



STATE ISSUE: DEVELOPMENT OF BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

POSITION: FNGLA supports the development of industry-driven, science-based, voluntary, best management practices (BMPs) that provide cost-share opportunities and other incentives to assist nurseries in meeting water quality standards and other environmental goals.

BACKGROUND: BMPs are practices determined by research or field testing to be the most effective and practicable methods to achieve efficient, cost-effective and environmentally favorable crop production. While BMPs are not new, the Florida Legislature has recently enacted laws, including significant incentives, to facilitate the development and implementation of voluntary interim measures and BMPs under the direction of the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (FDACS) and verification by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

FNGLA recently teamed up with FDACS, the University of Florida-IFAS, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop and implement the *Nitrate Interim Measure* for Florida's container plant growers. It is designed to minimize the offsite movement of nitrates runoff into water resources. In exchange for voluntary adoption of this *Interim Measure*, a nursery grower receives a waiver of liability from future state-imposed costs associated with cleaning up any water quality. The grower also receives a presumption of compliance with water quality standards. In 2003, the Florida Legislature added a new benefit to BMPs: most Florida counties are not allowed to duplicate state and federal rules, or regulate areas covered by BMPs.

FNGLA enthusiastically supports the development of grower-driven, science-based, voluntary BMPs that provide meaningful incentives to growers. Development of a BMP for field and container nurseries in south Florida is presently underway. Given the diversity of nursery crops, production techniques, and topographical conditions, government agencies must recognize development and implementation of BMPs tailored to nursery growers is a dynamic process and takes time. To encourage nursery growers to adopt BMPs, FNGLA strongly believes existing incentives and cost-share programs must be expanded -- and new ones developed. This will require full funding and increased coordination of the involved federal, state, regional and local agencies.