Commissioner Wilton Simpson Announces Cost-Share Assistance Program for Agricultural Producers Impacted by Hurricane Idalia

~ Maximum grant for eligible producers raised from $50,000 to $150,000 ~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson announced a cost-share assistance program to support agricultural producers severely impacted by Hurricane Idalia. The cost-share assistance program will be administered though the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ (FDACS) Office of Agricultural Water Policy and will support agricultural producers in repairing or replacing damaged irrigation systems, while simultaneously promoting agricultural water efficiency and reducing nutrient application. Additional information on this program and how producers apply can be found here.

Commissioner Wilton Simpson said, “Hurricane Idalia caused widespread crop and livestock losses and severe damage to agricultural infrastructure. This innovative cost-share program will work to support our hardest hit growers who lost much of their 2023 crop and are now looking for ways to repair or replace hundreds of irrigation systems ahead of the next growing season. While this program will not be able to support every impacted agricultural producer, it is another important recovery resource. I will continue working with local, state, and federal partners to ensure that impacted agricultural producers have access to the recovery resources they deserve.”

The assistance program will focus on existing irrigation systems and offer a reimbursement rate of 75% for eligible projects, practices, and equipment, up to a maximum of $150,000 per producer or entity. Commissioner Simpson raised the maximum eligible grant amount from $50,000 to $150,000. It is important to note that these funds will not cover items already fully insured. Eligible repairs will target water and nutrient savings, with a commitment of a five-
year contract by the producer or entity to ensure long-term water and nutrient conservation benefits over the irrigation system's twenty-year lifespan.

Eligibility for the program includes operations in a severely impacted county, enrollment in the applicable FDACS best management practices program, compliance with state and federal regulations, including water use permits for pivot locations, and a commitment to minimal tillage and conservation-based practices. The maximum reimbursement amount is set at $150,000 per producer or entity per contract.

Eligible projects, tools, and equipment include but are not limited to pump bowl upgrades, irrigation retrofits, variable rate irrigation systems, electrical conductivity mapping, precision soil sampling, soil moisture sensors, new control panels, irrigation system automation, flow meters, automatic shutoff devices, fertigation systems, weather stations, variable frequency drives, and other efficiencies or enhancements identified by the Mobile Irrigation Lab.

Through existing statutory authority and agency budget, FDACS will initially use allocated funds for cost-share. Given the substantial cost of equipping irrigation systems with precision agriculture technology, the department is actively exploring additional funding avenues to assist more producers.

This cost-share assistance program is in addition to a variety of other recovery resources offered by the state, local, and federal partners, including:

- Bridge Loan for Ag Producers
- Disaster Programs Administered by FSA
- Natural Disasters and Crop Insurance
- Hurricane Idalia Relief Fund
- 2023 Agriculture Disaster Impact Assessment
- Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool
- Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)
- Livestock Indemnity Program
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program
- Tree Assistance Program
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- Farm Loan Discovery Tool
- Disaster Work Log
- Cash Payments ECP Guidance
For more information about Commissioner Simpson and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, visit FDACS.gov.

###