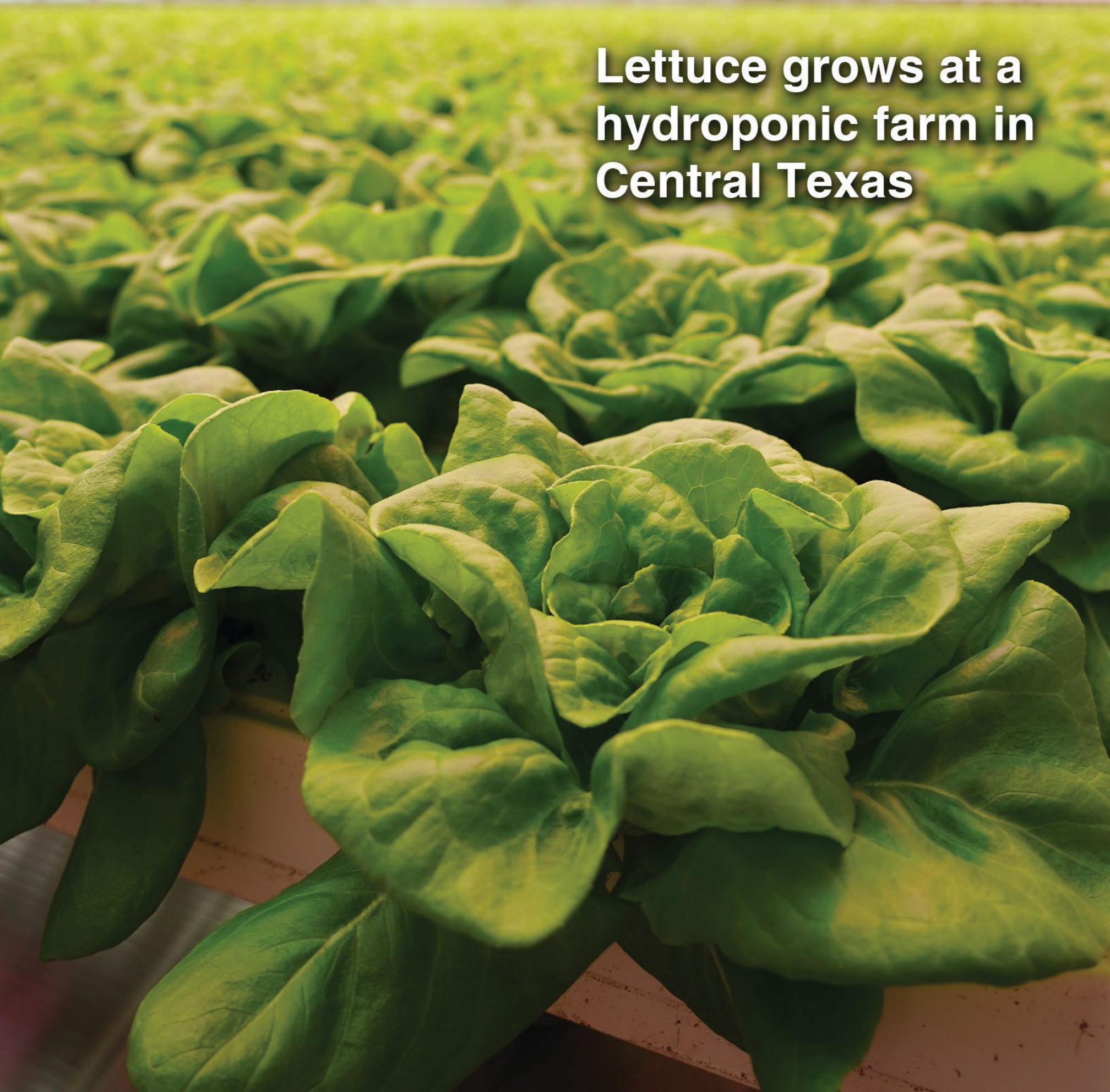


SPRING 2022

texas neighbors

**Lettuce grows at a
hydroponic farm in
Central Texas**





OPINION

Farmers, consumers feel the squeeze of inflation



By Russell Boening
President
Texas Farm Bureau

Texas farmers and ranchers are paying more at the grocery store, just like everyone else. We see the higher cost of food.

The numbers tell the story. The price for groceries jumped 1.4% in February and 8.6% over the past year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported.

The increases seem a bit high? They were. The monthly increase was the largest in about two years, but the 12-month increase was the biggest since the period ending April 1981.

It all helped drive an overall hike in the Consumer Price Index of 7.9% over the past 12 months, also the largest in 40 years.

Dollars are being stretched. It's not an easy time for anybody.

The common assumption is that farmers and ranchers must be benefiting from the higher prices at the grocery store.

Not so much.

For every dollar American consumers spend on food, U.S. farmers and ranchers earn just 14.3 cents, according to the most recent report released recently by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

The farm share of the food dollar is the share received by farmers from the sales of raw food commodities. The marketing share (85.7 cents) is the remainder accruing to food supply chain industries involved in all post-farm activities that culminate in final market food dollar sales.

The increase in food prices we're seeing now at the grocery store are reflections of higher expenses in the food supply chain beyond the farm and ranch gate. The increased costs range from energy to labor to raw materials.

Always remember that entities beyond the farm and ranch can pass their higher costs of business to the consumer.

Farmers and ranchers cannot.

The higher costs for fuel, fertilizer, water, equipment, seed and crop protection chemicals being paid by the farmer and rancher are absorbed by the farmer and rancher. The slim margins of profit shrink as each price increase is absorbed.

The quote from President John F. Kennedy still holds true nearly 60 years later, "The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways."

It's a perilous time for U.S. agriculture. Production expenses are forecast to increase 5.1% this year. This follows a 9.4% increase in nominal expenses in 2021.

Some production inputs, such as fertilizer, are 200-300% higher in price than a year ago. The extremely high costs are not sustainable. How many businesses can absorb these types of increases?

As an agricultural economics graduate of Texas A&M University, I understand the financial dynamics and risks of modern agriculture. It doesn't make it any easier, though, to withstand the headwinds of today's economy.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

04

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

Get to the science of agriculture with Texas Farm Bureau workshops

06

LETTUCE GET GROWING!

Lettuce grows at a hydroponic farm in Central Texas

08

WATERING TIPS FOR GARDENS

As your garden grows, be mindful of your water use

11

MAKE THE GRADE AT TRADE SCHOOLS

Trade schools specialize in specific areas of skill

13

TONY ROMO IS BEEF SPOKESPERSON

Tony Romo is promoting all things beef to his fans

14

TEXAS BLUEBONNETS

Bluebonnets are a favorite Texas tradition

17

COWBOY HAT IS A TEXAS ICON

Felt or straw: learn proper cowboy hat etiquette

18

SHEAR SUCCESS

Meet Angora goat farmers in the Texas Hill Country

21

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE RECIPE

Try this tasty recipe made with whipped cream, strawberries and biscuits

23

FIRE DANGER IN TEXAS

Know how to keep your home and property safe

24

WE ARE TEXAS FARM BUREAU

See what's happening at Texas Farm Bureau

26

PLANTING SEEDS FOR TOMORROW

The Goodwin family is planting this year's corn crop

29

SIGN UP FOR STUDENT SUCCESS SERIES

Students in 8th-12th grade can learn more about leadership

30

MEET YOUNG TEXAS FARMERS

Get to know 24 young farmers and ranchers in Texas



Teacher
Professional
Development

Resource

Summer Ag Institute signup open to Texas teachers

**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Texas teachers will learn more about agriculture and how to incorporate agricultural concepts in the classroom through Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Summer Ag Institute (SAI).

"SAI is designed to be a hands-on, immersive experience where teachers truly learn how agriculture is science, math, social studies, technology and so many other subjects they are already teaching in their classrooms," said Jordan Bartels, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Educational Outreach.

The professional development event is set for June 13-16 in Waco.

Teachers get to see the agricultural concepts demonstrated by educational professionals through SAI. They will also make connections with farmers, ranchers and industry professionals.

And there will be several opportunities for teachers to get their hands dirty.

Teachers will visit area farms, ranches and other agricultural businesses, as well as hear from

experts in agriculture and education. Other fun, interactive demonstrations will help connect agriculture to classroom curriculum.

"Over the four-day institute, teachers will get to take part in many hands-on experiences as we cover numerous topics," Bartels said. "But there are two key takeaways for teachers—that agriculture can be incorporated into any classroom subject and there are many resources available from Farm Bureau to help do just that."

Upon completion, teachers bring home activity ideas, lesson plans and a wealth of resources. Teachers also receive 36 hours of continuing professional education credits as authorized by the Texas Education Agency.

Any certified, active K-12 teacher of any subject can register to attend, but Bartels noted the content does have a focus in science.

