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# **Texas Agriculture**

May 1, 2020

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers

## **Coronavirus impacts Texas agriculture**

**Pages 14-22**



# Farmers, ranchers prioritize worker health, safety during pandemic

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has put a focus on many things associated with farming, ranching and our nation's food supply. The impacts on agriculture are broad and unprecedented, and the areas of focus have the undivided attention of Texas Farm Bureau.

One issue worth discussing is worker safety. Farm workers are considered essential workers during the COVID-19 crisis. No surprise there. They've always been essential to the success of U.S. agriculture.

Texas farmers and ranchers always have health and safety as a top priority—and even more so now as the nation works together to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

From adding handwashing and sanitizing stations in the field to limiting person-to-person interactions as much as possible, Texas farmers and ranchers are taking all the precautions possible to protect themselves, their workers and their communities.

They're screening and distancing arriving workers to ensure health and safety, providing food delivery services to limit workers' exposure

to community spread and providing additional cleaning and disinfectant supplies for worker housing.

They're educating employees on safety and cleaning practices through posters and notices, as well as providing local health care and telemedicine information. They've also established a plan of action for quarantining sick employees to prevent spread.



**By Russell Boening**  
TFB President

Agricultural activities and worksites vary and not every suggestion will work for every employer or grower. But many Texas growers are thanking workers in special ways. In the Rio Grande Valley, one farmer is adding "appreciation pay" to worker paychecks, offering paid lunches and giving food packs to more than 400 people. It's the right thing to do, they say.

Like the rest of the country, farmers and ranchers are taking these challenges day-by-day. As new information and resources become available from trusted sources, agriculture is responding and doing its best to ensure worker safety.

We all depend on the security of our food supply.

Protecting our nation's farms and ranches and the men and women who keep them running will require our full attention across the agricultural sector to stay a step ahead in taking precautions and decisive ac-

tion to promote the health of those on the front lines of our food supply.

Like all employers, farmers and ranchers have a role to play in stopping the spread by educating and protecting their employees.

## Your Texas Agriculture Minute

### The flow of technology in rural America

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things, but working the land is not one of them.

Unfortunately, technology is still not flowing in some parts of rural America.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced it is trying to help.

The agency is freeing up spectrum in nearly 30 states to improve connectivity and help close the digital divide.

Thirty-three wireless internet service providers will use the spectrum for 60 days through a special temporary authority.

This will help serve rural communities' increased broadband

needs during the coronavirus pandemic.

Yes, it's a start, but more work remains.

FCC data show that 26.4 percent of rural Americans lack access to broadband, compared to only 1 percent of urban Americans.

America's farmers and ranchers embrace technology that allows their businesses to be more efficient, economical and environmentally-friendly.

Access to broadband is key to the technology benefit and helping agriculture remain competitive.

Let's hope that signal is soon strong for everyone.



**By Gary Joiner**  
Publisher



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#### May 1, 2020 Vol. 35, No. 11

ADVERTISING: **Kelly Bogard**, Advertising Manager, (254) 751-2420; **J.L. Farmakis** (Representative for outside Texas), New Canaan, CT (203) 966-1746.

TEXAS AGRICULTURE is published 12 times a year by Texas Farm Bureau, 7420 Fish Pond Road, Waco, Texas 76710, (254) 772-3030. Changes of address may be sent to TEXAS AGRICULTURE, Box 2689, Waco, Texas 76702-2689.

Subscription price to Farm Bureau members is included in annual membership dues.

All advertising is subject to publisher's approval. Texas Agriculture reserves the right to reject any ad.

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## Texas peach crop looks good despite early concerns

Texas' peach crop looks good amid improved growing conditions despite warmer-than-normal weather that impacted tree chill hours, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Peach orchards around the state were progressing well despite a warm January that negated good early winter chill hours, according to Larry Stein, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension horticulturist in Uvalde.

"Commercially, producers who applied spray applications that help substitute for those lost chill hours are looking good," he said. "But if you're a homeowner and you see trees struggling to leaf out, it's because of warm temperatures in January."

Moisture conditions for much of the state look good, he said. Southwest Texas and the Hill Country had been experiencing drought, but rains improved soil moisture conditions dramatically.

The moisture is beneficial, but it also means farmers should be vigilant against diseases and pests, Stein said.

"If the weather continues to be wet, they'll need to keep up with their fungicide and pesticide management programs," he said. "It's especially important to be proactive with fungicides. If you have a good crop, you have to stay on top of things until you get across the finish line."

Stein said he expects some peach farmers with high tunnel-growing technology in the Hill Country to have ripe fruit as early as this month. Those farmers use high tunnels to extend their growing season.

"High tunnels allow those producers to start earlier, and then transition to their regular orchard through the rest of the season," he said.

Prices for peaches remain steady or are experiencing slight upticks, he said. The trend of direct farm-to-market sales with fruit stands or at farmers' markets continues to grow.

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## Report shows tractor, combine sales down in March

Unit sales of agricultural tractors and self-propelled combines in March 2020 fell in the U.S. and Canada, according to the latest data from the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM).

As COVID-19 swept through North America, uncertainty gained traction in March and sent commodity markets on a downward spiral, carrying over to the farm equipment industry, as well.

In the U.S., overall farm tractor sales in March were down 15.6 percent from the same time last year, while self-propelled combine sales were down nearly 12 percent.

Two-wheel drive farm tractors with 100-plus horsepower took the largest dip in sales at 18 percent, with four-wheel drive farm tractors taking the next-largest drop at 17 percent below March 2019 sales.

“Although the March numbers were likely impacted by COVID-19, it is too soon to tell the long-term impact of the current crisis on ag equipment sales,” Curt Blades, se-



*Photo courtesy of Association of Equipment Manufacturers.*

nior vice president of Ag Services for AEM, said.

In Canada, 100-plus horsepower tractor sales were the lone growth spot in North America, up nearly 7 percent over last year. However, total Canadian tractor sales fell 23 percent, with combines dropping 38 percent.

According to a recent industry analysis by AEM, agricultural equipment manufacturers add more than \$72 billion to the national gross do-

mestic product through direct, indirect and induced contributions. And with more than 700,000 jobs dependent upon farm equipment manufacturing, the organization said a healthy farm and ranch economy is imperative to its member businesses.

“Our number-one priority as an industry right now is doing what we can to meet the needs of farmers during planting time, while keeping our employees and customers healthy,” Blades said.

## NRCS accepting applications for urban, rural garden grants

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting grant applications through May 29.

The grants will help establish gardens, rainwater harvesting systems and high tunnels through Project G.R.E.E.N. (Growing Roots for Education, Environment and Nutrition) and through the Texas NRCS Urban and Rural Conservation Project.

Grant funding will help establish gardens to grow healthy produce in areas of need and to educate urban and rural youth, organizations and communities about the importance of conservation, agriculture and growing vegetables.

The Texas Urban and Rural Conservation Project will provide tech-

nical and financial assistance to eligible entities to establish or improve gardens for food production and pollinator habitat, including habitat for monarch butterflies, to install rainwater harvesting systems and to establish high tunnels to extend the growing season for fruits and vegetables. These grants are available to entities other than schools.

Project G.R.E.E.N. grants are available only to independent, private, public and state controlled school districts and private, public and state controlled institutions of higher education.

The grants have four components—community gardens, pollinator habitat, high tunnels and rainwater harvesting systems. Applicants can apply for one, two, three

or all four components of the grants in one application.

These grant opportunities are efforts to challenge community organizations, educational institutions and Native American tribes to establish community and school gardens across Texas.

Pollinator habitat planted with gardens can provide an increase in harvest potential while providing food and habitat for declining insect communities in Texas.

Grants are available for up to \$4,000 for a vegetable garden, \$3,000 for a pollinator garden, \$5,000 for a rainwater harvesting system and \$6,500 for a seasonal high tunnel.

For more information and applications for both grants, visit <https://tx.nrcs.usda.gov>.

## First hemp license issued in Texas

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) issued the first industrial hemp license to a farmer in the Lone Star State.

The farmer is from Killeen and was issued the license on April 9.

As a part of the application process, the applicant specified a facility where hemp will be grown.

As of early April, TDA had received more than 545 industrial hemp applications, including 458 farmer applications, 58 handler applications and 30 handler sampler applications.

Each farmer must also register a facility where the hemp will be grown and apply for a permit for every lot to be grown.

Industrial hemp production is an opportunity for Texas farmers to expand their operations and grow alternative crops.

As a part of the application process, each licensee had to watch a 25-minute educational video about the hemp program released by TDA.

The video outlines the regulations for growing hemp, as well as other issues like crop insurance.

The video, along with other information about growing hemp in Texas, is available online at [www.texasagriculture.gov/RegulatoryPrograms/Hemp.aspx](http://www.texasagriculture.gov/RegulatoryPrograms/Hemp.aspx).

TDA began accepting applications on March 16.

Any individual who plans to produce, handle, sample or collect hemp at any location in Texas will be required to annually submit a completed license application.

A \$100 fee must accompany the application for a one-year license.

Applicants must be 18 years of age or older and pass a background check.

Applications are available online at [www.texasagriculture.com](http://www.texasagriculture.com).

# Dairy Farmers of America to buy portion of Dean Foods' assets

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

A Texas-based bankruptcy court has approved Dairy Farmers of America's (DFA) bid to acquire a substantial portion of Dean Foods' assets for \$433 million.

"Following the competitive court-supervised auction process, and with the court's approval, we have determined a combination of bids that represent the best path forward for our stakeholders," Eric Beringause, president and Chief Executive Officer of Dean Foods, said. "We are confident that, under these new owners, our customers can expect the same commitment to quality and service that Dean Foods has lived up to over the years."

