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December 3, 2021

Texas Agriculture

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Christmas Cheer
Family farm grows holiday memories

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Congress passes a long overdue investment in infrastructure

As I have traveled across our great country this year, I have experienced all types of agriculture, foods and landscapes. But as I drive local roads and byways, there is one constant theme everywhere—a bumpy ride. That’s because our country has underinvested in the infrastructure we rely on to get our families from place to place and our farm goods from field to market.

The underinvestment isn’t limited to roads or bridges but includes our ports, canals, railways and strained power grid.

When farmers and ranchers invest in their farms, we do so because it helps us grow more with less and do it safely. That’s why the American Farm Bureau has been calling for a significant investment in our nation’s infrastructure for years. Well, after months of negotiating and hearing from our grassroots members, Congress has passed a bipartisan infrastructure bill.

While it has been a long road, it is nice to see that members of Congress from both parties could find common ground in passing this critical infrastructure funding. Bipartisanship is a rarity in Washington

these days, but thankfully Congress found enough to seal the deal. But it is important to note that this bipartisan infrastructure legislation is different than the partisan spending plan, called the “Build Back Better Act.”



By Zippy Duvall
AFBF President

The investment Congress passed is desperately needed.

Over 40% of the bridges in the U.S. are over 50 years old, and every day in the United States, Americans make 178 million trips across structurally deficient bridges.

The \$110 billion in funding for roads and bridges will increase our ability to make needed repairs. While there is significant work to be done on our roadways, our waterways are also desperate for attention.

A few weeks ago, I toured a grain export facility outside of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A ship getting filled with soybeans while I was there could hold 21 barges worth of grain, and each barge carried 70 semi-loads of grain coming from farms spread throughout the Midwest and the South. The facility

director described how canals and locks built more than 50 years ago aren’t enough to handle the number of barges coming down the Mississippi River today and that shutdowns for repairs can grind exports to a halt. And earlier this year, as Hurricane Ida tore through the area, the winds knocked massive electrical transmission wires strung across the river into the water. That meant no barges could move up or down the river for over a week. The bipartisan infrastructure bill invests \$17.3 billion to shore up our ports and inland waterways.

And while most Americans take broadband for granted, one in four U.S. farms has no access to high-speed internet, a necessity to opportunities and essential services.

The infrastructure bill invests \$65 billion in broadband expansion so rural Americans aren’t left behind without affordable broadband service.

This tool is essential to modern agriculture and gives families access to online health care and education. Having broadband internet on the farm allows farmers to use precision ag technologies to reduce inputs, protect water quality and improve soil health.

I’m grateful to all of our members across the country who made their voices heard and shared stories about why we need to improve our nation’s infrastructure. Your efforts keep our lawmakers accountable to work together and find solutions that help all Americans succeed.



The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will provide one of the largest increases in investment in roads, bridges, waterways, ports, transit, airports, electrical infrastructure and other projects in the U.S.



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AGRICURRENTS

TFB achieves 21 years of membership growth

The foundation of Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) is strong, and it shows as the organization once again achieved a membership gain, marking 21 years of continuous growth.

TFB gained 1,758 members for a total of 535,614 member-families. Out of 205 organized county Farm Bureaus across Texas, 136 counties gained members during the year, and a statewide retention rate of 88.72% was achieved.

“Our great organization embodies the true spirit, resilience and passion of the Lone Star State,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “Our membership continues to grow because of the tireless efforts of everyone in the TFB family. Members, county leaders, the TFB board of directors, staff and others have been living examples of the value of membership. We could not have achieved our gain without the work and loyalty of everyone involved.”

Achieving membership goals each year is a priority for the organization, as well as providing member benefits and services to help member-families save time and money, Boening noted.



TFB has grown from a small organization in 1933 to the largest and most influential farm and ranch organization in the Lone Star State.

TFB represents Texas farmers, ranchers, landowners and rural residents at local, state and national levels to influence policy decisions and help keep the state growing for generations to come.

Through educational and urban outreach efforts, TFB actively works to grow a deeper understanding of agriculture in classrooms and communities. The organization also sows

the seeds of TFB's future, growing leadership skills and agricultural advocacy through youth opportunities and leader development activities.

“This achievement marks 21 consecutive years of membership growth, and we're very proud of that accomplishment,” Boening said. “Our mission is to be The Voice of Texas Agriculture, and our continued membership growth shows the value of Farm Bureau to agriculture, rural communities and everyone connected to the production of our food, fiber and fuel.”

TFB Communications Division wins national awards

Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) Communications Division took home top honors in several categories of the American Farm Bureau Federation's national communications awards program.

The awards contest was not held in 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's contest featured 198 submissions for work produced in 2019 and 2020, with separate awards in each category for work primarily related to COVID and projects focused on other subjects.

“It's always gratifying to have our team's work recognized in the national communications awards program. I'm proud of everyone's efforts,” TFB Communications Direc-

tor Gary Joiner said. “Feedback from the program's judges also helps us focus on ways to improve our communications efforts, which is beneficial.”

TFB earned the top award in the Best Audio News Story, Feature Story or Commentary/Editorial for non-COVID coverage with a radio program focused on a Texas Senate committee eminent domain hearing.

An educational video produced by members and TFB's video team earned Best Educational Video for COVID coverage. The video featured Clancy Archie, a young Coryell County member, explaining how his family's ranch is an outdoor classroom.

TFB took home honors in the Best Media Relations category for COVID coverage. This award was for TFB's

virtual statewide media tour with TFB President Russell Boening to meet the demand for information on COVID-19's impact on agriculture and the nation's food supply.

TFB also earned the Dave Lane Award for Media Relations Excellence for COVID coverage. This award is given to only one state Farm Bureau each year for media relations work. TFB responded to 112 media inquiries from national, state and regional outlets. The division's efforts to host virtual media tours and respond to media inquiries on the pandemic's impact on agriculture, the food supply chain and more helped TFB earn this award, while also promoting The Voice of Texas Agriculture amid a national pandemic.

Texas Supreme Court to hear high-speed rail case

The Texas Supreme Court granted a motion to rehear a Leon County landowner's lawsuit against Texas Central Railroad challenging its status as a railroad company under Texas law.

In his petition for review, Leon County Farm Bureau member James Miles argued Texas Central is not operating a railroad, because it has not taken crucial steps toward operation “such as laying track or running cars.”

Miles also argued Texas Central is not an “interurban electric railway” because the 81st Texas Legislature, which added a clause regarding interurban electric railway companies to the State of Texas Transportation Code in 2009, did not intend to include large high-speed railways within the statutory definition.

The case comes after Texas' 13th Court of Appeals reversed a lower court ruling stating Texas Central was not a railroad.

If Texas Central is not a railroad company under state law, it cannot access private property for surveys or exercise eminent domain authority to acquire land needed to construct its proposed 236-mile high-speed rail line connecting Dallas to Houston.

After initially declining to review the case, the Texas Supreme Court reversed course in October when it granted Miles a rehearing.

“Texas Farm Bureau (TFB), along with many other agricultural organizations and landowner groups, filed an amicus brief in this case earlier this year,” TFB Director of Government Affairs Regan Beck said. “Apparently, all of those amicus briefs were persuasive, and the court decided later they did want to hear it after all. We'll be interested to see what happens in January when the court hears oral arguments.”

ARC, PLC enrollment underway, payments going out to farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued \$1.8 billion in payments to farmers who enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2020 crop year.