"Former participants have told us that although the content was focused more on science, they still took home valuable information and benefited from SAI even though they weren't science teachers," she said.

The cost is \$375 per person, which includes lodging and most meals, but sponsorships are often available.

Teachers will be notified of their sponsorship status after registration is complete.

Registration is limited to 50 teachers and closes May 18.

For more information and to register, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aitc or contact Bartels at 254-751-2569 or edoutreach@txfb.org.

Additional information on other educational opportunities can also be found on the [Ag in the Classroom webpage](#).

Summer Ag Institute

June 13-16

Waco

Register by May 18



Teachers encouraged to attend TFB Summer Ag Academies

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Three one-day workshops will be held this summer to help Texas teachers make the connection with agriculture through science and hands-on activities.

The Summer Ag Academies, hosted by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), offer teachers practical experience in agriculture-related concepts, and they can take home free resources to use in their classrooms.

"The Summer Ag Academies are designed to give teachers a hands-on opportunity to learn about agriculture and how it relates to what they are teaching in the classroom," said Jordan Bartels, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Educational Outreach.

These one-day learning opportunities are open to certified, active K-12 Texas teachers and pre-service teachers who are currently enrolled in a college or university education program.

Registration closes two weeks before each event.

There is no cost to attend the academies. Site visits will also be incorporated into

each Summer Ag Academy to help teachers build an understanding of Texas agriculture.

"Site visits give teachers a view into how diverse Texas agriculture really is," Bartels said. "These visits are beneficial because they allow teachers to step foot on farms, ranches and other agricultural operations and truly experience the everyday happenings that relate to what students are learning in the classroom."

For more than 25 years, TFB has hosted professional development events in the summer to help Texas teachers make the connection with agriculture, providing them innovative techniques to incorporate the subject in their curriculum.

"Although the content does have a focus in science, past participants continue to tell us they benefited from the ag academies regardless of the subject they taught," she said. "Participants will take home information, resources and experiences that will help them incorporate agriculture into the classroom."

The curriculum provided by TFB is aligned with Texas teaching standards to help teach-

ers better incorporate the material in the classroom.

Teachers also receive continuing education credits in addition to the resource material.

Additional information and registration details for the Summer Ag Academies are available online at texasfarmbureau.org/aitc.

For more information, contact Bartels at edoutreach@txfb.org or call 254-751-2569.

This year's
Summer Ag Academies
will be held at the
following locations:

July 7 | Brenham

July 12 | Stephenville

July 21 | Canyon

'Lettuce' get growing

*Leafy greens grow at
Central Texas hydroponics farm*





**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Rows and rows of leafy greens, of all sizes and select varieties, span across the greenhouses of TrueHarvest Farms in Belton.

It's where managing partners Jason Maks and Marshall McDaniel planted the roots for their hydroponic farm. They grow, harvest and package lettuce to sell to restaurants, schools and grocery stores.

"At TrueHarvest Farms, we are an indoor ag facility that uses hydroponics, or uses water, basically to provide nutrients to the plants along with water," Maks said.

They grow four varieties of lettuce—a romaine, a butterhead, a red oak leaf and a crispy leaf.

"In an indoor grow facility, we have the ability to manipulate the environment. We have the opportunity to use less water than we would use outside," Maks said.

They can also grow 365 days a year.

"We don't truly have a season," Maks said. "We do have some seasonality in terms of how things can grow and how long it takes to grow. But ultimately, we're able to grow from January to December every year."

In the summer, they can grow lettuce in about 35 days, and it takes up to 60 days in the winter, depending on how much light accumulation takes place.

In the 50,000 square-foot

facility, much of the process is automated to minimize opportunities for contamination and maintain optimal water vapor retention for freshness.

Instead of growing in soil, this farm plants its seeds and irrigates a nutritious solution into peat, an accumulation of partially decayed vegetation or organic matter to set the seeds for germination and growth. The peat, which comes from Eastern Europe, provides a functional substrate for roots to grow and feed the plant.

TrueHarvest Farms also makes its own biodegradable pots to cut down on plastic use.

"We'll plant the seed. We'll give it some water either through a boom irrigation system or through a pressurized drip system," Maks said. "At that point, we'll apply beneficial insects to it, so we don't use pesticides here at TrueHarvest Farms. We take the opportunity instead to use beneficial insects, or the good bugs to fight the bad bugs."

Then, the seed germinates, and it's moved to the greenhouse to for the propagation process.

"Once we get the pot with the seed and now the beneficial insects on it, we take it into a germination. We'll stay in germination a couple of days, let the seed coat crack," he said. "Then, we move it into the greenhouse where it goes through a nursery/propagation process."

At this point, they water overhead through a boom

sprayer before moving the more mature plant once it has root development onto the gutter line.

At the gutter line, the plant is watered underneath through the root system with a nutrient film.

But indoor farming does come with challenges, namely temperature and humidity. TrueHarvest Farms, however, uses computer monitoring systems to help control those factors.

"We use a cloud-based system that allows us to monitor data 24/7 through our phones so that we know what's going on, particularly with the plant," Maks said. "We measure temperature, humidity, vapor pressure deficit. We'll measure air speed. We'll measure moisture content in a pod, among other variables."

Ensuring the facility is properly maintained and that technology is working is essential to keep the farm running.

"I will say that the maintenance function in an indoor grow facility is the most critical function because if the equipment's not working, nobody's growing, nobody's shipping product at the end of the day," he said.

Maks and McDaniel established the hydroponic farm in 2017, began building in 2018 and steadily ramped up production since then.

And the central location of Belton helps them have a large market to sell to.

"We have San Antonio to the

south. We have Dallas/Fort Worth to the north, and then we have Houston to the southeast with Austin really kind of tucked in the middle of all those," he said. "There's 20 million people in this Texas triangle, and it gave us a great opportunity to build a farm to this scale and be able to service those markets."

Neither Maks nor McDaniel have a background in agriculture. But they did extensive research, toured multiple farms, worked with Controlled Environment Agriculture programs at colleges across the country and traveled across Europe to learn more.

"Indoor farming is continuing to grow in the U.S.," he said. "I do believe indoor farming and outdoor farming both have their places. Ultimately, you can't have one without the other. There's certainly an opportunity to learn from one another. I don't look at us as competitors as much as I look at there's an opportunity for us all to be able to supply the world with safe, healthy food."

They broke ground last month on an expansion that will grow the farm five times its current size.

"Now that we have the relationships we do in the field with the great customers that we have, it gives us an opportunity to expand," Maks said.

Growing lettuce and growing relationships—that's the root of TrueHarvest Farms' business plan and future growth.



SPRING GARDENING TIPS

RECYCLE WATER

When it comes to conserving water, small adjustments can really make an impact. Boil eggs in a pot of water? Use it to water your plants once it's cool. If you drop ice cubes, don't throw them in the sink. Instead, drop them in a house plant or your plants on the balcony.

WATER BY HAND

Use a hose rather than sprinklers to save gallons of water when watering your garden. This way you are only providing water directly to the plants.

INSPECT YOUR SPRINKLERS

Have a lawn sprinkler system? Consider having a certified irrigation specialist inspect the system to make sure water isn't being wasted.

MAINTAIN YOUR YARD

Don't over-fertilizer or mow too much. Let your lawn stay around 3 to 4 inches during dry weather and drought conditions. That helps shade the roots, which reduces the amount of water needed.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

It's recommended to water between 4-9 a.m. before the sun gets too hot.

MULCH, MULCH, MULCH

Use mulch to help reduce evaporation and keep the soil cool.

HARVEST RAIN WATER

Have a barrel, bucket, trough or some other container ready to catch rain from your roof or gutters.

DON'T OVERWATER

Sounds simple, we know. But more water is wasted overwatering than any other reason. Overwatering is also bad for the plants, because too much water in the soil stresses the plants' root systems. That contributes to root rot and fungal and bacterial disease.

MORE TIPS

Contact a landscape professional or your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office to consult with experts on soil conditions, watering systems and plants that grow well in your area.



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MAKING THE GRADE:

Trade school draws on work ethic, talent

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

It's a personal choice—trade school, community college, a four-year university or getting a job right out of high school.

The options are many, but they all have a common bottom line: earning a living and building your legacy.

Hard work can be dirty and exhausting. But those dirty jobs can sometimes be the most rewarding. It's not a new or profound message in rural America, but I think it's one that more people need to hear.

Work isn't the enemy, and it's time to rediscover the opportunities all around us.

Trade schools can help.

Trade schools specialize in specific areas of skill. And with a certificate or a degree from a trade school, graduates have access to some of today's most in-demand jobs.

Those are jobs that were deemed essential and critical during COVID-19.

Jobs that power our country and keep our technology up to speed.

Jobs that dish out our favorite cuisine and those that diagnose a glitch or turn a wrench.