The \$433 million bid is for 44 of Dean Foods' fluid and frozen facilities.

"We will continue to provide an uninterrupted supply of high-quality dairy products as we work toward completing these transactions," Ber-

ingause said. "We appreciate the continued hard work and commitment of our Dean Foods employees throughout this process."

Dean Foods, the largest processor of fresh fluid milk and other dairy products in the U.S., filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November.

"After many months of uncertainty regarding the future of Dean Foods, we are pleased to have been named the accepted bidder for a large portion of Dean's assets," Monica Massey, executive vice president and chief of staff for DFA, said. "The more than 13,500 dairy farmers who own our cooperative, and dairy farmers across the country, will now benefit from these milk markets remaining open."

Dean Foods, according to *BusinessWire*, has designated Prairie Farms Dairy as the winner of eight additional facilities, two distribution branches and other assets for \$75 million.

The Dean Foods facility in Miami



**Dairy Farmers of America will acquire the assets, rights, interests and properties relating to 44 of Dean Foods' fluid and frozen facilities for \$433 million.**

will go to Mana Saves McArthur, LLC for \$16.5 million.

Producers Dairy Foods' will take over Dean Foods' Reno, Nevada facility for \$3.7 million and will own the Berkeley Farms trademark and intellectual property for \$3 million.

Dean Foods' Uncle Matt's company will go to Harmoni, Inc. for \$7.25 million, while Dean Foods' Gold Hawaii operations will go to Realty Group, LLC for \$25.5 million.

According to *Politico*, Grocers

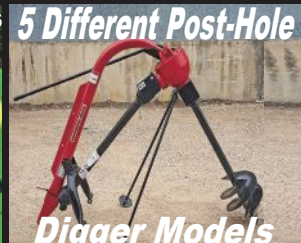
Stop and Shop and Food Lion filed objections against the acquisitions, claiming they appear to pose risk of anticompetitive harm.

Some of the companies filing the objections reportedly bid on the individual facilities owned by Dean Foods.

Each of the transactions approved by the bankruptcy court are subject to the required regulatory approvals.

Dean Foods anticipates the transactions will be complete by early May.

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# USDA offers marketing flexibility amid COVID-19

Farmers and ranchers now have more time to repay Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020. The loans now mature at 12 months rather than nine, and this flexibility is available for most commodities.

"Spring is the season when most producers have the biggest need for capital, and many may have or are considering putting commodities under loan. Extending the commodity loan maturity affords farmers more

time to market their commodity and repay their loan at a later time," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. "We are extremely pleased that USDA can offer these marketing flexibilities at this critical time for the agriculture industry and the nation."

Effective immediately, farmers of eligible commodities now have up to 12 months to repay their commodity loans.

The maturity extension applies to nonrecourse loans for crop years 2018, 2019 and 2020. Eligible open loans must in good standing with a

maturity date of March 31, 2020, or later or new crop year (2019 or 2020) loans requested by Sept. 30, 2020.

All new loans requested by Sept. 30, 2020, will have a maturity date 12 months following the date of approval.

The maturity extension for current, active loans will be automatically extended an additional 3 months.

Loans that matured March 31 have already been automatically extended by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Farmers who prefer a nine-month

loan will need to contact their local FSA county office.

Loans requested after Sept. 30, 2020, will have a term of nine months.

Eligible commodities include barley, chickpeas (small and large), corn, cotton (upland and extra-long staple), dry peas, grain sorghum, honey, lentils, mohair, oats, peanuts, rice (long and medium grain), soybeans, unshorn pelts, wheat, wool (graded and nongraded); and other oilseeds, including canola, crambe, flaxseed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sunflower seed and sesame seed. Seed cotton and sugar are not eligible.

# Virtual Leadership Conference replaces summer youth event

By Julie Tomascik  
Editor

The Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Youth Leadership Conference will be held virtually this year due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"We made the difficult decision to change the format of our annual Youth Leadership Conference and make it a virtual event for 2020," Mia Balko, TFB director of Youth Outreach, said. "Although we will have to make adjustments, we are excited about offering a meaningful online experience for all participants."

The Virtual Leadership Conference will still focus on the free enterprise system, patriotism and leadership.

Students will complete modules covering the U.S. Constitution, the free enterprise system and public speaking skills.

"A virtual scavenger hunt will also allow them the opportunity to learn more about Texas Farm Bureau and all the organization has to offer," Balko said.

The online learning modules will be hosted via Google classroom.

Students will be eligible for prizes for each module they complete.

Participants who complete all four modules will be entered in a drawing, and one student per TFB district will win a set of AirPods.

Students who will be entering their junior or senior year in August of 2020 are eligible to apply for the Virtual Leadership Conference.

"With the impacts of COVID-19, Texas youth are adapting as best they can to learning information online," Balko said. "The Virtual Leadership Conference meets students where they are right now—online. We are aiming to make this experience as fun as we can and allowing students to connect with others virtually across the state."

Visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities> for more information and directions to complete the registration process.

The deadline to register is May 22. Selected students will be notified by their county Farm Bureau and invited to the Google classroom by TFB staff.

The online learning modules will be available from June 1-30.

"This Virtual Leadership Conference will allow students to qualify for the Free Enterprise Speech contest and scholarship opportunities," Balko said.

Students will also be able to apply for a junior counselor position for the Youth Leadership Conference in 2021.

"This has been a difficult spring for students and communities, but we hope the Virtual Leadership Con-

ference helps connect students all around the state on topics that are important to all Texans and Americans—the Constitution and the free

enterprise system," Balko said.

For more information, contact Balko at [mbalko@txfb.org](mailto:mbalko@txfb.org) or call 254-399-5037.

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August 2020 are eligible to register

TEXAS FARM BUREAU

# Ag, cattle groups urge close examination of livestock markets

By Julie Tomascik  
Editor

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic sparked extreme volatility in beef and cattle markets, leading the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) to urge a close examination of livestock markets.

“The level of frustration with market volatility among livestock producers has never been higher,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “I applaud Secretary (Sonny) Perdue for his commitment to expand USDA’s investigation. It won’t bring back lost income for producers, but it will help to restore confidence in our pricing system.”

Duvall addressed the issue with Perdue and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CTFC) Chairman Heath Tarbert in April.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expanding its investigation into market activity surrounding the Holcolmb, Kansas fire to include the volatility and disparities surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S.

AFBF sent a letter to the CTFC stressing the need to monitor and analyze market activity.

“We believe an intense examination of the volatility in cash and futures markets for beef, pork and dairy is needed to determine if any market manipulations have occurred to the financial detriment of farmers and ranchers,” the letter states. “The disparity between the farm-level prices that producers receive and wholesale prices is alarming. We cannot afford to lose confidence in the integrity of the futures market, nor the price discovery efforts in cash markets, on top of the many other market disruptions and stresses farmers and ranchers are facing.”

Texas cattlemen and women are among those experiencing financial loss.

“Our members are seeing and feeling the effects of the market downturn, and that makes it difficult to operate a farm and ranch,” Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening said. “The futures market has been incredibly volatile, and the corona-

virus is just the latest in a string of misfortunes that have kept the farm and ranch economy down for several years.”

State Rep. Drew Springer, chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock, asked Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to investigate meat packers for market manipulation and price gouging amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a letter dated March 31, Springer said boxed beef prices were up over 20 percent, more than doubling packer margins.

“Yet despite the incredible demand in Texas, as well as across the U.S., cattle have dropped hundreds of dollars per head at auction,” he wrote. “All indications are that the market manipulation has cost the Texas cattle industry over \$150 million, while the potential price gouging has cost Texas consumers \$225 million in just the last 30 days. For consumers, these prices are seen and felt at the checkout counter. And while consumers are

blaming the retailers, the real culprit for higher consumer prices are the packers.”

Cargill, JBS, National Beef and Tyson control about 85 percent of the nation’s beef packing market, which Springer said puts them in a unique position to exert control over cattle and wholesale prices.

While he realizes Paxton cannot change the national market, Springer said he will continue to fight for fairness for his constituents and other Texans.

Other U.S. and state senators have also called for the increased investigation into cattle market issues.

A Market Intel report from AFBF in late March shows how the COVID-19 pandemic added volatility into live cattle and beef markets. That report covers cattle futures, production and availability of product, as well as boxed beef prices. It can be found online at <https://fb.org/market-intel/pandemic-injects-volatility-into-cattle-and-beef-markets>.



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# Texas ranchers should remain alert for scams during pandemic

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The novel coronavirus pandemic has taken cattle markets on a wild ride.

Unfortunately, ranchers have another concern to add to the list of worries, said Scott Williamson, executive director of Law Enforcement, Brand and Inspection Services for Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA).

Thefts and scams targeting cattlemen and women have increased as cattle prices have fallen.

“Economic and industry distress always increase the number of desperate people that will take fraudulent, dishonorable and criminal actions,” Williamson said.

It’s a two-fold issue, according to Williamson. Perpetrators may be trying to stay afloat and might not otherwise normally engage in criminal scams, and victims buying or selling in a panicked state may not consider warning signs as they normally would.

“You may feel like you need to get in a hurry to sell some cattle before it gets worse or get in a hurry to buy while the prices are low,” he said. “But please slow down and be prudent, because con men and thieves are taking advantage of this situation.”

It’s especially important to be careful when buying or selling over the internet, he noted.

“Be extremely wary. Be sure you have some way to absolutely confirm who that person is,” Williamson said. “My suggestion is don’t do any business without being able to tangibly lay your eyes on it or meet someone. I know that seems like overkill to some people, but you just can’t be too careful.”

