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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**LABELLE FARM TOURS PROJECT FUNDED BY DEO**

FORT MYERS, FL – **(INSERT DATE)** - The Labelle Farm Tours project was funded by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for \$25,000 to develop a farm tour of the LaBelle area’s most sophisticated agricultural operations including vegetable transplant and ornamental nurseries, citrus, sod, sugarcane and vegetable production as well as one of the largest beef cattle ranches in the state.

The purpose of this grant is to help promote the City of LaBelle’s, Hendry County’s rich and diverse agriculture industry by developing a business plan, marketing materials, and a brochure including an artistic map depicting the tour stops. The farms tours show case the various farms in the region and educates the public on the importance of issues that impact water, land use, fertilizers, and new farming techniques.

Contact the City of LaBelle Chamber for reservations, bus tours are \$35 per person.

**Florida Farming**

Farming was important then and it remains the single most important economic driver in Hendry County today. With citrus groves, sugar cane, ornamentals, timber and other agricultural products, Florida is one of the nation’s top ten most productive agricultural states. However, small and medium-size farms in Florida are undergoing the same economic crisis as other farms in the country. Competition with industrial agricultural corporations, high business expenses and low commodity prices are challenging the feasibility of small agricultural businesses. These reasons, along with Florida’s massive population growth are contributing to the conversion of small and medium-sized farms into urban development projects (Francesconi and Stein, 2014).

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