Jobs that essentially keep America running.

Even with record unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of skilled jobs remain unfilled, because no one is trained or willing to do them.

Read as: We have a skills gap.

And folks, that's a problem.

We are disconnected from the skilled and critical part of our workforce. Not just farmers and ranchers, but welders, mechanics, plumbers, electricians, pipefitters and everything in between. The jobs we all depend on.

Trades shouldn't be considered as a back-up career, because they are in fact viable, thriving careers.

The stigmas and stereotypes, however, discourage people from pursuing these jobs.

But change can start now. I think we need to reprogram the perception to appreciate hard work and skilled jobs.

Or maybe we should call it what it really is: Talent. And regard it as highly as we do sports and celebrities.

Texas Farm Bureau aims to help those who want to pursue a technical degree from a trade school. If you or an immediate family member or legal guardian are members of Texas Farm Bureau, you may be eligible to receive the Texas Farm Bureau Scholarship from Texas State Technical College. [Click here to find out more.](#)

And if a trade school isn't the route you wish to take, Texas Farm Bureau has scholarships available for high school seniors and enrolled college students. [Click here](#) for more details on eligibility and requirements.

Wherever your path may lead you, I wish you the best of luck and a prosperous future.



2022 Texas Farm Bureau

PHOTO CONTEST

It's time once again for the annual Texas Farm Bureau photography contest, when you or someone you know can share your best photo with the entire Lone Star State and maybe even win a cash prize.

The contest is open to Texas Farm Bureau members or an immediate family member (i.e., spouse, child, sibling, or parent).

Rural settings and rural lifestyles are the preferred themes for all submissions, and contestants are limited to one entry per person. Four top winners will be selected and published in the July edition of *Texas Agriculture* and the summer edition of *Texas Neighbors*.

FIRST PLACE

\$250 cash prize

SECOND PLACE

\$200 cash prize

2 HONORABLE MENTIONS

\$100 cash prize each

Visit texasfarmbureau.org/photo-contest for complete contest rules.

ENTRY DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2022

Tony Romo new spokesperson for beef campaign

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The iconic Beef. It's What's For Dinner. brand, managed by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and funded by the National Beef Checkoff, announced a new partnership with celebrity athlete and former football star Tony Romo at the 2022 Cattle Industry Convention.

"Kicking off this partnership in early 2022 is the perfect time to gear up for summer nutrition and grilling, spending time with friends and family and of course, tailgating," said Sarah Reece, senior executive director of Brand Marketing. "From his nutrition expertise to his love of beef and family, Romo is the perfect spokesperson for the brand."

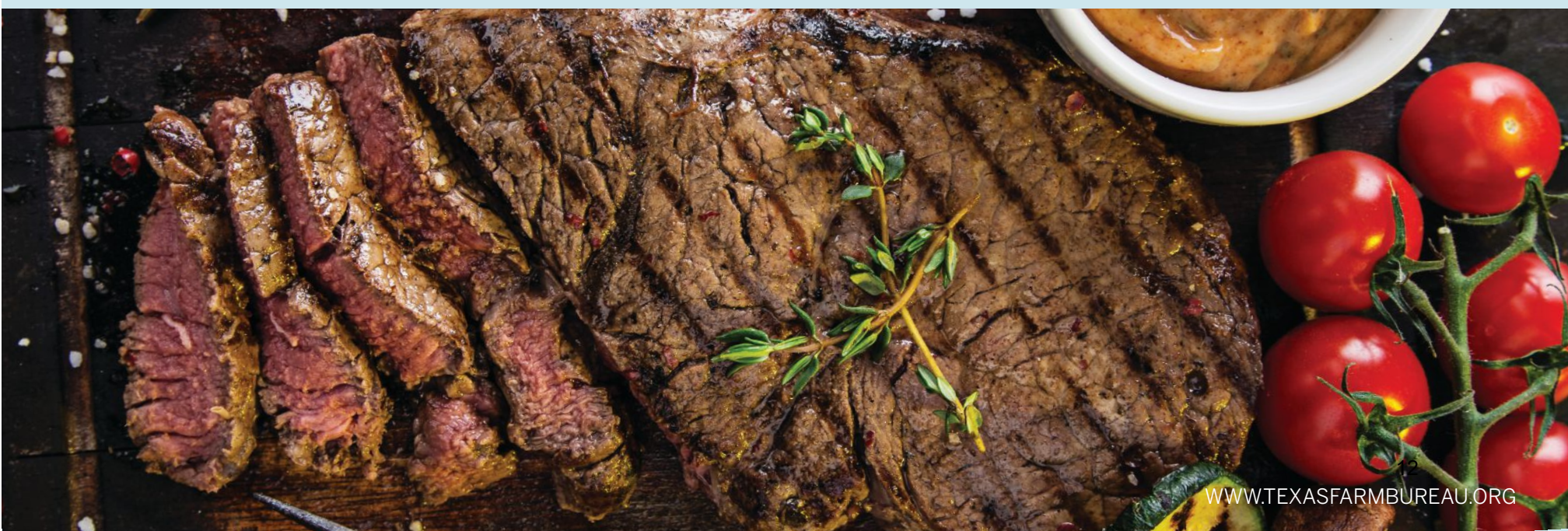
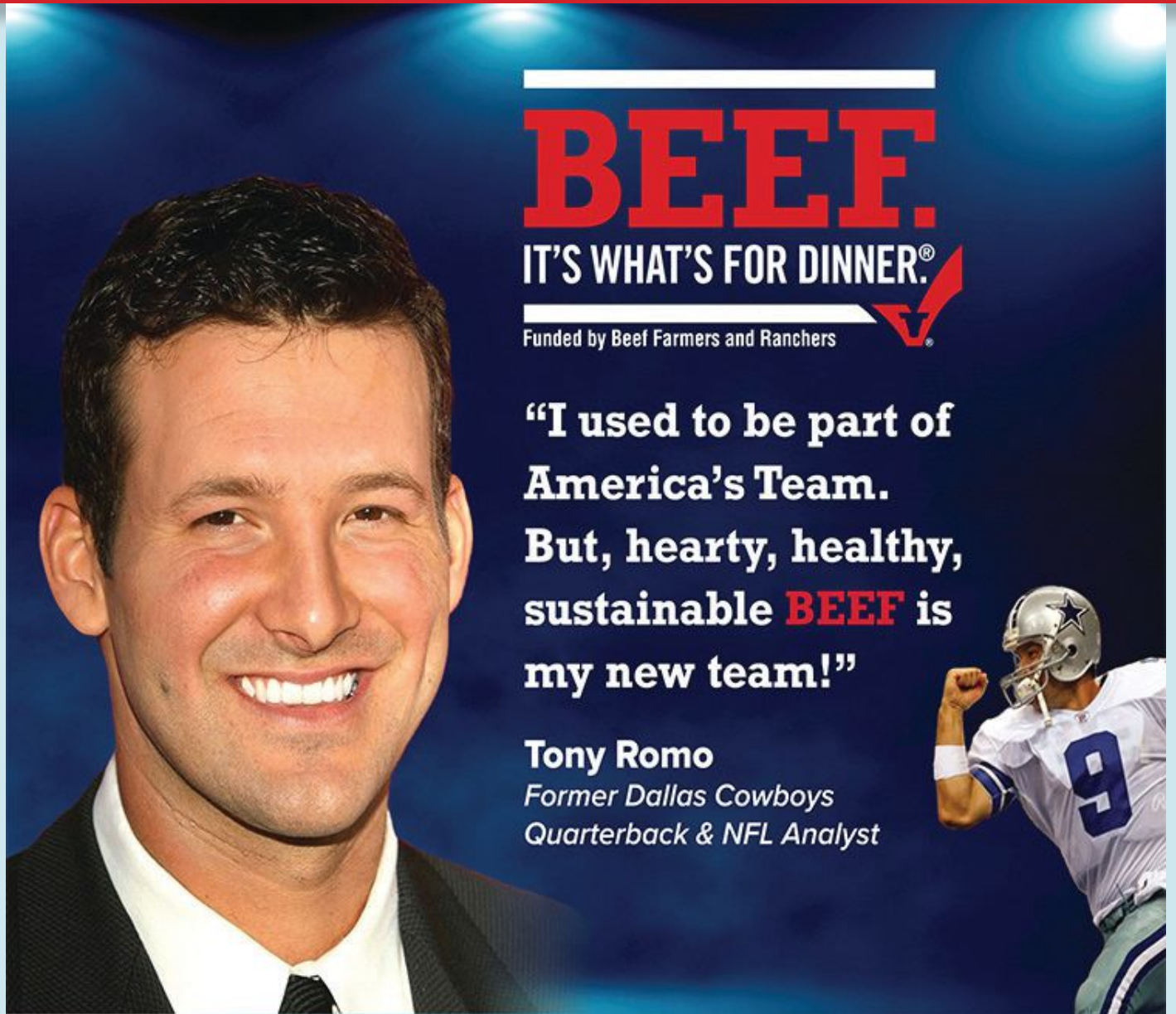
The partnership, which will last one year and tap into Romo's vast fanbase, will promote all things beef—from beef nutrition, to how beef is raised and beef's great taste.

