**HOW TO FORM A CO-OP IN FLORIDA**

**Brochure Outline**

* *How do I start?* In order to create an agricultural cooperative in the State of Florida, you first will need to form a Florida corporation.
* *How do I file?* You will file the Articles of Incorporation for your Florida Non-Profit Corporation with the Florida Division of Corporations either online or by mail.
* *Who can form a Co-op?* Three or more people or associations engaged in the production of agricultural products are required to form a co-op in Florida.
* *Choosing a Name*. The name must be distinguishable from Florida Department of State records, so do a preliminary search on Sunbiz.org before choosing your name. The name should include the term Corporation, Incorporated, Corp., or Inc.
* *Information You Will Need to File Your Articles of Incorporation:* The articles of incorporation should include:
	+ The nonprofit’s name and street address or PO Box.
	+ A valid email address (if filing online).
	+ The registered agent name and address – this will be the individual or legal entity that will accept service of process on behalf of the corporation. A business with an active Florida filing can serve as a registered agent. The address listed must be a physical street address in Florida.
	+ The signature of the registered agent. If the agent is a business entity, a principal of that company must sign.
	+ A corporate purpose. This should a specific purpose which frames the co-op’s long-term aspirations, plans, and programs. The corporate purpose will be important later, when filing for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status with the IRS. The IRS and other government agencies utilize the purpose statement as evidence for tax exemptions, so it is important that the purpose is clearly communicated.
	+ The manner of election where directors will be appointed or elected. This can incorporate the co-op’s bylaws.
* *How much does filing cost?* Currently, the required filing fee is $35.00, and the required fee for designating a registered agent is $35.00. You may opt to request a certificate of status, which certifies the existence of the corporation, for $8.75. Additionally, you may opt request a certified stamped copy of your Articles of Incorporation for $8.75.
* *After Filing the Articles of Incorporation.* The Effective Date, or date where the co-op begins to exist, begins on the date the Florida Division of Corporation receives and files the Articles of Incorporation. Every corporation must file an annual report to remain “active” within the State of Florida. The filing period for this report is January 1st to May 1st of the calendar year following the corporation’s date of filing.