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SUMMER 2021

texas neighbors

**Photo contest
winners
announced**





Hot air may be the most dangerous greenhouse gas



By Russell Boening
President
Texas Farm Bureau

“Climate,” “green” and “sustainable” are trendy terms scattered across all media, especially the internet. But don’t believe everything you read and hear.

And while we’re on the topic of believing, don’t believe those who point to animal agriculture as a major driver of climate change. It’s simply not true.

Where should you get your information? Well, I prefer places with facts and science.

So, let’s get to the meat of the matter.

Although livestock emissions get a lot of attention in discussions around climate warming, they make up less than 4% of overall emissions in the U.S. Those numbers are declining thanks to improvements in feed and production. In fact, U.S. agriculture would have needed nearly 100 million more acres 30 years ago to match today’s production levels.

As farm efficiency goes up, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions go down in the livestock sector, making agriculture more sustainable with every new advancement. U.S. agriculture contributes just 10% to overall GHG emissions, far less than other major industries, and plays an active role in enhancing wildlife habitat and absorbing carbon.

Don’t take my word for it, though. Read the science behind that statement in the most recent Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Still have a beef with cattle and the environment?

Allow me to shed some sunlight on cattle emissions and environmental sustainability.

Yes, cattle belch the greenhouse gas methane, and they do that while eating plants. But that gas is broken down in the atmosphere and converted to CO₂ that is then consumed by plants (can we get a nod to photosynthesis?). It’s stored as carbohydrates in plants, which are then eaten by cattle.

That’s environmentally sustainable and you know what that process is called. Maybe it should be renamed the “cow”bon cycle?

During this process, cattle convert plants that are inedible for humans into high-quality, tasty protein. In the U.S. there are about 800 million acres of land that are not suitable for growing crops due to factors like soil conditions, environment and lack of rain. But that land has native grasses cattle are able to upcycle into protein that contains many essential nutrients needed in a balanced diet. Now, I call that a win.

You’ve placed an emphasis on sustainability. So have farmers and ranchers for generations. We’ll continue to do so, too.

In fact, America’s farmers and ranchers are leading the way in climate-smart practices that reduce emissions, enrich the soil and protect our water and air. We do so all while producing more food, fiber and renewable fuel than ever before.

It’s the raw truth, which seems rare these days. I hope you enjoy this grilling season with the best beef around, along with all the other great products that farmers and ranchers grow, without any environmental guilt. Because the story about livestock negatively impacting the climate has been cooked so long, you know, it’s overdone.



Vol. 86, No. 3 Summer 2021

TEXAS NEIGHBORS is published quarterly by the Texas Farm Bureau, 7420 Fish Pond Road, Waco, Texas 76710, (254) 772-3030.

Subscription price to Farm Bureau members is included in annual membership dues. The Texas Farm Bureau does not assume responsibility for statements by advertisers or for products advertised in TEXAS NEIGHBORS. For information on advertising, contact:

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WE ARE TEXAS FARM BUREAU

See what's happening at Texas Farm Bureau

Students ‘farm’ from school alongside farmers, ranchers

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

This spring, students across Texas visited farms and ranches from their classrooms and homes, thanks to a new Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) program.

Through Farm From School, youth in kindergarten through second grade met virtually with farmers and ranchers once a month using video conferencing technology.

The goal of the program was to provide students more engaging experiences while learning about agriculture and how it relates to content learned in the classroom, according to Jordan Walker, TFB associate director of Educational Outreach, Organization division.

“Many kids were still attending school virtually this spring when we rolled out Farm From School,” she said. “This really brought the farm to the students wherever they were, whether that was in a classroom, on a computer or tablet at home. We heard from many teachers that it was a nice way to bring in an outside speaker in a year when finding avenues to be more interactive was very challenging.”

More than 1,065 students from home school, virtual and classroom settings connected with farmers and ranchers each month through the program.

During the monthly video meetings, the students got to know each farmer or rancher, learned about their operations and asked lots of questions along the way.

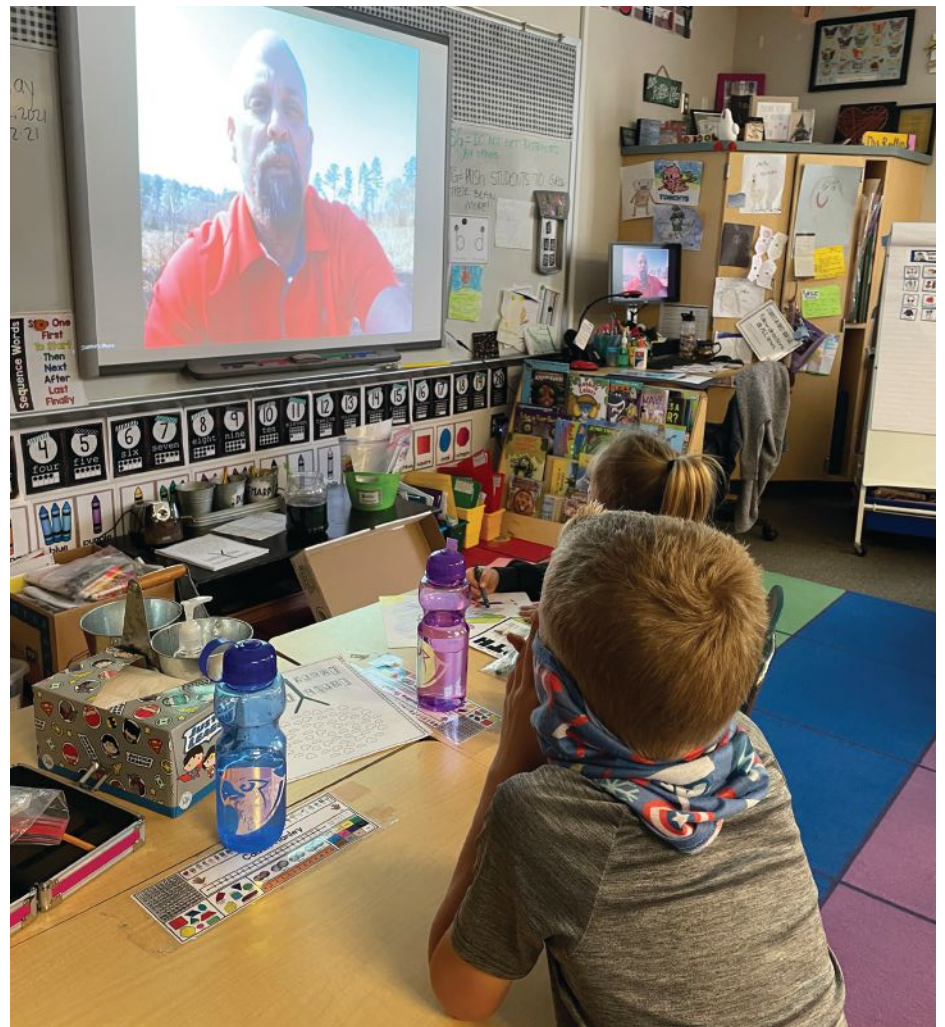
Jayne Doxsey, a retired school-teacher, taught her three grandchildren at home this year. The kindergartener, first- and third-grader learned virtually through their school district part of the day, then participated in home-school activities with Doxsey for the remainder of the school day.

The family connected with Coryell County Farm Bureau members Cody and Erika Archie, who raise Dorper sheep and Angora goats and cattle.

“They have not been to a farm or ranch, so they learned a lot from Farmers Cody and Erika while they were shearing a goat in one of their videos,” Doxsey said. “Afterward, we did some research into the animals and talked about how their hair can be used and what role they play on the farm. It’s been such an amazing experience for them.”

First-grade students from Mason Elementary in Cedar Park, who were learning virtually this semester, also met with the Archies.

“The kids love seeing what’s happening on their operation. They’ve asked the farmers about manure, the sheep dogs, tools and jobs on the farm, spraying cattle for flies, what skills are needed to care for the animals, all



Elementary students in College Station take a virtual field trip to an East Texas timber farm. Photo courtesy Hillarie Rollins.



Cody and Erika Archie show students how they care for their sheep in cool weather and warmer weather on their Coryell County ranch. Photos courtesy Erika Archie.

kinds of questions,” Geeta Erickson, a Mason Elementary teacher, said. “The kids had a realistic view because they aren’t just reading the information from a book. Their questions were really appropriate because they saw these things firsthand.”

In East Texas, District 11 students talked to Walker County Farm Bureau member Damon Burris, a forester for Steely Lumber Co. in Huntsville.

He took students from Forest Ridge Elementary in College Station on a journey from seedling to tree to lumber, showing the students the life cycle involved in the Texas forestry sector.

And their response was enthu-

siastic.

“They actually wanted to leave recess early so they could get on the call from the very beginning. That’s how I know they really love it, and they’ve had relevant questions. One of my students asked how many jobs Damon’s business provides the area,” Hillarie Rollins, whose class was participating through in-person learning, said. “All of his lessons have really targeted something we’ve learned in class, so we make those connections with what we’re learning. Things like plant life cycles and natural resources are so much clearer to them because they can see it happening in real time.”



There are 64 million acres of forestland in Texas, and that includes the Pineywoods and Crosstimbers ecoregions. The total economic impact of Texas forestry is over \$36 billion. Photo courtesy Damon Burris.



From farm to sawmill, Damon Burris showed students the various parts of the timber industry and how farmers care for their trees and the environment. Photo courtesy Damon Burris.

Farm From School this fall with Texas farmers, ranchers

Farm From School will be back in the fall with a slight change.

In the fall, one farmer a month will visit with students from across the entire state. This provides students the opportunity to see aspects of Texas agriculture in other regions of the state.

And many students won’t ever visit a farm otherwise.

