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# Texas Agriculture

June 5, 2020

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers

## **Agriculture focuses on recovery and new normal**

**Pages 13-19**



# Agriculture recognized as a truly 'essential' industry, foundation

I made up my mind when I started writing that this piece was not going to be about COVID-19. We get enough of that every day, so we do not have to be reminded.

This piece is about an important lesson we are in the midst of learning, and if we are smart, will not soon forget.

During these weeks that our lives have been disrupted in ways we never dreamed, we've all been able to reflect on what truly matters to each of us, and it has caused us to re-think the definition of "essential."

As the general public has fixated on how they will acquire the necessities of their daily lives, the folks who provide and deliver these necessities have rocketed to the top of the VIP list. I am reminded of a line in a Toby Keith song that goes "How do you like me now?"

One of the most undebatable rules of nature is that living things require nourishment. Human beings can do without a lot of things, but food is the most essential of all essentials.

From his very first executive order, Governor Greg Abbott rightly designated agriculture an "essential indus-

try." The importance of agriculture to this nation hasn't been this obvious in many years. We all count on a very small segment of our population that is now less than 2 percent to feed us.



By Si Cook  
TFB Executive  
Director/COO

Farming and ranching has never been more critical to our society, and never has society had less understanding of the process involved in producing and distributing food and fiber.

Part of Farm Bureau's purpose is to tell the story of agriculture and to create a sense of

partnership between farmer and consumer.

While we do not relish the circumstances, our current situation allows us to emphasize the important role that agriculture plays in every person's life—no matter their address or profession.

As you will see as you browse the pages of this publication, visit our website or see us on social media, your organization is accomplishing this using a wide variety of methods.

Yes, we have all had an opportunity to consider what really matters to each of us—faith, family, health, social interaction and our livelihoods.

Farmers and ranchers, along with all the folks involved in our food supply chain, have gained renewed prominence in these challenging times.

I think it's safe to say that if these times have taught us anything, it is that agriculture and the folks involved are truly "essential!"

## Your Texas Agriculture Minute

### Biotech regulations get an update

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) finalized a sweeping overhaul of its approval process for biotech crops. The announcement marks the first major change to the regulatory process in over three decades.

The timing is good. The science-based rule will encourage innovation while safeguarding the nation's food supply. It will help spur development of new traits and technologies.

Among the types of innovations expected are crops with greater resistance to disease and insect pests; greater tolerance of stress conditions such as drought, high temperature, low temperature and salt; and more efficient use of fertilizer.

The new process is expected to lead to lower regulatory costs and timeframes for the development of new plant varieties. It should provide a clear, predictable and efficient regulatory pathway for innovators. These improvements will help U.S. agriculture solve current and future challenges for production and food security.

It's critical that America's farmers and ranchers remain efficient and competitive. Access to innovation is a key to their success. By updating and modernizing its biotechnology regulations, USDA has forged the right balance of protecting plant health while positioning U.S. agriculture at the forefront of innovation.



By Gary Joiner  
Publisher



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**Gary Joiner**  
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**Carey D. Martin**  
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**Cindy Wennin**  
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**Julie Tomascik**  
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## Sims competes in AFBF's Collegiate Discussion Meet

The American Farm Bureau Federation's Collegiate Discussion Meet looked a little different this year due to COVID-19.

College students from across the nation competed virtually in the annual event.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) was represented by Hannah Sims, a junior at Texas A&M University.

Sims won TFB's Collegiate Discussion Meet in 2019, qualifying her for the national competition.

Through this contest, Sims discussed issues facing farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses, as well as potential solutions to those problems.

"We discussed issues over video chat in Zoom, and there was definitely a learning curve to the contest with it being held virtually this year," Sims said. "But we adapted. Just like agriculture has to adapt to changes, we had to modify the contest and how we competed. This will make us more prepared for changes we might face outside of college."

Sims advanced to the Sweet 16

round. During the contest, she discussed applying innovative technologies to traditional agriculture; using collaborative relationships to combat nationwide crises like mental health and opioid addiction; and how future food technologies can be beneficially integrated into modern agricultural production without hampering the success of traditional products.

"Qualifying for the national contest and then advancing to the Sweet 16 are accomplishments I'm extremely proud of," she said. "It's an exciting opportunity to be involved in this contest and getting to compete against college students from across the nation."

Sims, who is majoring in Agricultural Leadership and Development, plans to pursue a career in agriculture after college.

"I'm still trying to find my path," she said. "The Discussion Meet helped me find an interest in policy work."

Sims grew up in Austin but found her passion in leadership and agri-



*Hannah Sims*

culture through FFA in high school.

"I'm grateful for all the experiences I've had, but I'm especially grateful for the connections I've made through the Discussion Meet contest," she said. "The information I've learned preparing for this contest will help me no matter what I do in agriculture. I've gained a lot of knowledge and expanded my network."

## Save with Texas Farm Bureau member benefits, services

Even in these uncertain times, life goes on.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) is here for members during the coronavirus pandemic. From gathering farm, ranch and business information to offering student lesson plans online, the organization wants to be a resource to lean on in this unprecedented time.

Ensuring members can save money through the member affiliate program is another way the organization works for members.

Need a new computer to work or learn from home? Check out the discounts with Dell, where TFB members get offers and savings on PCs, tablets, electronics and accessories.

If you need home office supplies,

there's a deal for that, too. TFB members receive discounts of up to 75 percent on thousands of products through Office Depot and OfficeMax. Online orders over \$50 are eligible for free next-day delivery. Get what you need delivered right to your doorstep tomorrow. Curbside pickup is also currently available for online orders at all Office Depot and OfficeMax stores.

More time at home means an increase in utility bills. Ferrellgas service offers discounts off standard market price rates for residential and certain non-residential programs to TFB members.

In addition to working and learning, many are tackling home improvement projects.

Planning to paint? Industry-leader Sherwin-Williams offers a wide variety of indoor and outdoor paints, stains and supplies with curbside order and pickup. TFB members receive up to 30 percent off retail prices.

We know how much pride Texans take in their land. TFB offers discounts with Grasshopper, John Deere, Case IH and Caterpillar to help keep your land in shape.

From residential mowers and UTVs to tractors, hay balers and excavators, there's a discount on equipment that fits your needs.

A full list of benefits and services available to TFB members can be found online at [texasfarmbureau.org/membership/member-benefits](https://texasfarmbureau.org/membership/member-benefits).

## Training addresses farm, ranch stress

As people around the country look for big and small ways to help their neighbors through the uncertainty that has come with COVID-19, the Rural Resilience Training Program, now available at no cost for all Farm Bureau members and staff, is a chance to do just that.

Developed by Michigan State University Extension in partnership with the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), National Farmers Union and Farm Credit, the online training program is designed for individuals who interact with farmers and ranchers to help recognize signs of stress and offer resources.

"This free training comes at the perfect time and provides Farm Bureau staff and members a meaningful way to make a difference in their communities," RJ Karney, AFBF director of Congressional Relations, said.

The program will give participants the skills to understand the sources of stress, learn the warning signs of stress and suicide, identify effective communication strategies, reduce stigma related to mental health concerns and connect farmers and ranchers with appropriate mental health and other resources.

The training takes about four to five hours to complete and can be done over multiple sessions.

"Yes, it is a time investment, but one that pays vast dividends for both participants and those they will help," Karney said.

A 2019 Farm Bureau survey showed an overwhelming majority of farmers and farmworkers say financial issues, farm or business problems and fear of losing their farm negatively impact their mental health.

Learn more about the Rural Resilience program and sign up for the training at <https://fb.org/ruralresilience>.

# USMCA slated to take effect July 1

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The Trump administration recently notified Congress it will move forward with enforcing the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) on July 1, ending a nearly three-year process to modernize North American trade agreements.

The U.S. also notified Canada and Mexico it had completed its domestic procedures to implement the agreement, which is the final step necessary for USMCA to enter into force, according to a release by U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

“The USMCA’s entry into force marks the beginning of a historic new chapter for North American trade by supporting more balanced, reciprocal trade, leading to freer markets, fairer trade and robust economic growth in North America,” the release said. “The agreement contains significant improvements and modernized approaches to rules of origin, agricultural market access, intellectual property, digital trade, financial services, labor and numerous other sectors.”

Increased agricultural market access was a key point for agricultural organizations, including Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), when advocating for the implementation of USMCA.

“Texas farmers and ranchers are currently operating in a world of uncertainty,” TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. “Strengthening our relationships with our North American trading partners through USCMA will only help during this difficult time.”

Texas farmers and ranchers will benefit by increased access to Mexican and Canadian markets across a variety of commodities, including dairy, beef, poultry and eggs, fresh produce and more, Adams noted.

The updated agreement also addressed technical barriers to trade that previously limited U.S. exports to Canada of alcoholic beverages, grains and oilseeds and cheese.

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# USDA releases updated plant biotech regulations

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently finalized changes to update and modernize biotechnology regulations under the Plant Protection Act.

Under the new Sustainable, Ecological, Consistent, Uniform, Responsible, Efficient (SECURE) rule, plant biotech regulations will be updated by removing duplicated and antiquated processes. This will help

facilitate the development and availability of new technologies and provide American farmers and ranchers access to the innovative tools to help increase productivity and sustainability.

“Under President Trump’s leadership, USDA is implementing the first significant update to our plant biotechnology regulations in more than three decades,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said in a statement. “USDA’s SECURE

rule will streamline and modernize our regulatory system, facilitate science-based innovations and provide our farmers with the tools they need to produce the world’s safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply, which will help us continue to do right and feed everyone safely.”

Previous regulations were implemented in 1987 before the first genetically modified seeds were released in the mid-1990s and years

before gene-editing technology, such as CRISPR, allowed for faster modifications without using genetic material from other species.

The previous regulations focused on whether genetic engineering used a plant pest to develop modified plants and required a lengthy deregulation process for plants that didn’t pose an increased pest risk.