These payments provide critical support to help mitigate fluctuations in either revenue or prices for certain crops, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges.

In addition, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is encouraging farmers to contact their local USDA Service Centers to make or change elections and to enroll for 2022 ARC or PLC, providing future protections against market fluctuations.

The election and enrollment period opened Oct. 18 and runs through March 15, 2022.

2020 payments, contracts

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the market year average prices to be finalized.

FSA processed payments to farmers enrolled in 2020 ARC-County (ARC-CO), ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and PLC for covered commodities that triggered for the crop year.

For ARC-CO, view the 2020 ARC-CO Benchmark Yields and Revenues online database for payment rates applicable to the county and each covered commodity.

For PLC, payments have triggered for barley, canola, chickpeas (large and small), dry peas, flaxseed, lentils, peanuts, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, seed cotton and wheat.

For ARC-IC, farmers should contact their local FSA office for additional information pertaining to 2020 payment information, which relies on producer-specific yields for the crop and farm to determine benchmark yields and actual year yields when calculating revenues.

By the numbers

More than 1.7 million contracts were signed in 2019. In 2020, farm-



USDA issued ARC and PLC payments to farmers for the 2020 crop year and opened enrollment for 2022.

ers signed nearly 1.8 million ARC or PLC contracts, and 251 million out of 273 million base acres were enrolled in the programs.

In 2021, signed contracts surpassed 1.8 million.

Since ARC and PLC were authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and reauthorized in the 2018 Farm Bill, these safety-net programs have paid out more than \$32.5 billion to farmers of covered commodities.

2022 elections, enrollment

Farmers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-CO or PLC, which are both crop-by-crop, or ARC-IC, which is for the entire farm.

Although election changes for 2022 are optional, farmers must enroll through a signed contract each year.

Also, if a farmer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2022, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2022, the election remains the same as the 2021 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Crop insurance considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

Farmers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Farmers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider. However, farmers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Farmers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose

to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

Web-based decision tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist farmers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations.

Tools include the ARC and PLC Decision Tool available through Texas A&M. It helps farmers estimate payments and yield updates for 2022. The evaluation tool is available at afpc.tamu.edu.

Another tool, Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator, is available through the University of Illinois. It helps estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC. The calculator can be found online at farmdocdaily.illinois.edu.

More information

For more information and resources on ARC and PLC, visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services or contact your local USDA Service Center.



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WOODS
GET AFTER IT

U.S. food, fuel prices climb higher with inflation

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Consumer Price Index (CPI) Summary confirmed what many consumers already suspected—inflation is still going strong as we head into the end of 2021.

Over the last 12 months, the all-items index increased 6.2% before seasonal adjustment, according to the report. That's the biggest rise in 31 years.

Energy, fuel, vehicles and housing prices increased significantly over the past 12 months, BLS reported.

Along with pain at the fuel pump, where gasoline costs have surged 49.6% year-over-year, consumers are feeling the pinch of higher prices in their grocery carts.

Meat, poultry, fish and eggs were up 2.2% in September, 1.7% in October and 11.9% year-over-year. Beef and bacon are up 20% since the same time in 2020, BLS said.

It's getting pricier to dine out, as well. The cost of food away from home is rising at its fastest clip since the early 1980s, according to historical CPI data. Inflation in that sector hovers at 5.3%, just below the increase in food at home costs.

And thanks to inflation, consumers are effectively earning less. The Real Earnings Summary, which BLS releases the same day as the CPI Summary, shows real average hourly



Food and fuel prices continue to climb higher with inflation in 2021.

earnings for all employees decreased 0.5% from September to October, seasonally adjusted, and 1.2% from October 2020 to October 2021.

Although U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data indicate farm-level prices, or the prices farmers and ranchers are paid for their commodities, was set to increase in November for eggs, soybeans, vegetables and wheat, inflation is hitting agriculture hard, too.

Higher fertilizer, fuel, seed and other input costs have farmers and ranchers feeling less than optimistic about potential higher crop prices.

“As consumers see higher food prices at the grocery store due to inflation, Texas farmers and ranchers continue to struggle with mar-

ket prices and extremely high input costs,” Texas Farm Bureau National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. “While market prices have improved slightly, a number of major challenges remain that negatively impact farmers and ranchers. We are hearing from members who are unable to obtain parts for equipment, as well as fertilizer and chemicals for their crops. When you add inflation to the mix, higher market prices do not always correlate to more profit for farm and ranch families. When the overall economy is in distress, agriculture feels the impacts just like everyone else. It is critical for leaders to address issues like inflation and supply chain issues. This is a matter of national security.”

Re-register cattle brands, marks, tattoos by Feb. 28

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

All Texas cattle brands, marks and tattoos must be re-registered by Feb. 28, 2022.

All brands are registered through the county clerk's office.

Brand applications and renewals require a drawing of the brand that notes the location on the animal.

The fee varies by county, but the average cost is \$26.

The registration is good for 10 years and will expire Aug. 30, 2031.

Any previously recorded brands,

marks and tattoos that have not been re-registered by the Feb. 28 deadline will be considered unclaimed and eligible for registration by another.

Although Texas does not have a statewide brand registry database, the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA) keeps a centralized database for the association's law enforcement purposes.

For more information, visit tscrabrands.com or call 1-800-242-7820 to speak with the TSCRA Brand and Inspection Department.



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WOODS

Texas Farm Bureau grows grassroots leadership through AgLead

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Strong agricultural leadership can make a difference in the field and beyond the fence row, and members of Texas Farm Bureau's (TFB) new AgLead class will grow their leadership skills to help benefit Texas agriculture and their communities.

"AgLead is a program designed to cultivate and enhance skills and traits needed to be an effective agricultural leader," said Roger Hall, TFB associate director of Organization Division, Leader Development. "Through this program, members will learn to cultivate opportunities and a strong voice for agriculture in their various communities, whether that's at schools, local politics, the state legislature or city and county government."

The current class of 12 participants include: Tim Akers, Grimes County; Tryce Berend, Hood-Somervell County; Colton Buckley, Stephens County; Justin Cave, Dawson County;

Jay Clark, Brown County; Clayton Conway, Van Zandt County; Hailey Hayes, Calhoun County; Wesley Paben, Waller County; Jaret Reaves, Cooke County; Jarod Root, Denton County; Austen White, Wilbarger County; and Matthew Wolf, Archer County.

The two-year leadership development program takes participants across Texas, the country and the world to discover agriculture and leadership from a new perspective.

Members will also develop a deeper understanding of communication, public policy, regulatory activities, political advocacy and more, according to Hall.

"AgLead empowers farmers and ranchers to continue the proud legacy of Texas agriculture," Hall said. "Through this program, they will learn more about the intricacies of agribusiness, as well as the political and regulatory processes that influence their businesses at state and national levels."

The group's first session was held



The orientation session included presentations from Texas Farm Bureau staff, leader development exercises and agricultural advocacy workshops.

Nov. 7-11 in Waco.

"We spent the week learning about leadership, social media, agricultural advocacy and how Farm Bureau works on behalf of farmers, ranchers and rural communities," Hall said. "It was a packed week full of fun and education that ended with them taking home the foundational skills they'll build on throughout this program and begin to use every day."

And communicating about agriculture is a top priority for leaders.

The group participated in an engagement training that culminated with mock interviews to help them be better prepared to share their agricultural story.