“Even if students are back in the classroom and going on field trips again, many of them will not visit a farm in person,” said Jordan Walker, TFB associate director of Educational Outreach, Organization division. “This opens up a whole new world of opportunity and introduces students from to real-life Texas agriculture no matter where they live.”

Details on Farm From School for fall 2021 are available at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/aitc>.

FARM
FROM **SCHOOL**
with Texas Farm Bureau in
Fall 2021

Farm Bureau health plans approved by Texas Legislature

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

A bill allowing Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) to use its statewide infrastructure to provide health plans to members was signed by Gov. Greg Abbott.

HB 3924 by State Rep. Tom Oliverson allows TFB to provide members with the option to purchase an affordable non-insurance health plan with extensive health coverage as a member benefit.

Finding affordable health care coverage is a struggle for TFB members, many of whom are self-employed as farmers or ranchers, according to TFB Executive Director/COO Si Cook.

But HB 3924 allows TFB to provide this service to members without the insurance regulations under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that drove up the cost of health insurance.

Oliverson, a practicing anesthesiologist, recognized the need for additional options in health care coverage after the ACA caused many traditional health insurance companies to drastically raise their prices on individual or small group plans.

Reps. Charles “Doc” Anderson, James Frank, Tracy King and Mayes Middleton signed on as joint authors in April. Another 27 representatives signed as coauthors, many of whom represent rural districts.

The legislation was sponsored in the Texas Senate by Sen. Drew Springer, and Sen. Kel Seliger was a cosponsor.

The large number of supporters among the Texas House shows the need for such an option, Cook noted.

“These health plans are not insurance, so they’re more flexible and affordable than those traditional health insurance options,” he said. “We have many members who don’t have access to health insurance through an employer and do not receive a subsidy for an ACA plan. So, we feel like this is a workable option for those members without taking away from existing health care coverage options.”

The plans will feature many standard health benefits, including:

- office visits
- preventative, routine and wellness services
- outpatient and rehabilitative services

- lab work
- emergency room services
- maternity, newborn and pediatric care
- hospitalization
- telemedicine
- mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment
- prescription drug benefits
- dental and vision coverage

These plans allow each applicant to be individually rated based on their medical history. This can result in offering coverage for significantly less than similar coverage under ACA plans, Cook said.

If an individual does not qualify, other current options remain in place.

“Some have been concerned that these plans will deny those with pre-existing conditions outright, but that’s simply not the case,” Cook said. “Each individual will be rated based on their medical history. While some applicants may not receive coverage, our goal is cover as many individuals as possible where it remains feasible to do so. These health plans are in addition to current offerings, not a replacement or subtraction. No one is losing anything by us bringing this to our membership.”

TFB was established to serve its members and offering these health plans is another opportunity to do so, he said.

“With members in all 254 counties, we already have the organizational structure in place to support the sales and distribution of these plans,” he said. “The resources and structure of state Farm Bureaus across the nation have already proven this is a successful and viable model. Indiana, Iowa, Kansas and Tennessee Farm Bureaus already offer these plans. Tennessee Farm Bureau has been doing this for more than 70 years, so we know it’s doable. We know this can be a good option for TFB members who need alternative health care coverage than what’s available to them today.”

The plans, which are a contractual agreement, will be overseen by

a third-party administrator and will offer a grievance process equal to the process required by the ACA. In addition, Cook said any person feeling aggrieved may file a complaint with the Texas attorney general.

“Farmers, ranchers, those who work on farms, agribusiness owners and workers and rural entrepreneurs who have two or fewer employees have told us they cannot access or afford traditional health plans,” Cook said. “This is a way to help our members, reduce uninsured Texans, support rural hospitals and make sure rural communities have access to the same standards and services as other parts of the state.”

Farm Bureau health plans will feature many standard health benefits, including:

- office visits
- preventative, routine and wellness services
- outpatient and rehabilitative services
- lab work
- emergency room services
- maternity, newborn and pediatric care
- hospitalization
- telemedicine
- mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment
- prescription drug benefits
- dental and vision coverage

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Summer Ag Institute brings agriculture to Texas teachers

Teachers from across the state participated in a four-day, immersive experience to bring agriculture to their classrooms at every grade level and in every subject.

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Teachers from across Texas grew their agricultural knowledge and cultivated techniques to incorporate agriculture into the classroom at this year's Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Summer Ag Institute.

During the four-day professional development event June 14-17 in Waco, the educators toured farms, ranches and agribusinesses in the Central Texas area. They participated in hands-on activities to replicate in their own classrooms and heard from experts on topics important to Texas' vibrant agricultural sector. The group also visited a facility that creates livestock feed rations and met with a rural veterinarian to learn about livestock feed, animal care and more.

"The Summer Ag Institute is almost a week of hands-on, interac-

tive learning to really drive home the agricultural concepts they're learning about," Jordan Walker, TFB associate director Organization Division Educational Outreach, said. "Going to these farms and ranches and different ag-related businesses and learning how natural resources play a role in agriculture helps teachers really begin to understand in a concrete way and take that back to their students this fall."

The group traveled to Waco Wetlands, where they learned about water conservation and water testing.

Conservationists from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also talked about cover crops, rotational grazing and other conservation practices farmers and ranchers engage in to ensure the best use and care of their land.

FARM TOURS

In Cameron, the teachers visited the Livestock Nutrition Center, where feed is custom blended for ranchers according to their herd's needs. During a tour of the facility, the group learned how byproducts of human food and fiber production—like cottonseed, beet pulp and peanut hulls—are a quality source of nutrition for livestock.

The educators toured 44 Farms, a large-scale Angus cattle ranch. Director of Customer Experience James Burks explained how the operation produces top-quality beef cattle genetics for a variety of purposes including seedstock, herd improvement and feeder calves. He also discussed their direct-to-consumer beef sales, as well as their efforts to bring beef to restaurants and Walmart stores through an exclusive partnership program.

In Rogers, the teachers learned about honey production at Walker Honey Farm.

The farm sells a variety of raw honey and honey-based food products, beeswax soaps, candles and craft meads, drinks and wine. During the tour, teachers learned about pollinator gardens, apiary and beekeeping, large-scale honey production and how mead is made.

At TrueHarvest Farms in Belton, a hydroponic lettuce and leafy greens grower, teachers followed the greens' process from seed to harvest to learn more about hydroponic food production systems.

The group visited with John Evans, a fifth-generation farmer and rancher in Little River Academy. Evans discussed his family farm's evolution over the generations and how he used his background in technology to update some farming practices to increase yields and reduce inputs.



HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES, WORKSHOPS



The group also participated in hands-on activities and lessons they can use in their classrooms, as well as learned from industry experts and fellow teachers.

Previous TFB Outstanding Ag in the Classroom Teacher winners Martha McLeod and Mary Beth Bauer shared their experiences incorporating agriculture into the classroom and provided several lesson plans they developed using agricultural concepts.

In a session with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Entomologist Sonja Swiger, the group learned more about insect classifications and life cycles. The lesson concluded with building insect habitats out of everyday objects. Swiger noted these habitats can easily be incorporated into classrooms at very low costs by using objects purchased discount stores and having the students build them.

The evening featured an interactive demonstration by the Texas Beef Council connecting the beef cattle industry from pasture to plate. Teachers pulled on aprons to grill their dinner while learning more about nutritional science and culinary arts.

The teachers received lessons on plant propagation in the classroom, courtesy of the McLennan County Master Gardeners. They participated in a variety of activities to learn more about propagation and seed germination that can easily be replicated in their classrooms.

Other sessions included information from the Texas A&M Forest Service and a visit from Southwest Dairy Farmers' mobile dairy barn to learn more about Texas dairy production.

Even agricultural science teachers like Megan Walker were impressed by the breadth and depth of SAI in explaining agriculture to the educators. Walker, who teaches at the suburban Atascocita High School in Harris County, said she gained some valuable insights thanks to the institute's interactive nature.

"Other workshops I've attended are very 'sit and get,' but this had a lot of hands-on components. Just like kids, we don't learn by just sitting and listening. So, this experience is really great because you see a lot of different things in a short amount of time that makes you ask questions and want to learn more about what you're seeing," she said.

Those from urban and rural areas alike enjoyed the immersive experience.

San Antonio teacher Janell Nihipali, who teaches middle school math, science and social studies, said she is happy to take what she learned back to her students, many of whom live in apartment buildings where they don't have access to farms or even their own lawn.

"I am super excited to show them there are things they can do with their families, even in their apartments, with plants and animals that they otherwise wouldn't experience," she said. "We have received so many good resources here this week. I am going to go back down to

San Antonio to contact the Master Gardeners there to help me convince my administration to let us have a school garden."

Teachers of subjects seemingly unconnected to agriculture—like business, computer science and digital media—left SAI with a new passion for sharing agriculture with their students.

"All of my professional development has been sitting in a room learning about viruses and cybersecurity and computer programming problems. Here, we got out and got hot, dirty and stinky—all the things that kids love. It's the first time in my life I've done anything like this, and I'm hooked," Muenster Public School teacher Richard Harris said. "I teach kids about viruses and worms in computers, and now I'm going to be able to integrate entomology and plant propagation into their lessons. And we learned quite a bit about agribusiness this week. I've learned things about the dairy system that are highly technical, cotton gins, all the automated robotic tractors and plows and equipment. It's been tremendous."

There's room for agriculture in any subject and at every grade level, Walker noted.

"Participating in hands-on activities like the Summer Ag Institute helps teachers understand how to incorporate agriculture into any subject to make food and fiber production more understandable and relatable to students," she said. "Our goal is to show teachers how accessible agriculture is, no matter the subject or grade, and to help them find ways to work that into their daily lessons and curriculum so they can help their students understand more about how our food gets from the field to tables around the globe."