“After 30 years of experience, USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulatory scientists know that simply using a plant pest in the development of a plant does not necessarily cause the plant to pose a risk to plant health,” Perdue said. “The final rule puts in place a more efficient process to identify plants that would be subject to regulation, focusing on the properties of the plant rather than on its method of production.”

Now, according to the final rule, APHIS will evaluate plants developed using genetic engineering for plant pest risk under a regulatory status review. Only plants that reasonably pose an increased plant pest risk will be evaluated.

The agency said the new rule is a science-based and risk-proportionate regulatory system that will help increase agricultural productivity and sustainability, improve the nutritional value and quality of crops, combat pests and diseases and enhance food safety.

Other federal agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), applauded the overhaul.

The American Farm Bureau Federation also supported the modernization, noting the SECURE rule encourages innovation in new plant breeding techniques while safeguarding the nation’s food supply.

The rule was published in the *Federal Register* on May 18.

The new rule’s provisions become effective on key dates over the next 18 months.

A complete overview of the effective dates for the provisions in the final rule and a description of the implementation process is available on [aphis.usda.gov](http://aphis.usda.gov).

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# Young Farmer & Rancher contest applications available online

By Julie Tomascik  
Editor

The applications for the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher (OYF&R) and Excellence in Agriculture (EIA) contests are available online.

“We know there are a lot of unique operations out there,” Jesse Weiners, TFB YF&R Advisory Committee chair, said. “From vegetable production to raising livestock and being a large or small farm or even a first-generation farm—every farmer or rancher has a place in Texas agriculture. We want to recognize them through this contest.”

The annual contests are a way to highlight the achievements of the younger generation.

Applicants for both contests must be between the ages of 18 and 35 as of Jan. 31, 2021, and be current TFB members in good standing.

Applicants can apply as individuals or married couples.

“Our young farmers and ranchers in Texas are doing some truly innovative things on their farms and ranches, in classrooms and in the business industry,” Whit Weems, TFB director of Organization who oversees the contests, said. “This is a great opportunity to showcase farms and ranches, businesses and other agricultural endeavors and be rewarded for it.”

But there’s more to the contests.

“As you fill out the application, you get a chance to evaluate yourself and your farm,” Wieners said. “It makes you think about what you’re doing on the farm, how you can improve and the things that set you apart from

others in the area or across the state.”

Both contests also serve as a tool to help guide farmers and ranchers in personal and professional growth, he said.

## Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Contest

The Outstanding YF&R Contest recognizes young farmers and ranchers who are actively engaged in farming or ranching.

“Young farmers and ranchers play an important role in the future of Texas agriculture,” Weems said. “This contest highlights and rewards dedication and ingenuity. It gives young farmers and ranchers an avenue to promote agriculture, conservation, advocacy efforts and more.”

One winner is chosen from each of TFB’s 13 districts. Of those, three finalists are selected after a second round of judging. The judges will then visit each of the three finalists’ farm or ranch to determine the overall winner.

This year’s state winner will receive the title to a ¾ ton diesel pickup, sponsored by Texas Farm Bureau Insurance Companies; a \$5,000 cash award, sponsored by Farm Credit Bank of Texas; and expense-paid trips to both the TFB Annual Meeting and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Annual Convention.

Two runners-up will receive a \$500 cash award, sponsored by Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, and expense-paid trips to the TFB Annual Meeting.

New this year, all district winners will receive a \$1,000 cash award from Farm Bureau Bank.



*Braden and Jordan McInnis were the winners of the 2019 Outstanding Young Farmer & Rancher Contest. They took home the title to a ¾ ton pickup, among other prizes.*

## Excellence in Agriculture Contest

The EIA Contest rewards TFB members who are involved in agriculture but don’t make the majority of their income through production agriculture.

Eligible applicants include farm store managers, crop consultants, agricultural educators and those who are employed by an agricultural business or agency.

“It takes small and large farms and ranches, as well as those businesses that support agriculture,” Weems said. “The EIA Contest highlights Texans who are involved in agribusinesses but still make time to be involved in production agriculture.”

The state winner will receive a UTV, sponsored by Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company;

a \$5,000 cash award, sponsored by Farm Credit Bank of Texas, and expense-paid trips to both the TFB Annual Meeting and AFBF Annual Convention.

The two runners-up will receive a \$1,000 cash award, courtesy of Farm Bureau Bank, a \$500 cash award, sponsored by Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, and an expense-paid trip to attend the TFB Annual Meeting.

## Contest Information

Applications for both the Outstanding YF&R and EIA contests are due Aug.3.

Applications, sample questions and instructions are available online at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/YFR>.

For questions about the contest or other young farmer activities, email [youngfarmers@txfb.org](mailto:youngfarmers@txfb.org) or call 254-399-5030.



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# Cattle fever ticks found outside quarantine area

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have seen an increase in the number of cattle fever ticks outside of the quarantine zone in the Rio Grande Valley.

According to TAHC, cattle fever ticks have been found on cattle outside of the established quarantine areas in Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Wells, Jim Hogg and Willacy counties.

Many of those counties had existing quarantine areas, but TAHC reports the newly identified locations where the ticks were found were outside of the quarantine zone.

As a result, the premises where the ticks were found have been quarantined.

“Whenever we find fever ticks outside of the zone on livestock or wildlife, we quarantine those premises, and we start a systematic treat-

ment period where we treat the animals on those premises,” Dr. Susan Rollo, state epidemiologist, said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

TAHC also implemented movement restrictions to protect other naïve cattle.

“We also look at the properties around that place that has the fever ticks. We want to make sure there hasn’t been spread through wildlife to additional property, so those properties are quarantined and monitored for tick spread,” Rollo said.

The quarantines are important, because a single cattle fever tick can lay up to 4,000 eggs.

“We can easily have a population of ticks bloom with just one cow moving to a premises with one tick on it,” Rollo said. “That’s why we trace all the animals that were sold from an infested premises to make sure we find where all those ticks could have moved and make sure we got on top of any new populations of ticks.”

The cattle fever tick and the disease it carries has the capability to cripple the Texas and U.S. cattle industries if not contained.

“The ticks can carry an organism called babesia. Cattle in Mexico have babesia, but they were introduced to this organism as calves, so they have an immunity against it,” Rollo said. “When you have a group of naïve cattle in Texas or the rest of the nation, and you introduce this organism, it can make the cattle very, very sick. It has a high death rate.”

Any time cattle are moved out of a quarantine area, they’re dipped to protect cattle in other parts of the state and nation.

“They should not stop buying cattle from South Texas quarantine areas or zones,” Rollo said. “Any animal that is moved off a quarantine area is going to be dipped, so those animals are free of ticks when they move out of a quarantine zone and go to market to be sold.”

Cattle, horses and wildlife can

also carry cattle fever ticks.

“Cattle are the best host for cattle fever ticks, but we also have ticks in white-tailed deer. That’s concerning, because white-tailed deer will jump over a fence and spread ticks to other properties,” Rollo said. “We also have a huge population of white-tailed deer in South Texas now, so a lot of our issues are around the fact that we have white-tailed deer with the ticks.”

In non-hunting seasons, TAHC puts corn treated with Ivermectin in deer feeders in the quarantined zone to treat white-tailed deer, so they don’t spread the ticks from property to property.

Unfortunately, the same process does not work for nilgai antelope, which travel further than white-tailed deer traditionally do.

“Some of our new infestations we believe are due to nilgai movement out of our temporary preventative quarantine area in Cameron County,” Rollo said. “[Nilgai] are desirable to producers, because they’re good hunting animals.”

There are movement restrictions for nilgai, deer and cow hides from the quarantine areas.

“We have to scratch the hide and treat it prior to moving it off the quarantined premises,” Rollo said. “If there was a female engorged tick that was on a hide, and you carried it and threw it in your backyard, that tick could get into the ground. If you have cattle out there, that could be a risk.”

TAHC research shows feral swine are not carriers for cattle fever ticks at this time.

Cattle fever ticks are seen more often during the spring hatch in March, April and May.

The ticks do not typically feed on humans and dogs.

Cattle raisers and feeders who are concerned about ticks on their animals are encouraged to contact their private veterinarian, a TAHC regional office or USDA personnel to inspect the animal.

Additional information on cattle fever ticks is available at [tahc.texas.gov](http://tahc.texas.gov).

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# Matagorda County farmers plant first hemp crop

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The 2018 Farm Bill legalized industrial hemp production for the first time in nearly 100 years, paving the way for Texas farmers to apply for licenses to grow the crop this season.

Hemp has many potential uses from fiber and grain to oil extraction, and while there's opportunity for much growth in the new market, there's also much risk.

But in Matagorda County, three Texas Farm Bureau members say they're up for the challenge.

"This has been a long process in getting ready and leading up to planting. We've researched and studied this for over a year now, and finally you just get to the point where you just have to get out there and try it," Richard Beyer said.

Beyer and fellow farmers Troy Owens and Gary Rooth Jr. first started talking about growing hemp a couple of years ago, after it was announced that legalization of industrial hemp would be included for consideration in the latest farm bill.

Years of depressed commodity prices have left many Texas farmers looking to diversify, and they were no exception.

"We've gotten to where there's a zero margin, or sometimes even less than zero margin on everything else we farm. We're hoping hemp is a viable rotation for the future," Owens said.

So, on the morning of March 16, when Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) opened the hemp-growing license and permit application online, all three applied.

Their licenses were approved, and they began planting their first crop in early May. But despite their careful preparation and research, planting hemp hasn't been without its challenges.

Rooth said they researched seed varieties prior to planting, but they are unsure of how well the variety they chose will grow in the heavy, clay soils found along the Texas Gulf Coast.

The hemp seed is very fine, similar in size to grain sorghum, and brittle.

Augers and other equipment can

crack the seed, so Rooth first attempted planting with a seed cup-type drill. However, the seed cup ground the hemp seed into fine dust, so he switched to a different type of grain drill with 7.5-inch centers.