"I'm really excited to be your new spokesperson," Romo said. "Me, my wife and the kids eat beef all the time, and I think we're going to eat it even more if that's even possible at this point. Hearty and sustainable beef is my new team."

In addition to the general consumer appeal associated with celebrity spokespeople, Romo will be featured promoting beef in photo and video advertisements on digital and traditional media platforms. Social media content

also will be developed for organic and promoted posts across the Beef. It's What's For Dinner. social channels and on Romo's personal pages.

To view the latest content and updates on the partnership, make sure to check out [BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com](https://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com) and follow the brand on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).



Spring HAS Spring!



By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Spring has finally sprung! But the beauty we are accustomed to seeing alongside the Texas roadways and in our parks aren't as plentiful. The dry winter left much to be desired in terms of moisture for Texas wildflowers, pastures and crops.

But that doesn't mean we can't relive the beauty from all the gorgeous springs we've had previously. Take a trip down memory lane with some of our favorite wildflower photos in the Lone Star State.

And be patient. We just might see some bright colors popping up in large numbers soon!

When you do find a beautiful patch of bluebonnets or other wildflowers, there are a few things to keep in mind as you snap some photos.

In Texas, **private property means private**. Don't cross the fence. Don't park in someone's driveway. Put simply, don't trespass. That's not the Texan way.

Be safe! Wildflower season means plenty of traffic on the roads, so always pay attention to your surroundings. Stopping on the side of the road can impede traffic, and there's always a risk of someone losing control of their vehicle and running off the road. Be smart and avoid this danger. No photo is worth risking your life or your loved ones' lives!

Check the area before setting up for photos. Wildflowers are perfect ground cover for animals of all kinds, including snakes, insects and the occasional small vermin. Just because you don't see them at first glance doesn't mean they're not around.

You don't have to be a professional photographer to get the shot! Remember to pay attention to lighting and composition. Check for fence posts, power lines and other objects in the background of the photo. The harsh Texas sunlight can be a challenge with photographs. Sometimes you'll need to adjust your subject and angles to get the best shot with the right lighting and composition.

Whether you're using your phone or camera, anyone can take good photos. It just takes a little bit of thought and some practice.

From wildflowers to crops emerging from the ground, the Lone Star State is coming alive again this spring. Take a road trip and enjoy all that our beautiful state has to offer.



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THE COWBOY HAT

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Texas symbol



Ah, spring. That glorious time of year when the temperature is a balmy 68 degrees and the sun's rays gently caress you as you tilt your face lovingly up toward its warmth.

But we're here in Texas, where that gentle interlude lasts about 48 hours. That's IF we're lucky. Then the weather shifts from warm to hot, the sun shines fiercely, and we need a little protection from UV rays.

Luckily for us, Texans are famous for the perfect sun-shading accessory—the cowboy hat. Timelessly stylish, pairs perfectly with boots and protects you from the deadly sun. Sign me up for two, please!

Although the felt hat came first, straw cowboy hats became a popular choice for cowboys of the American Southwest because they block the sun while providing some ventilation.

But if you're going to wear a hat, it's important to know the rules. So, let's talk hat etiquette.

Don't pick up someone else's hat.

First things first. Picking up someone's hat is considered rude, a bit like a stranger picking up a woman's purse. Some hats are quite expensive, and besides, no

one wants someone else's grubby fingerprints all over their headgear.

So just don't do it.

When meeting someone

It used to be that men would remove their hats when meeting a lady, holding it by the crown facing their heart and offer the opposite hand for a handshake. This is a mannerism that has somewhat fallen by the wayside, but many gentlemen still do it—and many ladies still appreciate it.

We also advise removing your hat when meeting your future in-laws or any other person you want to impress favorably for the first time. It makes a nice impression and shows you have good manners.

Another way to greet someone is with a tip of the hat. This ranges from lifting the hat off the head by the crown for a few moments as you walk or drive by to a light tug of the brim in acknowledgement.

Save the hat tip for casual instances. It's not at all rude, just a less-formal gesture.

Inside a building

If you're old-school, always take off your hat when entering a building.

If you're a bit more modern or casual, there are some occasions when hats may be worn inside, like at sale barns, some meetings,

while shopping, inside a dance hall, that sort of thing. We're more relaxed these days, and some of this is regional and some of this is personal preference.

Let the local customs be your guide. If everyone else is similarly topped, let it ride. If others are taking their hats off, perhaps you should do the same.

At a private home, follow the lead of your hosts. If the gentleman or lady of the house normally wears a hat and doesn't have it on, follow suit.

But if you're in a theater, church or courtroom, the hat should not be on your head. Period. Proceed with caution in other state or federal buildings. If it feels like maybe you shouldn't be wearing it there, take it off and tuck it under your arm, with the crown facing away from you and the inside facing toward you.

Other indoor situations where the hat should be removed, no matter the building, include weddings, funerals, during the National Anthem, the Pledge of Allegiance, during prayer and while dining.

And while you're eating, don't lay your hat on the dinner table. Not only is it a social faux pas, you might spill something on it. Set your hat in an empty chair, or

if possible, hang it up when you come in. Many eating establishments in Texas still maintain a hat rack somewhere near the entrance for this purpose.

Outdoor situations

The above rules still apply when enjoying the great outdoors, except while eating. It's perfectly fine to dine al fresco with your hat firmly atop your head. How else will you keep the sun off your noggin?

Another time it's highly appropriate to take off your hat while outside is when a funeral procession is passing. It's considered a sign of respect for the bereaved to hold your hat over your heart as they pass by. While you may not see those folks again, trust me, they'll most likely notice and appreciate your courtesy.

In Summary

There you have it, folks: the basic commandments of wearing a cowboy hat. Things may have changed over the years, but when in doubt, follow the highest form of etiquette and take off your hat. Good manners are never inappropriate, after all.

And for good measure, head on over here to see how to lay down a cowboy hat properly.

We tip our hats to you, fellow Texans!

Shear Success

Angora goats are a staple for Texas ranch family



**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Taking a drive through the Hill Country and West Central Texas offers more than beautiful landscapes. It shows a glimpse into the area's unique agricultural commodity—mohair.

This luxurious, strong fiber comes from Angora goats and makes up a significant portion of the agricultural economy in the Edwards Plateau and the Hill Country. The vast majority of the nation's herd of Angora goats is found in these regions of Texas, cared for by farmers and ranchers.

And two of those Texas producers are Kendall County Farm Bureau members Cody and Melody Kneupper.

Cody's family has been raising Angora goats for generations.

Along with the Angoras, Cody and Melody also raise cattle, fine wool sheep, Boer goats and Spanish goats.

"Angora goats are a special breed of goats," Melody said. "Their hair has a really unique quality that makes it a really strong fiber."

The hair grows about an inch each month, so it's necessary to shear them twice a year—usually in early spring and early fall.

One of the challenges of raising Angoras is finding a crew to shear the goats. The physical labor and the skills needed are reasons why crews are a dying breed.

"Typically, farmers and ranchers don't shear their own goats. They hire shearing crews to come in. There's a few left in this area in Texas, the Edwards Plateau, and a little further out in West Texas, there are a few shearing crews," she said. "There's usually five or six guys at a time that come out, and they set up in a barn or in a covered area on a clean floor."

The shearing process requires every member of the crew to work quickly, yet carefully.

The crew sets up their equipment, including shearers that, in highly-skilled hands, can shave a mature goat in about two minutes.

One by one, goats with a full

coat of mohair are moved to the shearing station.

The pace is fast.

Members of the crew begin shearing. Another person picks up the mohair and places the product into a large sack, aiming to fill the bag with as many pounds as possible.

Then, the sheared goats are turned down the alley to another pen.

"Immediately after they shear the goats, they would either grade the wool right away or send it to a warehouse and grade it there," Melody said. "Then, at the warehouse, it sits and waits until a buyer buys it—maybe a clothing maker, carpet maker or blanket maker. They will then clean and comb the mohair."

Ranchers, like the Kneppers in Kendalia, help provide about 90% of the mohair grown in the United States.

From clothes to carpets, the silky-smooth fleece is a versatile, all-season fiber, appropriate for the ever-changing weather in Texas. It's even flame-resistant and used as a decorating fabric.

And for Cody and Melody, it's part of their livelihood.

"Shearing the goats is not much different than a cotton farmer harvesting cotton or a grain farmer harvesting grain," Melody said. "It's our source of income."