Perception or agreements over the phone do not likely establish grounds for a criminal charge or investigation, according to Williamson, so it’s an especially tricky situation.

Williamson recommends ranchers verify the person you are attempting to do business with through a

trusted source.

Also, when selling cattle, consider payment options such as an escrow service or online payment system. Never accept a check or cashier’s check that’s over the value of the sale, he said.

Confirm checks are valid by contacting your banking institution or the issuing bank.

When buying items, never issue payment until the items are received unless you have complete trust in the seller.

Inspect and document livestock and goods before taking delivery. You always have the right to refuse delivery.

If you believe you are the victim of a bait-and-switch purchase, act quickly. As time passes, the more it will appear you were initially agreeable to the transaction. Remedying the situation is less likely the longer



you wait.

Theft will also be more likely in times of economic turmoil.

Williamson recommends photo documentation of property, including animals, tack and equipment. This will save valuable time in the event of theft or loss.

Ensure your brand is recorded with the county clerk, Williamson added, and make sure all horses and cattle are branded.

“Cattle raisers have weathered a lot of storms over the years, and we’ll weather this one, too,” he said. “But in the meantime, be extra careful.”



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# Texas Beef Council connects with consumers

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

While thousands of Texans shelter at home during the coronavirus pandemic, the Texas Beef Council was busy reaching out to home cooks to tout the benefits of cooking with beef.

“The coronavirus has really thrown a wrench into a lot of the things that we had planned coming up for the spring and summer for Beef Loving Texans,” Rachel Chou, director of Consumer Marketing for the Texas Beef Council, told the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “We’re a very flexible and nimble group, and we’ve been able to adapt some of our content to not only adapt, but thrive during this time.”

The Beef Loving Texans team used its metrics and insight from social media to learn what consumers were looking for during the pandemic.

“Entertainment and online consumption has gone through the



*The Texas Beef Council continues to promote beef recipes, especially those made with ground beef, during the coronavirus quarantine. Photo courtesy of Texas Beef Council.*

roof,” Chou said. “We’re keeping a close eye on that and adjusting all of our content to reflect with is needed right now.”

That content, according to Chou, includes recipes that will feed many people for several meals.

“Of course, everyone is cooking at home right now,” Chou said. “We’re really switching any of our content

that was about restaurants or fancier meals to ground beef and pot roast.”

Around Easter, the Beef Council shared a recipe for pot roast that became one of their most successful pieces of content they’ve shared this year.

“It’s really interesting to see what people are looking for, but not only that, so much of the search has been revolved around food, recipes and comfort dishes that people can have and make them feel good while they’re feeling trapped at home,” Chou said.

The Beef Council continues to promote beef on behalf of Texas ranchers.

“We’re not stopping our marketing and our pursuit of increasing the demand for beef,” Chou said. “We’re just adapting to what is within pop culture and what is being needed and consumed at this point.”

The Beef Council is also offering more ground beef recipes.

“We know that people are watching a lot of YouTube content and a lot of videos,” Chou said. “So, we’re offering how-to-cook videos for consumers.”

The popular video series *BBQuest* is still available on Hulu, as well.

“We know that people are consuming that content,” Chou said. “While people cannot go out to restaurants, they can still order take out from a lot of barbecue restaurants that are featured in our *BBQuest* series.”

The Beef Council is also working on its All Plates of Life advertising campaign.

“That campaign around beef’s versatility speaks to how many different ways and how suitable beef is for whatever dish you have and whatever beef you have in your refrigerator or freezer,” Chou said. “You can make something delicious, and it serves your family’s needs.”

The Beef Council’s recipes, videos and other content is available on [beeflovingtexans.com](http://beeflovingtexans.com).

Information on the state beef checkoff is available on [texasbeefcheckoff.com](http://texasbeefcheckoff.com).

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# New analysis shows U.S. ag reducing per-unit GHG emissions

New analysis of updated data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), combined with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data, shows U.S. farmers and ranchers continue to reduce per-unit greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

All told, the U.S. agricultural sector accounts for less than 10 percent of total U.S. emissions. That's less than the emissions from the transportation, electricity generation and industrial sectors.

Globally, agriculture accounts for about 24 percent of GHG emissions.

The EPA's U.S. Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions provides a first look at 2018 U.S. emissions data, which is incorporated into a new Market Intel report from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

The Market Intel report finds that per-unit methane emissions from livestock have declined since 1990 as farmers and ranchers have increased productivity. During the past 30 years, U.S. milk production has increased 71 percent, while per-unit emissions of milk have declined by almost 25 percent. Beef production has increased almost 50 percent, while per-unit emissions have fallen nearly 8 percent.

Meanwhile, American farmers are producing more crops on fewer acres, according to an analysis of USDA data. When compared to farm production in 1990, U.S. farmers would have needed almost 100 million additional acres to grow the same amount of corn, cotton, rice, soybeans and wheat they harvested in 2018.

"We're doing more with less and proud to lead the world in agricultural advances," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. "Smarter farming, new strategies and technology are helping farmers reduce their environmental footprint and provide solutions."

The analysis builds on data shared during the launch of Farmers for a Sustainable Future (FSF), a co-

alition of agricultural groups aimed at educating lawmakers and finding solutions to challenges posed by climate change.

The gains farmers have made in reducing their environmental footprint have been significant, and FSF supports federal investment in innovation, science-based research, voluntary conservation programs, resilient infrastructure and incentives to assist farmers in furthering these efforts.

"Corn farmers are proud of their successful efforts to improve soil, water and air quality," said Kevin Ross, president of the National Corn Growers Association, an FSF member. "These efforts are paying off in increased carbon sequestration and carbon retention in the soil, which helps offset agriculture's relatively low contribution to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions."

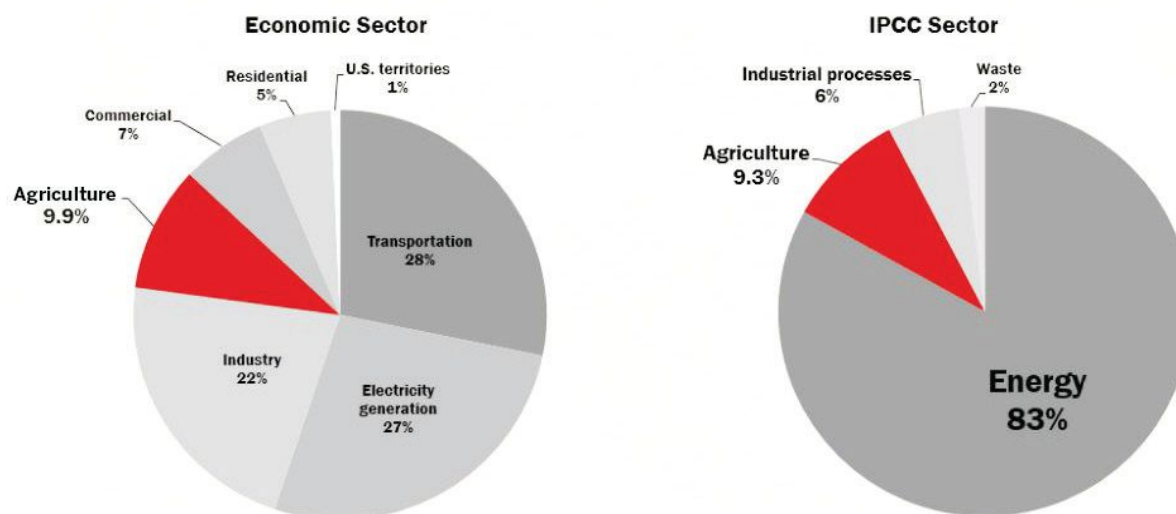
Learn more about Farmers for a Sustainable Future at [www.SustainableFarming.us](http://www.SustainableFarming.us).

To access the AFBF Market Intel analysis on GHG emissions, visit [www.fb.org/market-intel/ghg](http://www.fb.org/market-intel/ghg).

FSF members include the AFBF, American Pulse Association, American Sheep Industry Association, American Sugar Alliance, American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National

## Share of Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic and IPCC Sector

Draft U.S. Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks, 2018



Source: American Farm Bureau Federation

Barley Growers Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council of America, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Farmers Union, National Sorghum Producers, National

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MAY 1, 2020

TEXAS AGRICULTURE

13

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

*Commodity prices have been significantly impacted as a result of the economic consequences of social distancing and the closing of non-essential businesses, especially the full or partial shuttering of the retail, food service and restaurant sectors. On pages 14-22, Texas Farm Bureau provides an overview and information pertaining to the COVID-19 situation as of April 22. Updates will continue to be posted on <https://texasfarmbureau.org>.*

## USDA unveils plans for coronavirus funding

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

U.S. farmers and ranchers impacted by the coronavirus could receive at least some aid from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) by the end of May.

On April 17, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and President Donald Trump announced a \$19 billion program, the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, made up of two parts.

“First, there will be \$16 billion in direct payments to our farmers and ranchers who have experienced unprecedented losses during this pandemic,” Perdue said. “For this portion of the program, our economists and USDA evaluated commodity specific losses occurring during the mid-January to mid-April time frame for immediate assistance.”

The program is open to farmers and ranchers regardless of size or market outlet if they suffered an eligible loss.

To qualify for a payment, a commodity must have declined in price by at least 5 percent between January and April.

Of the \$16 billion provided for direct payments to farmers and ranchers, the American Farm Bureau Federation is reporting that \$9.6 billion will be directed to the livestock industry—cattle, dairy and hogs. Farmers of row crops will receive \$3.9 billion, and \$2.1 billion is set aside for specialty crop farmers. Another \$500 million will be available for farmers of other crops.