"As we progress through the program, their confidence and understanding will grow," Hall said. "They will be able to use these skills in any future leadership roles and activities."

Time is a priority investment for the program and a limited commodity for farmers and ranchers. But, Hall said, it's time well spent.

"The trips take time away from their families, farms, ranches and other businesses. The result, however, will be worth the investment," Hall said. "They will get to see all types of agriculture and agribusinesses, connect with others across the country and go places they may never had had the chance to go by themselves. Farm Bureau is truly offering them an opportunity of a lifetime."

The program's seven sessions include stops in Waco, Austin, the West Coast, Texas Panhandle, Rio Grande Valley, Washington, D.C. and an international trip.

The next session will be held in the Rio Grande Valley in early 2022.

AgLead is an advanced agricultural leadership program for TFB members ages 25 and above. To learn more about the leadership program, visit texasfarmbureau.org/aglead.



DECEMBER 3, 2021
TEXAS AGRICULTURE

Members of the 2021-2022 AgLead XV class attended their first training session in Waco at Texas Farm Bureau's Conference and Training Center in November.

Ag literacy resource shares food, farm facts

Fascinating facts about food in America—how and where it is grown and who produces it—are at your fingertips in a new resource produced by the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture.

Order the new Food and Farm Facts book, map, pocket guide and related products in the series at fb.org/store.

“With so many Americans interested in how our food system works, Food and Farm Facts is the perfect resource at the perfect time,” said Foundation Chairman Zippy Duvall, who also serves as president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The 32-page, full-color book features updated facts and easy-to-read infographics about U.S. agriculture that can be used in a variety of ways to help increase agricultural literacy. The book would be a valuable resource in the classroom, at fairs and events, for student leadership organizations and when creating social media posts, Duvall noted.

The book is organized by section—Consumers, Modern Farmers, Trade & Economics, Environment and Production. New in this edition of the book is information on how farmers are producing more on fewer acres and how they sustainably manage and preserve soil.

Copies of Food and Farm Facts may be purchased for \$4.25 each (up to 49 copies). Price breaks are available for multi-copy purchases starting at 50: 50-99 copies, \$3.50 each; 100 or more copies, \$2.50 each. Each copy of the book includes a color “Abundant Agriculture” map poster depicting top agricultural products produced in every state. A pocket guide version of Food and Farm Facts (100 copies for \$10) that features several popular infographics from the book is also available.

Additional Food and Farm Facts products will be available later this year and in early 2022.



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TFB urged House lawmakers to oppose Build Back Better Act

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

The Build Back Better Act promoted by President Joe Biden and approved by the U.S. House of Representatives would be harmful to agriculture and rural America, according to Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

“As TFB and its members have watched the partisan reconciliation process unfold, proposals in direct opposition to our national organizational policy remain in the legislation, leading us to oppose the bill. We appreciate Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle working with us to protect Texas farm and ranch families from some harmful tax pro-



posals,” TFB President Russell Boening said. “However, we worry items remaining in the bill, such as methane taxes on oil and gas, staggering

ag labor fines and lack of regard for the farm safety net, will only hurt Texas agriculture.”

Worrisome provisions in the bill include \$555 billion in “clean energy and climate investments.”

Although \$90 billion of that funding is supposed to be earmarked for agriculture in the form of conservation program increases and the creation of new sustainability programs, Boening noted the bill does not include any funding to enhance or protect the existing farm safety net.

Farm and ranch families are suffering from unchecked inflation, skyrocketing input costs, supply chain issues, volatile markets and other obstacles that make profitability extremely uncertain. The absence of funding for production agriculture is concerning, according to Boening.

And many middle-class Americans are wondering who, exactly, will be left to foot the bill. Despite Democrats backing away from a proposal to eliminate stepped-up basis and other changes to inheritance taxes, AFBF President Zippy Duvall said the totality of increased federal spending in this proposal, coupled with burdensome tax increases leveled on small businesses and individuals to pay for it, will stifle economic growth and destroy jobs—particularly among populations who can least afford to lose ground.

Ultimately, the result could be the consolidation or sale of family farms

and ranches, he noted.

“The massive amount of spending and tax increases required to pay for the plan outweigh the gains we would see in rural America. Also, the manner in which they were crafted is concerning,” Duvall said. “The agriculture industry and the committees of jurisdiction have held to a long tradition of bipartisanship that we have seen erode over this past year.”

Transparent, bipartisan policy development is not a hallmark of the Build Back Better Act, Duvall added.

Discussions about a bill of this magnitude should be open and include input from a variety of stakeholders, Boening noted.

“As farm and ranch families suffer from inflation, supply chain issues, volatile markets and other obstacles, they cannot afford additional burdens to be placed on them,” he said.

The U.S. House passed the bill on Nov. 19. As of press time, the bill was sent to the U.S. Senate, where it is expected to undergo changes.

For updates on the Build Back Better Act, visit [texasfarmbureau.org](https://www.texasfarmbureau.org) or sign up for the *Texas Agriculture Daily* email.

You can sign up for the email through the MyTFB membership portal at my.texasfarmbureau.org. Click “Contact Preferences” from the lefthand menu, and then select *Texas Agriculture Daily* from the list of emails.

American Farm Bureau pushes for stronger trade with global partners

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) joined eight other organizations in reaching out to U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai to call for needed reforms.

“The U.S. and global economy, and the livelihoods of workers around the world, depend on an effective WTO,” the groups said in a letter to Ambassador Tai. “A level multilateral playing field helps American manufacturers, services suppliers, innovators and farmers—large and small—by enabling workers and communities to compete more fairly in markets around the globe.”

AFBF supports advancing a comprehensive WTO reform agenda that tackles dispute settlement, special and differential treatment, distortive subsidies and state-owned enterprises. Reforms should also cover improved subsidy notifications, enhance transparency and help harness trade to improve sustainability.

“The administration can best support the international rules-based system and the WTO by

making concrete proposals and partnering with allies who share market-based trade liberalization, modernization and reform principles. Moreover, scheduling more frequent Trade Ministers meetings could help overcome impasses, support reforms and foster progress.”

AFBF and other agricultural groups also sent a letter to Tai and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen outlining recommendations to advance a more comprehensive trade strategy with China.

“We support the administration’s initial China trade policy priorities, including enforcing China’s existing commitments in the U.S.-China Economic and Trade Agreement (‘Phase One’), working to address long-standing structural concerns, and partnering with our allies to address non-market economy and other practices that adversely impact American businesses, farmers and workers,” the letter said. “Concrete steps advancing this agenda would restore greater certainty in both bilateral and global trade and economic affairs.”

Texas Beef Council hosted event for chefs

Beef Loving Chefs, a program of the Texas Beef Council (TBC), hosted the inaugural Beef Loving Chefs Summit at the Culinary Institute of America earlier this year.

During the two-day event in San Antonio, 40 chefs from across Texas learned about the beef lifecycle from pasture to plate from speakers who shared their valuable beef industry knowledge.

“The goal of the summit was to bring Texas chefs from different sectors of the foodservice industry together and take a deep dive into the beef production process,” said Chef Robert Hale, manager of culinary and foodservice for TBC. “These chefs were able to hear from industry experts and share their own unique experiences, as well. When they left the summit, we wanted them to feel good about choosing beef and including it in more of their dishes, which has the potential to put beef on more consumers’ plates.”