Along with SAI, several regional Summer Agriculture Academies are hosted each year by TFB. For more information on the institute and other educational opportunities available, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/aitc>.



Peach Cobbler

INGREDIENTS

For Peach Cobbler filling, you will need...

- 4 cups fresh peaches, sliced
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 tsp. cinnamon

and for the pie pastry, you will need...

- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 5 tbsp. cold water
- 1 tsp. salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix filling ingredients and pour into greased dish.
2. Mix all pastry ingredients together thoroughly and then roll and cut into 2-inch strips.
3. Weave a lattice over the top of the mixture with the pastry.
4. Bake in 400-degree oven about one hour or until brown.

Cooking time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Number of servings: 12-16



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TEXAS FARM BUREAU®

2021 TEXAS FARM BUREAU Photo Contest **WINNERS**

Each year, we ask Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members and their families to capture rural Texas and the rural lifestyle through the lens of their camera. And each year, they deliver.

Hundreds of photos from TFB members across the state were submitted to this year's contest. Though it was a difficult task, TFB staff critiqued the photos capturing various parts of the Lone Star State and selected this year's winners.

**1st
PLACE**



Mia Meehan of Grandview captured Texas' sunniest and brightest crop—sunflowers—with a busy little bee hard at work.

**2nd
PLACE**



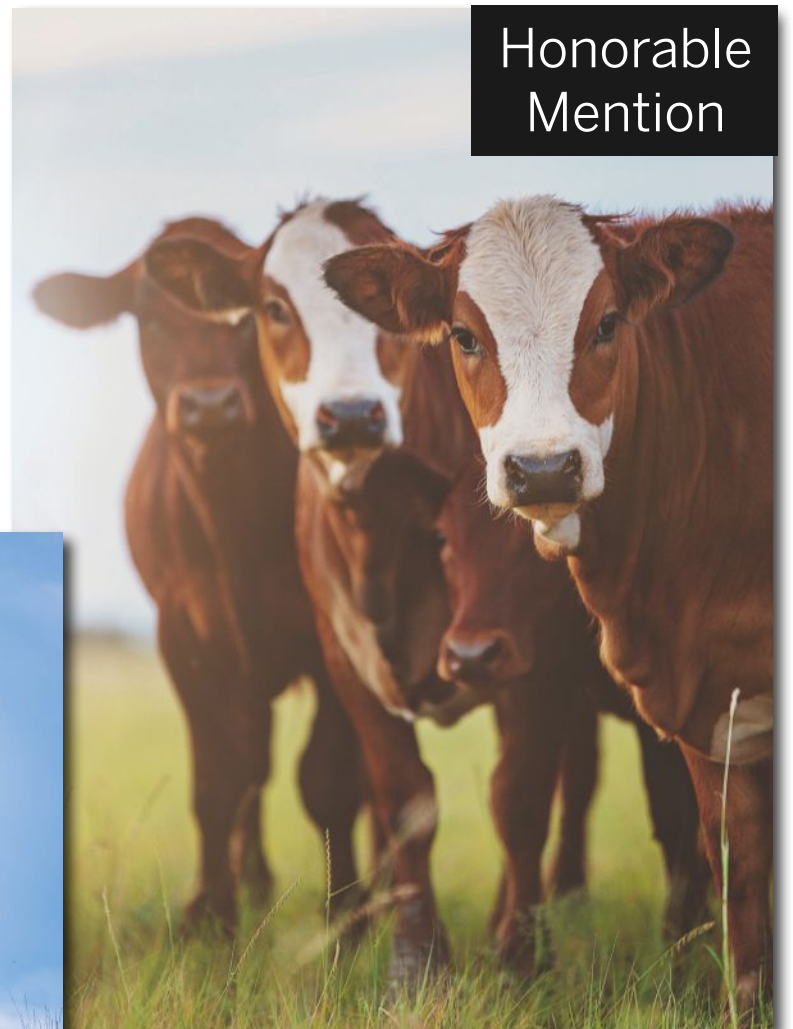
Social hour before the work begins. Our second place photo was submitted by Dessie Elledge of Petrolia.

**Honorable
Mention**



A future farmer dreaming of his own crops. Kayla Otahal of Corpus Christi received Honorable Mention with this photo of her son checking a field of grain sorghum.

**Honorable
Mention**



Squad goals. Lana Fernandez of Post snapped this photo and earned Honorable Mention.

MORE GOOD PHOTOS

More good photos include (from top, clockwise):

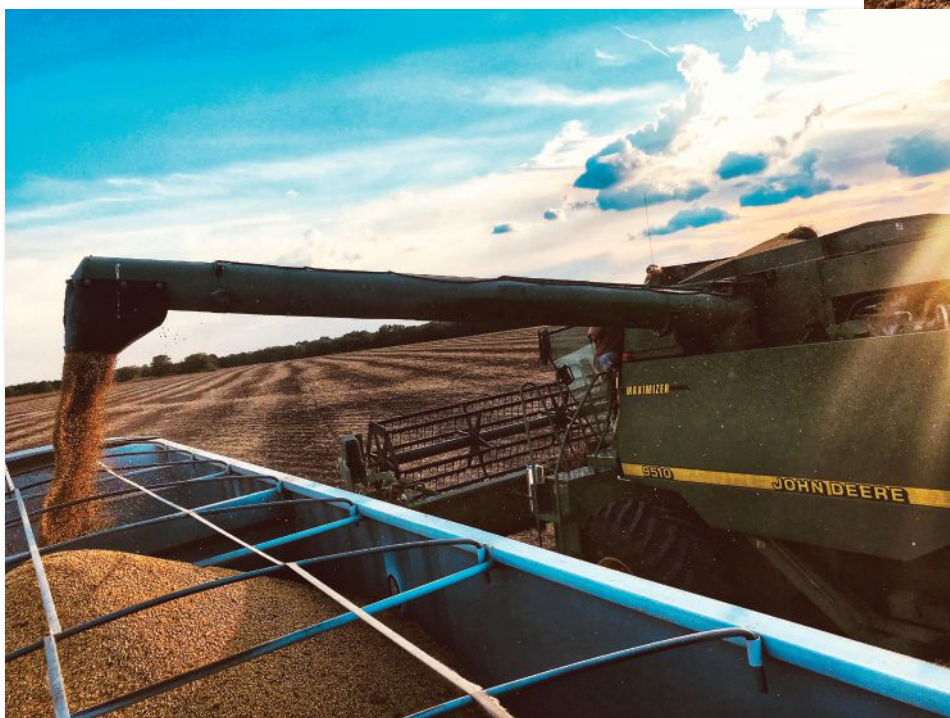
Praisin' and grazin'. This photo was captured by Wyatt Robbins of Mission.

Prepping the ground for planting. Kailynn Peugh of Ackerly submitted this photo.

Fog Horn the Rooster. Kinley Felps of Blanco captured this photo.

Fill 'er up! Dakota Davidson of Detroit captured this photo of golden kernels spilling into the hopper during harvest.

Under cover! Paul Estrada of Lubbock captured this photo of an adult Texas Horned Lizard on the flatlands of the Lone Star State.



EVEN MORE GOOD PHOTOS

Even more good photos include (from top, clockwise):

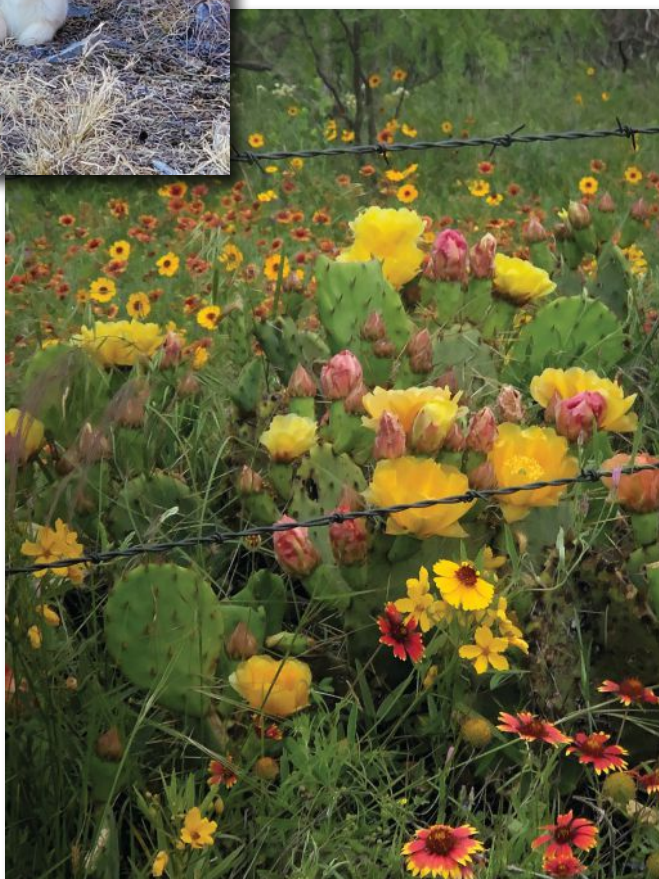
Sunny and 95 degrees. Danny Staley of Santa Fe captured this sunflower under a pretty Texas sky.

Pure Texas. Kristy Jenkins of Austin submitted this photo of a Texas Longhorn.

Martin Ivy of Hondo submitted this photo of the Milky Way over a Texas field and irrigation pivot.

After a tough winter of lost crops, trees, livestock and wildlife, a beautiful Texas spring was much-needed. Cathy Bredemeyer of San Angelo submitted this photo of cactus and flowers blooming.

Double trouble! Penny Dawson of Sonora captured this photo of a ewe and her twins.