USDA has yet to confirm this distribution of funding.

Payments will be determined using two calculations, according to USDA.

One part of the payment will be determined from price losses that occurred Jan. 1 through April 5. Farmers and ranchers will be compensated for 85 percent of the price loss during that period.

The other part of the payment calculation is derived from losses from April 15 through the next two quarters, for which farmers will be compensated 30 percent of expected losses.

Farmers and ranchers should save records—including depopulation of livestock or destroying products, like dumping milk or plowing under specialty crops—to demonstrate losses.

To distribute payments as quickly as possible, USDA will use the remaining funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), along with money from the coronavirus stimulus package, rather than wait for the CCC to be replenished in July.

“We’ve also looked ahead to help provide additional assistance with cost and disruption of markets in the months ahead, not really knowing what the demand disruption would be,” Perdue said.

The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program may take into consideration other farm program benefits, which could limit some Coronavirus Food Assistance Program payments to prevent farmers from being paid across multiple farm programs.

The second part of the program is a commitment by USDA to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, specialty crops, fruits, berries, vegetables, dairy and meat protein to be distributed to Americans in need.

The distribution will be made in conjunction with the private sector and will go into food banks and other

non-profit based and community operations.

According to USDA, the food purchases will begin with \$100 million per month in fresh fruits and vegetables, \$100 million per month in a variety of dairy products and \$100 million a month in meat products.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) applauded Perdue’s announcement.

“If there was ever a time when Texas farm and ranch families need help, it is now,” TFB President Russell Boening, a Wilson County farmer, rancher and dairyman, said. “TFB is grateful this program provides \$16 billion in critically-needed direct support for farmers and ranchers negatively impacted by COVID-19. This relief funding for agriculture, especially Texas cattle ranchers, provides much-needed certainty as we work through these extreme challenges.”

TFB supports USDA partnering with regional and local distributors to purchase agricultural commodities so those items can reach Americans in need.

“Texas farmers and ranchers are in a unique position regarding our nation’s response to the pandemic,” Boening said. “Each of us is battling the economic impacts on our own farm and ranch while remaining committed to feeding our country.”

Perdue said while the funding available through USDA won’t make farmers whole, it is a good start.

“We don’t expect we’ve met all the needs. We’re not going to make everyone content with this initial tranche, and many people will feel like it’s insufficient, but we’re doing everything we can to cover as many people—both small farmers as well as larger farmers, and we’ll have to



see where the gaps are to address later on,” Perdue said.

USDA hopes to have checks in the mail by the end of May, but Perdue said it is an arduous process and could take longer than that.

“We’re going to push them to get these checks out in May,” Perdue said.

The secretary also anticipates a need for additional funding to help those affected by the coronavirus in the coming months.

“The \$14 billion of replenishment to the CCC will not be available to us until July, and I felt like it was imperative to move more quickly to get these areas covered for our first quarter losses because I’m not sure if people can hang on long enough until July to wait for that money,” Perdue said. “We do anticipate further needs. We’ll be looking at second quarter losses as we go forward and have a better data position of knowing what the exact numbers are, but going forward, I anticipate we’ll need additional money.”

For the latest on the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program funding and other relief possibilities, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org>.

## Global pandemic plows through Texas agriculture, economy

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has altered every aspect of the American economy, including agriculture.

Volatile markets have led to increased uncertainty for farmers and ranchers who are facing tough decisions.

The economic uncertainty related to the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy and the destruction of demand for many agricultural products contributed to significant price declines for ethanol, crops and animal proteins. The decline in futures prices likely coincided with declines in cash market prices, as well.

COVID-19 is dramatically impacting agriculture, and the challenges don't appear to be slowing down.

### Cattle



The social distancing and quarantine protocols implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19 have reduced economic growth, shuttered consumers in their homes and changed the way Americans purchase and consume food.

The slowing economy is bad for all animal proteins, but beef—typically the highest-priced of the proteins and considered a luxury product in economic terms—stands to suffer the most when consumers spend less in response to wage cuts and job losses.

Since Jan. 14, June live cattle future prices have declined by more than 30 percent, to around 85 cents

per pound, while boxed beef cutouts reached record highs in mid-March to early April before decreasing slightly.

This is due to a variety of factors including reduced foodservice demands, shifts in beef primal cut values as consumers stocked up on cheaper retail cuts, slowdowns at beef packing plants and the way beef is ordered and sold for retail, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

“This global pandemic has injected never-before-seen uncertainty into the cattle and beef markets,” John Newton, AFBF chief economist, said. “As consumers were emptying meat cases, the boxed beef cutout rose to historic levels, and cattle futures zigged and zagged as far as they could in both directions—all while cash markets gyrated wildly.”

The closure of meat packing plants has also impacted the cattle sector.

Processing capacity across the U.S. is aligned with consumer demand and fed cattle supply.

The loss of packing plants narrows the outlets for those cattle ready to be harvested. This creates a log jam on the supply that reverberates to other segments of the cattle sector.

Another area causing concern is cattle auctions.

Gulf Coast Livestock Auction owner and general manager Eddie Garcia, whose business is located in Alice, said he received guidance from the Livestock Marketing Association on handling social distancing.

Garcia is only allowing “essential buyers” into the sales auditorium and has capped attendance at 50 people.

And the downturn in cattle prices has taken sale barn owners and buyers on a wild ride.

“There were a couple of weeks

leading up to this turnaround where the buyers really didn't know where to grab ahold of,” Garcia said. “It just really caused a lot of uncertainty within the markets and especially the buyers. Can you imagine buying something for \$700 or \$800 and the next day it's worth \$50 to \$100 less?”

Some livestock sale barn facilities are open in Texas depending on the location, while others have temporarily closed. Various social distancing guidelines have been implemented to ensure the safety of buyers, sellers and staff.

### Dairy



Schools and restaurants are major buyers of dairy items like milk, cheese and butter. Because many of those facilities are closed, demand was reduced at a time when milking traditionally increases in the spring, Texas Association of Dairymen Executive Director Darren Turley said in an interview with Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

“When you get out of cold weather and you start getting back to mild climate, you also have fresh green grass and cows give more milk,” he said. “This is a peak time for us.”

Even though consumers initially purchased more milk at the grocery store during panic-buying, that didn't translate into higher milk prices because of the nature of the purchases.

Bulk orders traditionally make up the largest portion of sector demand—items like hundreds of individual-sized cartons of milk for schools, 20-pound cases of shredded

cheese for restaurants and 55-pound butter cartons. Processing plants have specific production lines configured for these products, and it's difficult to change them overnight.

“With the change in foodservice and everything that we've seen through this stay-at-home process, we have the equivalent of 1,100 milk trucks per day in the nation not being used to make cheese that were in the weeks previous. That's just cheese,” Turley said. “We have a lot of milk in the market that is searching for a home at a time when most of the country is at or close to its peak milk production for the year.”

Milk from a dairy farm is typically processed and on the shelf in a short amount of time. Because it's perishable, it must be dumped if there is no buyer.

The dairy association is deciding on the viability of re-opening an old cheese plant and using it to make animal feed from some of the excess milk, but they're unsure if it will be profitable.

“Everything is running at full capacity. We have put milk in every venue. We have pots full,” he said. “We ship it out of state, multiple states over. But as you can imagine, most states are getting to be in a similar status as we are with their production being relatively full and having a surplus of milk.”

AFBF economists noted futures prices for Class III milk—which is used for hard cheeses, cream cheese and whey products—is down 36 percent, or more than \$6 per hundredweight, from January. Class IV milk that goes into making butter and dry milk powders is also down 34 percent, or \$5.60 per hundredweight.

Dairy processors and cooperatives are requesting dairy farmers reduce milk supplies, as well as requesting the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to impose a supply manage-

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

ment program in exchange for direct payments.

“Nobody likes to hear it, but I think the situation is far from over,” Turley said.

## Pork and poultry



Major meat companies in the U.S. and Canada have temporarily closed plants due to cases of the new coronavirus among employees and concerns about its spread.

The closures have contributed to drops in price of livestock, including poultry and pork. Both sectors in Texas are struggling to alter production.

Restaurant closures have also contributed to large losses for the industries.

Although these integrated industries are equipped to handle such changes in a systems approach, the farmers raising these animals must still find ways to sustain productivity and farm profitability in a time of uncertainty.

## Sheep and goats



MAY 1, 2020

TEXAS AGRICULTURE

Spring is an important time for lamb and goat markets with the arrival of two important holidays—Easter and Ramadan—when more consumers enjoy traditional meals with these proteins. In addition to restaurant closings, social distancing has prevented family gatherings

that would have normally included lamb or goat.

The traditional markets for feeder and slaughter weight lambs have sharply declined during this period due to the uncertainty in meat consumption and processor closings.

The value of American wool has also been lost due to decreased access to vital export markets. The major wool trade partners were impacted by COVID-19 and their ports were shut down. U.S. farmers rely on foreign markets for about 80 percent of annual sales, and prices responded with 40 percent declines compared to 2019.

## Cotton



COVID-19 is affecting the textile industry, from the cotton field to retail stores.

USDA's 2020 planting forecast predicted a slight increase to 13.74 million acres planted in cotton, a statistic Steve Verett, CEO of Plains Cotton Growers, recently said is unrealistic.

“I don't know where they think that's coming from,” Verett told *AgriPulse*. “I'm not hearing anybody saying they're going to plant more.”

Instead, he expects Texas farmers to plant less cotton as cotton prices and forecasted consumption continue to spiral downward at record levels.

The latest USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) world cotton market forecast shows world cotton consumption is down 7.6 million bales from last month, the largest monthly change in USDA's recorded data history.