"We're learning as we go," he said. "But the best way to learn is to just get out here in the dirt, put some seeds in the ground and figure it out."

Germination has also been an issue, according to Rooth. The hemp doesn't have much vigor, so while it has grown well underneath the soil, the plants have had trouble breaking through the top layer.

"It forms a knuckle and tries to leaf out under the soil, so we ran a CrustBuster across some of it to try to break the crust," he said.

Heavy rains in mid-May also caused issues for the farmers.

"We had some big rains, and we're going to have to replant some fields where it washed away," Owens said. "The stuff that's up and growing is still in the early stages. We lost more than we'd like, but we're going to replant and start over."

They all intend to grow hemp for

grain, in part because there's not a need for additional, specialized equipment.

"Already being farmers and growing other crops, we have the majority of tools and equipment we need for this crop," Beyer said. "And it's less hands-on than growing hemp for CBD oil. Planting, cultivating and harvesting can all be done mechanically."

A buyer has been secured for the grain, but they hope to also find someone who wants to purchase the fiber, making it a dual-purpose crop.

"We decided that starting out and learning this new crop, we're going to stick to grain production until we know more about how it grows and what to expect," Beyer said. "I think the grain market and fiber markets are going to be more stable than CBD. And CBD seems like more of a risk. You hear stories of people with warehouses full of (hemp) flowers that they can't get rid of."

Hemp fiber has many applications in textiles, rope, paper, bioplastics, insulation and other building uses. Researchers are also studying uses for hemp in livestock feed.

The crop may get some funny looks this year, but the farmers feel as though they've prepared themselves and local law enforcement as best as they can, and now they're focused on the future.

"We know we'll have inspections from TDA, and the crops will be tested for THC levels throughout the year," Owens said. "We've talked to the sheriff and let him know what we're growing, and we plan to put signs along the roadway letting people know it's industrial hemp. We expect there to be some posts on social media about it, but we're just excited to see what it can do in South Texas."

The opportunity to try something new and increase profits was too big to pass up, according to Owens.

"We understand it's going to have challenges, and there's a lot that we don't know. We realize that, but we feel like, because it's a new crop and there's so many opportunities, it was worth venturing into industrial hemp," he said.



Three Matagorda County farmers planted hemp this year. Heavy rains in mid-May resulted in a weak stand, but they began replanting at the end of May and beginning of June. Photos courtesy of Richard Beyer.

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## New report details COVID-19's impact on Texas agriculture

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on Texas agriculture. Since social distancing and shelter-in-place orders were implemented, consumer purchasing habits shifted to meals at home, creating disruptions in food and agricultural supply chains across the nation as manufacturers, suppliers and other industry pieces struggle to adapt.

In Texas, where agriculture is a major economic driver, the total impact is still being tallied, but a preliminary report by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Agricultural & Food Policy Center shows a devastating blow to farmers and ranchers.

The report shows prices on agricultural commodities have dropped 20-30 percent, estimating Texas farmers and ranchers may lose \$6-\$8 billion without intervention or price recovery.

Farmers and ranchers are feeling the impacts and uncertainty caused by COVID-19, according to Outlaw.

"Everybody understands about cow-calf producers, stockers and feeders because the cattle and beef markets have really been in the spotlight lately, but other commodities like ethanol and corn, those have really been affected, as well," Dr. Joe Outlaw, AgriLife Extension Service agricultural economist and co-director of the Agricultural & Food Policy Center, said.

### Row crops

Corn, cotton, wheat, sorghum, rice and soybean farmers are all facing uncertainty as they enter the 2020 crop year, Outlaw said.

Farmers are starting the year with crop insurance prices that are lower than the past two years, so farmers are facing the loss of 20 to 30 percent of a crop before seeing any insurance benefits.

"The only losses row crop farmers would currently be incurring

are from the sale of 2019 crops from storage," Outlaw said. "And while Texas producers typically do not store commodities this far into the marketing year, many continue to work through carryover stocks from the 2019 crop year."

Risk management strategies, crop insurance and farm bill programs will help with depressed prices, Outlaw noted. But without additional aid, financial stress will grow.

"We've had many people calling to tell us that this is actually bigger than anything they've ever experienced," he said. "In the '80s, when farmers went through some similar economic problems, they weren't spending as much on inputs as they are now, so it's definitely a very scary and challenging time."

### Livestock and dairy

The report shows livestock and dairy losses have been the largest due to the shift in demand from food consumed away from home, such as in restaurants and foodservice settings, to food consumed at home.

Production lines and processing plants set up to produce bulk packages cannot be easily modified to shift to smaller packages for retail settings, so markets dried up for some products almost overnight.

Temporary closures and labor shortages at meat packing plants due to COVID-19 outbreaks also slowed and reduced production.

"While a lot of losses have yet to materialize, for those producers marketing now—including dairy products, which are marketed daily—the pain is immediate," Outlaw said.

In addition to demand disruptions, consumers tend to shift purchases to less expensive cuts in a recession, like buying more ground beef and fewer steaks, he added. Combining that shift in demand with a record first quarter in beef production is a recipe for disaster.

Dairy demand and prices initially



*Agricultural production challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic include supply chain issues, labor shortages, market volatility and a change in where consumers are spending their food dollars.*

increased during the pandemic, said Jennifer Spencer, AgriLife Extension dairy specialist. But they suddenly came crashing down as the full effect of restaurant and foodservice closures hit.

About 66 percent of Texas dairies are enrolled in DMC, representing about 84 percent of the state's production, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data. However, AgriLife researchers noted most of this enrollment is likely at the lowest level of coverage, meaning support payments will only begin at catastrophically low margin levels not seen since 2009.

### Poultry and eggs

The poultry industry has been heavily impacted by restaurant closures and the suspension of sporting events.

The report showed Texas egg sets were down in mid-April as much as 14 percent from the same week a year ago, and chicks placed for broiler growout were down 9 percent. Researchers expected broiler growers to be pressured by fewer birds and changing growout timetables due to changing final bird weights.

### Specialty crops

As with livestock, losses in specialty crops, such as fruits and vegetables, are related to demand shifts.

"The specialty crop sector has been one of the hardest-hit sectors of ag-

riculture due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Outlaw said. "Most fruits and vegetables are consumed fresh and are highly perishable. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of most restaurants and schools has caused a major reduction in demand."

Produce farmers in South Texas have already reported anywhere between a 20 to 50 percent reduction in sales.

"Overall, due to COVID-19, the short-run outlook for specialty crop producers in Texas is complicated," Outlaw said. "The sudden loss of most foodservice outlets for highly perishable products, along with good winter production of fruits and vegetables in the state, is causing low prices across most fresh produce commodities. Changing consumer purchasing habits at the grocery store, demand uncertainty and labor shortages have created the perfect storm for specialty crop producers in Texas and throughout the U.S."

If COVID-19 issues persist, Texas fruit and vegetable farmers could be left without markets for their highly perishable products and could lose over \$397 million, the report stated.

### Additional details

AgriLife Extension also has a free training on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act.

The course is available online at <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu>.

## Coronavirus Food Assistance Program signup open through August

Sign up for the the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) began in late May. Enrollment will continue through Aug. 28.

CFAP will provide direct relief to farmers and ranchers who have suffered a 5 percent or greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

"America's farming community is facing an unprecedented situation as our nation tackles the coronavirus," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. "These payments will help keep farmers afloat while market demand returns as our nation reopens and recovers. America's farmers are resilient and will get through this challenge just like they always do with faith, hard work and determination."

Farmers and ranchers will receive direct support, drawn from two possible funding sources. The first source of funding is \$9.5 billion in appropriated funding provided in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stability (CARES) Act to compensate farmers for losses due to price declines that occurred between mid-January 2020 and mid-April 2020 and provides support for specialty crops for product that had been shipped from the farm between the same time period but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channels.

The second funding source uses the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act to compensate producers for \$6.5 billion in losses due to on-going market disruptions.

### Non-specialty crops and wool

Non-specialty crops eligible for CFAP payments include malting barley, canola, corn, upland cotton, millet, oats, soybeans, sorghum, sun-

flowers, durum wheat and hard red spring wheat.

Wool is also eligible.

Farmers and ranchers will be paid based on inventory subject to price risk held as of Jan. 15, 2020.

A payment will be made based on 50 percent of a farmer's 2019 total production or the 2019 inventory as of Jan. 15, 2020, whichever is smaller, multiplied by the commodity's applicable payment rates.

### Livestock

Livestock eligible for CFAP include cattle, lambs, yearlings and hogs.

The total payment will be calculated using the sum of the rancher's number of livestock sold between Jan. 15 and April 15, 2020, multiplied by the payment rates per head, and the highest inventory number of livestock between April 16 and May 14, 2020, multiplied by the payment rate per head.

### Dairy

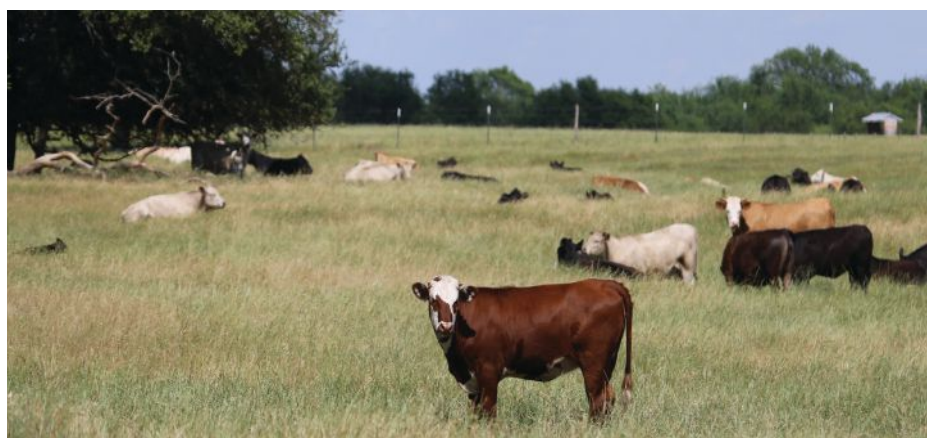
For dairy, the total payment will be calculated based on a farmer's certification of milk production for the first quarter of calendar year 2020 multiplied by a national price decline during the same quarter. The second part of the payment is based a national adjustment to each producer's production in the first quarter.