SNOW PHOTOS

In February, extreme cold weather blanketed Texas. The winter storm stretched from the Panhandle to the Rio Grande Valley and from Far West Texas to Deep East Texas, clutching every county in an icy and snowy embrace for several days.

Below are some of the judges' favorite photos captured by Texas Farm Bureau members.

Photos include (from top, clockwise):

Doug Helmke of LaVernia snapped this photo of a red cardinal during the winter storm earlier this year. A beautiful pop of color in the snow-filled sky!



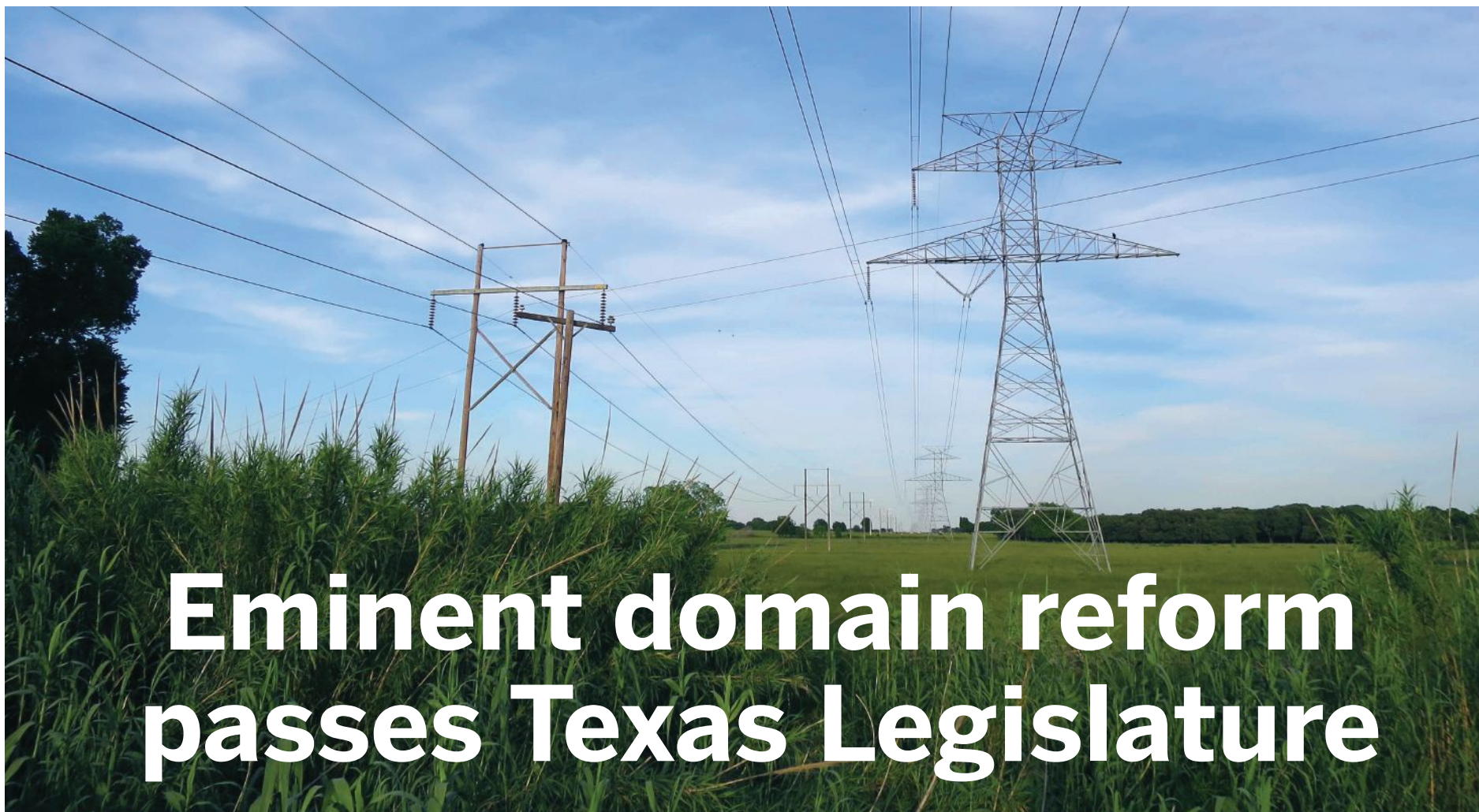
Our flags still wave proudly even on the coldest of days. This photo was submitted by Annette Chandonnet of Huntsville.

Taking a snowy walk. Rebecca Spain of Natalia captured this photo.

Erika Archie of Turnersville captured this photo of their Brahman heifers standing in the snow storm.

Victoria Mullaley of Mico submitted this photo of her husband's late grandfather's farm house. It was built in the late 1800s.





Eminent domain reform passes Texas Legislature

**By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor**

Private property rights advocates are celebrating a key victory after HB 2730 was signed by Gov. Greg Abbott.

The new legislation protects and improves landowner rights in negotiations with entities using the power of eminent domain.

“We’ve worked on this for multiple legislative sessions, and we’re very glad to see progress in this area to help the process become more fair and transparent for landowners, with better information provided to those who are facing the prospect of eminent domain on their land,” Regan Beck, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) director of Government Affairs, said.

HB 2730 was authored by House Land and Resource Management Committee Chairman Joe Deshotel and joint author Rep. DeWayne Burns. Burns is a longtime supporter of private property rights and one of TFB’s closest allies in previous sessions when eminent domain reform was attempted. State Sen. Lois Kolthorst, a strong proponent of eminent domain reform

and property rights, sponsored the legislation in the Senate.

“Although we initially did not endorse this bill because the original version did not help property owners, Rep. Burns worked to negotiate language that was eventually included in this bill that strengthens landowner positions in negotiations,” Beck said. “Several key issues were addressed in this bill, thanks to his hard work and dedication to protecting Texans’ private property rights.”

One of the biggest victories, according to Beck, is that an entity must provide in the initial offer, in plain writing, whether the offer includes damages to the remainder. He noted this is important because that should be part of the valuation of the taking.

Another positive outcome of HB 2730 is required minimum easement terms that help landowners protect their property rights and negotiate offers that encompass the entire scope of an easement, from construction to future actions.

“Now, when an entity gives the landowner

a contract for an easement, minimum terms must be included. This would include things like what kind of products will be sent through a pipeline, the size of the pipeline, what above-ground equipment might be on the easement, the maximum width of the easement and guaranteeing the topsoil is placed back on top after construction is complete,” Beck said. “This ensures property owners have information upfront so they know and can protect their rights to help them negotiate a fair offer. Before, you only received those terms if you knew about those issues, knew how to negotiate and asked for them outright. Now, it’s in there automatically.”

Another win for landowners is the inclusion of an updated landowner bill of rights. Under the legislation, the landowner bill of rights must be included with or before the initial offer, and the document must be updated every two years by the Texas attorney general, with a required public comment period.

[A full TFB analysis of HB 2730 is available here.](#)





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A Taste of Home

Volleman's Dairy bottles milk



**By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor**

For the Volleman family, dairy farming is a way of life. As far back as 1890, Vollemans have been raising dairy cattle and selling milk.

The family traces its history from Holland to Luxembourg to the U.S., where Frank and Annette moved with their two young sons in 1993.

They put down roots in Gustine and now provide Texans with what they call “a taste of home” through their dairy and new bottling facility, where they process and bottle their own milk in returnable glass bottles.

“When we moved here, Annette and I started milking 50 cows in partnership with my brother, Marcel. Then a couple of years down the road, he started his own dairy, and we continued to expand our facilities to the size we are today. Now, we milk about 5,000 cows and bottle and sell our own milk,” he said. “Our family has expanded, too, and we now have four sons: Benjamin, David, Andrew and Daniel.”

New roots run deep

This unique family operation involves two generations, eight family members and a whole lot of love. Love for the land, the farm and, most importantly, for each other.

Each son is responsible for a certain aspect of the operation.

Benjamin grows most of the dairy’s forages, and David manages the day-to-day operations at the dairy. Andrew oversees the bottling plant, and Daniel raises re-

placement heifers and helps on his uncle’s dairy.

David’s wife, Anna, manages the business office, and Andrew’s wife, Shelby, is the marketing director for the dairy.

Together, the Farm Bureau members are proud to bring Volleman’s glass bottled milk to stores across Central and North Texas,

took off from there.”

About 60-70% of the farm’s forages are grown by Benjamin, and the grains are purchased from other farmers and feed mills.

Benjamin loves farming, and he loves being able to work with his family every day.

“It’s a lot of fun working together in the family business. My brothers and I work together in the fields or on the farm or in an office together all the time,” he said. “We each have our own roles, but we can always help each other out if we need help on a certain task. Sometimes it’s a little challenging to get along with everybody, but that’s the fun part about it. We try to figure out how we can work together and get the job done.”

The dairy

Down the road from Benjamin’s corn fields, David oversees the day-to-day operations at the dairy.

I don’t know what the right word is, but you get a lot of pride seeing your bottle with your name on it on a shelf in a grocery store. ”

Frank Volleman

with more stores carrying the products every week.

They hope to continue to grow their family legacy here in Texas, one bottle of milk at a time.

Farming

At the farm, Benjamin grows corn, sorghum and three varieties of Bermudagrass.

“I’ve been doing this for my family for the last 10 years or so. Before I graduated college, we had grown a little bit of corn, but around the time I graduated, we started focusing on growing our own crops for the dairy,” he said. “We started trying to improve our Bermudagrass and find better varieties to produce better quality feed for our cows, and things just

Twice a day, the cows travel from their cross-ventilated barns to the 72-stall fully automated milking carousel.