It benefits the goats, too.

"Shearing doesn't hurt the goats. It's actually a relief to them, especially in August or September when it's really hot," Melody said. "It's not painful. These animals were made to grow hair for us to be able to use, and they want it shorn off."

But the Kneppers closely watch the goats after they are shorn, because that is when they are most susceptible to weather conditions.

"We have to provide them cover or shelter for at least a few weeks in case it rains or gets really cold until they get about a half inch of hair back on them," Cody said.

But mohair isn't the only way goats help sustain a productive ranch.

They also help control weeds and brush throughout pastures,



Cody and Melody Kneupper raise Angora goats, Boer goats, Spanish goats, fine wool sheep and cattle in the Hill Country with their two daughters. They are expecting a boy later this year.

which is critical to the long-term health of the land.

"One of the biggest benefits to raising goats on your property is for brush control," Cody said. "Without us raising goats, we would have to manage the land in a totally different aspect that would be very costly. But these goats can do it for us, and then we can benefit from that, as well."

They also handle the Texas heat well, which helps them thrive in the dry climate. Even during times of drought, the goats continue to produce a quality product.

But raising sheep and goats comes with additional challenges, namely a constant threat from predators.

Texas is home to numerous species that prey on livestock. Coyotes, bobcats, foxes, cougars and even feral hogs all take their toll on sheep and goats.

Luckily, area farmers and ranchers, in cooperation with state and federal wildlife experts, have been proactively managing the predator population.

"There's established predator control in this area. They've been controlling the coyotes and foxes

for many years," she said. "So, we don't have as many predators as they do in other places in the state and the landscape, the weather and vegetation that we have here are all just really great for Angora goats."

The challenges of raising them are no match for the satisfaction the couple has when each shearing is complete.

"It's very rewarding being a part of production and agriculture and doing our part to help feed and clothe the world," Cody said.

Their roots are firmly planted in the Hill Country soil, continuing the tradition of raising livestock and a family on the land.

"We love this lifestyle, and Cody and I are so thankful that we get to raise our kids here on the ranch around animals, teaching them compassion and animal husbandry," Melody said. "We do not take this opportunity for granted and realize how fortunate we are to be able to raise our children in this environment. It's days like this working together in the barn or in the pasture and making memories with our family that are just tough to beat."

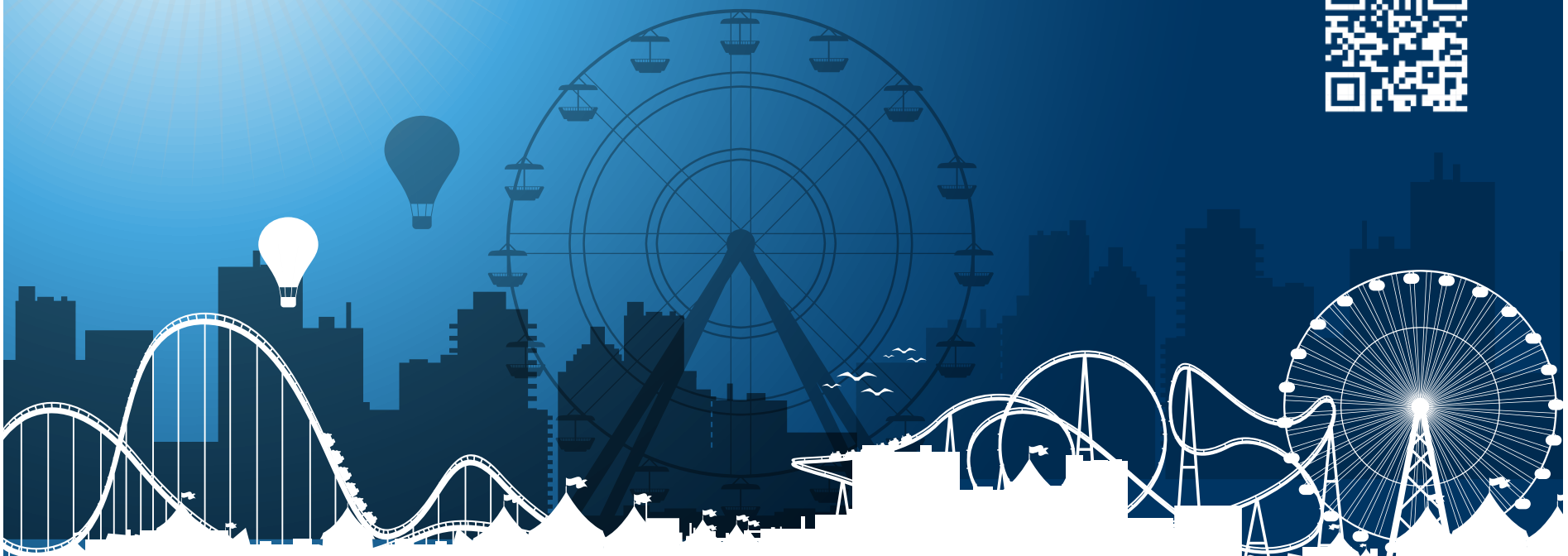
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Strawberry Shortcake

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. strawberries
1 ¼ c. flour
1 ½ c. heavy cream, chilled
4 tbsp. granulated sugar, divided
1 tbsp. brown sugar, packed
1 ¼ tsp. baking powder
1/3 tsp. salt

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.

Wash and slice strawberries.

Stir together with 2 tbsp. granulated sugar.

Cover and refrigerate.

In a large bowl, mix together flour, brown sugar, baking powder and salt.

Slowly mix in 1 cup of heavy cream to create a sticky dough.

Divide the dough into four biscuits and drop on a lined baking sheet.

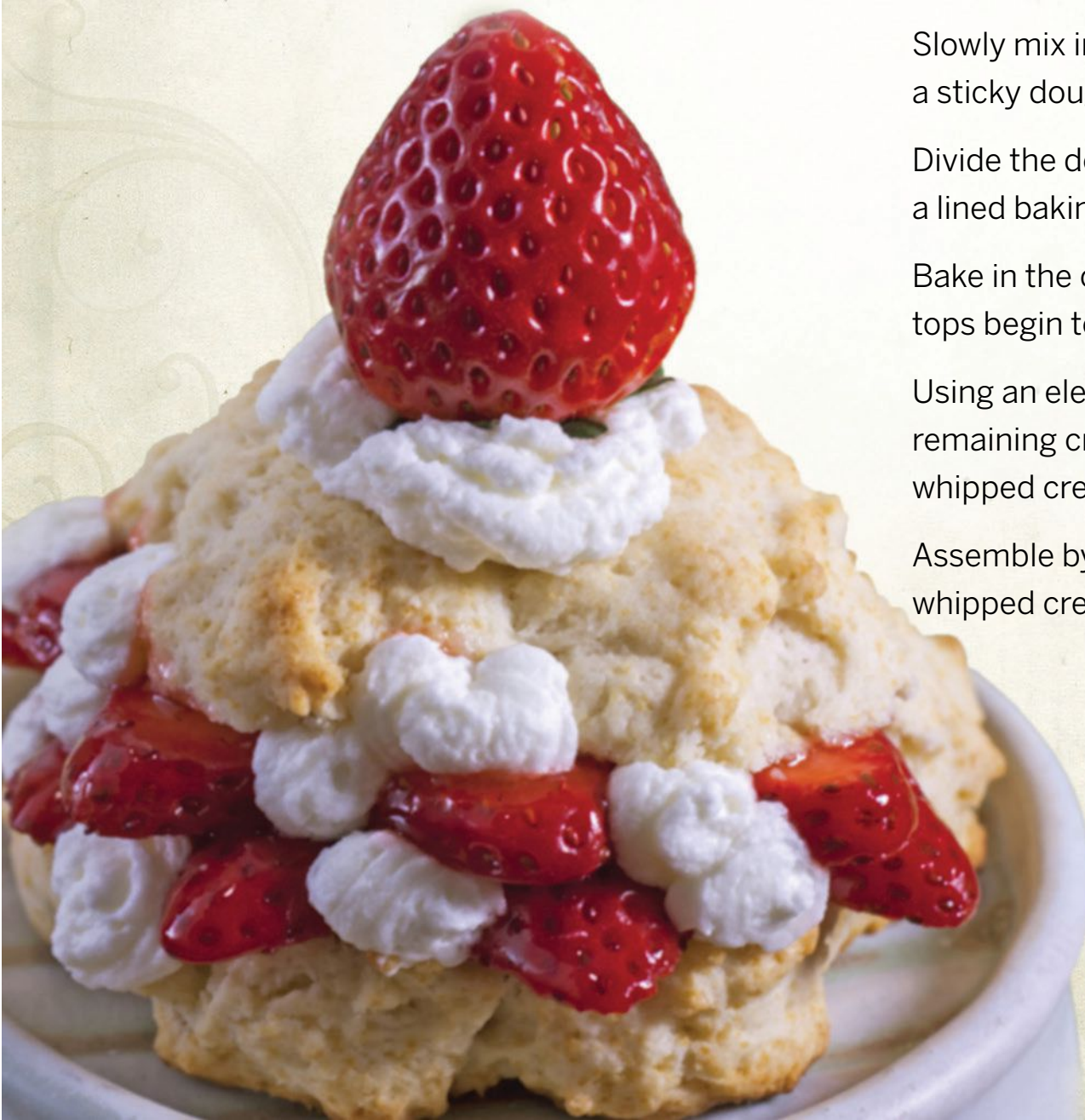
Bake in the oven for 12 to 14 minutes or until tops begin to brown.

