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How the area food industry is enriched

by the treasures of our local farmers.

LITTLE WORKER BEES

As the Florida Farm Bureau’s Northwest Florida district representative, Allen Scheffer has limited time when it comes to his side honey business, Smiley B Farms, so he utilizes modern, automated equipment to help him.

Scheffer is a Florida licensed honey bottler who bottles his own honey. He reached out to businesses within the food industry about seven or eight years ago, and has been delivering his honey-based products of honey and beeswax ever since. In addition, he also offers pollination services to other farmers, as well as manages cattle and harvests perennial peanut hay. Scheffer and his wife, Julie, and 7-year old son, Jamison, sell their products through restaurants, produce markets and gift shops throughout Northwest Florida, and have vendors that peddle them at farmers markets and other venues throughout the state. “Tupelo has been scarce here since about 2013,” states Scheffer. “But, I’ve had great success with many of the wildflower varieties that grow along the Choctawhatchee and Chipola Rivers.” He went on to further explain that he will produce a certain type of honey from a particular flower and only sell it in the area where it was produced. It is a method that must be working, as he manages to sell 50 barrels or more per year. For that reason, he is thankful for his Farm Credit of Northwest Florida loan officer, Stephen Roach. “He’s helped me get to where I am right now,” said Scheffer. “And I know that when the time comes, I can always turn to him again.”

As for the bees themselves, Scheffer jokes that while his farm has no actual employees, he still considers himself one of the largest employers in Jackson County. After all, he has 400-500 hives, each with 50,000 bees who all work for him. With counts like that, his “major employer” status is not far from the truth.