Attendees included healthcare chefs, broadline center-of-the-plate specialists, high school and post-secondary chef instructors, independent restaurant chefs, college foodservice chefs and hotel executive chefs.

Each of these specialists are largely tasked with educating their culinary staff or students about beef, while also developing menus and finding new ways to prepare beef that increase demand for the protein at their establishments.

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County Farm Bureaus execute successful community outreach

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Building relationships, strengthening connections and growing agricultural awareness in the community are just some of the results from activities held each year by county Farm Bureaus.

Despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, county Farm Bureaus hosted activities that successfully

promoted agriculture, Farm Bureau and encouraged involvement from young members and local community leaders.

This year, Anderson, Polk and San Patricio County Farm Bureaus were recognized by Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) for outreach efforts in the state County Activities of Excellence (CAE) award program.

“County Farm Bureaus plan and

execute outreach projects, collaborate with other organizations and agencies and participate in community activities each year. We’re proud of the work our county leaders do in their communities to grow an understanding of agriculture and increase awareness of what Farm Bureau does for agriculture on the local, state and national levels,” TFB President Russell Boening said.

“Through the CAE program, we aim to recognize and share successful county Farm Bureau programs and activities—like the work of these three counties—to help generate even more grassroots activity.”

The action-oriented programs developed by county Farm Bureaus are a major part of the overall success of the state and national organizations.

CAE Program Summary

The CAE awards recognize unique, volunteer-driven programming at the local level.

The CAE program categorizes county activities into the following areas: education and ag promotion, member services, public relations and information, leadership development and policy implementation.

This marks the eighth year of a statewide CAE program to highlight

county activities and outreach efforts.

Eleven county Farm Bureaus submitted entries, and judging was conducted by other state Farm Bureaus.

For more information about the CAE awards and participation, contact Charles Benton, TFB director of Field Operations, at cbenton@txfb.org or 254-751-2282.

Texas Farm Bureau 2021 County Activities of Excellence AWARD PROGRAM

Anderson County Farm Bureau

Inspiring and involving the next generation of agricultural leaders is one of Anderson County Farm Bureau’s goals.

To help achieve that goal, the county organization created an internship opportunity for a high school student to serve as a youth ambassador for the county board of directors.

A subcommittee developed objectives and prerequisites for the internship. Requirements to be the youth ambassador included previously attending TFB’s Youth Leadership Conference or Student Success Series and participating in the Free Enterprise Speech Contest.

“Youth are our future of Anderson County, of Texas and of Farm Bureau. We wanted a way to get more young people involved with us at the local level, and we thought this internship program would be a great place to start,” Anderson County Farm Bureau President Ted Brit-

ton said. “Involving them in what we do as a board of directors, as a county organization and as community leaders helps them better understand the impact they can have when they step into leadership roles like this.”

Involving students also teaches them more about Farm Bureau’s mission to promote agriculture and about production agriculture in the area, Britton said.

“Through programming efforts, planning meetings, policy discussions and attending monthly meetings, our youth ambassador saw firsthand exactly how Texas Farm Bureau and Anderson County Farm Bureau represent Texas agriculture,” Britton said. “This internship program also exposes youth to farmers and ranchers in the area, so they can learn more about production agriculture.”

The youth ambassador attended events, serving as a photographer and documenting activities Anderson



Anderson County Farm Bureau created a youth ambassador position to help inspire and involve the next generation of agricultural leaders in the local area. Courtesy photo.

County Farm Bureau was involved in throughout the year. The youth ambassador also gave presentations and assisted with other county activities.

As part of the internship program, the youth ambassador delivered monthly reports, served as an active member of the county’s Young

Farmer & Rancher Committee and attended district, state and national meetings.

At the end of the internship, the youth ambassador presented a report to the board highlighting experiences and the knowledge gained about agriculture and Farm Bureau.

Polk County Farm Bureau

Polk County Farm Bureau hosted a Growers' Breakfast each month. The educational event targeted community members who have an interest in agriculture.

"It's a mixture of formal education and a social hour for these growers to get together and discuss a variety of topics," said Matthew March, who serves as the commodity chair for Beef and Forage/Hay for Polk County Farm Bureau.

As Polk County continues to grow more urban, Farm Bureau leaders wanted to find a way to engage those new residents, provide educational information and empower them to be successful in small-scale agriculture.

They partnered with the Polk County AgriLife Extension Service to provide the educational events and identify knowledgeable speakers. Two Polk County Farm Bureau board members were appointed to chair, plan and execute the monthly

events.

The breakfast events allowed local farmers and gardeners to have opportunities to compare results and growing tips and techniques with each other.

"We wanted to reach out to a group that has been underserved in our area, and these breakfast meetings were a way to do that," March said.

This program created an opportunity for Polk County Farm Bureau to have a relationship with the growers and offer education and support for their agricultural efforts.

"We were able to connect them to Polk County Farm Bureau and to the AgriLife Extension office, as well as connect them with other area growers," said March, who is also a Polk County AgriLife Extension agent.

Some event topics have included small gardens, pest and weed control, egg production, orchards and specific varieties of vegetables to



Polk County Farm Bureau hosted a Growers' Breakfast each month. The educational event targeted community members who have an interest in agriculture. Courtesy photo.

grow for success.

The Growers' Breakfast were advertised at local farm and ranch stores, in the local newspaper, on the Polk County Farm Bureau Facebook page and through word of mouth from board members and past participants.

They were a plate full of conversations, relationships and outreach—the ingredients to cultivate a future with a better understanding of food and agriculture.

Polk County Farm Bureau plans to continue hosting the Growers' Breakfasts.

San Patricio County Farm Bureau

In recent years, used tire disposal costs have increased significantly. To add to that, San Patricio County doesn't accept used tires in pickup services or provide drop off points in the precinct or city yards. That led to more tires being dumped illegally or left in piles on private property.

So, San Patricio County Farm Bureau collaborated with the County Commissioners Court to host a Used Tire Drive—a much-needed service for citizens across the county.

This was the first-of-its-kind landmark partnership for the two entities.

"We saw a problem of used tires being discarded on our rural roadsides, drainage ditches and vacant properties. Plus, farmers and ranchers also had tires and only limited proper disposal options," Collin Chopelas, San Patricio County Farm Bureau president, said. "Our used tire event provided a service to farmers, ranchers, landowners, the county and all

residents of our communities."

A San Patricio County Farm Bureau subcommittee identified the needs, developed a plan and sought volunteers to help with the event. They contacted a local recycling facility and discussed splitting the costs with the county.

San Patricio County Farm Bureau provided three trailer trucks, and the County Commissioners Court provided the equipment and operators to load the tires.

"Our county Farm Bureau leaders identified a problem and worked with city and county leaders to find a workable solution," Chopelas said. "It was really successful. Working together, we were able to efficiently handle a large number of used tires in a very short period of time."

The groups collected over 200 large tractor tires and over 1,300 car and truck tires.

It is now scheduled as an annual fall event.



San Patricio County Farm Bureau hosted a Used Tire Drive to remove a large number of tires in an efficient and cost-effective way for farmers, county residents and county officials. Courtesy photo.

"It's a beneficial event for everyone involved, and many community leaders and officials were quick to recognize that," Chopelas said. "Used tires can stack up around the farm, and oftentimes, people use rural roads to dump their car and truck tires. This event is hopefully encour-

aging people in our communities to keep our right of ways cleaner."

