

Letters: Florida Crystals should mind its own business

By **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 17**

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Thursday's op-ed by Florida Crystals Vice President Gaston Cantens was absurd, another litany of lies concerning U.S. Sugar.

He criticized our company's refinery in Clewiston. Well, our refinery has broken production records for the past three years. It is operating at 140 percent of its designed capacity. That improvement is a direct result of the success of the new raw sugar mill design and the high-quality sugar it produces. Our refinery has become so efficient that we imported Mexican sugar as an opportunity to increase sugar sales, and we made money doing so. According to Mr. Cantens, Florida Crystals cannot import Mexican sugar and refine it profitably, but our state-of-the-art factory can and did for two straight years, and we already have purchased Mexican sugar again this year.

Industry experts come from around the world to benchmark our refinery. I doubt that many of them make a side trip to see Florida Crystals' much older operations just 15 miles away. Perhaps Florida Crystals would be better served investing the money it's wasting fighting the sale of U.S. Sugar land for Everglades restoration in upgrading its 40-year-old refinery to better compete with us.

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Editor's note: Robert Coker is senior vice president, public affairs, for U.S. Sugar Corp. in the U.S. trained in both linguistics and cross-cultural counseling.