Looking after 5,000 Holstein cows and confirming they get milked twice a day is a big job. But it’s a challenge David is always up for.

“Even though we are a larger farm, we’re still a family farm, and we absolutely care for our cows every day. Our main focus is our cows and the people we work with, ensuring a great quality of life for both,” he said. “The barns and all these things we’ve invested in here on this farm are to really make their life better so that they stay healthy and produce a

lot of milk. They take care of us. We take care of them. It’s a very symbiotic relationship, and we’re always looking to improve.”

The milk is collected in tanks where it is instantly chilled to about 35 degrees. It is continually stirred so the cream doesn’t rise to the top. After the milk has been tested repeatedly, it is loaded onto tankers for transport to processing facilities.

Anna, David’s wife, manages the business office and handles the flow of tankers and customers. He said it’s a blessing to be able to work together and alongside the rest of his family.

“I absolutely love raising our family on the farm. Anna was working in town, and I was really happy when she was able to join us out here. Now, when we get done with our main work, we can do things like hop in the truck and drive the kids around while we check on the cattle and do a last round before heading home,” he said. “I just really enjoy spending that time with my family on the farm, and it brings some flexibility to our situation. There’s an amazing quality of life here we couldn’t get anywhere else.”

**Volleman’s
bottling facility**

About nine months ago, some big dreams finally came true when the family was able to begin bottling and selling milk under the Volleman’s brand.

The dream was fully realized with the opening of their own creamery, located just outside the Gustine city limits. The Vollemans currently produce heavy cream and whole, 2%, chocolate and strawberry milk, along with one seasonal milk flavor that changes throughout the year.

When they opened the creamery, Frank said the timing was right to reintroduce an old concept: returnable glass bottles.

On top of the purchase price of the milk, customers pay a deposit for the bottle. The deposit is returned when the bottle is received back at a retailer, or the customer may choose to have the retailer keep the deposit so they can buy more milk.

“In the beginning, we weren’t sure we liked the idea. But the more we dug into it and traveled across the country and saw different operations, we decided there was something there,” Frank said. “People love the sustainability aspect of this. They feel good about it, that they’re doing something for the environment. And the response has really just been overwhelming.”

At the bottling plant, Andrew is responsible for processing, pasteurization and bottling the milk, as well as overseeing sales and distribution.

His wife, Shelby, also works at the bottling plant where she oversees marketing and branding.

Andrew’s background in distribution with the Coca-Cola Company and a dairy products technology program from Cal Poly prepared him for his latest role in the family business.

The family broke ground on the new plant in March 2020 and began producing bottles through a co-packer in June. The plant came online this January, and Volleman’s is steadily gaining recognition as they work to increase distribution throughout Texas.

When Andrew began struggling with the amount of work involved in running the bottling facility and handling sales, Daniel stepped in to help.

“I was kind of drowning, trying to do everything at once, and Daniel stepped up to help on the sales side,” he said. “He does a lot with talking to stores, maintaining relationships that we built and continues to find new stores, and we work closely together to keep growing into new areas.”

He said it’s a surreal feeling to have all their hard work pay off.

“I don’t know what the right word is, but you get a lot of pride seeing your bottle with your name on it on a shelf in a grocery store. The best feeling is when you walk into a store and there’s a line out the door and you can’t even get it off the truck, because they’re just grabbing it out of the crates,” Andrew, who used to do all the deliveries himself, said. “It’s just people standing in line for the milk, people

you’ve never met that have no clue who you are, and I get to say ‘Yes, that’s my milk from my family, from cows we raised and a place we built.’ It’s just a really cool feeling to have it all come full circle.”

Paving the way for the future

Frank is proud of what he and Annette have achieved, and he can’t wait to see what else his sons do.

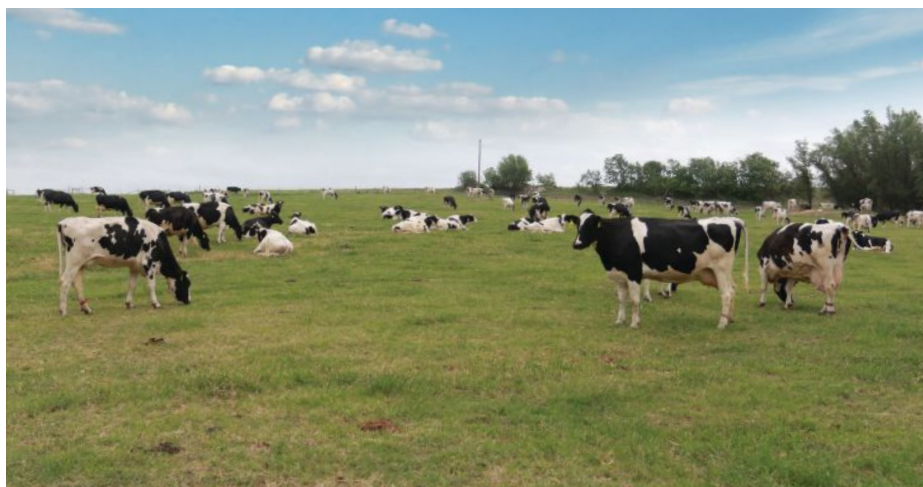
“The challenges when you come to a new country can be big, but I think when you’ve been instilled with family values, hard work and dedication, it will pay off. We could not have imagined or even dreamed of where we are today,” he said. “And our sons are our partners in this business now. They know every morning why they wake up and why the hours are long. That’s how we envisioned to build that legacy—for them to be part of it by their labor and by owning a part of it. And we know they’ll make it even more successful by working together.”

As she looks at her sons and their families, Annette can’t help but feel they’ve achieved their own version of the American dream.

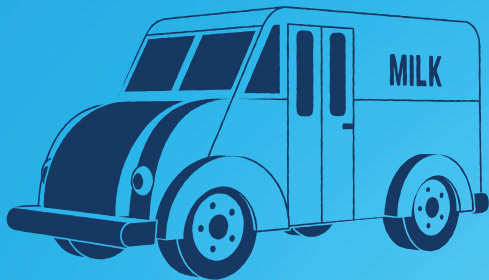
“It was not easy coming over here with two little kids and having no babysitter, trying to milk the cows ourselves. We did not speak the language well when the oldest two first went to school,” she said. “But just being here at the dairy with all the kids and them growing up close to the cows and doing their chores and helping Frank...it was a very, very good feeling.”

Now the next generation of Vollemans are learning life lessons in the family venture.

“It is very rewarding to see the boys now become part of our operation, all four working together. And now two of our sons have their little ones and bring them along, too,” Annette said. “I think it’s awesome to see us all growing as a huge, big family and running a business together. All in little different departments, maybe one with the cows, the other one with the feed, the other one with the milk, and the other one with the heifers and all of that. But still, all growing together.”



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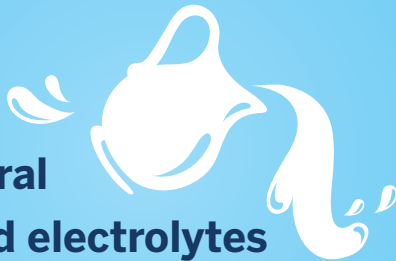
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Eliminating stepped-up tax basis could end family farms

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Tax increase proposals announced by the Biden administration would repeal several tax provisions that could spell disaster for family farms and ranches.

The increases are touted as ways to ensure wealthy Americans pay their fair share of taxes. But while family farms and ranches may appear to be sources of wealth on paper, most of the value is tied up in land and equipment.

Currently, capital gains are taxed when an asset is sold, explained Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) National Legislative Director Laramie Adams. Transfers at death are not treated as a sale, so the capital gain is not taxed. Heirs inheriting farmland may also increase the tax basis of the property to fair market value without paying capital gains tax, “stepping up” the property to current value.

This means if a property is sold right now, capital gains taxes are only paid on appreciation since that property was inherited. The current top capital gains tax rate is 20%.

But enacting capital gains taxes at death and eliminating or scaling back the step up in basis tax provision on inherited farmland would likely force many of these

small operations to sell land or equipment to pay the taxes.

“The step up in basis is a tax tool farmers and ranchers routinely use in passing operations and land from one generation to the next. If stepped-up basis is taken away from them, taxes would likely significantly exceed annual income generated by the land, which means they would probably have to liquidate to pay the taxes and lose their family land and livelihood,” Adams said. “That’s not fair to those families who are working to preserve that operation for the next generation, and that’s not how things are done in this country. We don’t reward hard work by effectively taking away their children’s right to inherit.”

Fourth-generation farmer and rancher Pat McDowell said his family has worked for over a century to get to where they are today. He and his two brothers grow cotton, corn, hay and wheat in the Texas Panhandle, where they also have a cow-calf and stocker operation.

There are plans to transfer the farm to his niece and her husband after the current generation retires, but changes to these tax provisions would be devastating and could unravel a family legacy.

“If the stepped-up basis went

away, she’d be taxed on an asset that was purchased so many years ago, and at such an old value, that inflation is going to make their taxes so much higher than what they’d ever bargained for,” McDowell, TFB District 1 state director, said. “Our ranch has been in our family for such a long time, the land has significantly appreciated in value since it was purchased. It’s not really fair to her, or any future generation, to pay taxes on the full increase in value from when it was purchased 150 years ago or whenever. Taxes shouldn’t drive someone out of business just because they may have to sell some land.”

Although eliminating stepped-up basis could present problems for his niece and future generations, McDowell said enforcing capital gains tax at death would be “disastrous.”

“It could be goodbye ranch, goodbye 100 years,” he said. “All the things that we’ve worked to keep together...if we had to pay taxes at death, that would basically be the end of the operation. That’s it, end of story.”

