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June 3, 2022

Texas Agriculture

Published by Texas Farm Bureau for commercial farmers and ranchers

Growing Greens

Pages 16-17

Federal mandates would hurt the Texas, U.S. cattle industries

Being the president of Texas Farm Bureau allows me to engage on a wide range of issues important to Texas farmers and ranchers. Our organization is a general farm organization. We represent our members' interests across all commodities.

The agricultural industry is experiencing unique and extreme circumstances—high input costs, market volatility, good commodity pricing but narrow margins.

There are times, though, when certain issues draw significant attention. Right now, one of those issues of priority is cattle markets.

There are about 80,000 Texas Farm Bureau members with interests in beef cattle production. And as a rancher myself, this is an issue of high personal interest to me.

It's not a simple issue, though. So, let's start with the top line of where we're at: Texas Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation are opposed to mandating how feedlots can sell their cattle.

The Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act gives the U.S. Department of Agriculture broad au-

thority to mandate up to 50% of fed cattle in the Texas region to be sold through negotiated cash trade.

Those changes will discount the value of cattle, and that will be passed to stocker and cow-calf operators.



**By Russell Boening
President**

Texas A&M estimates show it can cost the Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico region as much as \$126 million annually.

The bill will do nothing to change the packer concentration dynamics and increase competition.

If we want more competition between cattle buyers, we need more buyers and packers, or we need fewer cattle.

The bill would have done nothing to change the food supply chain backlog during the last three years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supply and demand will guide the price determined between buyers and sellers.

Our position on the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act reflects our policy.

We are opposed to the bill unless the portion that mandates how feedlots sell cattle and packers buy them is removed.

There are other parts of the bill

that everyone can agree will be good for the industry, such as increasing packer pricing information and transparency.

The legislation currently proposed in the Senate will give tremendous authority to the secretary of agriculture to set a percentage of cattle sold in cash negotiations as high as 50%.

Texas runs about 10% cash trade each year. That means the bill would give the Biden administration the ability to devalue 40% of the cattle fed in Texas.

I'm not confident that giving a government agency, no matter which administration is in office, additional power to arbitrarily manipulate how cattle can be sold, will

improve the bottom line for ranchers.

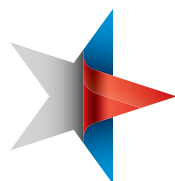
All analyses show that taking the free market away from buyers and sellers will result in less value throughout the cattle supply chain. It will also do nothing to reduce the cost of beef for consumers.

Our message on Capitol Hill is clear: Texas Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation are committed to staying fully engaged with lawmakers, USDA and other stakeholders to find solutions for price discovery and transparency while remaining opposed to mandates on how cattle are purchased.

More information about this important issue is available at <https://texasfarmbureau.org/cattle-markets>.



Economic analyses show that increasing government intervention and mandates will cost livestock producers millions of dollars.



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June 3, 2022 Vol. 37, No. 12

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

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

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Wildfire losses top \$23 million in preliminary estimates

Preliminary estimates from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service show wildfires that ravaged the Eastland Complex and parts of the Panhandle and Coryell County regions—a total of 433,000 acres—resulted in \$23.1 million in agricultural losses.

The losses include more than 400 livestock deaths, lost grazing values and fence repair costs.

The preliminary estimates were calculated beginning with the early March fires and running through the end of April. AgriLife Extension economists noted the preliminary loss estimates will likely climb higher due to ongoing fire threats.

“Drought conditions are only intensifying the potential for further economic losses moving forward considering the prospects of hay availability and associated feed costs,” Dr. David Anderson, AgriLife Extension livestock economist, said.

During a seven-day span in late March, state, federal and local fire



Wildfires have caused \$23.1 million in agricultural losses so far this year, according to preliminary estimates from AgriLife Extension. Photo courtesy Toby Hight.

resources responded to 192 wildfires that burned 173,559 acres. More than 300 Texas A&M Forest Service firefighters and more than 200 Texas

Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid System firefighters, along with firefighting personnel from 28 states, were positioned across the state to respond.

ASF vaccine passes tests required for regulatory approval

Scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) recently announced a vaccine candidate for African swine fever (ASF) passed an important safety test required for regulatory approval, moving the vaccine one step closer to commercial availability.

The test is an important milestone as part of a series of safety studies. These new results show that USDA’s vaccine candidate does not revert to its normal virulence, after being injected into swine. This “reversion to virulence” test is required to ensure that the vaccine’s weakened form of the ASF virus does not revert to its original state.

“This is a critical milestone for the ASF vaccine candidate,” Manuel Borca, senior ARS scientist, said.

“These safety studies bring this vaccine one step closer to being available on the market.”

The safety studies are necessary to gain approval for use in Vietnam and eventually in other countries around the world. Future commercial use, however, will depend on approval from the department of animal health within each requesting country.

“It is very hard to predict how selective pressure can cause a live attenuated vaccine to return to virulence,” Douglas Gladue, senior ARS scientist, said. “In the case of this particular vaccine candidate, ASFV-G-DI177L, we deleted a gene, which makes it difficult for the virus to simply add the gene back. So, we expected reversion to its original form to be unlikely, but the test still has to

be performed.”

An attenuated vaccine strain retains much of its genetic makeup and could genetically change when exposed to various external circumstances. All live attenuated vaccines are weakened versions of a virus and can be used as a vaccine because the live vaccine virus will not cause illness and can still provide immunity.

Although the virus is causing profound economic losses to the swine industry, there have not been any outbreaks in the United States. The highly contagious ASF virus spread from Africa to the Republic of Georgia in 2007 and has since swept through Central Europe and Asia, before reaching the Dominican Republic in 2021.

The virus is unable to transmit from pigs to humans, USDA noted.

Adkins named director for FSA in Texas

The Biden administration recently appointed Kelly Adkins as the new state executive director for the USDA Texas Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Adkins joined the Texas FSA team on May 9.

“Individuals selected to serve as FSA state executive directors are incredible public servants who have a proven track record when it comes to their commitment to advance their states and communities,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said.

Adkins was raised on a small family farm in Haskell County where he attended Haskell High School and later Texas Tech University. He earned his bachelor of business degree with a minor in agriculture.

Adkins enjoyed a career serving the farmers and ranchers of Texas and FSA in many capacities, including county executive director in Grimes and Randall counties and district director for the agency overseeing FSA county offices and program delivery for a multi-county area of the Panhandle.

He is currently a resident of Canyon where he is involved in a small farming and cattle operation.

Adkins has been involved in community activities and several state agricultural commodity associations.

As state executive director, Adkins will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of FSA programs to farmers and ranchers in Texas. These commodity, conservation, credit and disaster assistance programs ensure a safe, affordable, abundant and nutritious food, fiber and fuel supply for consumers.

Inflation to burden U.S. economy for several years

America's families can expect inflation to continue putting pressure on their wallets for the next few years, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

AFBF economists analyzed the inflation numbers in a recent Market Intel report. They expect inflation to stay above 5% or 6% for the foreseeable future.

"Quite simply, too much money was created by the Federal Reserve Bank (often called 'the Fed'), mostly in 2020, and it is turning, inevitably, into inflation," the Market Intel states. "Thankfully, the Fed has begun taking steps to address this...but it will likely take a few years to approach their long-term target of 2% per year."

The Market Intel points to the Fed injecting \$6.4 trillion into the economy between March 2020 and the end of 2021, which is a 42% increase in the money supply in only 22 months. This infusion of money is too much to be absorbed by economic growth in a year or two, even with a strong post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery. Lower interest rates also spurred borrowing. All of these factors combined to overstimulate the economy.

"There was a lot of disposable income, including enhanced unemployment benefits to most of those put out of work, substantial government support for businesses who kept people on payroll, and the regular paychecks of the vast majority of the workforce. This ensured that personal incomes and overall demand didn't flag. So, there was little reason for the Fed to pursue demand stimulus through such a loose money policy," the Market Intel states.