When the tires were removed, Chopelas noted other debris was easier to clean up along the road, on private property and on farms, which helped improve the appearance of the rural areas.

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Old Time Christmas Tree Farm grows holiday cheer every year

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Texas may be far from the North Pole, but at Old Time Christmas Tree Farm in Harris County, the holiday season rings merry and bright.

And at its roots, the Christmas tree farm is a family affair.

The Prause family grows holiday cheer each year on their farm by providing families an opportunity to choose-and-cut their own Christmas tree.

DECEMBER 3, 2021
Some come from near and others from afar, but they leave with smiling faces, a tree and priceless memories. Because the Prauses are in the business of bringing people Christmas joy.

The Prause family

Damian and Leia Prause have been growing Christmas trees for nearly 30 years. Their children, Erin and Michael, now help with the family business.

The farm is located outside of Houston in Klein, and it was the best place to grow up, if you ask Erin and Michael.

16 “It was really nice being out here

and being able to run free and play when we were little kids,” Erin said.

Michael helps Damian manage the farm. Together, they handle planting and trimming trees, irrigating, mowing and more. Erin helps with the business and administrative tasks—hiring and training employees, paperwork, social media, marketing and other tasks.

Christmas tree beginnings

As a young farmer, Damian raised cattle and grew hay and row crops on mostly leased land. But as more people moved to Harris County, the area changed.

The once wide-open spaces are now covered in concrete. Roads, homes, shopping centers and businesses cover the land where cattle used to graze. Urban sprawl swallowed up the area’s farm and ranch land, leaving Damian with few options but to adapt.

And he did.

“I could see that traditional farming and agriculture in our area was going away,” Damian said.

The idea of growing Christmas trees took root in 1991, and they

planted their first trees in 1993. They began selling them in 1996.

Although he misses traditional farming, he continues to grow hay and raise some cattle.

But growing Christmas trees has its benefits.

“I’ve never had a Christmas tree get out on us. I’ve never had the sheriff call me in the middle of the



At Old Time Christmas Tree Farm, the Prause family brings Christmas joy to families who visit their farm each year. Pictured left to right are Holden DiLalla (Erin’s fiance), Erin Prause, Leia Prause, Damian Prause and Michael Prause.



Erin Prause helps measure a tree and records the height on a tag that follows the tree through the check out process.



After the tree is measured, it goes to the shaker to remove the loose needles and debris.



Then, it's baled to make it easier for customers to transport.

night because the Christmas trees were on the road,” Damian said with a laugh.

How to grow Christmas trees

At Old Time Christmas Tree Farm, the Prauses grow Virginia Pine and Leyland Cypress.

“The pines are a little slower growing, but you can get an 8-foot tree, maybe, in four years,” Damian said. “The Cypress trees, maybe in three years, you can get an 8-foot tree.”

They use overhead irrigation, and can irrigate about seven acres a day, which means it takes roughly a week to irrigate the entire farm.

They buy seedlings to re-plant trees each year.

“They’ll grow for about a year before we begin to even do anything to them,” Damian said. “Then, we’ll put handles on them, and basically

that is cutting the lower limbs off so there’s enough trunk to put in a tree stand.”

After they reach about 4 feet tall, they begin to shape them like a Christmas tree.

“It’s pretty simple. You just cut off everything that doesn’t look like a Christmas tree,” Damian said.

Michael helps with that process, which takes place twice a year. Each trimming takes about six weeks to complete all the trees on the farm.

“You’d be surprised by how many people think the trees grow just like this without any work,” Michael said. “We trim them to help shape them and add thickness to them. If you don’t trim them, they’ll just be a big, giant circle, and we don’t want it to look like that.”

But in Texas, the climate makes it tough to grow other varieties. That’s why Old Time Christmas Tree Farm

brings in Black Hills Spruce trees and Frazier Firs from North Carolina and Michigan. They are sold as pre-cut trees.

“We can’t grow them here. We have a hot, tropical climate, and they’re in an environment where they need cooler weather, cooler nights, lower humidity,” Damian said. “We offer them as pre-cut, because if we don’t sell them one, somebody else will.”

Choose-and-cut trees

As a choose-and-cut farm, customers do exactly that—choose a tree and cut it down.

The process is simple. They meet a greeter who helps them get started. They pick up a saw and measuring stick, and then hop on a hay wagon for a ride out to the field. They’re dropped off in the trees where they’re left to wander, examine, smell and measure as many trees as they’d like.

“They can take their time choosing and cutting their perfect tree, and then the tractor driver picks them and their tree back up and brings them back to the front,” Erin said. “Then, we have processing stations to help get the trees processed as efficiently as possible.”

That includes taking a final measurement, and then the employees shake the trees.

“There’s a station where we shake the trees to remove any of the loose material in the trees—some loose leaves and needles and whatever may be in there,” Damian said.

Then, the tree goes to the baler to be wrapped for easier transport.

They have about 40,000 trees on the farm in various sizes from seedlings to the mature trees at 9, 10 and 11 feet tall.

(continued on page 18)

(continued from page 17)

Due to crowds and a growing demand, they now open the weekend before Thanksgiving.

“We try to sell about 20% a year,” Damian said. “So, we’ll retain 80%, re-plant and then the next year do that again.”

Family traditions

Old Time Christmas Tree Farm is part of many Texans’ holiday traditions.

“The best thing about it is that even in hard times with the economy, people still come, and they’ll get a tree,” Damian said. “That tree is the center of their holiday season. And really that’s probably the best thing about growing these trees is that we can be part of that—through good times and through bad times.”

How to care for your trees

“When you cut your tree and you get it home, the first thing you want to do is cut a little piece off the bottom. Even though you just got it cut and you’re taking it home, that tree will try to sap up and seal that up to try and not lose moisture,” Damian

said. “So, get a fresh cut on there, get it in the stand and get some water in it.”

He encourages customers not to put the tree in a window that has full sun and to keep it away from heating and cooling sources, because they tend to dry out the tree quicker.

“Water is very, very important,” he said. “No sugar, no Sprite, no anything like that. Just pure water. These fresh trees, the ones you cut, drink a tremendous amount of water.”

Damian recommends to water them twice a day, and even more often than that in the beginning if you notice the tree drinking more water. It is important, he said, not to let the tree get dry.

The farm’s future

As Houston encroaches upon the farm more each year, the Prause family remains dedicated to staying in the business of Christmas cheer and agriculture.

“My brother and I would like to take over the farm from my parents one day,” Erin said. “It’s something that we both just really love to do, and we’d like to keep the tradition alive.”



Damian Prause (left) and his son, Michael (right), inspect the trees. At Old Time Christmas Tree Farm, they grow Virginia Pine and Leyland Cypress trees for families to choose and cut. They also offer Fraiser Fir and Black Hills Spruce trees that are pre-cut and shipped in from other locations.

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Families like the Hudsons go in search of the perfect Christmas tree for their home.

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The Miller family poses with their tree. Choosing and cutting a tree has been a family tradition for them for nine years.

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New bill combines previously proposed cattle market legislation

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

A group of U.S. senators released the framework of the new Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act. The new legislation, which was introduced in the Senate on Nov. 19, combines previously proposed bills on cattle markets.

A joint release from Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Nebraska), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Jon Tester (D-Montana) and Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) outlined the four main actions the bill would include.

The legislation states no regional minimum level can be more than three times that of the lowest regional minimum, and no regional minimum can be lower than the 18-month average trade at the time the bill is enacted. USDA, however, would be able to periodically modify regional minimums after public notice and comment.

