

MEDIA ADVISORY

USDA Satellite Features Feed

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FEATURE – MOBILE LAB HELPS FARMERS SAVE WATER AND MONEY

INTRO: Farmers are always looking for ways to save money on irrigation. A new device from USDA may help them do that. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:57)

THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S MOBILE IRRIGATION LAB COULD HELP FARMERS SAVE TIME, MONEY AND WATER. U-S-D-A'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE IS PARTNERING WITH THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT ON A MOBILE IRRIGATION LAB THAT CAN HELP FARMERS GAUGE WATER USE.

John Allen, Grove Manager, Carlton Ranch, Hillsborough Co., FL: Basically they break the grove down into sections and actually physically walk the sections, recording pressure readings, flow rates, etc., so that you can get an idea of what your system is actually doing and is capable of doing and then you can fine tune it.

Guillermo Alverio, USDA NRCS Florida: And then we generate a report. The report will consist of information such as the uniformity and also have recommendations with an irrigation scheduling time.

Allen: It's comprehensive but it comes across simple enough that somebody who needs to be on a tractor anyway can make heads or tails out of it.

THE CARLTON RANCH CITRUS GROVES IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REALIZED SAVINGS RESULTING FROM THE LAB'S ANALYSIS.

Allen: Probably thirty to thirty five percent fuel savings. It's really noticeable when we had a drought like this past Spring. Instead of running for twelve hours you run for four or five and shut the pump down.

Alverio: Only a five percent improvement for a citrus grove of this area, we're looking at about over thirty thousand gallons per acre per year more or less.

Jeff Whealton, Agricultural Coordinator, Southwest Florida Water Management District: The mobile irrigation lab ultimately benefits the farmer immediately in that they notice a decrease in cost of the running of their pumps and water savings. And the district benefits by realizing that water saving across the district wherever the mobile irrigation lab is implemented.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR LOCAL N-R-C-S OFFICE. FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE I'M BOB ELLISON.