The Fed is now taking steps to address inflation through an interest rate hike and plans to sell off up to a trillion dollars in bonds and securities.

Read the full Market Intel at fb.org/market-intel.



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TFB names 2022 scholarship recipients

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) announced the organization's 2022 scholarship recipients, awarding \$293,000 to graduating high school seniors and enrolled college students.

"Continuing your education—whether at a trade school, college or university—can be expensive, but scholarships available through Texas Farm Bureau can help put students on the path to finding a career they are passionate about," TFB Youth Outreach Coordinator McKenna Bush said. "We are impressed with the 2022 scholarship recipients and are proud to invest in their future and the future of Texas agriculture."

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

2022 TEXAS FARM BUREAU SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS ANNOUNCED

An additional 39 high school seniors received district scholarships.

Enrolled college students also received financial assistance from TFB.

Three Young Farmer & Rancher Enrolled College Student scholarships were awarded, and four addi-

tional college students received the spring Mia Balko Student Teaching Scholarship (*see story on page 7*), which will assist recipients with expenses associated with off-campus student teaching. Another four college students also will be awarded the student teaching scholarship in

the fall.

TFB announced the \$20,000 S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award winner (*see story on page 7*). The scholarship honors S.M. True Jr., a former TFB president, and his commitment to agriculture.

Four recipients of TFB's new \$10,000 Rural Veterinary Scholarship (*see story below*) were also announced. The recipients must be second- or third-year veterinary students in a Texas DVM professional program and must plan to enter a rural and/or food animal practice in Texas upon completion of their degree.

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

TFB's Free Enterprise Speech Contest winners were awarded \$27,500 in scholarships (*see story on page 28*), and \$35,000 was made available to students through Texas State Technical College.

To view the full list of scholarship recipients, visit texasfarmbureau.org/scholarships.

First TFB Rural Veterinary Scholarship recipients named

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) awarded scholarships to four college students pursuing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree.

The Rural Veterinary Scholarships, valued at \$10,000, are new to TFB's scholarship program this year. The state's largest farm and ranch organization established the new scholarship to help ease the financial burden on veterinary students who seek further experiences and education with food animal species.

The recipients include Tucker Roberts, Manuel Sifuentes, Travis Twining and Emily Watson. They are all students at Texas A&M University.

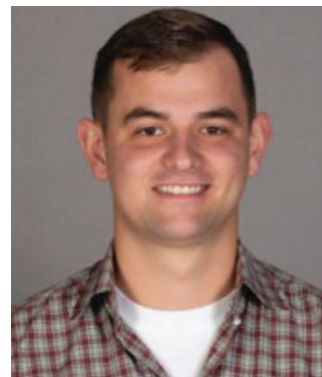
"There is a clear need for veterinarians in rural areas of the state. This new scholarship was created



Tucker Roberts



Manuel Sifuentes



Travis Twining



Emily Watson

to help support veterinary students who wish to pursue a career focused on the needs of rural communities and the food animal side of veterinary medicine," McKenna Bush, TFB youth outreach coordinator, said.

Animal agriculture is a large part of the Lone Star State, but a shortage of rural veterinarians could put that business at risk.

With fewer veterinary graduates

heading to rural areas, many longtime rural veterinarians have no successors.

That leaves farmers and ranchers in a tough situation—call a veterinarian who could be hundreds of miles away or solve problems on their own.

"TFB members from all across Texas need additional veterinary service, especially in emergency

situations," Bush said. "This scholarship program has been designed to lend assistance to those who wish to fill that need."

The scholarship was open to second- and third-year veterinary students in a Texas DVM professional program. Applicants must plan to enter a rural and/or food animal practice in Texas upon completion of their degree.

Clayton Elbel receives TFB's \$20,000 True Scholar Award

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

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

Clayton Elbel of Comal County is this year's recipient of the S.M. True Jr. Agricultural Scholar Award. The \$20,000 scholarship is presented annually to a deserving student in honor of former TFB President S.M. True Jr.

"President True lived a life of inspiration and service—serving his family, Farm Bureau and agriculture," TFB President Russell Boening said. "Like former President True, Clayton shares a passion for servant leadership, learning and agriculture. We're proud to honor him with this award."

Elbel is a junior on a combined degree program through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and The Bush School of Government and Public Service. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and is also working toward his master's degree in public administration.

He grew up on his family's farm and ranch in Spring Branch.

Throughout his high school and collegiate career, Elbel has dedicated his time to serving agriculture

in leadership roles, including a one-year term as Texas FFA state vice president.

He is also a TAMU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Council representative, a member of the university's Horse Judging team and helps lead the FarmLink Project.

FarmLink is a national organization that helps place surplus foods from farmers, distributors and retailers with community food banks to help reduce food waste and increase community access to fresh foods.

Elbel is the Hunger and Outreach team leader for FarmLink. He and his team of 15 volunteers moved about 19 million pounds of food over the last year-and-a-half.

"My life's purpose is rooted in integrity and working in our food and fiber system," Elbel said. "Food banks have a lot of canned goods or dry goods, but not a lot of fresh produce or protein. FarmLink helps provide people with access to fresh foods and vegetables at food banks, giving them a sense of dignity through food."

Elbel also won the 2021 TFB Collegiate Discussion Meet and represented Texas in the national contest.

He will be a political and economic affairs intern this summer for the U.S. Department of State in Rome.

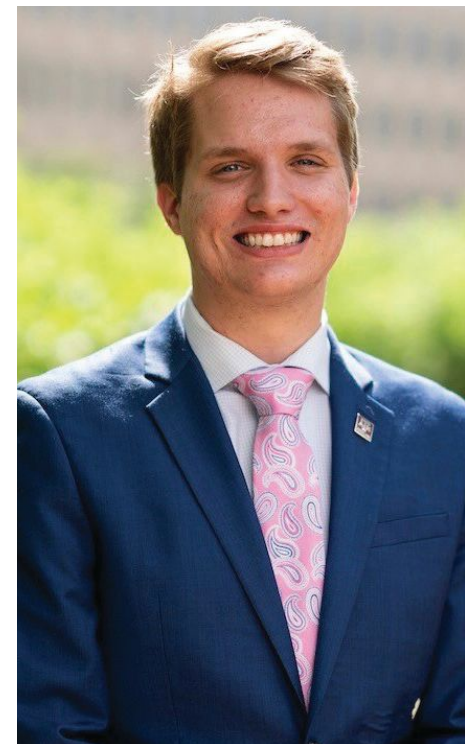
After completing his master's degree, Elbel plans to attend law school and focus on agricultural policy, specifically administrative law.

"One of the things I've realized through my professional experiences is that a lot of the policy implemented at the state and federal level goes through administrative law," he said. "That's why I want to focus my career in that area. I want to explore the intersection of agriculture and public policy and be a voice for rural producers and growers like my parents."

Elbel's various leadership, professional development and agricultural experiences have helped him grow into the individual he is today.

"My academic performance, leadership and commitment to excellence will help me serve as an influential voice for agriculture, fulfilling Farm Bureau's mission," he said. "To receive this scholarship named after someone with such a large impact on Farm Bureau is an honor. Farm Bureau expanded under Mr. True's leadership, and that reflects someone who had a mindset of service. I want to leave a legacy like that."

Other finalists for the award were Candace Lundrum of Bexar County; Natalie McDaniel of Dallam-Hartley County; Kristen Massingill of Hamilton County; and Sydney Orsborn of



Clayton Elbel

Van Zandt County.

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

To be eligible for the scholarship, a student must have at least 60 hours of college credit and be enrolled in a four-year college or university. To receive the full amount, the recipient must continue to major in agriculture and maintain a satisfactory grade point average.

TFB's Mia Balko Student Teaching Scholarship winners announced

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Four college students majoring in agricultural education received the Spring 2022 Mia Balko Student Teaching Scholarship from Texas Farm Bureau (TFB).

The scholarship recipients include Christian Floyd, Katelyn Grantham, Kerra James and Taylor Sanders. All four students attend Tarleton State University in Stephenville.

