FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gainesville, FL, January 22, 2012: The University of Florida's (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) and Florida A&M University's (FAMU) Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Focus Team are pleased to announce that the fourth annual Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference will be held in Kissimmee, Florida July 27-29.

The goal of the annual Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference is to provide farmers with up-to-date, research-based, in-depth educational information. As well, the conference aims to facilitate solutions-based collaboration by encouraging networking and an open dialog among members of Florida’s small farms community. Additionally, the conference is an excellent vehicle for increasing awareness of Florida’s small farms industry, which organizers accomplish by actively marketing to decision makers, supporting institutions and agencies, and other agricultural professionals.

The annual Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference has been successful from its inaugural year, and the majority of attendees and exhibitors return to subsequent conferences. The conference is an outstanding opportunity for Florida’s small farmers to hear noted experts speak about the latest science and research relevant to their industry while networking with other small farmers in a relaxed atmosphere and sampling locally grown foods prepared by Chef Tony Donnelly and his excellent staff. Florida’s small farmers find that, in this forum, their diverse experiences, coupled with their universal challenges (economics, regulatory pressures, marketing, and so forth), create a unique opportunity for collaborative problem solving and resource sharing. It is also an excellent chance for exhibitors to demonstrate their products and services to some of the most forward-thinking small farmers, educators, and researchers in Florida.

Through six concurrent educational sessions led by farmers, industry experts and noted researchers, the annual Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference provides opportunities for attendees to learn about groundbreaking research and access educational support about topics such as operating sustainable and profitable enterprises, integrating cost-effective methods to meet state regulations, and the latest in specialty crop and livestock production methods, as well as natural resource conservation, farm biodiversity, and alternative energy.

Support in the form of sponsorship, competitive grants, and in-kind gifts are critical to the success of the Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference and ensure affordable registration costs to Florida’s family farmers year after year. The University of Florida-IFAS, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have generously provided support since 2009. More information on these and other organizations that support this event are found on the event website, at http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/smallfarms/.

For more information on this year’s Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference, please contact Susan Kelly, Publicity Chair, Tel: 352-793-2728; Email: sakelly@ufl.edu; Mandy Stage, Conference Coordinator, Tel: 352-392-5930; Email: mstage@ufl.edu; Danielle Treadwell, Educational Program Co-Chair, Tel:352-273-4775; Email: ddtreadw@ufl.edu. Visit us at http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/smallfarms.