The Intercontinental Exchange

futures contract has fallen below 50 cents for the first time in over a decade, USDA said in the report. Global consumption is at a six-year low, world ending stocks are at the highest level in five years and stocks outside of China are 25 percent above the previous record.

## Corn



No major commodity has been left untouched by the pandemic, including corn.

Since Jan. 14, corn prices fell 15 percent and ethanol prices fell 40 percent, according to an analysis by AFBF Chief Economist John Newton.

Since about 40 percent of corn's demand is for ethanol fuel purposes, corn prices correlate heavily with crude oil and gasoline.

Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration revealed nearly half of U.S. ethanol production capacity was offline by early April.

Crude oil saw record lows as travel and corresponding fuel consumption dramatically declined under shelter-in-place orders.

Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration revealed nearly half of all U.S. ethanol production capacity was offline by early April.

Corn prices are also influenced by the USDA prospective plantings report, which said farmers intended to plant 97 million acres of corn this spring.

But since COVID-19 has wrecked the corn and ethanol market, agricultural experts are encouraging farmers to plant fewer corn acres.

## All commodities



Updated analysis by AFBF shows crop and livestock prices falling to levels that threaten the livelihoods of many U.S. farmers and ranchers. Shuttered schools, universities, restaurants and cafeterias are no longer buying milk, meat, fruits, vegetables and other food, causing a downward spiral in crop and livestock prices.

“The resilience of farmers and ranchers has been nothing short of stunning, but we must not take for granted their ability to hold on with prices spiraling, taking all hope of breaking even with them,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “I stand by my assurance that our food supply remains strong, but America will have fewer farms and ranches supplying it unless USDA acts quickly to deliver aid and our economy is released from the grips of this pandemic soon.”

## Labor woes



Farmers and ranchers across the state are concerned about getting enough laborers amid global travel restrictions and the temporary closing of consulates, who typically must conduct face-to-face interviews with H-2A applicants.

But the U.S. State Department recently announced it was committed



# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

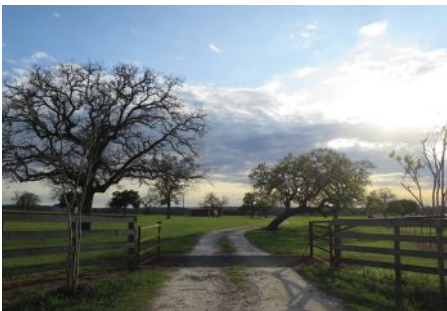
to processing H-2A program applications by expanding an interview waiver to include new applicants, as well as returning workers whose visas had expired in the last 48 months, according to AFBF Congressional Relations Director Allison Crittenden.

“This is important for agriculture, because it ensures that farmers and ranchers will have access to that critically important workforce. We are at a time when planting is getting started, some regions of the country are already harvesting, and this means that we will have access to our H-2A workforce pretty similar to how we would in a normal year,” she said.

In addition to the interview waiver by the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, with the support of USDA, enacted a temporary final rule to ensure farmers and ranchers could access the temporary labor needed to grow and harvest food.

Under this temporary final rule, an H-2A petitioner with a valid temporary labor certification who is concerned that workers will be unable to enter the country due to travel restrictions can start employing certain foreign workers who are currently in H-2A status in the United States immediately after United States Citizenship and Immigration Services receives the H-2A petition, but not before the employment start date listed on the petition.

## Rural life



Rural communities are also feeling the impacts of the global pandemic.

Lack of broadband internet ac-

cess has long been a problem for rural America, but the issue has gained a spotlight during the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance learning, work-from-home roles and telemedicine all require dependable, high-speed internet access.

The Federal Communications Commission benchmark for high-speed internet is at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads.

Research shows about 69 percent of rural Texans can access high-speed internet. But a 2019 USDA report, *A Case for Rural Broadband*, showed that 25 percent of Texas' nearly 250,000 farms have no internet access at all.

And another 25 percent of households have only one choice for broadband service.

Another report by the Classroom Connectivity Initiative noted about 275,000 rural Texas schoolchildren needed more bandwidth for digital learning, especially with schools closing for the year.

This leaves many rural Texans without a signal when it comes to working and learning remotely.

And telemedicine lags in rural communities, too, in areas that are already feeling the sting of closing hospitals and lack of healthcare providers.

According to the Texas Department of Agriculture, 75 percent of Texas counties are federally designated as health professional shortage areas and/or medically underserved areas.

Sixty-four of Texas' 254 counties do not have a hospital, and 25 counties do not have primary care physicians.

State and federal guidance forced many rural healthcare facilities to temporarily suspend non-emergency services, which typically fund the bulk of rural hospital budgets. The lack of income is straining already-tight budgets, some to the breaking point.

## Summary



COVID-19 is devastating every sector of agriculture and creating new challenges for rural Texas.

But while the current economic situation is dire, as TFB President Russell Boening noted during a re-

cent tele-town hall event, there will be an after.

“There are a lot of positives out there that we don't need to forget about. We have a lot of things that have happened in the past six months or a year, some trade deals that have gotten done, and I don't think we need to forget about that,” Boening said. “There will be opportunities after this is over.”

Updates on the impacts to agriculture, CARES Act, funding relief opportunities and other topics related to COVID-19 are available at [texasfarmbureau.org](https://texasfarmbureau.org).

## Texas Farm Bureau COVID-19 resource page available online

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted some of our most basic businesses and services.

To assist farmers, ranchers and other Texans during this unprecedented situation, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) launched a COVID-19 resource web page.

The page is available online at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/covid-19-resources>.

“It can be difficult to know where to turn for information online,” Regan Beck, TFB director of Government Affairs, said. “Texas Farm Bureau has put together a list of reliable resources to help Texans find answers they need in one place.”

The page features topics like loans and funding, critical infrastructure, animal health, the restaurant industry and more.

Texans can download fact sheets about agricultural labor as a critical infrastructure sector, read the latest COVID-19-related news from TFB and find contact

information for ag-related governmental agencies.

A link to a COVID-19 federal rural resource guide is available online, as well.

The site also has a link that could help farmers and ranchers working during the coronavirus pandemic.

“Agriculture is classified as essential and critical infrastructure,” Beck said. “The Texas Department of Agriculture provides an essential industry travel letter for those folks who are working in a critical industry.”

A link to that letter for members to print and carry with them is available on the TFB COVID-19 resources page.

“The information on the Texas Farm Bureau web page is from trusted sources, and there are contacts to state and federal agencies who can provide more information on particular subjects,” Beck said. “It's a beneficial page for farmers, ranchers and rural Texans who need reliable information during this time.”

## Farm Bureau Feeding Texas program announced

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) is joining county Farm Bureaus across the state to assist those who are in need of food, as well as those who provide that food, in an effort to keep their businesses alive in these unprecedented times.

The Farm Bureau Feeding Texas Co-op Contribution Program, es-

tablished by TFB, aims to pair food banks and other food-relief entities with local restaurants and caterers.

TFB suggests county Farm Bureaus work with restaurants, catering businesses or similar entities to help provide meals to those in need in the community.

These meals or food items can be

delivered to those in need by working through a local food bank or other food-relief entity.

TFB will match a county Farm Bureau donation of up to \$1,000 for this or any food-related project during the pandemic.

“The coronavirus pandemic has created real food hardships for many

across Texas, from those who are most vulnerable to food disruption, to restaurants and meal providers,” TFB Executive Director/COO Si Cook said. “Food banks and other food-relief entities have seen a sharp increase in the number of requests for help.”

For more information about the program, contact your county Farm Bureau office.

## Texas Farm Bureau members rally to help local communities, workers

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

From sewing face masks to donating much-needed food, money and supplies, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members helped their local communities during the coronavirus pandemic.

Several county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) and member-families have actively supported their community and critical and essential infrastructure employees.

While not every story is captured here, it's apparent TFB is a family who works to take care of themselves and other Texans every day, but especially during the unprecedented times brought on by the coronavirus

pandemic this spring.

### Farm Bureau members help protect critical workers

TFB member-families across Texas are pitching in to sew cloth face masks for healthcare workers, first responders and more.

Hidalgo CFB member Amy Lee said daughters Claire and Charylet learned sewing in 4-H. So, when area first responders asked for donations, they knew they could help.

“They quickly realized it was a need they could fulfill using skills they possessed,” Lee said.

The girls are each manning a sewing machine, including one that's been in the family for more than 50 years. The older model belonged

to the girls' great-grandmother and was dusted off for the effort, Lee said.

Her daughters worked steadily, sewing more than 70 masks.

With each mask, the girls included a note thanking the recipient for their public service in this difficult time.

“They've been raised to give back, so they're just glad to help however they can,” Lee said.

In Jasper County, TFB member John VanDevender's twin sons are also busy making masks for those who are considered essential and critical industry employees.

Their venture began when VanDevender's son Jordan needed a differ-

ent idea for his National Honors Society project after social distancing guidelines made his first idea impossible to complete.

Jordan approached his dad with the idea of making masks, and his twin brother Case also began helping by making masks for his 4-H club.

While they have sold a few, VanDevender said the majority of the masks have been donated to critical infrastructure employees.

“We've made donations to doctor's offices, nurses, first responders, law enforcement, family members...you name it, we've done it,” John said. “We're helping people. That's the main thing.”



Hidalgo County Farm Bureau members sew masks for critical infrastructure workers. Courtesy photo.



Jasper County Farm Bureau members deliver their masks to a doctor's office. Courtesy photo.

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

## Clay CFB 'meating' community needs

Clay CFB donated more than 50 pounds of hamburger meat in April to the county food bank, an act Clay CFB President Tommy Henderson described as "just neighbors helping neighbors."

