BROOKSVILLE, Fla.— On Oct. 20, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) marked the transfer of more than 3,800 acres of land and facilities of the former Subtropical Agricultural and Research Station to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU).

The ceremony celebrated one of the largest single land transfers ever to one of the 19 historically black land-grant universities established under the Second Morrill Act of 1890.

The site housed the station, part of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), from 1929 until it closed in 2012. Among landmark findings there, ARS researchers demonstrated that genetic and environmental interactions do exist in beef cattle. They also showed that locally produced cows generally outperform cows introduced from another environment.

Researchers at the station also established the first herd of Romosinuano cattle in the United States. And, based on studies from 1988-2002, they showed managed cow-calf operations were not major contributors to excess phosphorus loads in surface water in west-central Florida.

“A new chapter in the history of this land begins as we transfer from ARS to Florida A&M University,” said ARS administrator Chavonda Jacobs Young. “We look forward to our Florida A&M University colleagues continuing a fine legacy of agricultural research here and teaching the next generation of growers and producers as part of a new Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program.”

FAMU President Elmira Mangum said the transfer will greatly enhance the university’s research capacity. “We are grateful to the USDA for entrusting us with this land,” President Mangum said. “It will enable FAMU to develop educational training and developmental programs for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, and to teach them the latest biotechnological innovations and other key initiatives.”

Since Brooksville is located in a subtropical region, the property will enable FAMU to venture into new research related to subtropical fruits and animals and conduct research of significance to Central and South America, and the Caribbean. It will also enable the University to expand its organic farming. FAMU is also developing several partnerships with local organizations to provide training to veterans interested in farming. The partnerships will include establishing some small farms for veterans as a way to transition back from military service.

The transfer includes 3,812.5 acres with 19 buildings, 2,830 square feet of laboratories, 3,600 square feet of office space, and a variety of other support structures constructed between 1932 and 1987.