Under the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act, USDA would also create and maintain a publicly available library of marketing contracts between packers and producers in a manner that ensures confidentiality.

The legislation would require

more timely reporting of cattle carcass weights, as well as requiring a packer to report the number of cattle scheduled to be delivered for slaughter each day for the next 14 days.

USDA would be prohibited from using confidentiality as a justification for not reporting and must report all Livestock Mandatory Reporting information.

“Robust price discovery ensures that all members of the beef supply chain—cow-calf producers, feeders, packers and consumers—can be successful. The foundation of price discovery in the cattle market is negotiated cash sales. One or two regions of the country should not have to shoulder the burden of price discovery, and that’s exactly what has been happening,” Fischer said in a statement. “Furthermore, even regions that primarily use alternative marketing arrangements, such as formula contracts, predominantly rely on negotiated cash sales to set their base prices. Our compromise proposal takes regional differences into account and ensures fairness for every segment of the supply chain.”

The bill is supported by many agricultural groups, including the American Farm Bureau Federation.



The new Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act combines previously proposed legislation with some adjustments. The bill was proposed by a bipartisan group of four U.S. senators in mid-November.

“This bill fits squarely within American Farm Bureau policy. We support the bill, and we hope that parts of this bill are incorporated into Livestock Mandatory Reporting reauthorization,” Scott Bennett, AFBF Congressional Relations director, said.

Similar efforts introduced by Fischer and Wyden, Grassley and Tester and U.S. Reps. Vicky Hartzler

and Emanuel Cleaver each contained components of the current piece of legislation.

More information on the bill, including a summary by section, is available on Fischer’s website at fischer.senate.gov.

More updates on the bill will be available on texasfarmbureau.org and in the *Texas Agriculture Daily* email.

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Covering the basics: Hamilton CFB hosts cover crops workshop

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

Cover crops have many benefits, but it takes some planning and patience for farmers and ranchers to see the impacts on the soil.

To help area farmers and ranchers get a better understanding of those benefits and how to get started, Hamilton County Farm Bureau (CFB), along with assistance from Mills CFB, hosted a cover crops field day at the ranch of Alan McAnelly, Hamilton CFB vice president.

“Basically, the purpose of this event was to show if the farmer or rancher wants to consume the energy and the soil, the best way to do that would be with a cover crop instead of leaving it barren during the winter,” Hamilton CFB President Bennie Hromadka said. “Cost-effectiveness was the biggest part of this program, just showing that it doesn’t take a rich farmer or a rancher to start off with some cover crops.”

Since seeing is believing, Hromadka said McAnelly’s place was the perfect venue. McAnelly, who

has used cover crops for many years, planted a fall mix this year that includes mustard seed, clover, flax, radishes, turnips, oats, wheat and seasonal grasses.

Hamilton CFB invited Josh Bauman and Trent Manley, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) district conservationists, and Rafael Aldrich, range management specialist, to speak to nearly 30 farmers and ranchers about the advantages of incorporating cover crops into their rotations.

The seed mix McAnelly planted helps put nutrients back in the soil through nitrogen fixation, according to Aldrich and Manley.

The conservationists pulled various plants from the ground to show attendees how the roots were breaking up hard soil and creating pathways for moisture to go deeper into the ground.

Another benefit is that the plant matter breaks down over time, adding even more nutrients back into the soil.

In addition to soil enrichment, cover crops provide ground cover. They crowd out weeds and keep topsoil from drying out and blowing away.

Encouraging more young farmers and ranchers to plant cover crops by showing them a successful example in their area was a goal of Hamilton CFB when deciding to host the event, Hromadka noted.

“Our purpose here is to promote agriculture, and the best way to promote that is to help some of these young farmers and ranchers get more involved and help them be successful,” he said. “The other reason we chose this topic was because

we’ve been looking at prices and where our industry is going. Fertilizers have jumped in the last three months. We don’t know what the future holds, but we can start doing things today to help alleviate some of those costs.”

Helping the next generation be successful will keep Texas agriculture thriving well into the future, and some of the older folks might learn a few new tricks, as well, Hromadka said.

For more information on cover crops, plant guides and decision support tools, visit NRCS’s website at nrcs.usda.gov.



Hamilton County Farm Bureau hosted a cover crops field day last month with Mills County Farm Bureau. About 30 farmers and ranchers learned more about the benefits of cover crops. Courtesy photo.



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TFB submits comments on labels of cell-cultured products

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

The state's largest general farm and ranch organization is requesting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) establish accurate labeling requirements of meat and poultry products made using cultured cells derived from animals.

Last month, Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) submitted official comments that outline the need for clear labels for cell-based products.

"Consumers deserve the highest food safety standards when it comes to the products they put on their table," the organization wrote. "Texas Farm Bureau has a natural interest in the long-term success and viability of all farmers and ranchers in the meat and poultry business across the state. However, we want to be clear that our comments do not represent an attempt to prevent new technologies from entering the marketplace.

We trust and expect that USDA's FSIS will fulfill their intended roles, which is to protect consumers with truthful labeling and ensure that the safety of this country's food supply is of the highest caliber in the world."

TFB policy states that only livestock, poultry, fish and wildlife that are born, raised and harvested for food should be considered as meat products. The products created through processing those animals and considered to be food should be the only products allowed to use traditional meat labels.

The organization wants labeling to inform consumers on the differences between meat raised traditionally and those alternatives derived from cell cultures.

"Texas Farm Bureau policy states that all packaged meat substitutes be labeled 'not a meat product.' Utilizing this statement on label packages will provide enhanced clarity to consum-

ers as they make their purchasing decisions," the organization said.

TFB also stressed that allowing common use meat terminology, such as pork loin, would be inaccurate and misrepresent the food product, adding unnecessary confusion in the marketplace.

"Texas Farm Bureau policy states that only 100% live animal produced protein can be labeled and marketed as a meat product. Therefore, any combination of cultured animal cells and slaughtered meat should not be identified with traditional meat label terminology or language that may cause consumer confusion with a product derived completely from a slaughtered animal," the organization wrote. "This is a simple and extremely effective way to communicate that the product is not the result of the traditional process of slaughter and further processing of animal protein."

Farmers, ranchers and consum-

ers have benefited from the strict rules that govern traditional animal slaughter and food processing for decades. Any food protein produced through synthetic processes would require additional oversight due to the novel production system, the organization wrote.

"The production of cellular based products involves the use of numerous processes and ingredients not common to food production," the organization said. "It is reasonable to consider listing the ingredients and processes used in cell-cultured meat development on the consumer product label."

The American Farm Bureau Federation also submitted comments.

The comment period closed Dec. 2.

Other than new labeling regulations concerning this product, FSIS does not intend to issue any other new food safety regulations for the cell-cultured food products under its jurisdiction.

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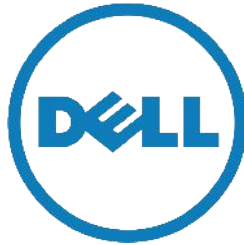
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Supply chain issues continue to disrupt agriculture in the U.S.

By Jennifer Whitlock
Field Editor

As the holiday season hits a high note, supply chain issues remain front and center in Americans' minds. Imports of consumer goods have garnered the most attention, with fears over whether the trendiest gift items will be available on time.