As the effects of COVID-19 continue to trickle down throughout the economy, many people are out of work or have had their hours reduced.

Henderson and Clay CFB Vice President Scott Cleveland delivered the meat to the food bank, giving area hungry families a much-needed protein option.

"We're all beef producers on our county board, so I felt like it was not only fulfilling a need for the food bank, but it was something we're very proud to give," Henderson said. "We're all in this together, so we try to help out where we can."

## Wilbarger CFB serves community

When Wilbarger CFB board members heard United Samaritan Services of Vernon (USSV) needed more food on its shelves, they took action.

The non-profit USSV assists residents with food, clothing, paying bills and more. The monetary donation from Wilbarger CFB will be used to purchase more food for distribution to those in need.

"Large organizations and the government are trying to help, but there are a lot of families in this area whose needs are not being met that need help and need it right now," Wilbarger CFB President Kurt Lemon said. "Without a job, there's no money to buy food. It's usually churches and small organizations in rural areas that step up to fill that gap, so we're proud to do what we can to help USSV."



Clay County Farm Bureau members donate more than 50 pounds of meat to the county food bank. Courtesy photo.



Wilbarger County Farm Bureau donates funds to the non-profit United Samaritan Services of Vernon. Courtesy photo.

## TAHC addresses threat of passing COVID-19 to livestock, pets

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

There's currently no scientific evidence to support that people can infect animals with the coronavirus (COVID-19), according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC).

The Center for Disease Control has reported that the first positive animal case was a tiger at the New York Zoo and then two additional cases were identified in pet cats. The companion animal cats were located in different parts of New York state and are expected to make full recoveries.

Research is underway to further understand if and how different animals could be affected by COVID-19.

"As everyone is aware, the situation continues to evolve, and we at

TAHC strive to keep up with new information as it becomes available," Dr. Susan Rollo, state epidemiologist, told the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

The tiger at the New York Zoo showed respiratory issues and was tested for coronavirus.

"If anyone has concerns about respiratory illness in their livestock or pets, they should immediately call their private veterinarian," Rollo said. "After doing so, their veterinarian will assess the animal for more common respiratory diseases and rule those out. Then, they may consult with us if they have further questions or concerns."

Because there is currently no evidence to show humans can infect their livestock with COVID-19,



MAY 1, 2020

TEXAS AGRICULTURE

there are currently no movement restrictions in place in Texas.

"As a matter of fact, our permits department is receiving just as many movement requests as before COVID-19, and many of the live-

stock markets are still up and running," Rollo said.

Texas are encouraged to follow all local and state ordinances and suggestions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus to one another.

## Tele-Town Halls focus on cattle concerns, COVID-19

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

Insights on cattle industry concerns and federal coronavirus (COVID-19) relief efforts for agriculture were topics of the two Tele-Town Halls hosted by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

The Tele-Town Hall calls were a new tool TFB used to communicate with members amid the pandemic. The calls allowed members to listen to discussion and address industry experts with questions to further explore the trending topics.

### Cattle concerns

More than 400 ranchers and other interested TFB members joined Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Professor and Extension Economist Dr. David Anderson, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Director of Congressional Relations Scott Bennett and AFBF Economist Michael Nepveux.

Since Jan. 14, cattle future prices have declined by more than 30 percent, while boxed beef cutouts reached record highs in mid-March to early April before decreasing slightly.

This is due to a variety of factors, including reduced foodservice demands, shifts in beef primal cut values as consumers stocked up on cheaper retail cuts, slowdowns at beef packing plants and the way beef is ordered and sold for retail, according to Nepveux.

During TFB's Tele-Town Hall, Nepveux noted AFBF asked the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to review packer margins during the pandemic.

"You hear a lot about the spread between cutout and the cattle prices. We understand it's very frustrating to watch the cutout rise so dramatically while watching cash and futures prices drop as much as they did," he said. "We're in contact with the packers and the folks who regulate the packers and those who regulate the futures market."

Another area causing concern is cattle auctions.

Nepveux noted some auction barns have remained open while following social distancing guidelines. But some sale barns have closed, and others are hosting fewer sales.

"These markets have to be functioning properly in order to ensure that this nation is fed," Nepveux said.

Circumstances have drastically impacted the cash market and will have long-term effects on the futures market, Anderson said.

The futures market, according to Anderson, is down due to several factors, including an already-high amount of beef production in the first quarter of the year.

Falling income levels combined with rising unemployment will change consumer meat purchases to more ground beef and fewer expensive cuts like steaks, which changes the value of beef.

Bennett discussed the aid available for agriculture in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and how AFBF is advocating for its use.

"We've encouraged the USDA to construct a program that's equitable to all sectors, but we really focused on allowing relief to come to the cow-calf producer," Bennett said. "The cattle industry is very dynamic between the cow-calf producer, the backgrounder or the stocker or the feeder, and they are all in need of relief. But the cow-calf producer typically has a smaller herd and is maybe not going to have risk management tools in place. If they were to sell their cattle in this climate, they're going to see a loss, and we need to make sure that is mitigated as much as possible."

AFBF staff have communicated with the four major packers, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Marketing and Regulatory Programs Undersecretary Greg

Ibach, according to Bennett.

He emphasized the necessity of keeping packing plants open during the pandemic to keep markets flowing and cattle moving from ranch to retail.

In addition to AFBF efforts, TFB President Russell Boening told listeners TFB is in direct contact with USDA and congressional leaders.

"At Texas Farm Bureau, we've engaged on many fronts, but we've specifically asked for help for Texas cattle producers," Boening said.

TFB worked with 25 other state Farm Bureaus on a letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue asking that funding for agriculture in the CARES Act be directed to the cattle industry, Boening noted.

"We're in trying times right now. We're in contact with our members, and we're listening to our members," he said. "We know their concerns, and those are the things we're working on."

### Federal relief efforts for agriculture

The second Tele-Town Hall focused on COVID-19 impacts on agriculture and federal relief efforts, including details on Small Business Administration (SBA) loans and programs.

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, SBA Dallas/Fort Worth District Director Herb Austin, AFBF Economist Veronica Nigh and AFBF Director of Congressional Relations R.J. Karney discussed the situation and took questions from listeners.

During the call, Austin said the SBA had exhausted the \$349 billion initially authorized for the Paycheck Protection Program.

The average amount of approved dollars per application for agriculture was \$108,000, which was the lowest among the 20 sub-sectors in which data were provided.

"We do know, however, that farmers and ranchers have not typically

utilized the SBA program," Nigh said. "They have instead been shuttled to USDA Farm Service Agency programs, and while those programs are useful in certain scenarios, at this point they are not good substitutes for the SBA programs that are available."

Cornyn noted legislation for relief efforts would provide assistance for farmers and ranchers.

"For agriculture, we know that the prices are down for everything. For cattle, cotton, fruits and vegetables, dairy and a number of crops are starting to go out of supply, with reduced demand. And then there's some meat packing plants that are temporary closed down because of the virus," Cornyn said. "Farmers, ranchers, producers around the state are wondering how to survive this new—not a natural disaster, not bad weather—but this virus that has been unleashed on our country."

Following input from TFB, Cornyn and fellow U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz sent a letter to Perdue detailing the challenges of Texas farmers and ranchers and asking the secretary to provide support for all farmers and ranchers.

In addition to the CARES Act, Cornyn noted he expected USDA to introduce a new \$16 billion assistance package for agriculture. That package was announced the next day by Perdue and President Donald Trump.

Boening concluded the call by reminding listeners there will be a time when the pandemic is finally over and the economy reopens.

"Texas farmers and ranchers are in a unique position when it comes to the COVID-19 outbreak and the nation's response. We know each of us are battling the impacts of the pandemic on our own farm and ranch, while at the same time, we have to keep doing what we do," he said. "We're committed to keeping an adequate and safe food supply for this country, and we just hope that we can work through this."

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

## Farm income forecast lowered due to COVID-19

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

A detailed report released in April by the University of Missouri's Food & Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) estimated 2020 net farm income at \$86 billion, down from \$106 billion in the group's January forecast.

Earlier in the year, FAPRI predicted farm earnings would rise, because the phase one trade agreement with China included major agricultural commodity purchases. But the impact of COVID-19 on China, where the disease originated, paired with drastic drops in U.S. commodity prices has the research group reconsidering the forecast.

"A lot of producers are already in trouble. This is going to make it

more severe," FAPRI Director Pat Westhoff said.

Many major commodities, including corn, cotton, cattle, hogs and dairy, have fallen in price dramatically since COVID-19 reached the U.S.

FAPRI lowered 2020 estimates of livestock prices as much as 12 percent, milk prices by 8 percent and crop prices by 5 to 10 percent.

Westhoff noted the report did not account for possible effects of supply chain disruptions, like the recent closure of several meatpacking facilities, that may further reduce prices.

"The challenges folks were already facing in agriculture were tough, but COVID-19 has put an additional strain on the ability to profit from farming and ranching," Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) National Legislative

Director Laramie Adams said. "Across the board, agricultural commodities and live cattle futures have significantly declined, posing major challenges. Net farm income will be impacted by these extreme challenges."

The FAPRI report was released prior to the unveiling of U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, which may slightly adjust the forecast, according to American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Chief Economist John Newton.

"The important component of FAPRI's report is they did not include the \$16 billion in direct payments from the recent USDA package," he said. "Now that farmers and ranchers have some government payments coming in, that will



offset the predictions a little bit."

But forecasts like FAPRI's are useful tools for legislators who are deciding how to allocate financial resources, Newton said. Periodic updates give analysts a current view of the situation and can help spur action.