A recent report for the Family Business Estate Tax Coalition confirmed McDowell’s warnings. The study found middle-class, family-owned businesses would be hardest hit by a repeal of the

step-up in basis tax provision.

The elimination of stepped-up basis would lead to a decline of 80,000 jobs each year for 10 years, and in the long run, a 100,000-job decrease each year thereafter. It would also cause a \$10 billion decrease in the gross domestic product each year, amounting to \$100 billion over a 10-year period.

These proposed tax increases and repeals would impact family farms and ranches of all sizes, so it’s important that lawmakers hear from their constituents on this matter, Adams noted.

“American Farm Bureau Federation and Texas Farm Bureau are working diligently with our lawmakers to make sure everyone is aware of how detrimental these changes could really be for family farms and ranches,” he said. “We are encouraging our members to reach out and share their concerns with us and their legislators, because this is a very real, very urgent issue, and family legacies are at stake. The difference in being able to pass your farm or ranch down to your children or grandchildren hangs in the balance, so this is definitely something we need all our members to engage in and act upon.”

More information on the topic is available [here](#).



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TFB 2021 scholarship winners named

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) announced the organization's 2021 scholarship recipients, awarding \$199,500 to graduating high school seniors and enrolled college students this spring.

"These scholarships from Texas Farm Bureau help students pursue educational opportunities and puts them on the path to finding a career they are passionate about," said Whit Weems, TFB director of Organization. "We are proud to

invest in their future and the future of Texas."

Thirteen graduating seniors were awarded Young Farmer & Rancher scholarships. One student received the Dick Mitchell Memorial Scholarship, and 13 seniors were awarded district memorial and honorary scholarships.

An additional 39 high school seniors received district scholarships.

Enrolled college students also received financial assistance from TFB.

Three Young Farmer & Rancher Enrolled College Student scholarships were awarded, and four additional college students received the Student Teaching Award Scholarship, which will assist recipients with expenses associated with off-campus student teaching.

The \$20,000 S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award winner will be announced later this month. The scholarship honors S.M. True Jr., a former TFB president, and his commitment to agriculture.

TFB also awards \$25,000 to high school students through FCCLA, Texas 4-H and Texas FFA, as well as \$1,500 through the Texas Rural Education Association Scholarship. (See next page.)

TFB's Free Enterprise Speech Contest winners were awarded \$27,500 in scholarships, and \$35,000 was made available to students through Texas State Technical College.

To view the list of scholarship recipients, visit texasfarmbureau.org/youth-opportunities.

Sloan receives TFB S.M. True Jr. Scholar Award

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A Texas Tech University student with a passion for agriculture received Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) most prestigious scholarship.

Riley Sloan of Rochester is the recipient of the 2021 S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award. The \$20,000 scholarship is presented annually to a deserving student in honor of former TFB President S.M. True Jr.

"President True lived an inspiring life and had a passion for agriculture, farmers, ranchers and rural communities. This scholarship recognizes students who share a similar dedication to agriculture and leadership," TFB President Russell Boening said.

Sloan is a junior at Texas Tech University majoring in Animal Science and Business. He grew up on his family's small Brangus cow-calf operation in Rochester.

"I'm the fifth generation on our land," Sloan said. "My family and I take pride in what we do."

Throughout his high school and college career, Sloan has devoted himself to learning more about different aspects of agriculture.

In high school, he was active in 4-H and FFA, exhibiting livestock and competing in various contests. He also participated in youth programs offered by Haskell County Farm Bureau and TFB, attended the Youth Leadership Conference

and returned the following year to serve as a junior counselor.

At Texas Tech, Sloan was a member of the 2020 National Champion Meat Judging Team.

He is currently on the Meat Animal Evaluation Team, striving for similar successes he had with the meat judging team.

Sloan works at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Lubbock.

After completing his undergraduate degree, the Haskell County Farm Bureau member hopes to pursue his master's degree in an ag-related field.

"Being selected to receive this scholarship is humbling and exciting," he said. "Having the support of Texas Farm Bureau, Haskell County Farm Bureau and so many others helps me to know that I'm on the right path and inspires me to work harder and find more ways to contribute to the agricultural industry."

Four other finalists for the award were:

- Emily Brite, a junior at Texas A&M University from Hood-Somervell County Farm Bureau



RILEY SLOAN

2021 Texas Farm Bureau
S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award winner

- Clayton Elbel, a junior at Texas A&M University from Comal County Farm Bureau

- Kristen Massingill, a sophomore at Connors State College from Hamilton County Farm Bureau

- Miles Mathis, a junior at Texas A&M University from Kleberg-Kenedy County Farm Bureau

The finalists each earned a \$1,000 scholarship.

The TFB board of directors established the S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award in 2014 to recognize True's commitment to agriculture.

True served as TFB president from 1982 to 1993 and had a passion for improving the lives of his fellow farmers and ranchers. He

believed Farm Bureau was the organization that best represented agriculture because of its grassroots orientation. True maintained a keen interest in farm and agricultural issues until his death in 2012.

To be eligible for the scholarship, a student must have at least 60 hours of college credit and be enrolled in a four-year college or university.

To receive the full amount, the recipient must continue to major in agriculture, maintain a satisfactory grade point average and maintain TFB membership for the duration of the scholarship.

A list of TFB scholarships and youth opportunities can be found at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities>.

TFB awards scholarships to 4-H, FFA, FCCLA students

Each year, in addition to the scholarships available to youth statewide, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) awards scholarships to high school seniors through the Texas FFA Association, Texas 4-H Foundation and the Texas Association of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

TFB is a longtime supporter of the three youth organizations, working with the students on leadership development, service learning and agricultural advocacy and literacy to help cultivate strong leaders for Texas agriculture's future.

Texas FFA recipients



Blake Mills

Blake Mills is the state president of Texas FFA. He graduated from Center Point High School and plans to attend Texas Tech University to major in agriculture and applied economics.

He was active in his FFA chapter where he participated in several career development events and exhibited livestock at county and state stock shows.

In addition to being the Texas FFA state president, Mills was active in UIL One Act Play, a PALs mentor and a leader in several student organizations on campus.



Emilee Sanderson

Emilee Sanderson is the first vice president of Texas FFA. She graduated from Blackwell High School and plans to attend Texas Tech University to major in agriculture and applied economics.

In addition to serving as an FFA officer, Sanderson competed in five varsity sports, UIL speech and debate, as well as exhibited sheep at state and county shows.

She is active in her church and enjoys studying agricultural policy and was a part of the Congressional Youth Advisory Committee for U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway.

Texas 4-H recipients



Jack Bishop

Jack Bishop graduated from Needville High School and plans to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering at Texas A&M University.

He was a member of Fort Bend County 4-H Club, including the 4-H Youth Pork Producers, where he served as president from 2018-2021. He was also the Fort Bend County Council president, Blue Baron 4-H president and served on various livestock committees.

He is the recipient of a Gold Star Award, the highest award a 4-H member may receive. Bishop also showed livestock through 4-H.



Garrett Meier

Garrett Meier graduated from Bandera High School and plans to pursue a business degree at Texas A&M University.

He was a member of the Pioneer 4-H Club and active in shooting sports, participated in livestock judging and showed cattle and sheep.

He was a county council delegate in 2016, 2018 and 2019 and district council delegate in 2017. Meier served as president of the Bandera 4-H County Council and was president of the Bandera County 4-H Shotgun Club. He also volunteered for various 4-H and community events.

Texas FCCLA recipient



Hailie Council

Hailie Council graduated from Three Rivers High School and plans to attend Texas A&M University to major in biomedical sciences and eventually become an oncologist.

In addition to serving as a state FCCLA officer, Council was the reporter for her local FFA chapter and chapter president of the National Honors Society. She participated in one-act play, UIL speaking and writing events, FFA speaking events and student council. She also served as a Boys and Girls Club mentor and assisted with the monthly food drives at her church.



2022 SCHOLARSHIP
applications and eligibility
 will be available in **late December**.

For more information on youth activities and opportunities, visit [texasfarmbureau.org/youth](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/youth)

Prairie Lea students build new ag barn

**By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor**

Kids who attend school in the small community of Prairie Lea will soon have an animal barn, thanks to the dedication of school administrators and hard work from enterprising students.

"It was the superintendent, school board and community's dream to have an agricultural education program and FFA here," Charles Wright, Prairie Lea ISD principal, said. "We already had a very solid career and technical education (CTE) program and having that will just make it even stronger."

Wright, who joined the Prairie Lea faculty last July, has an expansive background in CTE and agricultural sciences from his prior role as CTE administrator at Cleveland and Van Vleck ISDs, as well as a teaching certification in vocational agriculture. He understands the value of offering agricultural experiences to youth.

"I was eager to start an agriculture program and create an FFA chapter when I arrived, but year one you want to see how things work. Then, we had the pandemic that really threw everyone for a loop," he said. "We had a great [Skills USA](#) team built by Mr. Hardaway over the years. We wanted to be sure we weren't taking away from that."

The district went from offering two CTE

classes to five in one school year. Along with the construction trades and small engines classes offered by longtime Prairie Lea teacher Shelly Hardaway, students can enroll in several other CTE options.

There is room for both FFA and Skills USA classes in the growing district, however. With eight class periods each day, students will be able to participate in both programs. Hardaway, whom Wright described as the "kingpin of the school community," said his students could even build a barn to house animal projects for the new agricultural sciences program.

"Mr. Hardaway's students have been building things around here for 30 years," Wright said. "His classes built the elementary wing, so we knew they were up to the task, for sure."

Thus began a new era for Prairie Lea students. And the search for an agricultural science teacher was on.

"We put our feelers out and talked to a lot of people. Many came through the doors wanting to talk about the ag facility were amazed that we're a school over 150 years old with no ag department," Wright said. "But when I met Ms. Hess, I knew she was the best fit. She's the right person to charter the Prairie Lea FFA and bring agricultural education to our students."