### Specialty crops

For eligible specialty crops, the total payment will be based on the volume of production sold between Jan. 15 and April 15, 2020; the volume of production shipped, but unpaid; and the number of acres for which harvested production did not leave the farm or mature product destroyed or not harvested during that same time period, and which have not and will not be sold.

Specialty crops include, but are not limited to, almonds, beans, broccoli, sweet corn, lemons, iceberg lettuce, spinach, squash, strawberries and tomatoes.

A full list of eligible crops can be



*CFAP enrollment is open until Aug. 28 through Farm Service Agency offices.*

found on [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

Additional crops may be deemed eligible at a later date.

### Eligibility

There is a payment limitation of \$250,000 per person or entity for all commodities combined.

Applicants who are corporations, limited liability companies or limited partnerships may qualify for additional payment limits where members actively provide personal labor or personal management for the farming operation.

Farmers and ranchers will also have to certify they meet the Adjusted Gross Income limitation of \$900,000 unless at least 75 percent or more of their income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities. Farmers and ranchers must also be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions.

### Applying for assistance

Farmers and ranchers can apply for assistance through Aug. 28. Additional information and application forms can be found at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

Documentation to support the farmer's application and certification may be requested.

FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report at the time of application and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

### Payment structure

To ensure the availability of funding throughout the application period, farmers and ranchers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application.

The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date as funds remain available.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment 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 and ranchers by phone and using online tools whenever possible.

All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the 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](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

### Additional information

CFAP was announced on April 17.

This \$19 billion immediate relief program includes \$16 billion in direct support to farmers and ranchers, as well as \$3 billion for the Food Box Distribution Program.

More information is available at [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap).

## More COVID-19 farm, ranch assistance needed

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

The \$19 billion U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) package will provide some direct support to farmers and ranchers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but more assistance is necessary, and soon.

Years of declining farm income and a prolonged trade war, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, has negatively impacted all sectors of agriculture.

Commodity prices have tumbled in response to the pandemic, with hog futures down as much as 53 percent.

Live cattle and cotton futures fell 25 percent, while ethanol futures were down 33 percent. Farm bankruptcies also have increased since January, according to American Farm Bureau Federation economists.

While CFAP will not make most

farmers and ranchers whole, it is critical to help many farmers and ranchers remain in business.

“Our country’s food supply chain is a national security issue. The American public recognizes now, perhaps more than ever, the vital service and contributions that farmers and ranchers provide to our country and many around the world,” Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening said. “Our nation’s food security can never be taken for granted.”

Lawmakers have acknowledged more support is needed.

“We are going to have to do more, and exactly how we are going to structure it is something I would like to have some more dialogue with my ag colleagues on both sides of the aisle,” Sen. John Hoeven, who chairs the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee, said at a press event in early May.

USDA officials noted additional assistance is likely.

“We don’t believe this amount of money is adequate, frankly. I think Congress understands that, as well,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue told the *Red River Farm Network*. “They did appropriate and replenish \$14 billion in the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), but that won’t be available until July. We chose to use the remaining balance in the CCC and funds from the CARES Act to begin a program more quickly. Then, we’ll look at the needs we’ve missed.”

As the nation’s leading cattle state, the CFAP payment rate set for cattle on inventory was particularly troublesome to Texas ranchers.

“Texas Farm Bureau has major concerns regarding the \$33 payment rate for cattle on inventory. Many family cow-calf and stocker operators worked extremely hard to sustain operations and weather the COVID-19 storm,” TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. “It is critically important

for more resources to be provided to ranchers with cattle on inventory, or many will simply go out of business. TFB is visiting with Congressional leaders and USDA officials to ensure this problem is addressed going forward.”

It is difficult to predict the extent COVID-19 will have on agriculture, so agricultural organizations urge Congress to prepare for those scenarios and stand ready to assist farmers and ranchers.

“The coronavirus has placed an unprecedented strain on commodity markets, the food supply chain and our producers’ ability to continue operating. It is the latest in a string of misfortunes that have kept the farm economy down for several years,” Boening said. “As our farmers and ranchers weather this storm to keep consumers fed and clothed, we stress the need for additional assistance. We look forward to our continued work with Congress and the Trump administration to ensure our farm and ranch families can stay in business.”

## TFB hosts statewide media tour to discuss COVID-19 impacts

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening discussed COVID-19 and its impact on the nation’s food supply with six broadcast outlets over three hours as part of a special statewide media tour on May 20.

Boening participated in the interviews from his farm in Wilson County via Zoom or Skype.

Reporters and broadcast outlets participating in the media tour were Jack Fink of KTVT-TV (Dallas-Fort Worth), Mike Board of WOAI-AM (San Antonio), Wes Rapaport of KXAN-TV (Austin), Nora Perez of KIII-TV (Corpus Christi), Drake Lawson of KWTX-TV (Waco) and Karina Kling of Spectrum News *Capital Tonight* (Austin and San Antonio).

Fink coupled the Boening interview with local comments from TFB District 4 State Director John Paul

Dineen III of Ellis County, and Lawson complimented the Boening interview with local comments from TFB District 8 State Director Mickey Edwards of Lampasas County.

Each reporter reserved a 30-minute time slot to ask Boening questions.

It was the first electronic statewide media tour hosted by TFB.

“Media interest in the pandemic’s impact on Texas farmers and ranchers and on the nation’s food supply has been very high. We’re doing our best to respond to all of the media inquiries, as soon as possible,” TFB Director of Communications Gary Joiner said. “The media tour gave President Boening a chance in a single setting to reach several reporters who have interest in these issues and have covered farm and ranch issues in the past, while using the



TFB President Russell Boening conducted several media interviews from his farm in May to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture.

convenience of Zoom or Skype. The two formats have become industry standard for interviews during the pandemic because of limited travel opportunities by news outlets.”

Enhanced audio and video were

provided to stations to ensure the quality of sound and images was suitable for broadcast. TFB Video Services Manager Ed Wolff managed onsite Zoom, Skype and audio/visual logistics in Wilson County.

## Texas, U.S. ranchers see falling prices during global pandemic

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

Beef prices may be going up, but cattle ranchers' profits are going down.

That's the take-home message from ranchers to consumers about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their operations.

And although every sector of the cattle industry is feeling the pain, a report recently released by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) said without relief payments, cow-calf producers stand to lose \$3.7 billion in 2020, equivalent to \$111.91 per head for each mature breeding animal.

Additional long-term damages of \$4.45 billion, or another \$135.24 per mature breeding animal, could impact the cow-calf sector in the future if damages are not offset by relief payments.

**Hyman Boozer**  
**Nacogdoches County**

Hyman Boozer began raising cattle as a side pursuit and went into ranching full-time after retirement. He and his son run a crossbred Charolais/Brangus cow-calf operation, a Brangus cow-calf herd and occasionally raise stockers.

The recent jump in boxed beef cut-outs while cattle prices are declining concerns Boozer.

Although the cattle market always has its ups and downs in pricing, Boozer said it seems like the concentration of the packer industry throughout the years has made pricing more volatile.

"It's just down to a few packers now, and that's not always a good thing. This year, we have a situation where the calf market overall has been down, but demand and retail prices have gone up," he said. "There's a big difference, and I'm not exactly sure how that's all working out. Packers need to justify how the boxed beef is bringing such big prices when what

we're seeing at the sale barn doesn't reflect that."

The recent low prices haven't yet reached his Nacogdoches ranch, though. Boozer's calves are typically sold in September or early October, so for now, he is observing and hopes the market corrects itself by the fall.

"We've been fortunate to have rain and early grass, so we aren't having to feed right now. We're just raising our calves and hoping for the best, but a lot can change between now and September," he said.

Agricultural organizations, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, and state and federal lawmakers have asked for an investigation into the price volatility and disparities.

"It's an interesting battle that we face every day. We're not like most folks. We aren't guaranteed a certain amount of money for our work when we sell calves," he said. "We use quality bulls, and we protect and try to care for our animals so that we can produce a good product, and all we want is a fair price for that effort. Ranchers in Texas are really concerned, because we want people to realize the cattle industry is where they're getting that good cut of beef for their dinner plate."

**Austen White**  
**Wilbarger County**

Austen White's family has been farming and ranching in Wilbarger County since the early 1900s. The fifth-generation rancher continues the family legacy, raising cattle and proven young sires for the R.A. Brown Ranch.

A few years ago, the Whites began participating in verification programs, including certification through the Global Animal Partnership (G.A.P.), an animal welfare program, as a way to add more value to their beef cattle.

"We bought into these programs around six years ago and saw this niche market open up," he said. "Year

in and year out, we've done really well marketing our cattle. Sustainability cannot happen without profitability, and more profit is the end game for everybody, really. We're just trying to keep our margins healthy by trying some different things."

It has been business as usual around the ranch, but White and his family are holding some yearling calves a bit longer this year while keeping a close eye on the cattle market.

"We like to sell a few loads [of cattle] and keep a few loads at the yard," he said. "With the markets the way they are, you can't hedge your bets. You don't really want to give your calves away, so you're basically going in and hoping for the best."

He noted good genetics and quality beef will help his operation hopefully weather the COVID-19 storm.

"We're not doing the same kind of ranching we were doing 40 years ago," he said. "We really believe in good genetics. Texas produces a lot of beef, and people realize that and depend on us for quality, and we won't let them down. It's easy to be mad at the packers, but it's best to worry about your operation and how to keep it profitable."