"These four students are passionate about agricultural education and inspiring the next generation to learn more about agriculture and pursue ag-related careers," McKen-

na Bush, TFB youth outreach coordinator, said. "We are proud to play a role in their future endeavors of connecting students to agriculture."

College students from TFB member-families who are pursuing a degree in agricultural education applied for the \$1,500 scholarship in the spring. The funds will be used during the fall semester of off-campus student teaching.

As a student teacher, there's not typically time to have another job due to classroom responsibilities, Bush noted.

"Student teachers work alongside an experienced teacher for a

semester as part of the agricultural education experience. They prepare lessons, teach classes and supervise various FFA projects and contest trainings. It's an invaluable part of the learning experience for future agricultural science teachers," Bush said. "That schedule doesn't allow them to have another job, so this scholarship aims to alleviate some of the financial burden for these students who are preparing for careers in agricultural education."

The scholarship was renamed the Mia Balko Student Teaching Scholarship in 2021 after the late Mia Balko, who was a former agricul-

tural science teacher and director of Youth Outreach for TFB.

There are about 2,400 full-time agricultural science teachers in Texas and over 1,100 active FFA chapters.

"Agricultural science teachers are in demand, and TFB wants to do our part helping students prepare to fill those roles," Bush said.

Four scholarships will also be awarded in the fall to ag education seniors going into their student teaching semester in spring 2023. Details will be available later this year on texasfarmbureau.org/scholarships.

Farm Bureau concerned with proposed cattle market legislation

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and other agricultural organizations are concerned about a bill that falls short of reaching the intended goal of creating transparency and fairness in cattle markets.

The Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act (S 4030) would require packers responsible for more than 5% of fed cattle to buy a certain percentage of negotiated cash cattle rather than by contract or formula. The secretary of agriculture would establish up to seven regions of the country for cash cattle trade. The bill also establishes a contract library and mandates annual reporting of the cutout yield.

TFB reiterated its opposition to the bill in a recent letter to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Ag Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow and Senate Ag Committee Ranking Member John Boozman.

“TFB remains strongly opposed to provisions included in Sections 2 and 7 specific to the establishment of federal mandatory minimum thresholds under which certain percentages of cattle are purchased,” TFB President Russell Boening wrote. “There is no economic evidence to show regional mandates will increase prices for cow-calf and stocker operators.”

A report released by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University concluded negotiated trade mandates are expected to have negative effects on short-term cattle and calf prices.

The report also showed the region that includes Texas would see the greatest negative impact from the imposition of mandatory trade minimums.

“Many studies and analyses from top universities conclude a federal mandate in the market will cost cow-calf and stocker operators up to \$50 per head, if not more, on the price of their cattle,” Boening wrote. “It is

clear the mandate is not the solution to higher cattle prices and profitability for farmers and ranchers.”

TFB also has concerns with the establishment of five to seven new “covered regions” that would fall un-

der price reporting and recommends that additional analysis should be completed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture prior to any federally mandated changes.

The bill was heard by the U.S.

Senate Committee on Agriculture in late April but was not passed out of committee as of press time. TFB anticipates more discussion and possible action this month when the Senate returns to session.

TFB launches cattle markets information webpage

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) has launched a webpage to inform stakeholders and highlight issues with legislative efforts meant to improve transparency and profitability in cattle markets.

The webpage provides extensive analysis regarding the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act (CPDTA), which would impose an onerous federal mandate on the cattle market.

TFB is engaged with leaders of Congress to ensure any legislative solution will indeed help all segments of the cattle industry.

American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) policy generally sup-

ports certain provisions of the CPDTA that would benefit U.S. cattlemen and women, including the 14-day cattle slaughter report, expedited carcass weights reporting and the cattle contract library.

However, TFB and AFBF remain strongly opposed to provisions specific to the establishment of federal mandatory minimum thresholds under which certain percentages of cattle are purchased.

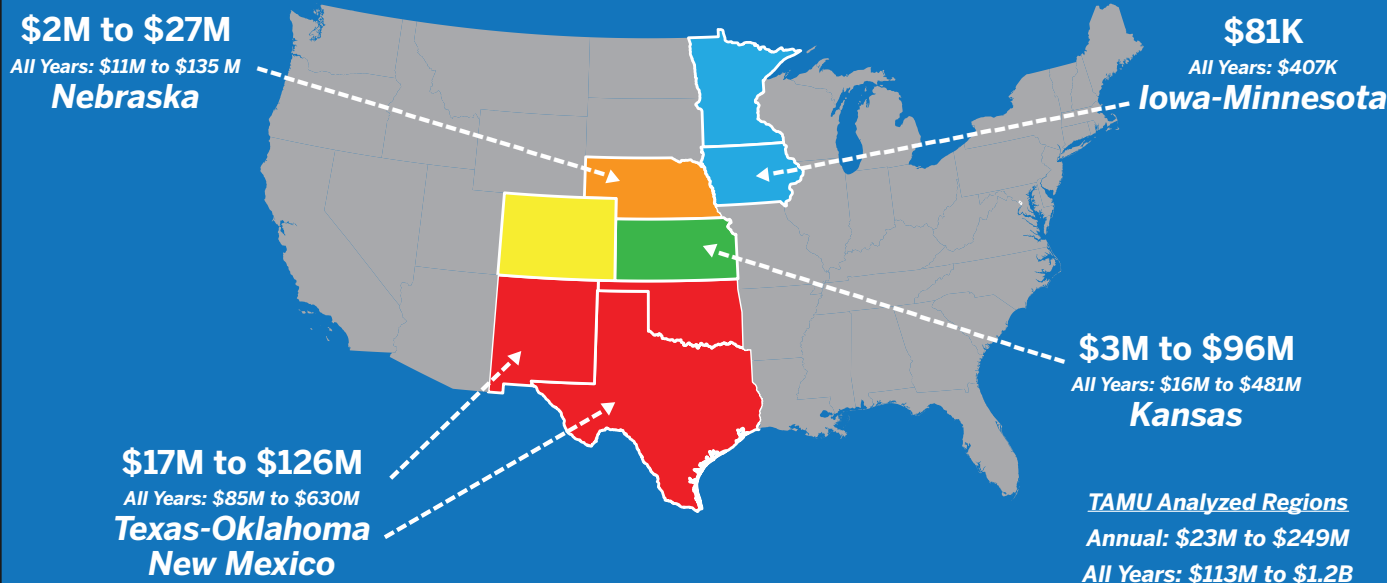
Many studies and analyses from top universities conclude a federal mandate in the market will cost cow-calf and stocker operators up to \$50 per head, if not more, on the price of their cattle.

“As discussions regarding legislation on providing transparency in the cattle market continue, we believe it is critical to keep our members informed and armed with the facts,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “As the top cattle state in the country, TFB is heavily involved in the legislative process to ensure legislative solutions will help our ranchers, regardless of sector. Currently, there is no economic analysis proving a mandate in the cattle market will result in higher cattle prices.”

View the analyses and information on the webpage at texasfarmbureau.org/cattle-markets.

Potential Costs of Losing Formulas

Expected economic costs associated with a cattle market mandate, estimated to be \$50 per head minimum and maximum, 2022 to 2026, annual average and total, Texas A&M analysis of S. 4030



Mandated cash trade would cost ranchers between \$23 to \$249 million annually depending on where the secretary of agriculture sets the mandate during the five years, according to data analyzed by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University. About 90% of the total costs will be shared by Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico cattle producers. The Texas region losses will range from \$17 to \$126 million annually.

Meat industry investigator bill passes U.S. House Ag Committee

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee passed the Meat and Poultry Special Investigator Act of 2022, which will create a new office in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

It would oversee agricultural markets with authority to investigate, subpoena and prosecute meat packers and live poultry dealers accused of wrongdoing.

The committee hearing showed division among congressmen and women, but the bill ultimately passed with a 27-21 vote.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) understand the intention of the legislators, but both organizations have numerous concerns and questions about implementation.