A Caldwell County native, Erin Hess said she

is excited to begin her own career by building the first FFA chapter in Prairie Lea ISD history.

At the recent ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Prairie Lea ISD agricultural barn, Caldwell County Farm Bureau board members Brian Nielsen and Billy Ray Buckner visited with Hess.

"We introduced ourselves to Ms. Hess, made her aware of who we are and what we do and talked to her about the teachers' programs available through Texas Farm Bureau," Nielsen, whose children attend Prairie Lea schools, said. "We are very excited for the new programs and that there will be FFA at the school now. We wanted to let her know that Farm Bureau is here to support her and help out with those educational efforts."

Hardaway's students have completed the exterior of the building and will work with Hess to determine layout and placement of animal enclosures over the next several months.

"We will have a traditional FFA chapter for high school students and junior FFA for grades three and up that can show animals under the Prairie Lea FFA chapter," Wright said. "This barn is a big step forward in making those plans and dreams come true, and we're just looking forward to the next school year and getting things up and running."



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FARMERS, RANCHERS SHARE BORDER CRISIS STORIES ONLINE

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas farmers and ranchers who live and work near the southern border say the recent surge of immigrants illegally crossing into the U.S. has significantly increased.

The crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border threatens their personal safety, overwhelms local resources and causes serious financial hardship and disruption.

Fences are sometimes cut as illegal immigrants move across farms and ranches. Others are destroyed in bail-outs during high speed chases.

Homes and barns are vandalized. Equipment and vehicles are stolen. Clothes, backpacks, other items and trash are left behind in the “camps” as illegal immigrants move through their property, leaving farmers and ranchers left to clean up the mess. And fear and anxiety are high for families concerned about their safety.

To help bring awareness to the border crisis and the impacts on rural families, Texas farmers and ranchers continue to share their stories online through Texas Farm Bureau’s (TFB) Border Crisis Impacts webpage.

The webpage was launched in late April to highlight the ongoing struggles of farm and ranch families along the border.

“The impacts of the border crisis are many,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “Farm and ranch families are bearing the brunt of this unprecedented influx. The personal accounts on the webpage are real.”

One South Texas rancher describes how he grew up on the family ranch near the border and how he was accustomed to three to four illegal immigrants crossing the ranch each month. But, now, the situation has changed.

“The situation has changed 100%. We have immigrants coming through the ranch, not three or four a month like in the past,” he said. “Just yesterday, we had 30 immigrants come through the ranch. The day before that, 40 immigrants came

through the ranch. I think we had a total last week of about 140.”

In May, five young migrant girls were found alone by Jimmy Hobbs on his ranch near the Rio Grande River as temperatures soared past 100 degrees.

For Stephanie Crisp-Canales, it’s important to share her perspective of the border crisis to raise awareness of the conditions of living near the border.

“Unless you have been here and have lived here, you really have no idea just how bad it is,” she said.

After sharing her story with TFB and on social media, Crisp-Canales has been interviewed by numerous media outlets, including Fox News.

“We have had multiple bail-outs a day. We’ve never had that before,” she said. “The landowner isn’t compensated at all. We have to pay to fix our fences, to replace our gates. When this is happening multiple times a day, this is costly.”

But it’s also the extra stress and worry.

“When we go to check our cattle now, if my husband gets out to open a gate, I have to be watching. If I get out and open a gate, he’s watching. There have been numerous ranchers that have been assaulted while they were opening a gate because illegals would come up on them because they want their vehicle,” she said.

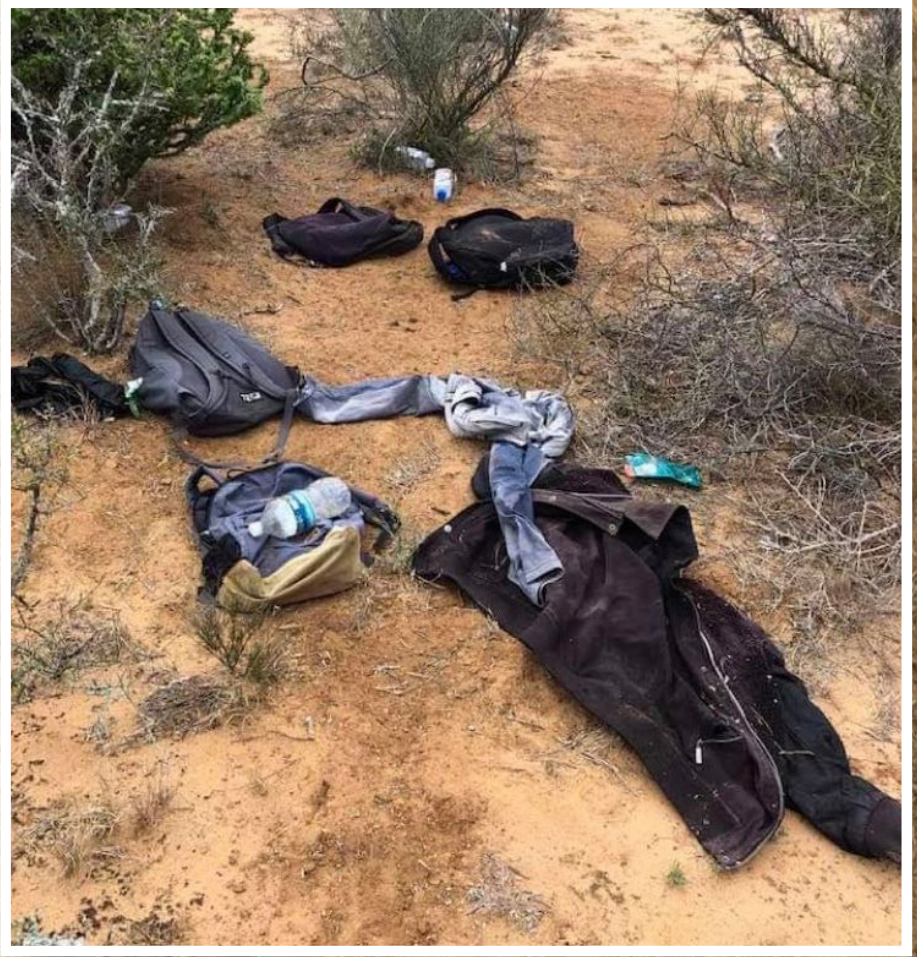
Crisp-Canales and her husband raise cattle and have two children.

“When you’re on your own property and you don’t feel safe, it’s really unnerving. It really is. But that’s what we’re dealing with down here,” she said. “It’s like nothing we have ever seen before. I really hope something can be done.”

TFB believes the U.S. must secure its borders and enforce lawful immigration, and the organization asks federal and state authorities to help mitigate the border problem as soon as possible.

Farmers and ranchers from Arizona and New Mexico are also sharing their stories of financial hardship and disruption on the TFB Border Crisis Impacts webpage.

View all of the stories on [texasfarmbureau.org/border-crisis-impacts](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org/border-crisis-impacts).



“ When you’re on your own property and you don’t feel safe, it’s really unnerving. It really is. But that’s what we’re dealing with down here. It’s like nothing we have ever seen before. ”

– **Stephanie Crisp-Canales**

Texas Farm Bureau lends helping hand following winter storm

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Through the Helping Hands co-op contribution program, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and county Farm Bureaus donated \$262,197 to community food and emergency relief efforts following February's winter storm.

The Lone Star State faced a tough start to the year when the storm dealt another blow to Texans who were still reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resources were stretched thin, and the list of people and organizations needing assistance after the record-breaking winter storm was long.

The Helping Hands program established by TFB aimed to meet a variety of needs in communities across the state.

"This unprecedented weather event brought new hardships to Texans who were already struggling with loss of employment, fewer resources available and other issues related to the pandemic," TFB President Russell Boening said. "This program assisted county Farm Bureaus in lending a helping hand to the local communities."

In 2020 and 2021, TFB and county Farm Bureaus contributed a total of \$815,996 in community food and emergency relief efforts. Donations in 2020 were made through Feeding the Need and Feeding Texas co-op contribution programs.

Through the Helping Hands program, TFB provided a 2-to-1 match for county Farm Bureau contributions up to \$750 for any qualified donation. Entities that provide food and shelter or meet other basic needs were a priority, as well as other non-profits that were affected by this historic weather event.

A total of 123 county Farm Bureaus participated in the program, donating \$98,384 directly to local food and emergency relief organizations. TFB matched \$163,813, WWW.TEXASFARMBUREAU.ORG



Hale County Farm Bureau leaders and family helped pack bags as part of its donation to Planview Snack Pak 4 Kids. The group also donated money to help purchase the items included in the snack packs. Courtesy photo.



Brazos County Farm Bureau used the Helping Hands program to donate to three local charity organizations that provide food assistance and other forms of aid to Brazos County residents in need. Courtesy photo.

further increasing the impact of the statewide program.

"This program put the decision of how best to make an impact in the hands of county Farm Bureaus to maximize the co-op contribution from the state organization," Boening said. "Our county organizations and Farm Bureau members stepped up to help provide assistance in a time of high demand."

Several county Farm Bureaus

made donations to Meals on Wheels, food pantries, volunteer fire departments and a weekend snack program for kids. Others donated to community organizations and charitable groups.

Donations came in all shapes, sizes and amounts. County leaders also contributed their time and coordinated logistics for donations.