But long after people turn from Christmas cheer to New Year's resolutions, the ramifications of the supply chain crisis will still be affecting U.S. farmers and ranchers.

American agriculture is impacted by supply chain disruptions in both imports and exports. While closely intertwined, each aspect uniquely affects farmers and ranchers.

Exports

Exports are a key component of the profitability of American farms and ranches. About 25% of all U.S. farm products are exported each year, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

And relationships and reliability are key drivers in export sales, which accounted for slightly more than 10% of the U.S. gross domestic product last year.

Cancelled vessel bookings, shipping container shortages, bottlenecks of cargo ships at U.S. ports and other ocean shipping problems have agriculture feeling the brunt of ocean freight infrastructure shortfalls.

A survey by the agricultural export group, Agriculture Transport Coalition (AgTC), noted 22% of U.S. agricultural exports could not be

completed due to high ocean carrier rates, freighters declining to carry export cargo, unreasonable demurrage and detention charges and other unfair trade practices.

"The transportation crisis for U.S. agriculture and forest products is becoming increasingly dire each month. There is nothing we produce in agriculture and forest products in this country that cannot be sourced in some other country. If we cannot deliver, affordably and dependably, our foreign customers will find alternatives to our exports," AgTC and 95 other agricultural groups, including AFBF, wrote in a letter to U.S. Reps. John Garamendi and Dusty Johnson in support of the legislators' Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2021.

Moving the goods over land is another sticking point in the agricultural export supply chain. Labor shortages in the trucking and rail industries coupled with high demand create a tight surface transportation market and increased shipping costs across the spectrum.

On top of the labor issues, there aren't enough shipping containers or container chassis, the wheeled metal frames which support the containers during surface transport.

Add in crumbling American infrastructure and the situation becomes a recipe for disaster for farmers and ranchers trying to move products.

But alongside other legislative efforts to modernize and streamline ocean shipping, AFBF President Zippy Duvall noted the Infrastruc-



Texas farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses have been hit with cost increases for pesticides, fertilizer and other supplies as global supply chains sputter in the wake of the pandemic.

ture Investment and Jobs Act will help alleviate some of these issues.

"Farmers and ranchers depend on millions of miles of roadways and waterways to get their products to America's dinner tables, and they rely on ports to ship food, fiber and fuel to countries around the world. Improvements in transportation infrastructure, as well as repair and upgrades to the aging western water infrastructure, will ensure farmers can continue to keep this nation fed," Duvall said.

Imports

While export issues add challenges in getting goods from farm to port, thanks to import supply chain matters, farmers and ranchers are facing an equally daunting task getting farm inputs from overseas to the farm.

The same bottlenecks at shipping terminals, surface transportation issues and labor shortages plague agricultural importers, too.

Now, crop protectants, fertilizers, tires and parts for farm equipment, computer chips for tractors and more are all in short supply.

Fertilizer costs have increased to unprecedented highs. The average retail price of anhydrous ammonia was at more than \$1,000 per ton in November, compared to just under \$500 per ton last year, Texas Farm

Bureau (TFB) Associate Director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities Brant Wilbourn noted.

"Countervailing duty investigations into some of the major suppliers of raw phosphate and urea ammonium nitrate led to tariffs on those fertilizer components, which trickles down in the form of higher on-farm fertilizer prices," he said.

On top of the tariffs, many countries from which the U.S. sources fertilizer and other farm inputs are facing energy crises as they ramp up production after COVID-19.

"As a result, in the upcoming growing season, farmers are looking at spending about 36% of their operating costs on fertilizer alone," Wilbourn said. "That's a big chunk of a farm budget, and they're also looking at increased input costs across the board. So, they're understandably concerned about profitability."

Electronic components like computer chips for tractors and other farm equipment, as well as new parts to repair equipment, are also difficult to find.

"The longer we let this play out and the longer we continue allowing these challenges to multiply, the closer we inch to facing a national security issue and food supply crisis," Wilbourn said.



Bottlenecks at some of the busiest U.S. ports drastically delay agricultural commodity exports.

TFB Resolutions Committee discusses issues facing agriculture

By Julie Tomascik
Editor

Livestock, private property rights and foreign ownership of agricultural land were among the topics of proposed policy resolutions discussed by the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Resolutions Committee Nov. 1-2 in Waco.

The committee, comprised of 39 TFB members representing Texas agriculture, spent two days reviewing, deliberating and consolidating more than 200 resolutions to both state and national policies proposed by county Farm Bureaus across the state.

“We had a lot of great discussion. We talked about livestock, private property rights, taxes and many other issues facing agriculture,” Mark Daniel, TFB vice president and chair of the Resolutions Committee, said. “The issues get surfaced at the county level. Everything we do starts at the grassroots. That’s how our organization functions, and that’s how we are going to keep it.”

The committee evaluated several resolutions related to animal welfare.

They supported a resolution that would require livestock health evaluation training for animal control and law enforcement personnel.

During the two-day meeting, the committee also discussed border issues and supported a resolution that would establish an assistance program for full or partial reimbursement to landowners for property damages due to illegal bailouts and chases.

Other resolutions that received support from the committee pertained to eminent domain. The committee supported requirements for companies with easements to install and maintain erosion control methods where the easement crosses a stream, creek, river or other erosion-prone areas identified by the property owner.

The committee also supported a resolution that opposes the use of eminent domain to acquire private prop-

erty for renewable energy projects.

Additional policy resolutions supported by the committee included financial compensation to farmers, ranchers and individuals for contamination of groundwater wells, surface water for nearby farms, livestock and irrigation water sources if a farm or ranch is adversely impacted by hazardous or toxic waste.

On the national level, the Resolutions Committee discussed foreign investment in agricultural land in the U.S. They supported creating and enforcing a registry of all lands currently owned by foreign interests or foreign individuals. Any future purchases of land would also need to be registered at closing.

“Foreign ownership of American property and businesses was a big topic of discussion. Texas is a big

state. We’re growing. Rural issues and urban issues—we’re colliding at a pretty fast rate,” Daniel said.

The committee supported a resolution that would oppose government mandates that force any livestock slaughter facility to purchase a set percentage of their live animal supply through cash bids. They also supported a resolution that opposes a tax on livestock.

The committee supported a resolution that would encourage the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) as it relates to colony collapse to reflect the historic production averages for each apiary. ELAP provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers due to certain adverse

weather events or loss conditions.

The policy recommendations will be considered during the business session of the organization’s 88th annual meeting Dec. 3-5 in Corpus Christi. State resolutions adopted at the TFB annual meeting become policies that guide the organization. National resolutions, if adopted by voting delegates at the TFB annual meeting, are sent to the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) annual convention for consideration.

Resolutions approved by AFBF delegates in January provide a roadmap for the national organization.

For more details on TFB’s annual meeting, visit texasfarmbureau.org/annualmeeting.

Updates and coverage from the annual meeting will be in the January 2022 issue of *Texas Agriculture*.



The 39 members of the TFB Resolutions Committee discussed policy resolutions from county Farm Bureaus while observing COVID-19 protocols and safety measures at the TFB Conference and Training Center.

Biden signs \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill

President Joe Biden signed the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in mid-November.

The bipartisan bill passed the House by a 228-206 vote and the Senate by a 69-30 vote.

The bill aims to improve the country's roads, bridges and waterways.

Several agricultural organizations, including the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), praised passage of the bill.

