

2021 Inductee



Bobby McKown

Bobby McKown spent his career championing and defending the health and well-being of Florida agriculture and, in particular, the Florida citrus industry, before state, national and international regulatory bodies. He is best known for his decades as the executive vice president/CEO of the state's largest citrus growers association, Florida Citrus Mutual (FCM), leading the industry through a critical period.

McKown took the helm of the association in 1980. Over the course of his career he earned a reputation as an expert in international trade negotiations and was appointed by five presidential administrations to every trade committee, task force and advisory position of any influence. He participated in the development of four different trade agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement for Tariff and Trade (GATT). He not only protected Florida citrus growers from unfair trade practices, he also worked to gain the best results for the state's agriculture industry as a whole.

McKown cultivated political connections and used them to strengthen the industry. During the 1980s, when the industry was ravaged by citrus canker and devastating freezes, he fought for and earned state and federal assistance for growers. He also was instrumental in stopping competitors from illegally dumping frozen concentrate orange juice below fair market value in the United States.

McKown's accomplishments also include more than 15 gubernatorial appointments. His fierce advocacy and education efforts were grounded in the genuine belief that the Florida citrus industry could weather any storm, natural or man-made, with abundant, relevant communication and strong, reliable relationships. His commitment to the growers he represented never wavered.

Because of his important role in protecting the interests of growers, Bobby McKown was once dubbed "the voice of oranges" throughout the world. An endowed fund at the University of Florida was established at his retirement. His accomplishments were recognized by the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame when he was inducted in the class of 2005.

Before joining FCM, McKown, a graduate of the University of Florida with a degree in advertising and management, worked for the *Winter Haven News Chief*, the Florida Canners Association and the Florida Agricultural Research Institute (now known as the Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical Association).