**James O'Brien**  
**Bee County**

James O'Brien is a sixth-generation rancher in Bee County. While his family has run a large cow-calf operation in the Coastal Bend for more than 100 years, O'Brien realized he needed to diversify to add another generation to the ranch.

To bring in additional revenue, O'Brien raises and trains horses, as well as operates a direct-to-consumer grassfed beef operation. His perspective on the pandemic and its effects on agricultural markets comes from the differences in their conventional cow-calf herd and the direct-marketing herd.

O'Brien recently took some cattle to the sale barn. After the sale, he compared his prices to last year's prices.

In May 2019, live cattle sold at the local auction for around \$1.51 per pound. Now, they're selling for around \$1.30 per pound, which nets him about \$105 less per head.

O'Brien, like many ranchers, faces a tough decision between holding calves in hopes of better prices or selling them now and taking the hit.

"You have steers sitting in the feed lot hitting 1,500-1,600 pounds, and



*Texas ranchers are feeling the impacts of continued low prices and market volatility during the coronavirus pandemic.*



# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

they need to go somewhere, so they take the \$1.00 or 90 cents they're offered, and we do the same thing at the sale barn because we don't really want to keep feeding them, and we need the room for the new babies. But it's a hard decision to make," he said. "It's tough to hear those stories about the boxed beef cutouts, and then go to town and lose money on your cow-calf operation."

But his grassfed beef operation is doing well.

"We're just fortunate we've been focused on diversification the past few years," he said.

The market for his direct-to-consumer beef has grown steadily since he first started it three years ago.

Since the pandemic, demand for his local beef has increased even more.

"Where we were selling out at about every 25 days and processing once a month, now we're selling out every two weeks," he said. "The prices at the grocery store have gone up, and they're limiting what you can buy, so people are looking for other sources to ensure they have meat for their families."

It's an interesting comparison to what's happening in the conventional cattle market.

"On the cow-calf side, we're losing \$100 a head, but on the direct-marketing side, if they'd let me process 10 head a month right now, I'd do it because sales are so good," O'Brien said.

"We're processing three a month now, and we're just lucky we already had the ball rolling. We're ramping up our volume as much as we can and trying to build inventory."

Moving forward, O'Brien expects more ranchers will better understand beef marketing, genetics and the cattle market in general. He believes there will be more emphasis on technology and more interest in unconventional or niche markets than prior to the pandemic.

"There are a lot of people who started looking at direct-to-market operations after prices tanked and packer margins ballooned," he said. "I've heard even some custom guys that normally focus on wildlife are

starting to process beef. The smaller, local processors are getting slammed with all the livestock shows getting cancelled and so many people thinking they might switch to direct-marketing. That's going to have an effect on packers, as well."

The disparity between live cattle markets and packer margins may spur some changes in the way markets operate.

"It's like two different markets is the best way to explain it. When I think of cattle, I think of beef but it's really two different markets," he said. "It's going to end up being a heck of a case study in a year or two when we can look back on all this data and see why it went down the way it did."

## More price discovery needed to set cattle market prices

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

Legislation recently introduced in the U.S. Senate would require large U.S. beef processing facilities to purchase a minimum of 50 percent of daily volume on the open or "spot" market.

The bill, which would amend portions of the 1946 Agricultural Marketing Act, would only apply to packers that slaughter over 125,000 head of cattle annually, unless that company only owned one plant. It would exclude pork, poultry, dairy-bred and dairy-cross animals, beef cattle over 30 months of age and animals of foreign origin.

Animals purchased and reported as cash sales would be required to be slaughtered within 14 days.

The legislation was introduced by Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Jon Tester (D-Montana). Other co-sponsors are Sens. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), Steve Daines (R-Montana), Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota), Tina Smith (D-Minnesota) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Missouri).

Grassley first introduced similar legislation almost 20 years ago but eventually dropped the issue in 2009, saying he could not garner

enough interest from other legislators to see it advance.

While the bill seems to satisfy recent complaints about price manipulation by meat packers, many agricultural organizations say government mandates are usually not the answer.

"This idea is sparked by a desire to create higher cash cattle prices, but mandating minimum cash purchases do not equate to higher cash prices," Tracy Tomascik, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities, said. "Almost everyone will agree that more cash bids are good for the market, but they're no guarantee."

Record high prices in 2014 were achieved with a similar percentage of cattle traded on the spot market, giving evidence that a mandate will not create the desired results, Tomascik noted.

The practice may also unintentionally have a detrimental effect on cattle market prices in some states, including Texas.

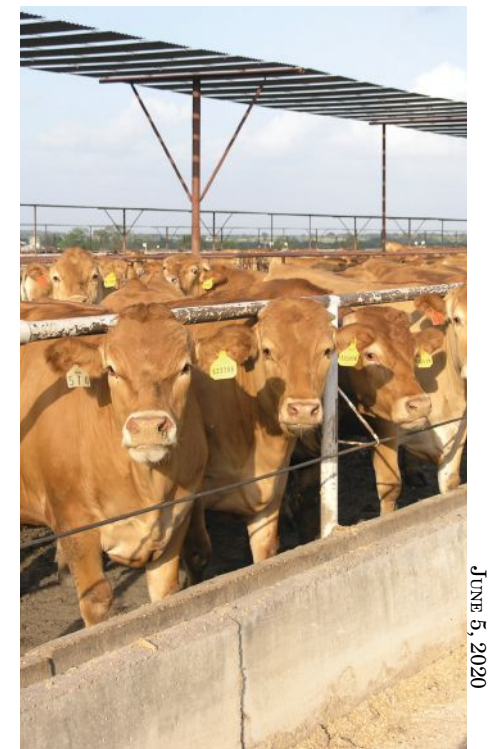
"In Texas, more than 90 percent of slaughter cattle sales are made according to formulas or contracts," Tomascik said. "Those cattle owners

would be prevented from using their desired pricing avenue if packers were mandated to push that down to 50 percent."

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) announced opposition to the bill, saying in part the organization would like to see the market achieve price discovery and increases in cash trade, but a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work for the highly individualized beef cattle industry.

"Depending upon what region you're in, depends upon how much cash trade you need to have in order to have true price discovery," NCBA CEO Colin Woodall said in an interview with *Brownfield Ag News*. "Our concern is a blanket 50 percent across the country might work in some areas, but it wouldn't necessarily be a true national fit."

In a response to questions by *DTN*, the North American Meat Institute (NAMI) said years of research, including a study commissioned by U.S. Department of Agriculture, shows marketing agreements between ranchers and meat processors provide consumers with "affordable, reliable and consistent meat products," which benefits both



JUNE 5, 2020

ranchers and packers.

"An action by government forcing packers to buy half their cattle on the spot market would distort the market and cause further upheaval to the food supply chain during these unprecedented times," NAMI said.

American Farm Bureau Federation and TFB have not taken an official position on the legislation at this time.

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

## Farm Bureau Feeding Texas program has statewide impact

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) joined county Farm Bureaus (CFBs) 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, established by TFB, aims to pair food banks and other food-relief entities with local restaurants and caterers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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

To date, more than 40 counties have participated in the program, and TFB has reimbursed over \$35,000 to CFBs.

## County Farm Bureaus contribute to local communities, businesses during COVID-19



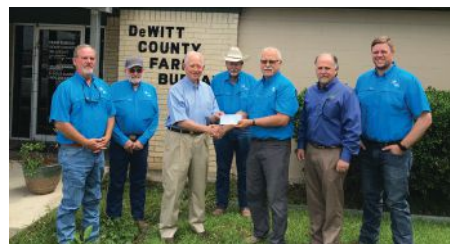
### Blanco County

Blanco CFB understands the needs of the community during the pandemic. To help local families, Blanco CFB donated \$1,000 each to the Blanco Good Samaritan Center and to the Johnson City Christian Food Pantry.



### Denton County

Denton CFB donated \$2,000 to the Denton Community Food Center to help local families in need during the global pandemic.



### DeWitt County

DeWitt CFB leveraged the TFB grant with another program provided by a local non-profit, the Cuero Community Foundation (CCF).

The local organization made a donation of \$2,000 to Cuero Area Ministerial Alliance House of Cuero, Yorktown Assistance Ministries and Yoakum's First Baptist Food Pantry.

continues to impact area families.

FISH Ministries helps provide short-term assistance for families who are facing a crisis, including COVID-19.



### Kleberg-Kenedy County

Kleberg-Kenedy CFB made a donation to the local food pantry at the First Christian Church.

Polk CFB used the TFB Feeding Texas Co-op Contribution Program to provide \$2,000 to a local organization, Center of Hope.

The funds helped feed individuals who lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic, as well as those who lost homes in the tornado.



### Victoria County

Victoria CFB helped feed local senior citizens during the pandemic.

By taking advantage of the matching grant funds offered, Victoria CFB presented Meals on Wheels Victoria with a \$2,000 check.



### Nueces County

Nueces CFB donated \$1,000 to the Corpus Christi Food Bank with help from TFB's Feeding Texas program.



### Walker County

Walker CFB used the matching grant program to help the Houston Food Bank provide food boxes to those in need during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The group worked with the Junior Service League of Huntsville to distribute the food, including eggs, milk, cheese, orange juice and a vari-



### Brown County

Brown CFB made a \$2,000 donation to the Good Samaritan Ministries in Brownwood. The funds will be used to help area families in need.



### Bowie County

Bowie CFB made a donation to Texarkana Harvest Regional Food Bank with help from the TFB matching grant.



### Hunt County

Hunt CFB donated \$1,500 to FISH Ministries to help the local community as the global pandemic



### Polk County

In addition to the aid received by other county Farm Bureaus after a tornado tore through Polk County,

# CORONAVIRUS IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

ety of fresh produce. Honeydew melons, watermelons and turnips were some of the fresh fruits and vegetables available in the food boxes that week.