“We understand any wrongdoing must be addressed. This is what the Department of Justice already does, but this bill has a lot of unanswered questions and has the potential to inflict real and permanent damages to

the livestock industry,” TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. “One thing is for sure, it does not describe any oversight for the new office, and without that, it will have to ability to run roughshod over the industry while farmers and ranchers pay the price at the farm gate.”

Many questioned the need for a new office that will hold similar authority to that of current regulatory arms in the agricultural markets. USDA’s Packers and Stockyards Division and the Department of Justice both currently work cooperatively to identify and take action when meat packers or live poultry dealers are charged with misconduct.

“There’s no room for inventing another office or agency in our government, especially when it gets designed without any consideration for costs or confusion it would cause among the agencies currently working these issues, and that was heard loud and clear throughout the hearing,” Adams said.



The proposed legislation will create a new USDA office to investigate and prosecute claims of misconduct in livestock and poultry markets.

Lawmakers reiterated challenges faced by farmers and ranchers across the U.S. and warned legislation without proper vetting would cause additional problems.

“Farmers and ranchers across the U.S. are enduring very difficult times with rising input costs, market disruptions and inflation rates that are quickly eroding their ability to operate,” Adams said. “There is never a good time upend the food supply

system with additional lawsuits and jeopardize farm profitability, and it’s especially true today.”

TFB encourages further evaluation of the potential impacts this legislation will have on agriculture and will continue to work with Congress to prevent passage in the current form.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry will have the opportunity to review the bill in the coming weeks.

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USDA announced \$6 billion through emergency relief program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2020 and 2021 will soon begin receiving emergency relief payments totaling about \$6 billion through the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) new Emergency Relief Program (ERP) to offset crop yield and value losses.

For impacted farmers, existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data is the basis for calculating initial payments.

USDA estimates that phase one ERP benefits will reach more than 220,000 farmers who received indemnities for losses covered by federal crop insurance and more than 4,000 farmers who obtained NAP coverage for 2020 and 2021 crop losses.

ERP eligibility for phase one

ERP covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to a qualifying natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 and 2021. Eligible crops include all crops for which crop insurance or NAP coverage was available, except for crops intended for grazing. Qualifying natural disaster events include wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

For drought, ERP assistance is available if any area within the county in which the loss occurred was rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks or D3 (extreme drought) or higher level of drought intensity.

Lists of 2020 and 2021 drought counties eligible for ERP are available at fsa.usda.gov.

ERP payment calculations for phase one

For crops covered by crop insurance, the ERP phase one payment calculation for a crop and unit will depend on the type and level of cov-



Crops such as these freeze-damaged broccoli and cabbage crops in the Rio Grande Valley in 2021 would be eligible for assistance under the USDA's Farm Service Agency's Emergency Relief Program announced on May 16.

erage obtained by the producer. Each calculation will use an ERP factor based on the producer's level of crop insurance or NAP coverage.

For crop insurance, the ERP factor is 75% to 95% depending on the level of coverage ranging from catastrophic to at least 80% coverage.

For NAP coverage, the ERP factor is 75% to 95% depending on the level of coverage ranging from catastrophic to 65% coverage.

Applying ERP factors ensures that payments to producers do not exceed available funding and that cumulative payments do not exceed 90% of losses for all producers.

Also, there will be certain payment calculation considerations for area plans under crop insurance policies.

The ERP payment percentage for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers will be increased by 15% of the calculated payment for crops having insurance coverage or NAP.

Because the amount of loss due to a qualifying disaster event in calendar years 2020 and 2021 cannot be separated from the amount of loss caused by other eligible causes of loss as defined by the applicable crop insurance or NAP policy, the

ERP phase one payment will be calculated based on the producer's loss due to all eligible causes of loss.

Future insurance coverage requirements

All producers who receive ERP phase one payments—including those receiving a payment based on crop, tree, bush or vine insurance policies—are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, for the next two available crop years, as determined by the secretary of agriculture. Participants must obtain crop insurance or NAP, as may be applicable, at a coverage level equal to or greater than 60% for insurable crops or at the catastrophic level or higher for NAP crops.

Coverage requirements will be determined from the date a producer receives an ERP payment and may vary depending on the timing and availability of crop insurance or NAP for a producer's particular crops. The final crop year to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage to meet the second year of coverage for this requirement is the 2026 crop year.

Phase two emergency relief for crop and livestock producers

This announcement is only phase one of relief for commodity and spe-

cialty crop producers. Making the initial payments using existing safety net and risk management data will both speed implementation and further encourage participation in these permanent programs, such as federal crop insurance, as Congress intended.

The second phase of both ERP and ELRP programs will fill gaps and cover producers who did not participate in or receive payments through the existing programs that are being leveraged for phase one implementation. When phase one payment processing is complete, the remaining funds will be used to cover gaps identified under phase two.

Through proactive communication and outreach, USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program details are made available.

Additional commodity loss assistance

The Milk Loss Program and On-Farm Stored Commodity Loss Program are also funded through the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act and will be announced in a future rule in the Federal Register.

More information

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov.

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TEXAS AGRICULTURE

13

Sign up open for remaining Student Success Series programs

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Registration is now open for the three remaining Student Success Series programs—Jumpstart, Activate and Thrive.

The Engage program, an in-person event for students in the graduating class of 2025 and 2024, is underway across the state through district events.

“Our students are our future, and we can help them put together the pieces that make up a successful leader through our Student Success Series,” TFB Youth Outreach Coordinator McKenna Bush said. “Through the programs, students can develop a better understanding of advocacy, learn more about Farm Bureau and grow personal and professional skills that they can use in the classroom and in their future careers.”

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a free, virtual program open to students in the gradu-

ating class of 2027.

Students will become familiar with TFB, learn more information about Texas agriculture and grow leadership skills.

Registration closes Sept. 15.

Online modules must be completed by Oct. 31.

Activate

Activate is a free, virtual program for students in the graduating class of 2026.

Students will be challenged to create a plan for leaving a legacy, learn more about TFB, explore career opportunities and trends and be engaged in personal and professional etiquette.

Registration closes Sept. 15.

Online modules must be completed by Oct. 31.

Thrive

Thrive is an in-person event for the graduating class of 2023.

Through this event, students will dive into public speaking, the free en-



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terprise system and the Constitution.

They will hear from a motivational speaker on leadership topics and learn more about using reputable sources for advocacy efforts on social media.

Thrive will be held Aug. 5-7 in Waco at TFB's Conference and Training Center. Registration is first-come, first-served and will be

limited to 150 students.

There is an \$80 registration fee.

Registration closes July 5.

Program details

For more information and to register for the individual programs, visit texasfarmbureau.org/student-success-series.

Contact Bush at mbush@txfb.org or call 254-399-5037 with questions.

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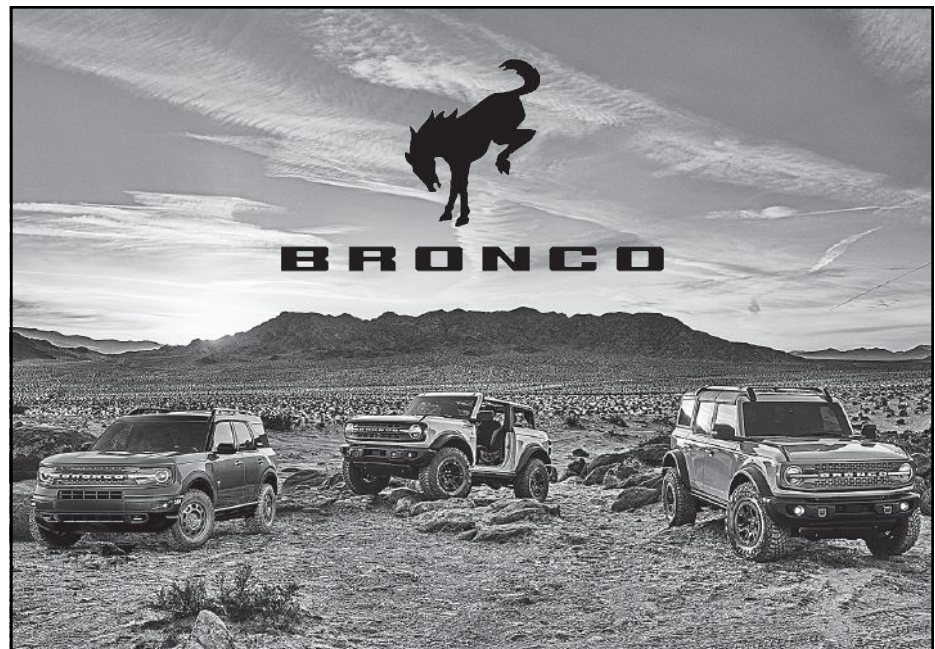
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Proposed SEC rule pulls farms, ranches into regulatory target

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) proposes to require publicly traded companies to provide climate-related information from their entire supply chain in their filings and annual reports, including potentially invasive and burdensome information about farms and ranches.