Using an electric mixer, whip together the remaining cream and sugar to create a whipped cream topping.

Assemble by layering the strawberries and whipped cream in or on the biscuits.

Baking time: 12-14 minutes

Number of servings: 4





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FIRE DANGER IS HIGH IN TEXAS

Know how to keep your home and property safe

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Wind whips up the dust. Cracks stretch through the fields and pastures. It's dry in Texas.

The majority of the state is impacted by drought.

News reports tell a scary tale. Fire danger is high in the Lone Star State, and there's plenty of fuel to burn. The lush, green vegetation from last year is now dry and dormant. Flames could lick the sky. Smoke fill the air. And fear can quickly set in. All within minutes.

It's a reminder of the massive wildfires a few years ago in the Texas Panhandle that wiped out nearly half a million acres, destroying homes, property and killing livestock.

A cigarette carelessly thrown from a car window. One match. One small fire that gets out of control. All can spark a wildfire and potentially put farms, homes, businesses and families in a dangerous path.

But there's more.

The dry, parched ground across Texas desperately needs rain as farmers prepare to plant their crops. That moisture plays a major role as the crops—like corn, sorghum, soybeans and more—get their start.

Stock tanks are also getting low, and winter grazing needs a drink to keep it growing.

Agriculture needs rain. Cities need rain. We all need rain.

Fire risks will remain constant throughout the winter and early spring.

While the chances for rain remain slim, we must be extra careful and vigilant during this dry time. And pray that rain comes soon.

Texas is like a tinderbox right now. So, get to know your local fire personnel, and take action around your homes and property with these tips from the Texas A&M Forest Service:

- **Trim trees up to 6 to 9 feet above the ground.**
- **Keep your grass mowed short.**
- **Move wood piles and debris away from buildings and structures.**
- **Don't let safety chains drag with trailers.**
- **Pay attention to the weather.**





THIS IS FARM BUREAU

Book helps children learn about gardening, farming

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture presented its 15th “Book of the Year” award to author Kiki Thorpe for *How to Grow a Monster*. The award was presented at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 103rd Convention.

How to Grow a Monster explores the makers theme of gardening and includes a gardening-related activity for young makers to try themselves.

Tapping into the popular makers movement (hands-on learning), the book is part of a series of fun, easy-to-read stories that focus on problem-solving and hands-on action.

Thorpe has written more than 40 books for young readers. She is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Never Girls* chapter book series, which has been published in 25 countries.

Thorpe grew up in Boise, Idaho, and finds inspiration for many of her stories in memories of her childhood there. She lives with her family in Colorado.

“It’s such an honor to have my book recognized by the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture. I hope *How to Grow*

a Monster inspires young readers to try growing their own food,” Thorpe said.

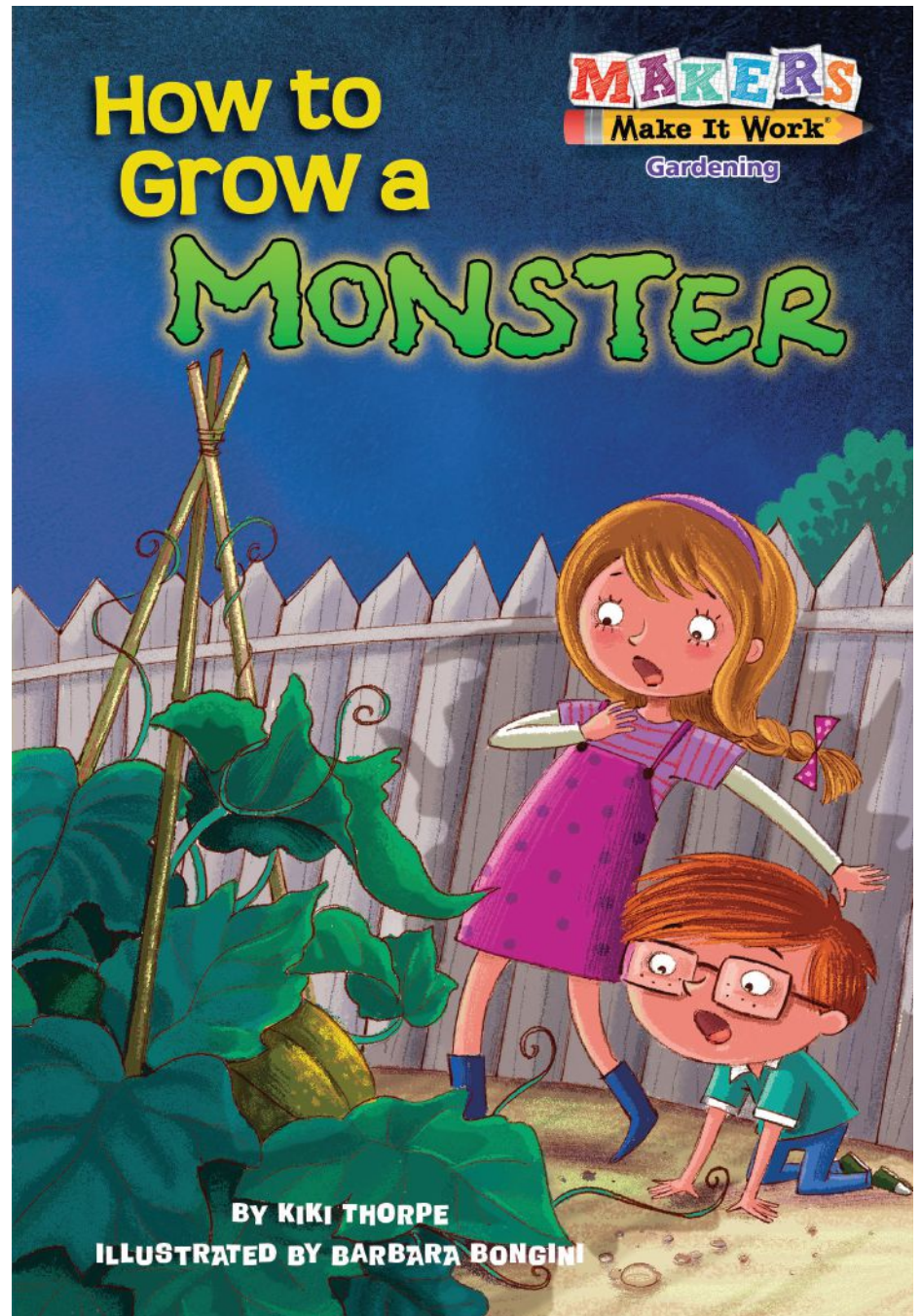
To accompany *How to Grow a Monster*, the Foundation created an educator’s guide.

The “Book of the Year” award springs from the Foundation’s effort to identify “accurate ag books,” a collection of nearly 500 books for children, teenagers and adults that accurately cover agricultural topics.

Book of the Year selections are educational, help to create positive public perceptions about agriculture and inspire readers to learn more and touch their readers’ lives, as well as tell the farmer’s story.

The comprehensive Accurate Ag Books database from the Foundation is available at agfoundation.org/recommended-pubs. Educator and student resources are also available for some of the books.

Other recent books recognized by the Foundation of Agriculture include *Tales of the Dairy Godmother: Chuck’s Ice Cream Wish*, *Full of Beans: Henry Ford Grows a Car*, *Right This Very Minute* and *First Peas to the Table*.



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American Farm Bureau Federation President (AFBF) Zippy Duvall said farmers and ranchers are serious about the responsibility of feeding the world, while preserving and caring for the environment.

“Farmers have put 140 million acres voluntarily into conservation programs. And then of course, a lot of other techniques are being used like low till or no till, and over half of our corn, cotton, soybean and wheat acres in the United States have been put in those practices which helps conserve or retain carbon in the soil,” Duvall said. “We also have about 200 million acres that has cover crops on it.”

When it comes to livestock,

Duvall noted it’s easy to point to misleading statistics about cattle and climate change.