## Waller County

Waller CFB fed more than 150 area families with help from TFB's program.

The county Farm Bureau provided \$3,000 in funding to area caterers, who then worked through local school districts to distribute heat-and-eat family-sized meals to those in need.

Casseroles made by Waller County Catering were distributed at Hempstead ISD, and burritos

were handed out at Royal ISD. Best Friends Catering made Tex-Mex and King Ranch chicken casseroles that were distributed at Waller ISD.



## Wheeler County

Wheeler CFB made donations to both the Shamrock and Wheeler Meals on Wheels organizations.



## Wichita County

In April, Wichita CFB prepared

to-go meals for local residents at two locations.

They served 470 meals at the Wichita Falls location and 720 meals at the Iowa Park location.



## Wilson County

Wilson CFB donated \$250 each to the four local food pantries in the county with help from the TFB matching grant program.

## Want to help in your community?

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.

"The coronavirus pandemic has created real food hardships for many across Texas," 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 Feeding Texas program, contact your county Farm Bureau office.

**More than 40 counties**  
*have participated in the*  
**Farm Bureau Feeding**  
**Texas Co-Op**  
**Contribution Program.**

Texas Farm Bureau has  
reimbursed **over \$35,000**  
to county Farm Bureaus.

## USDA, Baylor program aims to bring more meals to rural children

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

A partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, McLane Global and PepsiCo will increase the number of weekly meals they deliver to rural children impacted by COVID-19-related school closures.

The collaborative program, Meals to You, was successfully trialed in summer 2019 to deliver shelf-stable, individually packaged and child-friendly foods to eligible students unreached by traditional summer food programs. But after the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close their doors, Meals to You was adapted to fit the new situation families and children found themselves facing.

Meals to You initially aimed to deliver about one million meals per week to a limited number of rural schools closed due to COVID-19.

The goal was quickly surpassed, however, and nearly 3.5 million meals have been shipped to the homes of children across 12 states: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

USDA noted 23 additional states and Puerto Rico have requested to participate in Meals to You, so the program is preparing to serve five million meals per week to help meet growing demand.

Research made available through Baylor's Hunger Data Lab showed about 11 percent of households in the U.S. were food insecure in 2018, a number researchers believe has increased during the pandemic.

To help children who are facing food insecurity, Meals to You boxes contain 20 nutritious meals—10 breakfasts and 10 lunches.

Foods meet USDA's Summer Food Service Program meal standards and may include items like milk, fruit cups, cereal, whole-grain crackers and chili. All foods are easy for children to prepare without assistance. Boxes are delivered directly to children's doorsteps via postal or delivery services to help rural families who may not have access to food distribution centers.

"We are grateful to be a part of an innovative team made up of both the public and private sectors motivated by the strong desire to help our neighbors in need," Jeremy Everett, executive director of the Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, said. "We hope that the

boxes of food will nourish children and communicate to their families that they are not in this tough circumstance alone."

McLane Global, a Texas-based food and logistics company, has long offered a variety of services to food banks and hunger relief agencies through McLane Hunger Solutions. Chairman Denton McLane said the company is dedicated to ensuring kids don't go hungry during this difficult time.

"We've shifted to a 24-hour production schedule across all locations to meet the demand and couldn't be prouder of our partners, employees and the people on the ground working to ensure these meals get to those who need it most," McLane said.

For more information on Meals to You, visit <https://mealstoyou.org>.

# Applications now open for TFB's AgLead program

By Julie Tomascik  
Editor

Strong agricultural leadership doesn't just happen in the field. It happens beyond the fence row—in local and state organizations, court rooms and Congress.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) can help develop those leadership and agricultural advocacy skills through its AgLead program.

"There is so much beyond the fence row that impacts agriculture," Jamie Gipe, TFB director of Membership and Special Projects, said. "Farmers and ranchers must step out and advocate for their interests or others will do it for them. AgLead prepares participants to be a voice for agriculture at all levels."

The 2019-2020 class was called AgLead-FarmLead, combining TFB's two leadership programs for ages 25-40 and ages 40 and above.

For the next class, the program will be called AgLead—completing the merger of both programs to enhance leadership development and individual experiences.

TFB is currently accepting applications for the AgLead XV program.

A maximum of 20 participants will be selected for the program—10 participants between the ages of 25-40 as of Dec. 31, 2020 and 10 participants age 40 and older as of Dec. 31, 2020.

The two-year program takes participants across Texas, the country and the world to discover agriculture and leadership from a new perspective. AgLead members develop a variety of skills—leadership, communication, public policy, regulatory, advocacy and more.

AgLead XV tentative sessions include a visit to the TFB headquarters in Waco to focus on communication, leadership and technology.

The Austin session will highlight Texas government, priority issues, state demographics, political awareness and advocacy, as well as a tour of an organic farm.

On the West Coast tour stop, AgLead participants will learn about environmental regulations, labor



**Members participate in a media training to help grow and strengthen communication and advocacy skills. The AgLead program seeks to develop agricultural leaders from the county level to the Capitol steps.**

and water issues, among others.

While in the Texas Panhandle, participants will tour area farms, and learn about issues related to energy and water, and visit with organizations, agribusinesses and universities with direct agricultural ties.

A trip to South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley will highlight border and immigration issues, local agriculture and international trade.

The Washington, D.C. session will focus on national government, priority issues, agricultural advocacy and a visit to an international embassy.

An international trip will conclude the program, exposing participants to production agriculture, infrastructure, and trade with a foreign country.

Current and previous program participants note AgLead helped strengthen their leadership skills and expand their agricultural knowledge.

"In this program, you get around a diverse group of people, and you get to hear different viewpoints on a variety of topics," Winston Millican, a pecan farmer from San Saba, said. "You also get to see different aspects of agriculture in Texas and across the nation while developing your leadership skills. It's a beneficial program for any farmer or rancher."

In addition to discovering new innovative agricultural techniques, participants will discuss agricultural policy with elected officials at the state and national level.

"One of the highlights for me includes the Austin trip, because we

were there during the session," Kristin Anderson, an AgriEdge specialist for Syngenta, said. "We were able to see how our Farm Bureau team works on legislation at the Capitol, and we also met with the Ag Council to see how Farm Bureau and other agricultural groups work together during the session."

Anderson noted her relationships with lawmakers, as well as local leaders, have strengthened.

"Being able to make connections with elected officials, the folks serving on the local water board, consumers or anyone else you meet is important, especially when trying to share the stories of agriculture," Anderson said. "We have to be willing to speak out more. We can all make a difference and have a positive impact on agriculture's future."

Time is a priority investment for the program and a limited commodity for farmers and ranchers. But it's time well spent, Millican and Anderson said. And they both agree merging the programs was beneficial.

"It's time away from your job, your farm, your family and other commitments, but it's also a hands-on learning experience that you can apply to all aspects of your life," Anderson said. "In my career, a big part of what I do is support producers in South and East Texas. I was able to learn about a lot of resources Farm Bureau has available and leave that with my customers in the field, but I was also able to learn from my classmates. I



**The two-year program includes tour stops across the state, country and the world.**

could have candid conversations with those who have more experience and different experiences in agriculture, and that's extremely valuable."

AgLead members learn about agriculture from the farm to the factory and beyond, including visits to some of the nation's most diversified and innovative agricultural operations, processors, packagers and marketers.

"The program helped me make connections and build relationships across the state with my fellow classmates, but also around the country through the various tour stops. I've learned so much about the different industries within agriculture," Millican said. "Through AgLead, Farm Bureau gives you opportunities that you likely wouldn't have on your own. I encourage everyone to apply."

Participants get the tools needed to help cultivate true Texas agricultural leadership.

"With the demographics of Texas shifting to urban centers, the call for prepared agricultural leadership grows even louder," Gipe said. "AgLead prepares participants to answer that call and advocate for agriculture from the county level to the Capitol steps."

Participants must be a TFB member at the time of application and throughout the program, if selected.

Applications and supporting documents must be submitted by Nov. 1.

For the application, costs and more information on the program, visit [texasfarmbureau.org/aglead](https://texasfarmbureau.org/aglead).

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# Path cleared for U.S. sorghum exports to Vietnam

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

After more than four years of negotiations, U.S. sorghum will soon be headed to Vietnam.

The grain will go to high value uses, including pet food and liquor, as well as animal feed, according to a joint statement released by the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) and United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP).

The opening of Vietnamese ports to U.S. sorghum comes after years of collaboration between USGC, USCP and the National Sorghum Producers (NSP), along with efforts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and regulators and industry representatives in Vietnam.

“We are excited to see our hard work and collaboration pay off in Vietnam,” Ryan LeGrand, USGC president and CEO, said. “It’s been a long time coming but is a model of how by working together with industry and government good things

can happen for U.S. commodities.”

The announcement was made after a pest risk assessment between the USDA and Vietnam’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was finalized in late May.

“From an initial visit in 2015 by USCP and USGC to discover the potential for sorghum in various marketplaces to the development of a fish-feeding trial, our organizations have worked to create opportunity for U.S. sorghum in Vietnam,” Florentino Lopez, Sorghum Checkoff executive director, said. “All this work would fall short without organizations like NSP that came in along the way to help steward the approvals needed to make it official. Our persistence has paid off, creating additional market opportunity for U.S. sorghum farmers.”

The pest risk assessment outlines handling guidelines for U.S. sorghum exported to Vietnam.

According to USGC and USCP, the agreement became even more

critical in April 2018, after a shipment of sorghum originally destined for China was diverted to Vietnam but couldn’t be delivered because of the lack of a pest risk assessment.

A delegation from the Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development traveled to the U.S. to meet with representatives from each of the grain groups and several USDA agencies. The Vietnamese delegation also met with agribusiness representatives and visited the Port of Houston to observe grain loading protocols.

Feed demand from Vietnam’s poultry, swine and aquaculture sectors continues to grow, USGC said.