The SEC's primary purpose is to protect investors, maintain efficient markets and facilitate capital formation.

Companies would be required to report on greenhouse gas emissions, climate-related targets and goals, as well as how climate risks impact their business.

The proposed rule would have an effect on farms and ranches across the country.

"This is an end-run around legislation to get companies to report certain climate change information in their financial reports," Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) President Russell Boening said. "Our concern is

that the only way the public companies will get this information is by requiring it from the farmers and ranchers themselves."

The SEC proposed rule is 510 pages long, with 1,068 technical footnotes and 750 direct questions. The SEC extended the public comment period for its proposed rules on The Enhancement and Standardization of Climate-Related Disclosures for Investors until June 17.

The proposed rule could create burdensome reporting requirements for family farms and ranches selling into supply chains and force the disclosure of private information. It may create multiple, new sources of substantial costs and liabilities. These include reporting obligations, technical challenges, significant financial and operational disruption and the risk of financially crippling legal liabilities.

"This is an example of overreach by the SEC," Boening said. "Farmers and ranchers are heavily regulated

by agencies at the federal, state and local levels. These new reporting requirements would make an already complicated patchwork of regulations even more cumbersome."

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and TFB issued an action alert on the proposed rule where public comments can be submitted to the SEC.

To submit comments, visit TFB's website at texasfarmbureau.org/ad-vocacy/voter-voice.

AFBF economists expect the proposed SEC rule to impact farmers and ranchers through increased costs due to compliance concerns. Farmers could be required to track and disclose information on day-to-day activities.

The proposed rule, according to AFBF economists, could potentially require private and personally identifiable data. Unlike public companies and corporations, farmers work and raise families in their place of business.

The proposed rule could spur consolidation, as small farms lack the resources to comply with burdensome reporting requirements.

There could also be increased liability because the timeline given is unattainable to comply with Scope 3 emissions, which are the result of activities from assets not owned or controlled by an organization but contribute to its value chain.

"These are regulations intended for Wall Street, not family farmers and ranchers," Boening said. "Corporations currently regulated by the SEC have a team of compliance officers or attorneys dedicated to handling SEC compliance issues. Family farmers and ranchers do not. We urge the SEC to avoid enacting regulations that will keep farmers and ranchers from focusing on growing the food, fuel and fiber this country needs."

More information about the SEC's proposed rule is available in an AFBF Market Intel report at fb.org/market-intel.

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Leafy greens grow at Central Texas hydroponics farm

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

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

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

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

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

"In an indoor grow facility, we have the ability to manipulate the environment. We have the opportu-

nity to use less water than we would use outside," Maks said.

They can also grow 365 days a year.

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

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

In the 50,000 square-foot facility, much of the process is automated to minimize opportunities for contamination and maintain optimal water vapor retention for freshness.

Instead of growing in soil, this farm plants its seeds and irrigates a

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

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

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

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

the propagation process.

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

At this point, they water overhead through a boom sprayer before moving the more mature plant once it has root development onto the gutter line.

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

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

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

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

“I will say that the maintenance function in an indoor grow facility is the most critical function because if the equipment’s not working, nobody’s growing, nobody’s shipping

product at the end of the day,” he said.

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

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

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

able to service those markets.”

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

“Indoor farming is continuing to grow in the U.S.,” he said. “I do believe indoor farming and outdoor farming both have their places. Ultimately, you can’t have one without the other. There’s certainly an opportunity to learn from one another.

I don’t look at us as competitors as much as I look at there’s an opportunity for us all to be able to supply the world with safe, healthy food.”

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

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

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



Jason Maks walks through the greenhouse inspecting lettuce growing hydroponically. He and his business partner, Marshall McDaniel, established the hydroponics farm in 2017.



They grow, harvest and package several varieties of lettuce in the Belton facility.



Employees harvest the lettuce by hand and prepare it for packaging. TrueHarvest Farms sells to restaurants, schools and grocery stores.

TFB launches new BLOCK leadership program

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A new leadership development program offers Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) members additional opportunities to grow within the organization and learn more about agriculture.

The BLOCK program—Building Leadership Opportunities & Cultivating Knowledge—is open to members ages 36 to 50.

The program is designed to provide opportunities for members transitioning out of the Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) program to network together while learning about important agricultural issues, challenges and programs in other areas.

“BLOCK serves as a continuation of leadership development, providing members the opportunity to build on their Farm Bureau knowledge and continue developing relationships,” said Roger Hall, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Leader Development.

Cultivating leaders who have a

passion for agriculture and Farm Bureau are essential for helping the organization grow into the future.

“Farmers, ranchers and agricultural professionals are continually looking for opportunities to engage with other agricultural producers, learn about agriculture in other areas across the nation, develop a strong network and to stay involved in TFB activities,” Hall said. “This program offers those opportunities. Plus, it’s another tool in the leadership toolbox, adding to the ever-evolving skills to help Farm Bureau members strengthen their voice for agriculture.”

To learn more about the program, visit texasfarmbureau.org/block.

For 2022, BLOCK will consist of an industry tour and a conference.

BLOCK Tour

The BLOCK Tour is set for July 31 to Aug. 4. It will start and end in Grapevine with stops in Oklahoma.

Participants will see a variety of agricultural operations and have

leadership building opportunities.

Registration is limited to the first 30 individuals and is available online through the MyTFB membership portal at my.texasfarmbureau.org.

Registration closes June 30.

Participants are responsible for getting to and from the designated hotel in Grapevine.

Tour transportation, lodging and 10 meals will be provided by TFB.

Additional details on price packages are available online. Sponsorships may be available from county Farm Bureaus.

For more information, visit texasfarmbureau.org/block or contact Hall

at rhall@txfb.org or 254-399-5021.

BLOCK Conference

The BLOCK Conference will take place in Waco this fall.

It is open to former AgLead and FarmLead participants, former state commodity advisory committee members and past YF&R Advisory Committee members who are between the ages of 36 and 50.

The two-day event will include keynote speakers, breakout sessions and a roundtable discussion. Members will learn more about Farm Bureau and current issues in agriculture while networking and building new friendships.

More information on the conference will be available later this summer.

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Biden announces plan to help agriculture, lower food costs

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The Biden administration last month announced three priorities to help American farmers amid the global supply chain challenges and the spike in food prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) says the efforts alone will not solve the multiple challenges faced by growers.

Those priorities announced by the Biden administration include increasing funding for domestic fertilizer production, increasing the number of counties eligible for double cropping insurance and greater access to technical assistance for technology-driven precision and agriculture and other nutrient management tools.

"I stand here today to thank American farmers who are the breadbasket of democracy," Biden said during his speech on an Illinois farm on May 11. "We can make sure that American agricultural exports will make up for the gap in Ukrainian supplies."

During the Illinois farm visit, Biden shared that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will double funding available for domestic fertilizer production from \$250 million to \$500 million.