“But here’s the truth, and this is taken directly from EPA and USDA data. Beef cattle production accounts for 2% of all of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. More effective farming methods and the use of new technologies have led to a reduction of the per-unit emissions in cattle,” Duvall said. “Our critics are looking for a simple solution to a complex problem. Adding burdensome regulations that will reduce affordable protein would make food more expensive and worsen food insecurity issues for millions of our families across America.”

To address unfair criticism of American agriculture, Duvall said

farmers and ranchers need to continue to share their stories.

“It’s easy to get frustrated when we see agriculture misrepresented in the media, but we must remember that almost 90% of Americans say that they trust farmers and we have a positive story to share with them,” he said.

“We can’t fall into the trap of going low even when our critics do so, because it will jeopardize the public’s trust in us. It’s important that we seek opportunities to engage with our neighbors and with the media to help set the tone to ensure agriculture is being portrayed honestly.”



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City	Frequency	Call Letters	City	Frequency	Call Letters	City	Frequency	Call Letters	City	Frequency	Call Letters
Abilene	96.1	FM KORQ	Corsicana	1340	AM KAND	Hereford	106.3	FM KPAN	Perryton	1400	AM KEYE
Amarillo	97.5	FM KGNC	Corsicana	104.9	FM KAND	Hillsboro	1560	AM KHBR	Perryton	96.7	FM KEYE
Amarillo	710	AM KGNC	Crockett	1290	AM KIVY	Hondo	1460	AM KCWM	Post	107.3	FM KSSL
Amarillo	103.9	FM KHNZ	Crockett	102.9	FM KIVY	Idalou	105.7	FM KRBL	Quanah	1150	AM KOLJ
Amarillo	96.5	FM KDDD	Crockett	105.5	FM KIVY	Kenedy	92.1	FM KCAF	Quanah	100.7	FM KOLJ
Austwell	105.9	FM KIBQ	Crockett	92.7	FM KIVY	La Grange	104.9	FM KBUK	Ranger	98.5	FM KWBY
Ballinger	1400	AM KRUN	Dalhart	1240	AM KXIT	La Grange	1570	AM KVLG	Reno	98.9	FM KLOW
Beeville	1490	AM KIBL	Dalhart	94.5	FM KXIT	Lamesa	690	AM KPET	Rockdale	98.5	FM KRXT
Beeville	97.1	FM KIBL	Detroit	104.3	FM KFYN	Lamesa	105.1	FM KPET	San Angelo	92.7	FM KDGD
Big Spring	1490	AM KBST	Dilley	95.3	FM KVWG	Levelland	1230	AM KLVT	San Angelo	1260	AM KKSA
Big Spring	103.9	FM KBST	Dimmitt	1470	AM KDHN	Lubbock	94.1	FM KSSL	San Antonio	680	AM KKYX
Boerne	1500	AM KBRN	Dimmitt	102.7	FM KDHN	Lubbock	580	AM KRFE	San Antonio	104.9	FM KKYX
Boerne	103.9	FM KBRN	Dumas	800	AM KDDD	Lubbock	95.9	FM KRFE	Seguin	1580	AM KWED
Bonham	1420	AM KFYN	Dumas	103.5	FM KDDD	Madisonville	1220	AM KMLV	Seymour	1230	AM KSEY
Bonham	103.9	FM KFYN	Dumas	95.3	FM KDDD	Madisonville	98.9	FM KMLV	Seymour	94.3	FM KSEY
Brady	1490	AM KNEL	Eastland	97.7	FM KATX	Madisonville	102.7	FM KMLV	Seymour	105.7	FM KSEY
Brady	95.3	FM KNEL	El Campo	1390	AM KULP	Madisonville	100.5	FM KMLV	Shamrock	92.9	FM KSNZ
Breckenridge	1430	AM KROO	El Campo	106.7	FM KULP	Mansfield, LA	92.7	FM KJVC	Smiley	103.9	FM KBQQ
Cameron	105.1	FM KMIL	Elk City, OK	98.9	FM KSNZ	Marshall	103.9	FM KMHT	Spearman	98.3	FM KXDJ
Canadian	102.9	FM KSNZ	Fredericksburg	910	AM KNAF	Mason	102.5	FM KHBL	Sterling City	100.5	FM KSCK
Canton	1510	AM KWJB	Giddings	96.3	FM KGID	Mason	101.7	FM KZZM	Stephenville	93.1	FM KSTV
Canton	95.1	FM KWJB	Graham	1330	AM KSWA	Memphis	105.3	FM KLSR	Sulphur Springs	107.1	FM KRVA
Carthage	104.3	FM KGAS	Greenville	1400	AM KGVL	Meyersville	100.1	FM KQBO	Sulphur Springs	1230	AM KSST
Center	930	AM KDET	Greenville	93.5	FM KIKT	Mineola	99.9	FM KMOO	Sulphur Springs	101.3	FM KSSS
Childress	96.1	FM KCTX	Greenville	105.9	FM KGVL	Pampa	101.3	FM KHNZ	Sweetwater	1240	AM KXOX
Christine	96.9	FM KWYU	Greenville	107.7	FM KGVL	Paris	1490	AM KPLT	Sweetwater	96.7	FM KXOX
Clarendon	99.3	FM KEFH	Hamilton	900	AM KCLW	Paris	96.3	FM KPLT	Temple	1400	AM KTEM
Clovis, NM	99.1	FM KCLV	Haskell	97.1	FM KVRP	Paris	93.9	FM KOYN	Temple	94.3	FM KTEM
Comanche	94.3	FM KYOX	Hebbronville	104.3	FM KUFA	Pearsall	1280	AM KMFR	Tyler	104.1	FM KKUS
Comanche	1550	AM KCOM	Henderson	1470	AM KWRD	Pearsall	94.7	FM KMFR	Vernon	101.7	FM KOLJ
Comanche	100.1	FM KCOM	Henderson	98.5	FM KWRD	Pecos	97.3	FM KDNZ	Victoria	107.9	FM KIXS
Corpus Christi	99.1	FM KRY5	Hereford	860	AM KPAN	Perryton	93.7	FM KEYE	Wichita Falls	97.5	FM KXXN

Taking it one acre at a time: Goodwins plant seeds, hope



**By Julie Tomascik
Editor**

Planting seeds deeper in the soil with some extra faith and hope is where you could find Chris and Zac Goodwin in mid-March.

The father-son duo was planting corn around Venus and Alvarado in Johnson County.

Dry weather conditions throughout the fall and winter led to a lack of soil moisture, forcing the farmers to plant the seeds deeper.

“The challenge is how dry we are, but we hope we get some good rains,” Chris said.

It’s an extreme contrast to the weather last year.

Chris said a tremendous amount of rainfall—about 30 inches in May—ruined last year’s corn crop.

But the Goodwins have been very conservative in their ap-

proach for this year.

“We’re just trying to conserve what we have, trying to minimize our passes across the field,” Chris said. “We’re approaching this with caution because inputs are up tremendously. Some of the inputs are approaching 200-300% in price increase from last year, plus the fuel cost.”

They’re trying to minimize

passes through the field to cut back on fuel and to not disturb the soil.

Uncertainty is the theme of this growing season. They don’t know when the next price increase will hit.

“Financially, this is one of the toughest years we’ve seen because there are too many uncertainties in the market,” Chris

said. “We don’t know where this is going. The supply chain is already stressed from COVID.”

But it’s not just the cost that’s a challenge right now. Equipment and parts are difficult to find, too.

The Goodwins ordered parts for their planter last December, and they didn’t come in until late February.

“There’s a lack of parts, and we’re having to plan out farther ahead for purchases to make sure we have enough to cover every aspect of what we’re doing. We try to keep good stock of parts in our barn and plan ahead, but you just never know,” Zac said. “There’s such a supply shortage and getting stuff moved across the country and the world is such a challenge right now.”

Zac came back to the family farm after college. It’s where he enjoys being, despite the struggles that often come with the



Zac (left) and Chris Goodwin farm wheat and corn, raise cattle and have a hay operation in Johnson County.

farming lifestyle.

“I took some internships, traveled the nation, saw differently lifestyles and had different experiences. But at the end of the day, all I wanted to do was come back home,” Zac said. “If I wasn’t farming, I don’t know what I’d do, because this is where my heart lies.”

Together, the Goodwins grow wheat and corn, raise cattle and have a hay operation.

The majority of the corn grown by the Goodwins is sold to feed mills in the area. It is either crushed or flaked for beef and dairy cattle feed.

And the Goodwins then buy their cattle feed from those local mills.

“It’s full circle,” Zac said. “We pride ourselves on that.”

And Chris is proud to be farming with his son.



The Goodwins inspect the corn seed in the planter. It took them about 10 days to plant corn in mid-March.

