

Directors Meeting Update - January 2025

Members:

New Director - Our newly elected director, Jerry Mixon, resigned due to a change in his planned involvement in the bamboo industry. Our Bylaws require that the Board of Directors appoint a new Director who will serve until the next election. We appointed Drew Morson, a farm owner that is a doctor in New Orleans, and who was on the ballot at our recent election. Drew has agreed to serve. Welcome Drew!

Review of Priorities - After healthy discussion we concluded that the following 3 priorities will be the focus of our attention this year:

- Proof of Concept - this is where we use the Key Project to better forecast production and earnings of our farms.
- Wood Markets Development - we will continue to encourage interest from prospective buyers of our bamboo wood to join the FBGA and explore how they can become a buyer.
- Farming Best Management Practices - we will work with UF-IFAS to develop a document that defines the best practices for planting and growing bamboo farms in Florida.

Harvesting - We discussed whether it makes sense for the FBGA to be involved in developing and providing some oversight over the Harvesting process of the shoots. It was concluded that we should provide this role now, at this young stage of development of our industry.

Mechanical Harvesting - We were very pleased with the latest update from Michael Rogers of UF-IFAS on the project to develop Mechanical Harvesting for our wood culms. They have received a proposal from the involved engineers with a cost over two years of \$350,000 and which Michael is confident that UF-IFAS will fund. The concept is to have two machines: 1) Felling - this will cut the culms and pull them down. 2) Stripping/Cutting into lengths/Stacking. Both machines will run on tracks (like a track hoe) and will be small enough to get into small places. But here is the most intriguing component - both machines will be *Autonomous*...! In other words, they will run themselves and not require their own labor (yes, robots!). We were all quite thrilled to hear this as this will enable the lowest cost in harvesting.

Other Research - As we consider a larger group of farms to be harvested in 2025, we expect ramped up participation in the Key Project. Even with the cost sharing by participating farm owners, the cost to FBGA will

approximately double. UF-IFAS historically bears roughly 60% of the total cost and we are pleased that they have agreed to cover that for the expanded project in 2025.

Next Meetings - our future schedule will plan for meetings on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 11am, to be located at the UF-IFAS Lake Alfred location.

Thanks everyone and we look forward to an exciting year in 2025!