"Folks on Capitol Hill have a lot of faith in the estimates put out by FAPRI and other groups," he said. "USDA numbers, commodity sheets and research reports from different universities...it's important to look at all of those and see what's going on."

## Congress replenishes Paycheck Protection Program, clarifies EIDL program

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

Congress recently voted to approve a \$484 billion "phase 3.5" coronavirus relief bill that provided additional resources to small businesses and hospitals and implemented a nationwide COVID-19 testing program.

The bill replenished the Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) with an additional \$310 billion and increased the authorization level of the emergency Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program by another \$60 billion (\$10 billion for advance grants and \$50 billion for EIDL loans). The bill also makes agricultural entities eligible for EIDL loans.

"We are very thankful to our legislators for hearing the concerns of the agricultural community and addressing them," Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. "The Paycheck Protection Program is a lifeline for

small businesses of all kinds right now, but farmers and ranchers had issues utilizing this program in the first round. We are pleased some of these issues are now addressed to help more of our hardworking farm and ranch families receive access to SBA programs."

PPP applications for self-employed and independent contractors—which is how most farmers and ranchers are categorized—weren't accepted until April 10, a full week after the application window was open for other businesses.

Guidance for those types of applications wasn't released until April 14, and funding ran out less than 48 hours later.

As a result, of the more than 1.6 million loans approved, only 46,334 went to businesses in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector, according to SBA data.

Traditionally, farmers and ranchers don't use SBA programs, Adams explained, but instead go through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's

(USDA) Farm Service Agency for disaster relief.

Although the SBA was doing an incredible amount of work in a short amount of time, Adams said the agency was unfamiliar with the unique aspects of farming and ranching operations, such as the use of different tax forms, labor contracts instead of direct hires, seasonal employees and rent structures, including land, structures and equipment instead of a single building lease.

Adams noted community banks, Farm Credit branches and other primarily rural institutions were also unable to get approved as lenders in time, so businesses that already had relationships with lenders familiar with SBA protocols were first in line for PPP funding.

"That really left some farmers and ranchers hurting," Adams said. "Just like any other small business, their payroll needs must still be met, and bills have to get paid. So, we're very glad to see some more funding

added to PPP."

Additionally, SBA's interpretation of EIDL funding initially left agricultural enterprises other than aquaculture, agricultural cooperatives and nurseries ineligible for the program. But Adams said this latest bill adds language clarifying congressional intent to include agriculture.

"Getting access to EIDL is a big deal, because that opens up additional relief to farmers and ranchers," Adams said. "And while Congress specified the program was for any small business with less than 500 employees, it didn't get interpreted that way, and we're pleased to have that corrected. Any amount that can help farmers and ranchers stay afloat until the economy re-opens and critically needed."

The legislation also contains funding to continue fighting the coronavirus pandemic, including \$75 billion to hospitals and an additional \$25 billion to establish a nationwide viral testing protocol.

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

## TFB launches virtual resources, ag-tivities for educators, parents

By Julie Tomascik  
Editor

When schools began closing in March, Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Educational Outreach and Field Operations staff began creating virtual lessons and ag-tivities to help with hands-on learning.

"With education transitioning to distance learning during this time, we recognized that we needed to provide educational resources for students to continue learning about agriculture at home," Jordan Walker, TFB director of Educational Outreach, said. "Distance learning doesn't mean that hands-on lessons or an introduction to agricultural education has to be postponed."

To meet this need, TFB Field Operations staff created videos that vary in topic and length, and TFB's Educational Outreach team created guided activities to go with each.

"We adapted our current lessons and created new activities to help parents and educators through this unprecedented time," she said. "The guided worksheets encourage stu-

dents to actively engage in the videos. They're both educational and fun."

TFB's *Be Ag Smart* publications are also available online. They focus on beef, cotton, corn and dairy.

TFB's extensive video library featuring Texas farmers and ranchers, as well as an Ag in the Classroom video series, helps students connect crops in the field to food on their plates.

In addition to gaining a better understanding of where and how food and fiber are grown, kids can engage in virtual lessons, cooking activity videos, recipes and more fun.

"Increasing agricultural awareness and literacy is more important than ever. Since we couldn't continue our school visit program, which reached 52,000 students in 2019, we knew we had to provide engaging and educational virtual opportunities," Walker said.

TFB school visit presenters Bilynn Johnson and Jill Kreuzler give tours of their farms and ranches, explaining how science is a part of modern agriculture.



**TFB school visit presenters and Field Operations and Educational Outreach staff created videos to share more about modern agriculture. The videos are available on TFB's social media pages and YouTube channel.**

"Although a computer screen can't take the place of face-to-face interaction, our hope is that students have still been able to broaden their knowledge about agriculture and learn where their food comes from, while also having fun," Walker said.

A seed planting demonstration and germination journal are also available online to help students better understand the steps and care needed to help plants grow.

"At home, students can plant a dry bean from the pantry and watch it grow," Walker said. "Planting a seed teaches students about agricul-

ture on a small scale. They can use the germination journal to record findings, make predictions and draw the plant growing."

The virtual lessons and resources are available online at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/aitc>.

For videos featuring farmers and ranchers, including the farm tours from school visit presenters, go to TFB's YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/texasfarmbureau](http://www.youtube.com/texasfarmbureau).

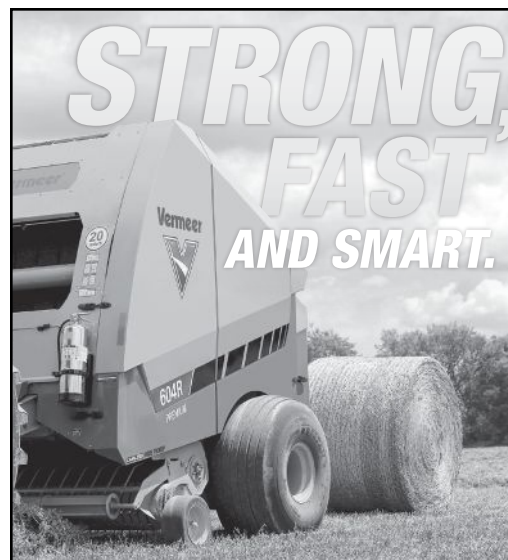
Recipes, information about food and other topics can be found on the *Texas Table Top* blog at <http://tabletop.texasfarmbureau.org>.



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MAY 1, 2020

TEXAS AGRICULTURE

23

# TPWD sets red snapper season in federal waters

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

Private anglers will have 63 days starting June 1 to catch red snapper in federal waters off the Texas coast.

Bag and size limits remain unchanged at two per person with a 16-inch minimum length.

The start date and length of season for federal waters was set by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

“This is something new. We’ve been trying it out for the past couple of years, and we finally got approval from the National Marine Fishery Service in 2019 to set all of the red snapper seasons in federal waters going forward,” Julie Hagen, social media specialist for TPWD’s Coastal Fisheries Division, said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

Prior to this year, TPWD was work-

ing under an exempted fishing permit for two years.

“This will be our third year, and we will have that authority going forward,” Hagen said.

The season length is based on historical landing data, last year’s fishing effort data and the state’s allocation from the 2019 stock assessment.

“The reason that we say a projected 63 days is because even though we do manage the opening and closing of the seasons, we do have an allocated poundage,” Hagen said. “The federal government has given each Gulf state a certain amount of red snapper that they can have.”

The allocation is given in pounds of fish, not number of fish.

“We can’t exceed that total allowable catch. In order to do that, we keep meticulous records throughout the season in federal waters and all of the time in state waters so we can get an

estimate of how many pounds of fish have been caught,” Hagen said.

When the state gets close to the limit, TPWD will close the season and announce it on their website.

“We have enough science and statistics using historical landings to project out that we think it’ll take about 63 days,” Hagen said.

Anglers are encouraged to check the TPWD website and the Outdoor Annual app to ensure the season is still opening before fishing.

Federal waters in Texas start past nine nautical miles.

“We are only managing private recreational anglers,” Hagen said. “This means people going out on their own boats, and they can bring friends and anything like that. We do not manage the for-hire sector that includes charter boats, party boats and head boats.”

The for-hire sector is still regulated by the federal government.

In state waters, private anglers can fish year-round.

Bag and size limits remain unchanged at four fish per person with a 15-inch minimum in state waters.

“You’re going to know if it’s a red snapper by that deep rosy red color, and they’re actually going to have a dark fringe around the dorsal and tail fins,” Hagen said.

Anglers are encouraged to report their catches on the iSnapper app.

“We would love help from anglers. It helps us better manage federal and state waters if we have an accurate count,” Hagen said. “You can download the iSnapper app, and it’s on your smartphone, or you can just report your landings through Texas Parks and Wildlife.”

The app will ask how many red snapper were caught, the size and where they were caught.

Anglers must carry a valid Texas fishing license with them when fishing in state and federal waters.

# AFBF encourages farmers to participate in USDA labor survey

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) urges farmers to respond to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) labor survey about farm workers’ hours and wages.

The survey information is used to provide accurate measures of the farm labor force and wages paid, which affect labor program wage rates such as the Adverse Effect Wage Rate. USDA and the Department of Labor also use the data to estimate the demand for and the availability of seasonal agricultural workers.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service’s 2020 Agricultural Labor Survey was mailed to nearly 38,000 randomly selected farms and ranches that had previously reported having paid farm labor.

The April questionnaire asks for information covering two reference weeks, Jan. 12-18 and April 12-18.

NASS will mail an additional survey to farmers in October that will ask for information about reference periods in July 12-18 and Oct. 11-17.