“For me, that’s the ultimate reward. I grew up with my granddad, with my dad,” he said. “But having my son back is the ultimate reward. My wife and I are involved, my son’s involved, and my daughter helps from time to time.”

But the Goodwins are concerned about the profit margin for the family farm. Ongoing drought, production costs and

supply chain issues have been a consistent burden.

It’s one that doesn’t look like it will be going away any time soon.

Farming is always a gamble, though, and the variables changing.

But this year, each seed is being planted in uncharted territory. Despite the uncertainty, the Goodwins have faith knowing they are doing all they can.

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Texas Farm Bureau's Student Success Series

Register for one of our four exciting opportunities through our Student Success Series. Students will grow communications skills, develop confidence and take home cool prizes!



JUMPSTART **Graduating class of 2027** **Virtual program**

Any student entering 8th grade in August 2022 is eligible to participate.
Registration: June 1 – September 15
Online modules must be completed by Oct. 31.



ACTIVATE **Graduating class of 2026** **Virtual program**

Any student entering 9th grade in August 2022 is eligible to participate.
Registration: June 1 – September 15
Online modules must be completed by Oct. 31.



ENGAGE **Graduating class of 2025 and 2024** **In-person district events**

Any student entering 10th or 11th grade in August 2022 is eligible to participate.
Registration: March 18 – May 1
The in-person events will take place in each of the 13 Texas Farm Bureau districts in May and June.
Dates and locations can be found at texasfarmbureau.org/student-success-series.



THRIVE **Graduating class of 2023** **In-person event in Waco**

Any student entering 12th grade in August 2022 is eligible to participate.
Registration: June 1 – July 5
The event will be held Aug. 5-7 in Waco at Texas Farm Bureau's Conference and Training Center.
It is limited to 150 students.

For more information and to register, scan the QR code or visit texasfarmbureau.org/student-success-series



YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS APPOINTED TO STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Twenty-three young producers were appointed to Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee.

An individual or a couple from each [TFB district](#) serve two years on the committee. The district

representatives are named by TFB President Russell Boeing.

Committee members are responsible for recommending, promoting and evaluating programs and activities that encourage young people to become involved

in Farm Bureau at the local, state and national levels.

The committee plans the YF&R Conference and Fall Tour, as well as hosts districts meetings in the spring and summer. Want to get involved or meet your YF&R dis-

trict committee representative? Check out the information below or visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

[View this map to see the counties in the various TFB districts.](#)

For more information, visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR.

Meet the Texas Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher Advisory Committee.



District 1
Landon and Brianna Friemel

Landon and Brianna Friemel farm cotton, wheat, corn and sorghum and raise cattle with Landon's brother through their business, Rockin L Enterprises. Landon and his brother also own a metal fabrication shop and run a custom swathing and manure-spreading business. Brianna runs a home-based jewelry design company and is a partner in an event venue. They have three children: Madisyn, Masyn, and Mason.



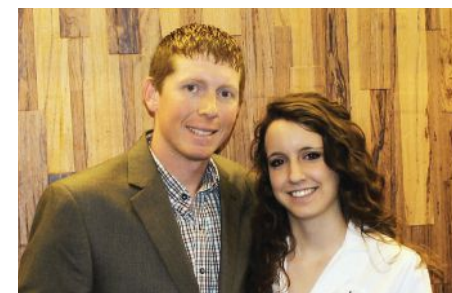
District 2
Alton and Adrienne Synatschk

Alton and Adrienne Synatschk grow corn, cotton, grain sorghum and wheat in the Texas Panhandle. In addition to the row crops, they raise stocker cattle, maintain a cow-calf herd, and operate several custom businesses—spraying, swathing, and trucking. Alton also farms in a separate partnership with his two brothers, and Adrienne is a teacher. The couple has four children: Emilee, Bailee, Kylee, and Brantley.



District 3
Colby and Allison White

Colby and Allison White are the sixth generation to farm peanuts, wheat and cotton in Wilbarger County. They farm with Colby's dad and granddad on the multi-generational family farm. Allison helps out by bringing meals to the farm and is the Vernon High School cheer coach. They hope to pass on the family farming legacy to their three children: Hayslee, Drayson, and Coburn.



District 4
Brandon and Kaitlyn Boerner

Brandon and Kaitlyn Boerner are part owners and operators of their family's fifth-generation farm. They grow wheat, peanuts and oats alongside Brandon's family in Grayson and Hunt counties. The couple also manages their cow-calf herd. In addition to farming and ranching, Brandon works for SMA, Inc. - America's Ag Parts Supplier, and Kaitlyn is a veterinarian at a local animal practice.



District 5
Patrick and Lacey Williams

Patrick and Lacey Williams are fourth-generation farmers in East Texas. They specialize in hay production using sprig cultivation and liquid fertilization with weed and pest control. They have a small cow-calf herd and work with Patrick's brothers for feed and pasture production for their cattle. Lacey assists with the farm and is as a registered nurse specializing in labor and delivery.



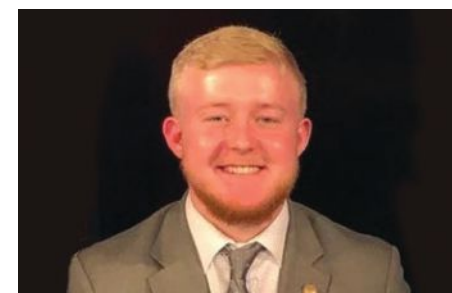
District 7
Jacob and Laura Henson

Jacob and Laura Henson are part owners in an Angus-cross commercial cattle herd and help operate Laura's family's farm, white-tailed deer ranch and silage harvesting business. Jacob works for Infinity Firearms, and Laura is an instructor at Tarleton State University and owns the small-business marketing company Laura Henson Designs. They have one daughter: Ashton.



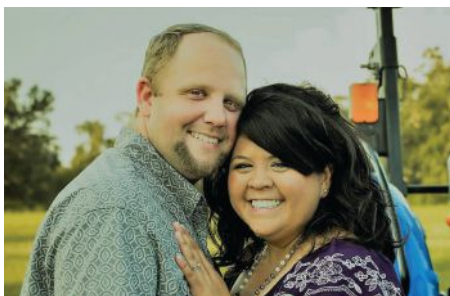
District 8
Heston and Stevie McBride

Heston and Stevie McBride are the owners and operators of AgroTech, an agricultural service business that provides liquid feed, custom hay services, herbicide application, liquid feed, agricultural equipment rentals, dyed diesel and more to farmers and ranchers in the Lampasas area. The young couple also manages a cow-calf herd and grows hay. They have one son: Hetch.



District 9
Preston Loggins

Preston Loggins graduated from Texas A&M University with a degree in agricultural leadership and development and a minor in agronomy. During college, he served as an intern in the U.S. House of Representatives. Loggins is the incoming chairman of the Angelina County Barrow show and serves as an Angelina County Youth Fair board member.



District 11
Kevin and Jackie Seawright



District 12
Matthew & Breanna Krueger



District 13
Travis and Bethany Wanoreck



Ex-officio
Eric and Alisha Schwertner

Kevin and Jackie Seawright are first-generation swine farmers. They own and manage Right Track Farms, where they breed show and meat market pigs. They have expanded their farm to include vegetables and chemical amino acid/protein application. Kevin is also an agronomist and manages environmental compliance for K3BMI, and Jackie is a quality assurance and food safety manager at Colorado County Rice Mill, Inc. They have one son: Jackson.

Matthew and Breanna Krueger raise commercial cattle, grow winter oats, and harvest Sudan and irrigated coastal Bermudagrass in Bexar County. In addition to their farm and ranch, the couple manages a custom hay and harvest business. Matthew is a full-time farmer, and Breanna works as a fuels analyst at a local utility company. Together, they are working to care for their land and livestock. Matthew and Breanna live in Stockdale with their son Stetson.

Travis and Bethany Wanoreck are first-generation farmers who grow cotton, grain sorghum, and wheat in Bee, Jim Wells and Nueces counties. They also custom sow wheat and custom harvest cotton. The couple implements minimum tillage and strip-till practices on their farms to help reduce soil erosion and increase organic matter. Bethany, a registered nurse, is the district nurse at Orange Grove ISD. The couple has three children: Wyatt, Brynlee, and Taryn.

Eric and Alisha Schwertner grow cotton, corn, sorghum and wheat. They grow hay for their cow-calf herd, and Eric owns and operates a custom cotton harvesting business. Alisha is a product manager for John Deere. The couple has three boys: Lane, Caleb, and Eli. The Schwertners are currently serving their second year on the AFBF YF&R Committee. Alisha was elected the 2022 committee chair and is the first from Texas to lead the national committee.

Have an interest in Texas Farm Bureau's Young Farmer & Rancher programs and activities?
Visit texasfarmbureau.org/YFR for more information!



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