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UF/IFAS names Calvin Arnold to lead Southwest Florida Research and Education Center

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- Calvin Arnold, who led the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center for 10 years, will return to that post next month, UF's Jack Payne, senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources, announced Tuesday.

"We are so fortunate to have Dr. Arnold back with UF/IFAS," Payne said. "He is well-versed in the issues that are most critical for agricultural producers in that region, which is a huge advantage, and he's a great leader, as well."

Arnold, who now works for the Agricultural Research Service, the research arm of the United States Department of Agriculture, said he's happy to be returning to UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, where he spent 31 years earlier in his career. He begins his new role at the center April 1.

"It feels right ... kind of like going home," he said.

Arnold is director of the U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory in Fort Pierce, a research-only facility that focuses on citrus, vegetables and nursery crops. Some of Arnold's recent research includes being the principal investigator on a three-year, \$190,000 study of transgenic citrus' greening resistance for the Citrus Research and Development Foundation.

Earlier at UF/IFAS, Arnold was the Indian River Research and Education Center's director from 1995 until 2001, the Immokalee center director from 1985 until 1995, including two years as the acting District Five Extension director.

The Southwest Florida region has several major crops, including citrus, beef cattle, sugarcane, ornamental nurseries and vegetables. Producers there range from small, family farms to major companies, he said, and the region has specific issues, including a unique flatwood soil type as well as proximity to Lake Okeechobee, the state's largest freshwater lake.

Arnold said his overriding goal for the Southwest Florida REC will be to foster collaboration and coordination between the center's stakeholders, faculty and staff, and administrators.

"All three groups want the same thing. They all want the center to be productive and to generate new technologies and extend them to the users," he said. "And not only do they need to help producers be profitable, but they need to enhance environmental compatibility."

Arnold holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural education from the University of Florida, a master's in fruit crops and a doctorate in horticulture from Michigan State University.

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