"We're proud our county Farm Bureaus and state organization

County Farm Bureaus donated
\$379,241
directly to community
food-relief organizations

TFB matched
\$174,557
to further increase the
impact of the county
donations across the
Lone Star State

TFB also donated
\$25,000
to Meals on Wheels Waco,
bringing the total Farm Bureau
contribution in 2020 to
\$578,799

could lend a hand during these trying times. Farm Bureau considers itself one big family, and we set out to help as many folks as we could during this time of need—just like family would do," Boening said. "Farm Bureau's commitment to agriculture and communities has never wavered during a time of need, including Winter Storm Uri and the ongoing pandemic."

The program ran from Feb. 18 through April 30.




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MASTER THE GRILL WITH THESE TIPS

FIRE UP THE GRILL



HEAT GRILL
to 400°F.



**4x4
METHOD**

TEST HEAT

Place hand 4 inches above heat source for 4 seconds before the heat requires you to remove your hand = 400°F.



PRO TIP

The single-layered grid pattern (shown above) prevents hot and cold spots on the grill and ensures even cooking.



PRO TIP

Always start with a clean grill. Allow the fire to heat the grates to make cleaning easier. Use a grill brush, ball of tightly wrapped foil and/or half an onion to remove any remaining bits from the grates.

GRILLING BASICS

The following steps are part of a popular method for preparing steak, but it's also the one that tends to worry a lot of beginner cooks. But when you follow these steps (and allow yourself a little practice), you'll find grilling is easy and—most importantly—very satisfying.

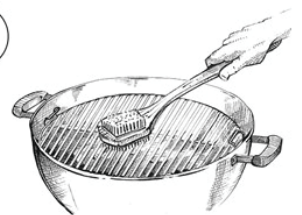
1



PREP PAYS OFF

Some grill experts emphasize the importance of bringing steaks to room temperature before grilling, but we don't recommend it for food safety reasons. Likewise, our cooking chart (on the next page) is based on the meat going directly from chill to grill. So plan on pulling the meat from the fridge, seasoning well and getting started right away.

2



FIRE IT UP

Make sure your grill grate is clean. If you're using charcoal, follow the directions for how much you'll need and how to build the charcoal pile. For gas grills, refer to your owner's manual and set the grill to medium.

COOK YOUR STEAK

IT'S EASY!



Place steaks on the grill.



Flip steak when juices begin pooling on the top and it is easily removed from grates.



Flip steak only once.



PRO TIP

Use tongs instead of a fork to turn steaks. This keeps delicious juices inside and prevents steak from drying out.

COOK TIMES

Approx Total Cooking Time in Minutes For Medium Rare (145°) to Medium (160°)

BEEF CUT	THICKNESS/WEIGHT	CHARCOAL GRILL	GAS GRILL
Flat Iron	8 oz. each	10-14	12-16
Ribeye (boneless)	¾ inch 1 inch	7-10 10-14	7-9 10-14
Strip	¾ inch 1 inch	7-10 11-14	7-10 11-15
Top Sirloin	¾ inch 1 inch 1½ inch	7-11 11-15 22-26	8-13 13-16 24-30
Skirt	1-1½ lbs	7-12	8-12
Flank	1½-2 lbs	11-16	16-21



For a complete grilling timetable, please visit BeefLovingTexans.com

3



GRILL, BABY, GRILL

Use an instant-read thermometer to monitor doneness, and let it go—don't flip the steaks so much! One flip is usually all you need, but take care to avoid charring or burning and be ready to turn down the heat (or move to a cooler spot on the grill) if necessary. Keep in mind the internal temperature will continue to rise for a few minutes after coming off the grill.

4



REST & RELAX

Here's another step novice cooks often overlook: resting the meat before serving—even if you're hungry. It's seriously worth the wait, because it prevents all those tasty juices from draining onto your plate. For most grill-friendly cuts, about five minutes is enough.

5



FINISHING TOUCHES

If you're slicing the steak before serving, be sure to cut across the grain to maximize tenderness.



THIS IS FARM BUREAU

TFB to offer campaign seminar this September

Many private citizens feel a call to serve others in an official capacity, but it can be intimidating to leave the quietness of relative anonymity and campaign for public office.

To help begin that journey, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) will host a two-day strategy seminar this September for candidates, spouses and others involved or interested in the campaign process.

"This seminar is to train people that want to run for office about best management practices as far as running a campaign. Things like candidate consideration, issues, communication tactics, volunteers and election strategy will be covered," TFB Associate Director of Government Affairs Billy Howe said. "It's geared toward those who want to run and either their spouse or campaign manager. We also encourage anyone to attend who just wants to learn more about how campaigns function and understand the entire process better."

A campaign training seminar program was implemented with the help of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) in the 1980s.

The information, strategies, videos and training sessions are continually updated and revamped for today's challenges and political climate.

It's important to help find and train candidates who are well-versed in production agriculture and understand the challenges faced by the rural Texans, farmers and ranchers, Howe noted.

"One of our goals as an organization is to have more people in elected office that are involved in agriculture or have firsthand knowledge of agriculture," he said. "If we can help them understand how to run an effective campaign and get elected, that meets one of our main organizational goals and provides farmers and ranchers another voice in the legislative process or local governments."

The seminar will be held Sept. 29-30 at the Texas Farm Bureau Conference and Training Center in Waco.

Topics covered include evaluating the candidate and electorate, selecting campaign theme and issues, campaign structure, role of a campaign manager, budget-



ing, identifying voters, using polls, Election Day activities and much more.

The event runs from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday.

"This seminar provides all the information necessary to run a successful political campaign," Howe said. "Many of our current elected officials have participated in the process and found it very valuable in preparing them to step into public office for the first time. No matter at what level, if you're considering running for office, it's definitely a worthwhile investment of your time and money."

Registration is \$100 per candidate and \$100 per spouse or campaign manager attending alone.

If the spouse or campaign manager is attending with the candidate, the cost is \$60. One \$40 member discount per candidate is available for those with a current TFB membership.

The registration fee covers candidate materials, a mock interview video, two breakfasts and lunches and one dinner. Lodging is separate. Hotel reservations are available by contacting Betsy Simon by phone at 800-537-8294 or email at bsimon@txfb.org.

[Click here](#) to sign up by Aug. 30.

TFB members get discounts on American, Texas flags

A new member benefit is available to help Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members showcase their pride in America and Texas.

Through the Fly the Flag program, TFB members receive discounts on purchases of American and Texas flags.

"The Fly the Flag program gives county Farm Bureaus and members the chance to demonstrate their patriotism by purchasing and displaying American and Texas flags," Whitney Richter, TFB Member Benefits marketing coordinator, said. "As Americans and Texans, we have a strong heritage of patriotism and pride in our country and in our state. This is grounded by our faith and rural

values, and it is supported by our organization's grassroots policy."

TFB members get discounts from two Texas vendors: Dixie Flag and Banner Company and Kronberg's Flags and Flagpoles.

At Dixie Flag and Banner Company in San Antonio, orders may only be placed by phone at 210-227-5039. Use code **TXFB10** for a 10% discount. For more product information and selection, visit www.dixieflag.com.

TFB members get a 15% discount at Kronberg's Flags and Flagpoles in Houston. Orders may only be placed by phone at 713-661-9222. Use code **TXAG15** for a 15% discount. For more product information and selection,



visit www.kronbergsflagsandflagpoles.com.

"These companies have been in business a minimum of 40 years, and each is offering a discount for our members," Richter said.

If you have questions regarding the Fly the Flag program and the

discount codes, contact Richter at wrichter@txfb.org or 254-751-2644.

The full list of over 60 member benefits and services available to TFB members can be found online at texasfarmbureau.org/memberbenefits.

Texas gains two more seats in Congress after census

The fast-growing Texas population earned the state two additional congressional seats after the 2020 U.S. Census.

For the next decade, Texas will have 38 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“We are glad to see Texas’ political clout expand by adding two new congressional seats. Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) looks forward to building relationships with additional leaders in Congress after restricting is finalized and changes go into effect in 2022,” TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said.

The additional seats also means Texas will now have 40 votes in the Electoral College.

Despite losing one seat after the census, California continues to have the largest congressional delegation and share of Electoral College votes.

Other states losing seats include Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio,

Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Five other states—Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon—are each gaining one seat.

The remaining states will not see changes based on the census.

Texas’ congressional delegation currently includes 22 Republicans and 13 Democrats. One seat remains vacant after the recent death of Republican Ron Wright.

The population in the Lone Star State is now at 29,145,505, which is up significantly from the 25.1 million in 2010.

And the U.S. resident population, which represents the total number of people living in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, was 331,449,281. That’s an increase of 22,703,743 or 7.4% from 308,745,538 in 2010.

Congressional and state House and Senate districts need to be reconfigured before the 2022 elections to account for the state’s ex-



plosive growth in the last decade.

Most population growth continues to be in cities and suburbs, and new districts must be drawn to reflect that.

The impact of the new districts on rural areas will depend on where they are added.

“The Texas State Legislature has the responsibility to redistrict the Texas Senate and House and Congressional districts. However the new districts are drawn, Texas

Farm Bureau will engage and work with new Congressional leaders to show the issues that face farmers and ranchers and help them better understand agriculture,” Adams said.

Redistricting data include the local area counts states need to redraw or “redistrict” legislative boundaries.

The Census Bureau estimates states will receive redistricting data by Aug. 16.



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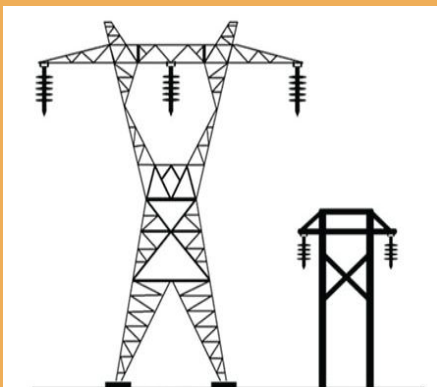
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