To encourage sorghum demand, feeding trials were conducted testing the viability of replacing cassava with sorghum as feed for Pangasius, a large catfish species native to Southeast Asian diets.

The groups noted Vietnam produces 2.4 million tons of catfish yearly.

Official approval from USDA and Vietnam’s pest risk assessment approval allows Vietnam to issue licenses when Vietnamese importers request one for sorghum.

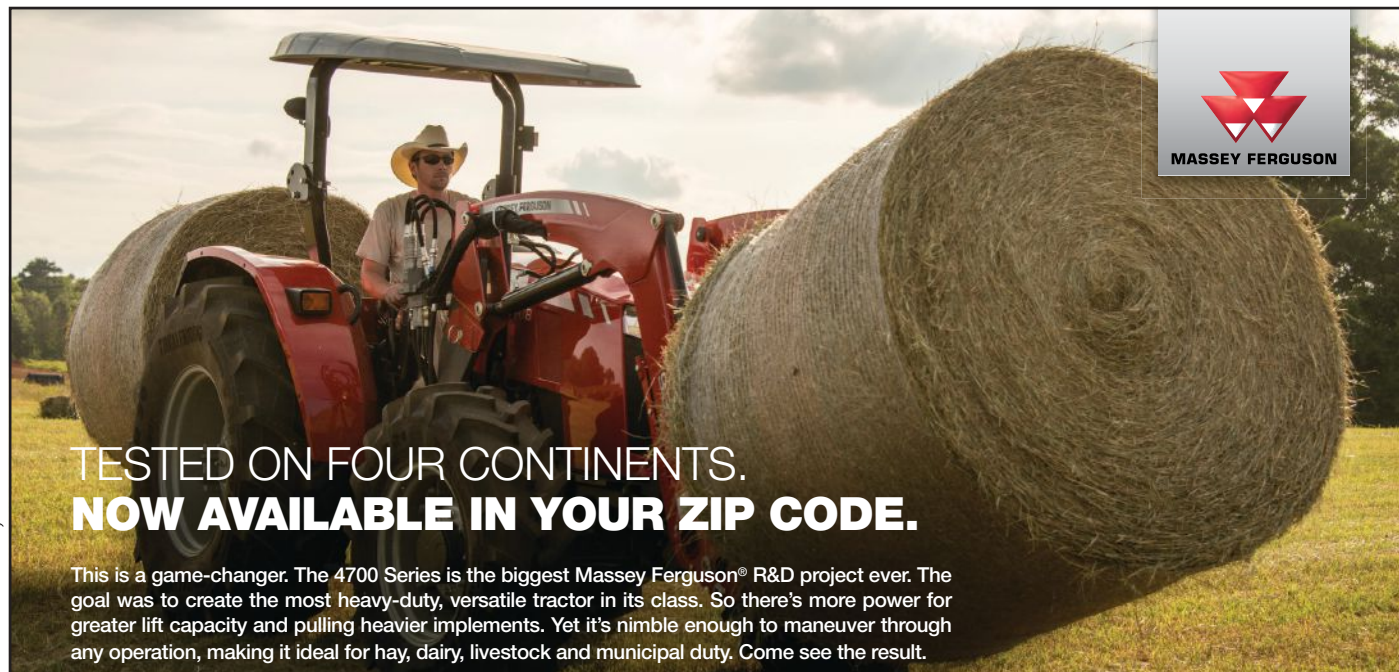
Vietnamese buyers are seeking to diversify feed sources, as well as find alternatives that store better in the area’s climate. Sorghum is gluten-free and non-GMO, which is attractive to niche sectors like the pet food industry in Vietnam, according to USGC.

“Fifteen years ago, grain sorghum probably had one use outside of being fed to pigs or animals. Today, there are thousands of uses,” Wayne Cleveland, Texas Sorghum Producers executive director, said. “Consumers are becoming more aware that we’re a gluten-free product, and being GMO-free is important in a lot of markets. We’re finding sorghum has a lot of antioxidants in it, which is really good for your body. A lot of those things are working to our advantage.”

The groups’ groundwork in Southeast Asia’s aquaculture sector was a critical step in securing this opportunity to help diversify U.S. sorghum’s export markets and create a pathway for U.S. sorghum into one of the fastest growing food-producing sectors in the world.

“This victory is a clear example of how working together—both in industry and in governments—can lead to winners on all sides,” LeGrand said. “Vietnam will be able to meet its country’s grain and feed demands, and U.S. sorghum farmers will have access to a market that has several different sectors as potential end users for their product.”

Learn more about sorghum export market development from the U.S. Grains Council at [grains.org](http://grains.org).



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# Dealer trust legislation could help ranchers recoup payment losses

Ranchers may soon have a better secured option for selling their livestock.

The Securing All Livestock Equitably (SALE) Act (S 3419 and HR 6067) was introduced to establish a Dealer Statutory Trust. It's a practical solution to a problem facing livestock producers and markets across the United States, according to the Livestock Marketing Association (LMA).

HR 6067 is included in the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) is among several livestock groups advocating for similar language to be included in a companion bill from the Senate.

A Dealer Statutory Trust would correct unfairness in current law for ranchers. It would give unpaid sellers of livestock the legal right to reclaim livestock or, if they have been resold, proceeds from livestock in the unfortunate event of a livestock

dealer payment default.

Under current law, farmers, ranchers and livestock auctions have been devastated when livestock dealers default on payment.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) feasibility study and report shows there were more than 80 dealer defaults from October 2013 to June 2019.

"While this is an issue that we've had going on in our industry for a while now, the more volatile the market becomes and the more price swings we have, the more we are going to see ranchers end up in situations where they aren't paid for their livestock," Chelsea Good, vice president of Government and Industry Affairs for LMA, said.

Creation of a dealer trust is supported by the livestock industry, including AFBF, American Sheep Industry Association, LMA, National Cattlemen's Beef Association and U.S. Cattlemen's Association.

AFBF policy supports amending

the Packers and Stockyard Act to include a dealer trust provision that gives first priority to unpaid sellers of livestock in the event of a dealer default.

"Livestock markets are required to pay sellers by the end of the next business day for cattle sold through the sale ring. Oftentimes, that's before a dealer's check has cleared on those cattle, which means the markets themselves end up paying for the cattle if a dealer defaults," Laramie Adams, Texas Farm Bureau national legislative director, said. "When a dealer buys cattle directly off the farm and doesn't pay, the rancher is out the money and often can't get the cattle back."

A dealer trust would provide recovery in addition to the current USDA required bonds. It would not create a separate pool of funds or mandate changes in day-to-day business. Livestock sellers will have a legal, priority standing to regain their livestock or the proceeds of their sale

from a dealer.

"Defaulting of dealer payment means trouble for an industry already strained by low prices," Adams said. "A dealer trust would also have the added benefit of protecting livestock sellers from preferential transfer claims in bankruptcy. These potentially devastating claims arise when a bankruptcy trustee seeks to pull back 90 days' worth of past payments made by a now bankrupt dealer."

Congress directed USDA to evaluate the feasibility of enacting a Dealer Statutory Trust as part of the 2018 Farm Bill.

The USDA study was released in December 2019 and states a Dealer Statutory Trust would improve seller recovery in the event of a dealer default.

The study also found implementation of a Dealer Statutory Trust would not likely have a significant impact on credit availability or lender behavior.

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# Ainsley receives prestigious 'True' scholarship

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

Madison Ainsley of Medina County Farm Bureau (CFB) is the recipient of the 2020 Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award.

The \$20,000 scholarship is presented annually to a deserving student in honor of former TFB President S.M. True Jr.

"President True was an outstanding leader who inspired many. He was devoted to agriculture and to serving others," TFB President Russell Boening said. "This scholarship recognizes students who share a similar dedication to agriculture and leadership. The passion Madison displays is fitting of a scholarship in President True's name. We're proud to honor her with this award."

After obtaining her undergradu-



ate degree from Texas Tech University, Ainsley is now enrolled at the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences to pursue a doctorate degree in veterinary medicine.

Ainsley was born and raised in Hondo, where her family has raised sheep and show lambs for more than 25 years. She said agriculture has always been a big part of her life.

"Growing up in a rural community on a family farm has inspired me to pursue a career that focuses on the sustainability of livestock production through medicine, nutrition and reproduction," she said. "I am very blessed to be part of the agriculture industry and surrounded by hardworking individuals who live to serve their communities."

Throughout her childhood, Ain-

sley was involved in sports, 4-H, FFA, raised sheep and market hogs and participated in rodeo events.

Her passion for veterinary medicine began when she was in kindergarten and grew throughout her high school and college years, during which time she worked at several veterinary practices.

"My parents like to tell the story of how the first word I could spell in kindergarten was veterinarian," she said. "I know lots of kids say they want to be veterinarians when they grow up, but I obviously never grew out of it, because here I am all these years later still on the same track."

During her time at Texas Tech, Ainsley held a student research assistant position and was a member of the meat and livestock judging teams. She graduated summa cum laude in May 2019 with a bachelor's degree in animal science.

At Texas A&M, where she just completed her first year of vet school, Ainsley is involved in several organizations, including the Student American Veterinary Medical Association, the Texas Veterinary Medical Association and the Veterinary Business Management Association.

Ainsley hopes to be involved in

a mixed animal veterinary practice after graduation where she can stay closely connected to the livestock industry, as well as treat companion animals and pets.

"Words can't even explain how grateful I am to Texas Farm Bureau," Ainsley said. "I'm truly humbled to be chosen as the recipient among five highly qualified and competitive individuals. I'm so thankful for TFB and their investment in Texas youth and agriculture, and one day I hope to give back as part of the great organization that has given me so much."

Other finalists for the award were: Jadeyn Arthur of Crosby CFB, a junior at West Texas A&M University; M'Lynn Prewitt of Clay CFB, a junior at Tarleton State University; Taylor Schertz of Denton CFB, a senior at Texas Tech University; and Jordan Sustaire of Hopkins-Rains CFB, a junior at Tarleton State University.

