil health, reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers, and supports sustainable agricultural practices.

Stimulate local economy: Utilizing locally produced compost within the county supports local composting businesses and creates a circular economy.

Table 1.3: Commercial Organic Waste Composting & Local Fertilizer Use

Action Plan Components	Jurisdiction	Pros	Cons
Pilot Program for Commercial Food Waste Collection & Composting	Alachua County Solid Waste & Resource Recovery Department in collaboration with local businesses and a private sector composting facility.	<p>Reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Creates a market for local composting businesses.</p> <p>Provides valuable data for future program expansion.</p>	<p>Requires initial investment in infrastructure and logistics.</p> <p>May require financial incentives for businesses to participate.</p> <p>Needs to ensure proper food waste separation and contamination control.</p>
<p>Incentivize Use of Local Compost on Agricultural Lands:</p> <p>Develop a program to incentivize local farmers' use of locally produced compost (e.g., grants, cost-sharing programs).</p> <p>Educate farmers on the benefits of</p>	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with UF/IFAS Extension, NRCS, and local farmers)	<p>Promotes sustainable agricultural practices.</p> <p>Reduces reliance on synthetic fertilizers, improving environmental quality.</p> <p>Supports local businesses and</p>	<p>May require financial resources for incentive programs.</p> <p>Requires ongoing outreach and education efforts to encourage farmer participation.</p>

compost (improved soil health, reduced reliance on synthetic fertilizers, improved water retention).		strengthens the local economy.	
Facilitate connections between local farmers and compost producers.			

Building a Local Food System Culture through Engagement and Agritourism

Foster community engagement and appreciation for local food systems.

Promote understanding of the importance of sustainable agriculture and its connection to the environment and community health.

Enhance the economic and social benefits of agritourism.

Table 1.4: Building a Local Food System Culture through Education and Agritourism

Action Plan Components	Jurisdiction	Pros	Cons
<p>Develop a "Farm to Table" Education Program: Integrate farm-to-table education into school curricula (e.g., gardening programs, nutrition education, cooking classes using local ingredients).</p> <p>Organize field trips to local farms for students to learn about food production and connect with farmers.</p> <p>Develop educational resources for teachers and students on topics such as sustainable agriculture, food systems, and the</p>	<p>Alachua County Public Schools, in partnership with the Children's Trust, UF/IFAS Extension, local farmers, food incubators, and community organizations.</p>	<p>Increases awareness and appreciation for local food among youth.</p> <p>Promotes healthy eating habits.</p> <p>Fosters a connection between students and their local food sources.</p>	<p>Requires ongoing funding and coordination between multiple stakeholders.</p> <p>May require teacher training and curriculum development.</p>

importance of supporting local farmers.			
<p>Enhance Agritourism Experiences: Develop and promote agritourism trails and maps highlighting local farms, farm-to-table restaurants, and other agritourism destinations.</p> <p>Organize annual "Agritourism Weeks" or festivals to showcase local farms and connect visitors with the agricultural community.</p> <p>Encourage the development of unique agritourism experiences (e.g., farm stays, farm-to-table dinners, educational workshops).</p>	<p>Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with farms, restaurants, breweries, UF/IFAS Extension, municipalities, and private sector partners)</p>	<p>Boosts local tourism and economic development.</p> <p>Provides additional income streams for farmers.</p> <p>Promotes awareness of local agriculture and its importance to the community.</p>	<p>Requires ongoing marketing and promotional efforts.</p> <p>May require additional resources for infrastructure development at some farm locations.</p>

Expand Protection of Agricultural Lands

Expand perpetual protection of agricultural lands by implementing Alachua County Forever Agricultural Land Protection Strategy.

Table 1.1: Expand Protection of Agricultural Lands through Land Conservation Strategies

Action Plan Components	Jurisdiction	Pros	Cons
Implement Agricultural Land Protection Strategy through Alachua County Forever Program	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with local farmers, non-profit land trusts, and state and federal land conservation partners)	Protects additional agricultural lands from development through the acquisition of development rights.	Will require ongoing funding for the purchase of rights.
Recommend and support farm practices that provide additional farm management and conservation benefits.	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (in partnership with local farmers, non-profit land trusts, and state and federal land conservation partners)	Improves farm health and sustainability, and community resilience.	Will require ongoing staff support and funding opportunities from state and federal partners. May reduce maximum per-acre productive capacity for farms.

What can you do?

Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program

This program, run by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), trains volunteers to provide horticultural education to residents. Educating friends,

families, and neighbors is a significant first step towards getting involved in community gardens and encouraging residents to grow their produce.

Compost

Make use of one of the composting services in Alachua County to reduce food waste:

- Beaten Path Compost has two drop-off locations at 409 SW 4th Ave and 231 NW 10th Ave.
- Gainesville Giving Garden has a drop-off location at 225 NW 12th Ave.
- UF Field and Fork Farm has a drop-off location at 2656 Museum Road.
- UF Student Compost Cooperative has a drop-off location at the Energy Research and Education Park.
- Find composting locations at a local community garden.

Alternatively, use a wire compost bin for free by collecting free wire rolls at the Alachua County Public Works Office at 5620 NW 120th Lane.

References

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