"We're going to see what actions we can take to increase fertilizer

supplies globally," Biden said. "We're also going to see how we can work together to prevent export restrictions on food and agricultural inputs and bring more global production to market which will stabilize prices and bring more certainty to our farmers and keep people from dying of hunger."

The skyrocketing costs of fertilizer and other supplies may limit what some farmers can afford to grow, but the proposal to increase domestic fertilizer production is an acknowledgement by the administration of the extraordinarily high cost of supplies for farmers and ranchers. However, getting a fertilizer facility established and running will likely cost billions of dollars and take several years.

USDA also will open the double cropping insurance floor to a total of 1,935 counties—up from 681 counties in the initial announcement.

The efforts to address production costs and food prices are appreciated, but it will require more solutions to solve the multiple challenges facing Americans, TFB President Russell Boening noted.

"Texas farmers and ranchers acknowledge and appreciate the efforts, but this alone will not solve the multiple challenges we face," Boening said. "We look forward to working with the administration,



During an Illinois farm visit last month, President Joe Biden shared that USDA will increase precision ag technology funding to \$500 million and open the double cropping insurance floor to a total of 1,935 counties—up 681 counties from the initial announcement.

USDA and the private sector to get the supply chain moving again and find solutions that benefit farmers, ranchers and consumers."

USDA says double cropping will boost production without substituting crops or cultivating new land, but as the American Farm Bureau Federation noted, it is not a viable option or sound practice in some areas. The Biden administration, however, says there is a plan to address the risks.

"The growing season for wheat is

short and if the weather conditions aren't ideal or there are other disruptions, then the timing of everything is thrown off," Biden said. "But it's a risk we need to take, and that's why my administration is looking at how to extend crop insurance coverage to give financial security to farmers."

Increasing technical assistance for precision agriculture and other nutrient management tools will allow farmers and ranchers to continue building on their strong record of climate-smart farming practices.

Texas is now the third-largest dairy state in the United States

By Carey Martin
TFB Radio Network Manager

Texas is now the third-largest milk producing state in the nation, surpassing Idaho to take the number three spot.

Darren Turley, executive director of the Texas Association of Dairy-men, noted Texas just moved into the number four position, surpassing New York, last year.

"We were the fourth-largest dairy state last year on an annual basis, passing New York to reach that," he said.

Texas has been the third-largest

milk producing state for the past few months, he added.

"Both Idaho and Texas have a production control system in place, trying keep from overproducing milk for those regions until we can get new plants online," Turley said. "That production control system has probably held Idaho back a little, so we've been able to surpass them."

There are currently three cheese plants set to be built in the Texas Panhandle, creating even more demand for the growing dairy industry there.

Cacique LLC is building a plant to produce Mexican-style cheese in Amarillo, while a Leprino cheese and dairy ingredients plant should start construction in Lubbock this summer.

Another plant is slated to be built in the Dumas area.

"That will create over 200 loads of additional milk sales per day in a few years," Turley said in an interview with the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network.

California and Wisconsin are the two states that have larger dairy production than Texas, but it may be

a while before the Lone Star State can overtake Wisconsin for the number two spot.

"That's a pretty big jump," Turley said. "We'll have to get our plants in and continue to grow and see what happens."

Milk production in Texas during the first quarter of this year totaled just over four billion pounds, up 4% from the previous quarter and 5% more than the first quarter of last year.

The average number of milk cows in Texas last quarter was 634,000 head, up 17,000 from a year ago.

Texas farmers, ranchers talk agricultural issues on Capitol Hill

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A farmer's job is not always in the field. At times it's walking the halls of Washington, D.C., talking to lawmakers about the issues important to agriculture and rural America.

That's what more than 240 farmers and ranchers did in late April—visited Capitol Hill to talk cattle prices, disaster assistance, border security and immigration, trade and the farm bill as part of Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) National Affairs Awards Trip.

It was the first time for members to travel to the nation's capital since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's great that we were able to be in D.C. again as a big group, and I appreciate our members taking the time away from their farms and ranches," TFB President Russell Boening said.

Both TFB and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) have staff who work with lawmakers in Washington, D.C. on behalf of members. But it's the people who are impacted most by potential legislation that really hits home.

"It's imperative that we do this.

It's very crucial to meet with our congressional leaders," Boening said. "When they can hear from the folks back home, when they can hear how things actually affect their constituents on their farms and ranches, that's what resonates."

Their voices echoed the halls and offices on Capitol Hill as they tackled issues affecting agriculture.

Farm Bureau leaders met with members of the Texas congressional delegation or their staff, as well as heard from U.S. Sens. John Cornyn and Ted Cruz.

"The office visits were great. We visited mostly with staff, which is fantastic because we know that working with staff is the fastest and best way to our elected officials," TFB Vice President and District 1 State Director Pat McDowell said. "They asked for specifics about different bills, and I think that's really neat when we can tell them what's happening at home and how it's actually affecting us. They want to actually visit with members of Texas Farm Bureau. We have a tremendous amount of validity and respect from these people, and that's something that's very important, and



U.S. Senator John Cornyn addressed inflation, supply chain issues and other current agricultural topics in his address to Texas Farm Bureau members.

we're kind of reaping the benefits from that."

Farm bill discussions are beginning, and this trip gave farmers and ranchers the opportunity to discuss risk management tools that are important in uncertain and volatile markets like what agriculture has faced since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cornyn touched on those supply chain issues and inflation in his address to the group.

"The thing I hear most from the ag sector is the impact of inflation on all of the inputs needed to grow crops or raise livestock," he said. "And one of the things that's happened with the invasion of Ukraine



Texas Farm Bureau leaders met with U.S. House Agriculture Committee members to discuss cattle markets, the farm bill, trade and border security, among other issues, during the National Affairs Awards Trip.



David Winfrey (left), legislative director for U.S. Rep. Kay Granger, listened as constituents talked about inflation, supply chain concerns and other current issues affecting their farms and ranches.

is energy security is now part of the conversation rather than just emissions or climate.”

Cruz also addressed the group, noting agriculture is dealing with rising production costs, taxes and government regulations.

“The ag community is the beating heart of our state, but you’re seeing the cost of running your farm, running your ranch going up on every front. The inflation from Washington is a real problem. Every time the government spends trillions of dollars, prints trillions of dollars that we don’t have, the result is it drives up inflation. We need to rein it in,” he said. “And Texas farmers and ranchers don’t want to see new rules and regulations coming from Washington that make it harder to run a farm.”

While TFB members were in D.C., both the House and Senate held hearings on cattle market legislation.

“We had a lot of discussion about cattle markets and packer concentration,” Boeing said. “We are op-



U.S. Rep. Michael Cloud talked about the work of the U.S. House Ag Committee on which he serves.

posed to the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act the way it’s written because of the government mandates on how packers have to buy cattle.”

Finding a long-term solution to securing the Texas-Mexico border also was a key topic of discussion.



U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz visits with Texas Farm Bureau District 8 State Director Mickey Edwards and his wife, Jani, about food production costs and supply chain issues.

“Our congressional delegation gets the issue, they really do,” Boeing said. “But we have to keep working on that. We have to keep talking about the need for border security. We have members down there who are living it and suffering through it every day, and we need a workable

solution to this crisis.”

Conversations also centered around taxes, the re-write of the Waters of the U.S. rule, disaster assistance and trade.

Members of the current AgLead class were also in attendance.

The trip was held April 26-29.

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Rep. Cuellar honored with Farm Bureau's Golden Plow award

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and Texas Farm Bureau presented U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar of Laredo with AFBF's Golden Plow award. The Golden Plow is the highest honor the organization gives to sitting members of Congress.

"Congressman Cuellar has demonstrated his support for agriculture throughout his nine terms in Congress," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "He understands that the issues facing farmers and ranchers require bipartisan solutions."

Texas Farm Bureau endorsed Cuellar for the award in honor of his work to increase funding for agriculture, create more trade opportunities and reform burdensome regulations.