NASS will use the data from these

four reference weeks to determine both quarterly and annual averages for wages and hours worked.

The survey asks for information about the number of hired workers on the farm; total number of base and overtime hours worked; total base, bonus and overtime wages; and total gross wages paid each week. Farmers should not report farm labor contractor employee data in their survey responses, which are due May 7.

NASS prefers online responses at [agcounts.usda.gov](https://agcounts.usda.gov). Respondents need the secure 17-digit survey code included with the survey to access and complete the survey.

As required by federal law, the results of the survey will be available in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified. NASS will publish the survey findings in the Farm Labor report, which is scheduled for release on May 28.

If you have any questions, contact NASS at 1-888-424-7828.

For more details about the survey, using the data or NASS survey methodology, visit the Agricultural

Labor Survey page at [www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide to NASS Surveys/Farm Labor](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide%20to%20NASS%20Surveys/Farm%20Labor).





# USDA reports record enrollment in key farm safety net programs

Farmers signed a record 1.77 million contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year. That is more than 107 percent of the total contracts signed compared with a five-year average.

USDA also reminds farmers that June 30 is the deadline to enroll in ARC and PLC for the 2020 crop year.

"Producers for several years have experienced low commodity prices, a volatile trade environment and catastrophic natural disasters," said Richard Fordyce, Administrator of USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). "Farmers looking to mitigate these risks recognize that ARC and PLC provide the financial protections they need to weather substantial drops in crop prices or revenues."

Farmers interested in enrolling for 2020 should contact their FSA county office.

Farmers must enroll by June 30 and make their one-time update to PLC payment yields by Sept. 30.

The ARC-CO program provides income support tied to historical base acres, not current production, of covered commodities.

ARC-CO payments are issued when the actual county crop revenue of a covered commodity is less than the ARC-CO guarantee for the covered commodity.

PLC program payments are issued when the effective price of a covered commodity is less than the respective

reference price for that commodity.

The effective price equals the higher of the market year average price or the national average loan rate for the covered commodity.

FSA attributes the significant participation in the ARC and PLC programs for the 2019 crop year to increased farmer interest in the programs under the 2018 Farm Bill. Another reason for heightened interest was the increase in eligible farms because of the selling and buying of farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers and military veterans with farms having 10 or fewer base acres.

Program enrollment for 2019 ended March 16.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing.

While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with farmers by phone and using online tools whenever possible, according to USDA.

All USDA Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment.

More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](http://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

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# Texas High Plains farmers increasingly consider wheat for forage

Wheat has long been grown on the Texas High Plains, but fewer farmers are taking the crop to grain harvest, opting instead to cash in on diverse forage options for livestock producers, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

While summer annual forages, including corn and forage sorghum, are primarily used for silage, wheat silage provides Texas cattle and dairy producers an alternative forage source and farmers an option to market their product, said Jordan Bell, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension agronomist in Amarillo.

Because of wheat's flexibility, Bell said, it provides many farmers an opportunity to harvest for grain or for forage based on markets or weather. With recent freezes, farmers in the southwestern Panhandle are beginning to chop many fields for both hay and silage.

"A wheat crop can be grazed, baled or cut as green chop or as wheatlage if it is not taken to the grain stage,"

she said. "While grain harvest in the High Plains is typically in late May to early June, forage options allow the farmer to harvest their crop during April. In some cases, this might also allow the farmer to plant a summer crop."

Bell explained wheatlage is the process of cutting and ensiling wheat as a silage crop to preserve forage quality.

Wheatlage is generally chopped at the soft dough stage when the moisture is favorable for fermentation.

Green chop wheat is either fed directly or wilted in the field prior to ensiling. Green chopping optimizes forage quality because crude protein and digestibility are greater at earlier growth stages, she said, because green chop wheat is generally cut at the boot stage.

At boot, the head is still enclosed in the flag leaf sheath, and the moisture content at this stage is about 80 percent.

"There is generally a significant reduction in yield when chopping at boot rather than at soft dough," Bell said. "At soft dough, the early grain development as well as added biomass contributes to higher yields, although quality is reduced."

Rick Auckerman, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent in Deaf Smith County, reported that earlier-planted fields were at boot to heading at the time of the April 13 and April 17 freezes.

Farmers who are concerned about freeze injury are opting to take advantage of a strong forage market. Some wheat has already been swathed for hay, and silage chopping should begin in the next seven to 10 days.

In the northwest Panhandle, wheat acres for forage continue to increase in response to livestock demands.

"Although many producers are concerned about freeze-related yield reductions, a large percent of the

wheat acres was already contracted for green chop or wheatlage," said Mike Bragg, AgriLife Extension agriculture and natural resources agent in Dallam and Hartley counties.

Bell said farmers are applying one more irrigation to preserve yield and quality on wheat that will be cut for forage due to dry conditions. It is also expected irrigation will continue on fields for grain production if the dry weather persists.

Because of the increased demand for green chop and wheatlage, Bell and Bragg initiated a wheatlage trial in 2018 in northwest Dallam County.

Many farmers were inquiring about yield penalties when wheat harvesting occurred at the boot stage rather than soft dough, so Texas A&M AgriLife data is helping farmers decide how and when to market their forage.

Bell and Bragg are repeating the trial during this production season.

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# Texas leads nation in enrolled Conservation Reserve Program acres

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently offered a general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup, the first general enrollment offered by the agency since 2016.

And Texans took full advantage of the offering, enrolling more than 540,000 acres in the program.

“Texas was the number one state, not only for acres offered, but also acres accepted,” Richard Fordyce, FSA administrator, said. “There was lots of interest in those historical CRP areas around the Panhandle, and lots of folks taking advantage of this general CRP signup.”

Fordyce told the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network more than 3.4 million acres across the nation were accepted.

“The general signup is a competitive signup process,” he said. “Landowners have conversations with staff at Farm Service Agency offices

and go through some options and choices they can make. Then, they submit an offer. Basically, the landowner says, ‘This is what I can commit to do,’ and there are points allotted to different activities they would undertake with their CRP contract.”

The scores are ranked based on an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI), with points allocated for soil erosion control, water quality improvements, wildlife habitat and other conservation activities.

“There were over 4,000 offers [made in Texas],” Fordyce said. “That could be unique landowners, or a landowner could have made more than one offer, but that tops the list as well in number of offers. So, Texas led the way in almost all of the categories for the general CRP signup this year.”

The goal of CRP is to preserve “environmentally sensitive” land by paying landowners through rental payments and cost-share assistance initiatives. Cost-sharing assistance

is available for activities like seeding cover crops and restoring native vegetation.

CRP was first signed into law by President Ronald Regan in 1985. It’s one of the largest private land conservation programs in the U.S. and has helped farmers, ranchers and landowners prevent more than 9 billion tons of soil erosion, sequester an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, restore more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands and protect more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers.

There are three forms of CRP available to landowners nationwide: general enrollment, continuous enrollment and grasslands enrollment. A fourth program, Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP), is available only to certain northern states in an area known as the Prairie Pothole region.

Under the competitive general enrollment program, landowners

sign a contract with USDA for 10 to 15 years guaranteeing the land will not be farmed or used for ranching during that time.

The grasslands program is similar to general signup, except the land may still be used for grazing, haying and seed production.

Continuous enrollment is open all the time. Offers are automatically accepted if the land and landowner meet certain eligibility requirements and enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

“The Conservation Reserve Program is one of our nation’s largest conservation endeavors and is critical in helping producers better manage their operations while conserving valuable natural resources,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. “The program marked its 35th anniversary this year, and we were quite pleased to see one of our largest signups in many years.”

For more information on CRP, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

2020 Texas Farm Bureau  
**PHOTO  
CONTEST**

MAY 1, 2020

TEXAS AGRICULTURE

Entries due June 1

The graphic features a blue background with a white camera lens icon. Below the lens is a film strip showing four photos: a cow, a group of people, a dog, and a longhorn. The text '2020 Texas Farm Bureau PHOTO CONTEST' is prominently displayed in white. On the left side, 'MAY 1, 2020' is written vertically, and 'TEXAS AGRICULTURE' is written vertically at the bottom. At the bottom center, it says 'Entries due June 1'.

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

The deadline for photo submissions in the 2020 contest is June 1.

The contest is limited to members of the Texas Farm Bureau and their immediate families.

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 will be awarded a \$250 cash prize, second place will receive \$200 and two honorable mentions will receive \$100 each.

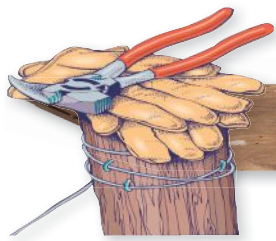
As in years past, both digital and printed photographs may be submitted. To enter, follow these simple rules:

Digital entries should be e-mailed to [photocontest@txfb.org](mailto:photocontest@txfb.org). For publication purposes, photos must be at least 1024 X 768 pixels or higher.

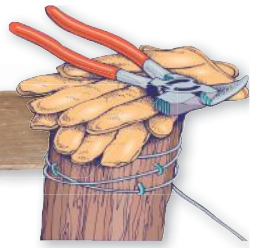
Print entries may be mailed to Photo Contest, TFB Communications Division, P.O. Box 2689, Waco, TX 76702-2689. A self-addressed, stamped envelope needs to accompany your print photo entry if you want your photograph returned.

Include a brief description regarding the entry, plus the participant’s name, address, telephone number and valid Texas Farm Bureau membership number.

More information is available at <https://txfb.us/photocontest20>.



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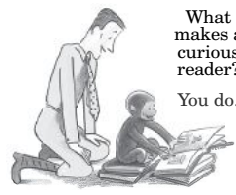
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