



## Preserving Natural Resources

Well-managed cattle ranches work in harmony with the natural environment, providing wildlife habitat, biodiversity, air and water purification, carbon storage, moderation of extreme weather events, soil preservation, and control of agricultural pests. In Florida, the dollar value of such ecosystem services is estimated at \$4.6 billion annually.<sup>1</sup>



### Plants and Wildlife

Cattle ranches provide sensitive and unique ecosystems that support many native and endangered plants, including bromeliads, milkweed, pawpaw, scrub palmetto, bald cypress trees and sabal palms.

The extensive open spaces on ranches are crucial for protected wildlife species with a large home range, such as the Florida panther and black bear. The mosaic of habitats on ranches, including pastures, woodlands and wetlands, provide homes for many notable wildlife species, including the bald eagle, American alligator, gopher tortoise and more.



### Water

Some large cattle ranches in Central and South Florida have partnered with Water Management Districts to provide on-site water impoundment as a low-cost option to enhance water quality and reduce flooding.<sup>1</sup>



### Carbon Footprint

Improved efficiency and animal well-being mean a **16% lower carbon footprint and fewer natural resources** used for every pound of beef produced.<sup>2</sup>

Well-managed beef cattle grazing systems and improved feed production practices can reduce the carbon footprint of beef and contribute to the reversal of global climate change.



### Land

Florida cattlemen are dedicated to preserving the land and its resources by entering into conservation easement agreements and assisting public land managers through managed grazing leases.

Conservation easements allow public and private organizations to purchase property rights, such as development and land-use conversion rights, that are needed to accomplish specific water resource and environmental protection goals.

### Wetlands constitute 15-25% of grazed land, and

Florida ranchers have enrolled 185,496 acres in the USDA's voluntary Wetland Reserve Easement program, which purchases the development rights to the wetlands and restores the hydrology of these areas.<sup>3</sup>



**Source:** <sup>1</sup>Hodges, A.W., Court, C.D., Rahmani, M., and Stair, C.A. 2019. Economic Contributions of Beef and Dairy Cattle and Allied Industries in Florida in 2017. University of Florida/IFAS, Food and Resource Economics Department. <https://bit.ly/2C4hhbw>  
<sup>2</sup>Capper, J.L. 2011. The Environmental Impact of Beef Production in the United States. *Journal of Animal Science* Vol. 189, Issue 12, pp. 4249-4261. Cary, N.C.: Oxford University Press.  
<sup>3</sup>Figures contributed by UF/IFAS sources.