"Congressman Cuellar advocated for the repeal of the flawed 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule and supported a new rule that returned clarity and certainty to water regulations," Duvall said. "He also recognizes the crisis along the southern border and



U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar (center) received Farm Bureau's Golden Plow award. In attendance at the reception were (left to right) TFB State Directors Brian Adamek, Sam Snyder, Mickey Edwards, Brian Jones, AFBF President Zippy Duvall, TFB President Russell Boening, TFB State Directors Walt Hagood, Allen Kaminski and Warren Cude.

has listened to farmers and ranchers to develop solutions that increase security and ensure the safety of families living there."

"Texas Farm Bureau cannot think of anyone more deserving to receive the AFBF Golden Plow Award than Congressman Henry Cuellar," Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening said. "He serves as a strong voice in Washington for farm and

ranch families across the nation. Any time an issue arises in agriculture, Congressman Cuellar is ready to work with Farm Bureau and across the aisle to find common-sense solutions. I congratulate Congressman Cuellar on this incredible achievement and thank him for being a champion for farmers and ranchers."

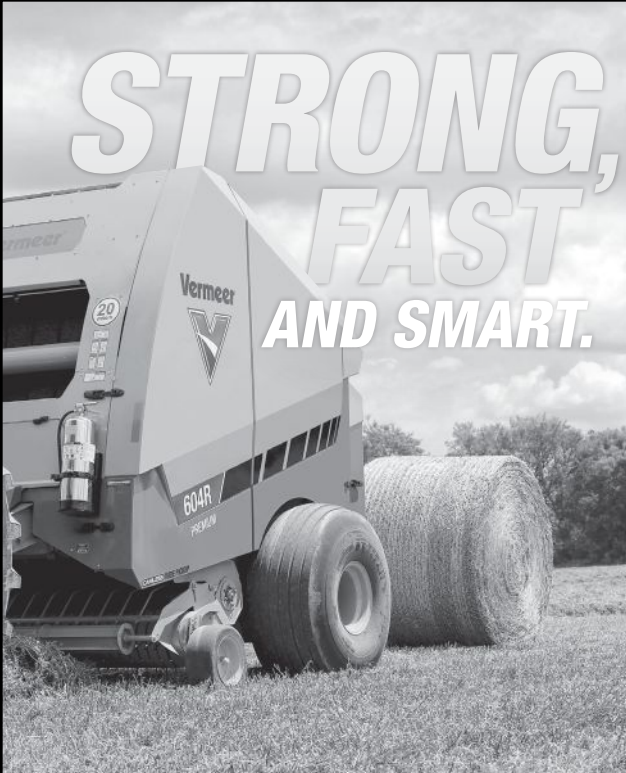
AFBF's Golden Plow award rec-

ognizes members of Congress who exemplify agricultural leadership and support of Farm Bureau policies. Recipients are chosen for having a philosophy or record that demonstrates a commitment to sound agricultural policies supported by Farm Bureau, the private enterprise system, fiscal conservatism and reduced federal regulation of businesses and individuals.

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Diesel prices, farm input costs continue to climb

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Farmers and ranchers continue to pay escalating prices to grow crops and raise livestock. One of those increasing costs is diesel.

In mid-May, Allen Kaminski paid \$4.56 per gallon for diesel. Compared to last year, that's up over \$2 per gallon for the Austin County rancher.

"I checked my receipts from last year, and in May, I was paying \$2.25 per gallon. That's for off-road farm diesel," Kaminski, who raises cattle and grows hay, said. "Last year, it cost me about \$225 to fill the 100-gallon tank on my truck of off-road diesel. Now, it's \$456 for the same tank. That's \$231 more in one year."

Nationwide, diesel prices hit a record high in mid-May. The national average price of diesel was \$5.54 per gallon.

Kaminski noted the increased fuel prices, combined with the rising costs for fertilizer and parts, will impact his bottom line.



Input costs continue to climb due to inflation and supply chain issues. Economists expect inflation to burden the U.S. economy for several years.

"It's a big change. It's a big impact," he said. "Let's say I'll burn 30 gallons a day in one tractor, so I'm going to burn \$150 worth of fuel. Plus, it's just not that fuel, but it's the parts, the twine, the net wrap that I use. All that's increasing because the transportation costs to get my supplies or parts that I need to

the store is increasing."

The record high prices are troubling, but a diesel shortage could be catastrophic. Certain areas of the country have already seen a shortage.

But the cost of diesel isn't the only thing worrying Kaminski. Lingering drought is putting pressure on graz-

ing for his cattle, his hay fields and stock tanks.

"It's not just the supply chain issues, but we're in dry conditions, too," Kaminski, Texas Farm Bureau District 11 state director, said. "So, we're going to run the same equipment across the fields, but what we're going to get in production is going to be less, too. So, our expenses are going to be higher."

Despite the challenges facing agriculture, Kaminski said farmers and ranchers are still optimistic, albeit not as much as usual.

"We still have a positive attitude, but we're concerned about what's this going to lead to? What's the next steps? How much higher is it going to get? What's the price going to be of fuel in another two or three months?" he asked. "And then with lack of rain where are we going to get our hay? How much are we going to have to pay to get hay shipped in? Because that's going to add to the cost, transportation cost, bringing that hay in for us. So, we're concerned, too."

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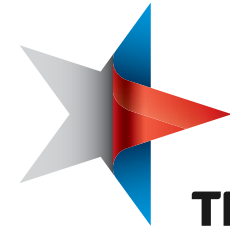
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TFB testifies before Texas House committee on border security

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) testified before the Texas House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety, sharing concerns about the ongoing crisis at the Texas-Mexico border.

During the interim session, state lawmakers are studying the issue to prepare for the next legislative session that gavels in January 2023.

“The crisis at the Texas-Mexico border is a critical issue that is negatively impacting the families and livelihoods of those farming, ranching and living along the border,” TFB District 13 State Director Brian Jones said. “As the crisis continues, we are disappointed in the lack of action from the federal government in putting forth solutions that would address this problem.”

Jones noted farmers and ranchers have faced threats to themselves, their families and their employees.

“Over the last several years, farm-

ers and ranchers throughout South Texas have increasingly encountered tragic situations of finding dead bodies on their property, having vehicles broken into or stolen, facing home break-ins or being faced with armed individuals crossing through their land,” he said. “Often, this occurs in rural remote locations with no cell phone service and law enforcement being an hour away, at best.”

Another concern shared by farmers and ranchers along the border is the damage to fields, fences, watering equipment and other machinery and farm equipment.

“Law enforcement or border patrol personnel must often engage in high-speed car chases of illegal migrants,” Jones said. “To get away from authorities, sometimes immigrants will drive through agricultural property, damaging fences and fields. Similar disturbances occur by those who cross by foot with reports of cut fences and broken watering troughs. When these instances occur,



The ongoing crisis at the Texas-Mexico border negatively impacts families and their livelihoods, including agriculture, Texas Farm Bureau District 13 State Director Brian Jones told a House committee during a hearing last month.

farmers must quickly make repairs and, unfortunately, incur significant ongoing costs in the process.”

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

“The current situation on our nation’s border is unsustainable for hardworking farm and ranch families who work to feed and clothe the

world,” Jones said. “It is critically important for the federal government to recognize the seriousness of the issue and develop a plan to stop the drastic increase in illegal immigration, which is posing a major risk to our state and nation.”

TFB continues to advocate for a long-term solution to the illegal immigration crisis that will effectively help farmers and ranchers in border towns and counties.

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More avian influenza cases confirmed in the Lone Star State

By Jessica Domel
Multimedia Reporter

A third animal in Texas—a bald eagle in Bosque County—tested positive for the highly-contagious disease that has led to the deaths of thousands of domestic and wild birds across the nation.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) confirmed the bald eagle tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) after a private landowner brought the bird to the attention of a wildlife biologist.

The eagle was showing symptoms of HPAI.

It is the second wild bird in the state to test positive.

