The facts about U.S. Sugar and Lake Okeechobee water

What we do:
We are American farmers who grow sugar cane, sweet corn and citrus. We are scientists and biologists who manage water quality on our farms. We are hardworking mothers and fathers whose children will be future stewards of this land. We are your neighbors who care about our local waterways, because many of us live right here in Martin County.

Who we are:
We’re American farmers – 2,500 strong. For nearly 100 years U.S. Sugar has been farming in Florida. Our farms are located in and around Clewiston, which you can see is south of Lake Okeechobee, more than 60 miles southwest of Stuart. Many of our 2,500 hardworking employees own the company and many of them live in Martin County.

Water Facts:
As you can see, 95% of all water that flows into Lake Okeechobee comes from the north - from Orlando and the Kissimmee Basin which is in light blue.

Only 5% of the water flow comes from communities south of the lake and that's for flood control. When the lake level gets too high, that’s when the Army Corps of Engineers sends water into the Caloosahatchee River and the St. Lucie and into the South Fork and Lagoon.

What you may not know, is that billions of gallons of Lake O water does flow south and we use some of that water to irrigate our sugar cane, sweet corn and citrus. That water actually leaves our farms cleaner than when it left the lake. Last year alone, water that left our farms was twice as clean than water that was sent south from Lake Okeechobee.

Back Pumping Facts:
Recently some irresponsible groups like Sierra Club made false claims that we pump polluted water into Lake Okeechobee. These claims are 100% false! U.S. Sugar does not pump water from its fields into Lake Okeechobee. Nor do any other sugarcane farmers. In fact, U.S. Sugar’s property does not connect directly to Lake Okeechobee.

Back pumping is strictly controlled and ONLY done by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). It’s also important to note that it’s rarely ever done and it’s ONLY done to protect Glades-area communities, businesses, hospitals, schools and farms from catastrophic flooding and according to SFWMD, benefits “thousands of families and businesses”.


Learn more about U.S. Sugar at www.ussugar.com