Each runner-up will receive a scholarship valued at \$1,000.

The True scholar award was established in 2014 by the TFB board of directors.

For more information on TFB scholarships, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities>.

## TFB announces scholarship recipients

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) announced the organization's 2020 scholarship recipients, awarding more than \$207,000 to graduating high school students and enrolled college students this spring.

"No matter where you decide to further your education—whether at a trade school, college or university—it can be expensive. These scholarships allow Farm Bureau to help these students further their education," Mia Balko, TFB director of Youth Outreach said. "We are very impressed with the 2020 scholarship recipients and are proud to invest in their future and the future of Texas."

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

An additional 39 seniors received district scholarships.

Enrolled college students also re-

ceived financial assistance from TFB.

Madison Ainsley received the S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award (see story above).

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

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

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

To view the complete list of winners, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities>.

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# TFB program grants funds to Texas 4-H clubs

By Jennifer Dorsett  
Field Editor

A new Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) grant program, Clover Cash, aims to help Texas 4-H clubs increase their reach in connecting youth to agriculture.


The grant program is available on the county, district and state levels to fund hands-on activities that grow students' knowledge of food, fiber and fuel, as well as increases their awareness of the importance of agricultural advocacy.

At the county level, four grants up to \$500, four grants up to \$750 and three grants up to \$1,000 are available.

Four grants up to \$1,500 each will be awarded at the district level, and three grants up to \$2,000 each will be awarded for state projects.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agents or adult leaders of any county, district or state 4-H program are eligible to apply. The funds will be disbursed by the Texas 4-H Foun-

**Texas 4-H clubs can apply for grants through the Texas Farm Bureau**



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dation to organizations only, not an individual.

“We’re looking for projects that provide hands-on experiences and ideas that really engage students,”

TFB Director of Youth Outreach Mia Balko said. “We want to see projects that expand students’ knowledge of agriculture in ways that are meaningful and memorable.”

For the application to be considered, students must be directly engaged in the educational component of the project.

A timeline of the project, a list of all community partners and a detailed budget with estimated expenses must also be included in the application.

Applicants are encouraged to be creative in their project proposals and descriptions.

“We’re leaving the parameters pretty wide open, so 4-H clubs can really get creative and do whatever it is they need to do to get the message home to their students,” Balko said.

Applications must be submitted via a Google document and are due by midnight on July 17.

Grant winners will be announced in August.

For more information and the link to the online application, visit <https://texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youth-opportunities/>.

Questions may be directed to Balko at [mbalko@txfb.org](mailto:mbalko@txfb.org) or 254-399-5037.

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# Ag Innovation Challenge gives startup funds to entrepreneurs

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), in partnership with Farm Credit, has opened on-line applications for the 2021 Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge. This national business competition showcases U.S. startup companies that are addressing challenges faced by America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

Farm Bureau will award \$145,000 in startup funds provided by sponsors Farm Credit, John Deere, Bayer Crop Science, Country Financial, Farm Bureau Financial Services and Farm Bureau Bank.

Launched in 2015 as the first national competition focused exclusively on rural entrepreneurs, the challenge continues to identify the next agricultural entrepreneurs to watch and support innovation essential to Farm Bureau member businesses and communities.

For this seventh year of the competition, Farm Bureau is seeking entrepreneurs who are addressing both traditional challenges farmers and rural communities face—like the 2020 Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year, Dana Mohr with HydroSide Systems, who developed an automated irrigation system—as well as business owners tackling new challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In light of the impacts Farm Bureau members are experiencing from COVID-19, solutions from entrepreneurs are needed more than ever to help farmers, ranchers and rural communities,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “We’re very interested to see how entrepreneurs will use startup funds provided by the challenge to help support farms and ranches and grow the rural economy.”

Farm Bureau and Farm Credit will select 10 startup companies to compete at the AFBF Annual Convention in January 2021 as semi-finalists. The 10 semi-finalist teams will be announced on Oct. 5 and awarded \$7,500 each.

The 10 teams will compete to ad-

vance to the final round where four teams will receive an additional \$7,500 and compete live on stage in front of Farm Bureau members, investors and industry representatives.

The four finalist teams will compete to be the People's Choice Award winner by public vote for a total of \$20,000 and to be the 2021 Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year to win a total of \$50,000.

The Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year and the People's Choice

Award winner will be announced at the AFBF Annual Convention.

The top 10 semi-finalist teams will participate in pitch training and mentorship from Cornell University's Dyson School of Applied Economics & Management faculty prior to competing at AFBF's convention.

In addition, the top 10 semi-finalist teams will have the opportunity to network with industry leaders and venture capital representatives

from the Agriculture Department's Rural Business Investment Companies.

Entrepreneurs must be Farm Bureau members to qualify as top 10 semi-finalists.

Detailed eligibility guidelines, the competition timeline, videos and profiles of past winners are available at [fb.org/challenge](http://fb.org/challenge).

Applications must be received by midnight Eastern Daylight Time on July 31.



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# Summer is a good time to take hunter education

By Jessica Domel  
Multimedia Reporter

Dove and white-tailed deer season are still a few months away, but now may be the perfect time for Texas youth to complete hunter education.

Hunters who were born on or after Sept. 2, 1971, must complete a hunter education course before hunting in the state of Texas.

"I strongly recommend people do that during the summer because when we get to the fall, because a lot of hunter education instructors are volunteers, it gets difficult around October and November to find a hunter education class," Chris Mitchell, director of the Texas Youth Hunting Program (TYHP), told the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

People who complete hunter education during the summer are eligible to begin hunting as soon as the season begins and they have a valid hunting license.

Mitchell said there are several op-



**A hunter education course must be completed for those hunters who were born on or after Sept. 2, 1971. Photo courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.**

tions to complete hunter education.

"If you're under the age of 17, you can take a portion of hunter education online, and then you can go to a field course, and that's only four hours long," Mitchell said.

The field course puts participants in safety scenarios and shoot/don't shoot situations.

Completing hunter education early also helps those youth who are interested in signing up for a TYHP hunt.

"All you need to do is go to [tyhp.org](http://tyhp.org), create an account and sign up for hunts," Mitchell said. "You can sign up for as many hunts as you like, but if you're a new hunter, be prepared because that's how we choose hunters. We choose the hunters who have the least number of hunts."

TYHP scheduled hunts will be posted in the fall.

"It's a program that takes nine- to 17-year-old youth from Texas, and actually from out-of-state, on hunts, provided they've completed hunter education," Mitchell said. "They have to come with a parent. Landowners donate access to their property."

Last year, the program, which is hosted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Texas Wildlife Association (TWA), hosted more than 230 hunts and took over 1,200 kids hunting.

The hunting section of the TPWD website, [www.tpwd.texas.gov](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov), and TYHP website, [www.tyhp.org](http://www.tyhp.org), have links to upcoming hunter education courses.

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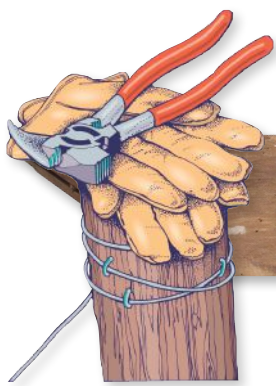
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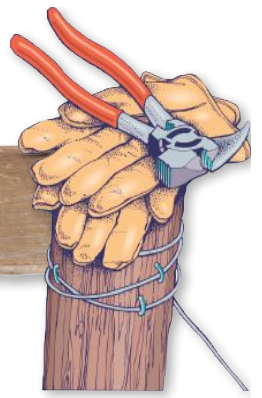
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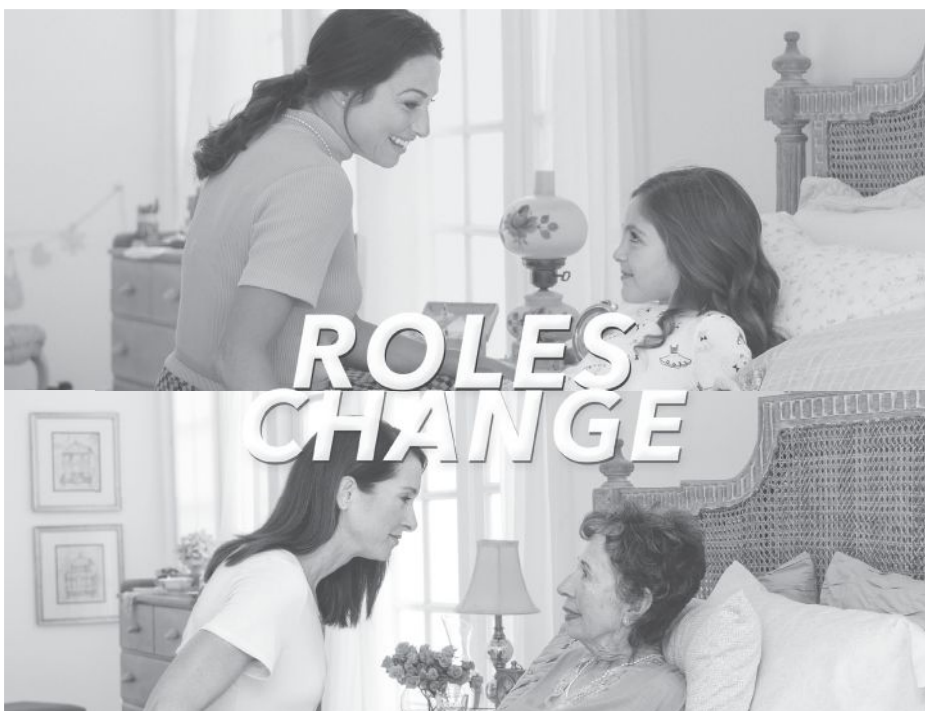
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