“We have seen a fair amount of mortality occur in eagles, as well as black vultures,” Shaun Oldenburger, TPWD small game program director, said in an interview with Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network. “Anything that could basically prey on waterfowl, we’re seeing high susceptibility.”

Of the 1,112 wild birds in the United States that have tested positive for HPAI, 668 are bald eagles, 350 are geese and 81 are ducks.

“It does seem like upland game birds do have high susceptibility,” Oldenburger said. “There’s been a number of game farms in a few locations, New York being one, that have had to be depopulated.”

A pheasant from a commercial flock in Erath County was the first positive detection of HPAI in Texas this year.

Officials from the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) told the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network they believe the pheasant was infected by a wild bird carrying the disease.

That flock has since been depopulated, and the area is being monitored as a precaution.

A great horned owl in a rehabilitation facility in Wichita County also tested positive for HPAI.

To date, HPAI has been found in 38 states nationwide, infecting waterfowl, wild birds and domestic poultry.

An estimated 37.55 million domestic birds have been affected in 172 commercial poultry flocks and 120 backyard flocks.

TAHC and TPWD are encouraging those who work with wild or domestic birds to enhance their biosecurity measures to mitigate the risk of HPAI introduction into their flock.

“Our best defense is for all poultry owners to join together in the effort to prevent disease by following strict biosecurity practices,” Dr. Andy Schwartz, TAHC executive director and state veterinarian, said.

Symptoms of HPAI include diarrhea, incoordination, lethargy, coughing and sudden death.

In domestic poultry, decreased water consumption, lack of appetite, respiratory distress, nasal discharge, decreased egg production and/or soft-shelled or misshapen eggs may also be symptoms of HPAI.

Not all infected animals will show outward symptoms of the disease.

HPAI is spread by direct contact with an infected bird, contaminated equipment, clothing and/or shoes.

“If you do have backyard chickens, make sure those birds have something over them so they don’t have, for instance, black vultures or something roosting above them that could defecate in there and spread disease,” Oldenburger said. “The influenza virus survives in a lot of biological material.”

If anyone notices these symptoms in their backyard or commercial poultry operation, they are encouraged to contact a veterinarian as soon as possible.

Those without a veterinarian are encouraged to contact TAHC at 1-800-550-8242.

TPWD is monitoring the wild bird population for signs of HPAI.

“Right now, Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists are responding to mortality events from susceptible species,” Oldenburger said. “We are getting those specimens and send-

ing them off to the National Wildlife Health Center or the Texas Veterinary and Medical Diagnostic Lab in College Station for testing.”

Texans who notice a group of dead, wild birds are encouraged to contact their local TPWD biologist.

The public can help reduce the spread of HPAI by limiting unnecessary contact with wild birds.

Wildlife rehabilitators are encouraged to remain cautious when intaking birds with clinical signs consistent with HPAI and should consider quarantining birds to limit potential HPAI spread.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the risk of transmission of HPAI from an infected bird to a human is low, but people should take basic precautions like wearing gloves and face masks and washing hands thoroughly if interactions with wild birds cannot be avoided.

For more information, visit tahc.texas.gov.



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Farm From School program reaches Texas teachers, students

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

This spring, young students across Texas visited farms and ranches from their classrooms and homes through Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Farm From School program.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade met virtually with farmers and ranchers once a month using video conferencing technology.

More than 550 teachers and 12,600 students from home school, virtual and classroom settings connected with farmers and ranchers each month through the program.

During the monthly video meetings, the students got to know each

farmer or rancher, learned about their operations and asked lots of questions along the way.

"Students learned a variety of things associated with the commodity that is featured each month," said Jordan Bartels, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Educational Outreach. "More specifically, they learned about the science behind plant growth, technology used in agriculture, the needs of livestock and how they're cared for and other unique aspects of agriculture."

But even more importantly, students get to learn from real farmers and ranchers.

"Bringing agriculture to the class-

room is so vital, and it is important that we're constantly finding a variety of ways to do that in a way that can reach all students," Bartels said. "Virtual visits allow students in all parts of the state to learn about agricultural commodities that might not be grown or raised where they live."

This semester, the students learned about hydroponic farms, Angora goats, planting and beef cattle.

"This program continues to grow each semester. It's become very apparent that teachers and students like having the opportunity to see things they can't easily see during the school year," Bartels said. "While they might have one opportunity to

an Ag Day or other field trips, this program offers multiple opportunities to see crops and livestock and to engage with different types of farmers and ranchers."

TFB also provides corresponding materials and resources that teachers can use to help relate the visits to concepts they're teaching in the classroom.

The popular program will be back again this fall, and teachers can begin registering later this month. Sign up will close Aug. 29.

Visit texasfarmbureau.org/aitc for more information and the latest announcements on TFB's Ag in the Classroom activities.

Runnels County student wins TFB Free Enterprise Speech Contest

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A high school junior from Runnels County took home first place and a \$6,000 scholarship as the winner of Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) 2021 Free Enterprise Speech Contest.

Benjamin Flanagan, son of Scott and Mylea Flanagan, topped 10 other speakers from across Texas in the annual contest.

Flanagan is a homeschool student and active in several 4-H activities, including the Youth Livestock Ambassadors and a member of the District 7 4-H Council. He received the Gold Star 4-H Award and participates in livestock judging and the 4-H Livestock Skillathon.

He plans to attend Texas A&M University and major in animal production.

Runner-up in the competition and winner of a \$3,000 scholarship was Amanda Hoffmann of Bexar County.

Hoffmann, daughter of Otis and Christine Hoffmann, is a senior at Samuel Clemens High School in Schertz.

She is active in several organizations, including 4-H and FFA. She is a 4-H Youth Livestock Ambassador, vice president of the Santa Clara 4-H Club, Texas FFA Ford Leader-



The winner, runner up and finalists are pictured with Texas Farm Bureau President Russell Boening.

ship Scholars and vice president of Cibolo Creek FFA chapter. She is also the National Honor Society treasurer and Positively Influencing Everyone (PIE) Club treasurer.

Hoffmann plans to attend Texas A&M University and major in animal science.

"Our contestants delivered strong speeches detailing the benefits of the free enterprise system and how it's integral to our nation's success," TFB President Russell Boening said. "These young individuals displayed knowledge of our economy, our government and Farm Bureau.

We're proud of their hard work and the roles they will play in the future of agriculture."

Four other finalists and winners of \$2,000 scholarships were William Jones of Rusk County, A.J. Kendrick of Lubbock County, Steven Perez of Starr County and Carson Smith from Hall County.

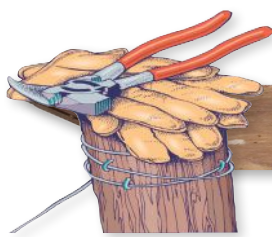
The winner, runner-up and four finalists will receive an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to visit elected officials, observe Congress in session and visit historical sites.

Other contestants and winners of \$1,500 district scholarships were

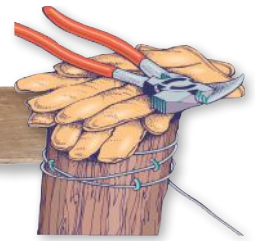
Brock Braden of Midland County, Maggie DeLaCerde of Denton County, Logan James of Wilson County, Conner Schroeder of Archer County and Bryli Wilson of Lampasas County.

To compete in the district and state Free Enterprise Speech Contest, contestants must have participated in the Thrive program, part of Texas Farm Bureau's Student Success Series, last year.

More details about the contest and other youth opportunities are available online at texasfarmbureau.org/youth/youthopportunities.



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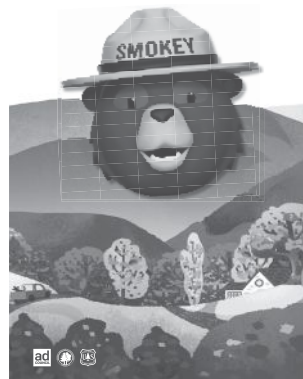
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