

IFAS Matters



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IFAS Matters - March 2014

Posted on March 21, 2014 by Jack Payne

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Cartoon provided by *Skeptical Science*

Embracing Science in Addressing Global Issues

Slightly more than 14 years ago, we had our first global group-think as we turned the page on the 20th Century. Most of the modern world held their collective breath as the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve 1999. The dreaded Y2K "virus" was, according to some, going to bring global operating systems to a screeching halt due to a programming glitch. The fallout from Y2K was predicted to cause disasters ranging from home computer malaise to nuclear missiles automatically launching themselves.

Articles

Extension Centennial



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Peaches



UF/IFAS researcher to growers: Peaches can be profitable in three years.

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UF/IFAS study helps researchers better estimate citrus crop yields.

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[UF/IFAS names Kevin Folta as horticultural sciences chairman](#)

[Turner named interim UF/IFAS dean of agricultural and life sciences](#)

[UF/IFAS researcher wins \\$300,000 grant to further citrus greening research](#)

[UF/IFAS researcher named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors](#)

Y2K turned out to be a tempest in a teapot, but not before billions of private and public dollars were spent to become Y2K compliant. Y2K got people's attention. Folks who could barely afford it went out and purchased new computers and software. Companies hired consultants to guide their passage to the new millennium. Governments scrambled to get a solution. It looked as if everyone drank the Kool Aid and believed that some sort of preparation was necessary. The modern world was playing "Beat the Clock" to get ready for the inevitable New Year's Eve that could change everything.

Today the dire portents of climate change have garnered a less than lukewarm response. That the reality of the destructive forces presented by climate change fully *register* with people, so they will to act with the needed urgency, is indeed a challenge. In fact, many people are in total denial of the efficacy of the overwhelming scientific data and the ever-increasing world political upheavals, devastating food and water shortages, and mounting weather-related disasters that are happening right now, all around us.

I admit, sometimes the language of science is not a stirring call to action. Scientists are by nature cautious, and restrained. However, science is in a battle with politics, and when that happens, science usually loses. And that is true regardless of political party. However, scientific research can't bail us out of a famine if the notion that science is either something that can be believed in selectively, something that is simply one point of view, or something about which anyone can have a creditable opinion, no matter how ill-qualified, uneducated, or misinformed. *This point needs to be made very clear to both sides of the aisle.*

If we continue to persist in driving greenhouse gasses up with only casual concern, there will be consequences. Now more than ever, it is imperative for the general public and for policy makers to understand and act upon the many agricultural issues that are influencing their daily lives and that could ultimately save their lives.

Furthermore, we will not get out of this situation by living more simply. Even the most draconian lifestyle reductions will not suffice to avoid dangerous climate change or to make enough food available to feed nine billion people a Western-style diet. Nor will we escape this by ending growth -- almost all of which will happen in the developing world. There is only one way out of this situation. We must augment research to protect and increase the resources we have available, while reducing our impact on the planet.

Science is our best tool to understand - and protect - the world around us. We must learn to set our emotions aside and embrace what science tells us.

-Jack

Key Largo Woodrat

New Cultivars



UF/IFAS approves 14 new cultivars for release.
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Extension



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Water Survey



Center survey: Floridians value water, but not 'all in' on conservation.
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Canker



UF researchers find genetic cause for citrus canker, putting them a step closer to a cure.
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A UF/IFAS study shows captive breeding is no help to the endangered Key Largo woodrat.

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Military Meals

A UF/IFAS researcher is helping to eliminate waste and streamline the process of distributing the U.S. Army's legendary Meal, Ready-to-Eat or MREs.

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Dairy Farming

UF/IFAS Extension is helping North Florida dairies move into grazing using a perennial grass.

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