"We cannot afford to ignore the millions of miles of roadways, waterways and railways rural America relies on to keep our country fed, especially as we see widespread supply chain challenges," Duvall said.

The historic legislation will provide one of the largest increases in investment in roads, bridges, waterways, ports, transit, airports, electrical infrastructure and other projects in the United States.

Infrastructure spending is set to increase by a projected \$550 billion over 10 years. Of that, \$110 billion

is slated for roads and \$40 billion for bridge projects. Another \$66 billion will be used for rail projects, and \$55 billion will go toward various water projects, including \$15 billion to remove lead pipes and \$200 million to address lead in school drinking water.

Included in the bill is \$65 billion to build out broadband infrastructure across the nation. States will be required to prioritize unserved areas, and projects will have to provide speeds of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

"Extending broadband to rural communities is just as much a priority," Duvall said. "A quarter of America's farm families have no high-speed internet access while working to meet the needs of a growing world. Investments in physical infrastructure like broadband will be critical to bridging the digital divide."

The bill also increases funds for ports and inland waters by \$17.3 billion and will provide \$918 million over five years for the U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture's (USDA) watershed programs.

Among other items covered in the bill is \$10 million for a byproduct pilot program for USDA to study the benefits of using materials derived from farm commodities in construction and consumer products.

Other key provisions include record investments in transit, walking and biking infrastructure and \$7.5 billion to begin building a nationwide electric vehicle charging network.

Another \$350 million will be used to build wildlife corridors, which ensure animals can get under, around or over roads to migrate, mate and maintain biodiversity.

According to the *Texas Tribune*, the Lone Star State will receive about \$35.44 billion over five years for projects under Biden's infrastructure plan.

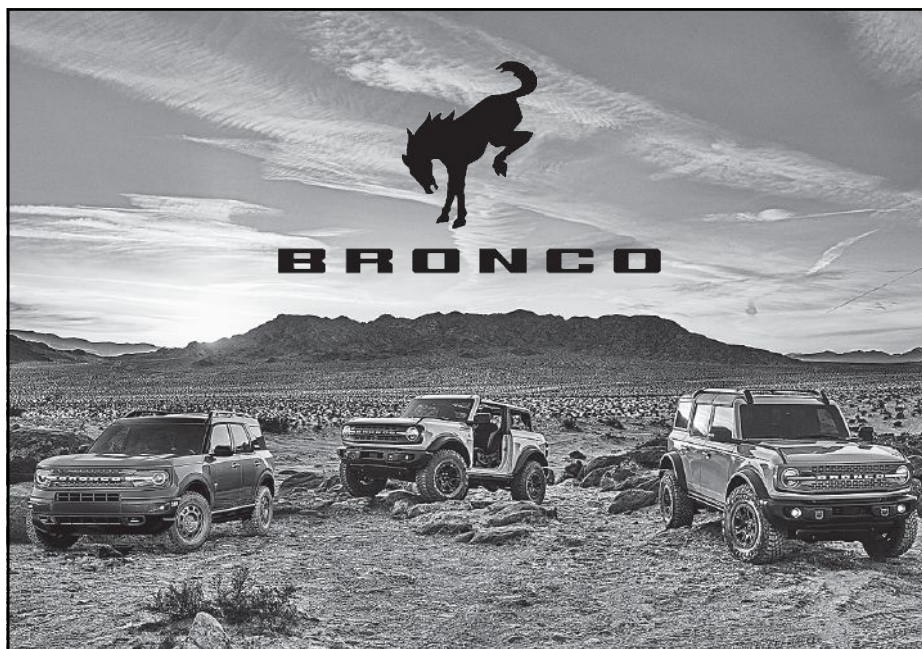
The funds will help advance existing plans, pay for repairs and launch other projects for roads, bridges,

broadband access, electric vehicle charging stations and more.

The breakdown for Texas funds includes the following:

- Federal highway programs: \$26.9 billion
- Public transportation: \$3.3 billion
- Drinking water infrastructure (and removing lead pipes): \$2.9 billion
- Airports: \$1.2 billion
- Bridge replacement and repairs: \$537 million
- Electric vehicle charging network: \$408 million
- Broadband expansion: \$100 million
- Wildfire protection: \$53 million
- Cyberattack protection: \$42 million

The White House also estimated that \$3.5 billion will be invested to weatherize the country's energy infrastructure, but it's unclear how much of that money would go to Texas or how those plans could combine with measures approved by the Texas Legislature this year.



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Family Land Heritage event recognizes longtime farms, ranches

As Texas' urban population continues to expand, farm and ranch lands continue to shrink. And the number of farms or ranches remaining in the same family for 100 years or more continues to get even smaller.

The Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Family Land Heritage program was created in 1974 to recognize and honor the families who maintain ownership of farms and ranches and keep them in produc-

tion, generation after generation.

This year's Family Land Heritage ceremony was held Nov. 3 at the state capitol.

Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) was a sponsor of the event.

Since the program began, TDA has recognized more than 5,000 farms and ranches—many of them TFB member-families.

This year, 54 families were recognized through the program.

The following farms and ranches were recognized at this year's ceremony:

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Hendrix Ranch, Bastrop County
Ellis Ray McKinney Ranch, Bee County
W.E. McKinney Ranch, Bee County
Walker Farm, Briscoe County
Martin and Novella Vance Farms, Carson County
Crook Farm, Childress County
Don Crook Farm, Childress County
Bar D Ranch, Clay County
Bartek's 3 Ass Ranch, Colorado County
Spechts Crossing Ranch, Comal County
Old Lamb Place, Cooke County
Chain 7 Ranch, Denton County
Doehrman Ranch-Ende der StraBe, DeWitt County
Rhoades Map Ranch, Erath County
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Engel Ranch, Gillespie County

Jenschke Farm, Gillespie County
Landgrebe Ranch, Goliad County
377 Ranch, Grayson County
Wrinkle Family Farm, Hardeman County
Vela Peña Ranch, Jim Hogg County
Rogge-Landgrebe Ranch, Karnes County
Lee Goff Ranch, Kerr County
Baylor Burks Bell Ranch, La Salle County
Mayben Alexander Ranch, Lampasas County
Mayben Place, Lampasas County
Jurena Cardinal Field, Lavaca County
The Gersch Family Farm, Lee County
Weiser Farm, Lee County
Prather Ranch, Leon County
Texas Kitten's Legacy in Farming, Lubbock County
Circle A Ranch, Madison County
Circle A Ranch - Creek Place, Madison County
Seaquist Family Ranch, Mason County

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New staff join Texas Farm Bureau's Organization Division

Two new staff joined Texas Farm Bureau's Organization Division.

Carson Read joined the staff in November as the program assistant.

She is responsible for providing support and input to programs within the Organization Division, including Educational Outreach, Youth Outreach, Urban Outreach and Leader Development.

A native of Rhome, Read raised and exhibited swine and cattle and was active in Texas 4-H and Texas FFA. She served as an officer in her local chapters, competed on livestock judging teams and was a Texas 4-H Youth Livestock Ambassador.

Her involvement in agriculture and the youth organizations led her to Texas Tech University where she earned a bachelor's degree in Animal Science.

During her time in Lubbock, she continued her involvement in agriculture by serving as an officer in Ag Council and Block & Bridle. She was also a member of the Agri Texan organization and a graduate of the Matador Institute of Leadership En-

gagement cohort.

Also joining the Organization Division is McKenna Bush. She will serve as the youth coordinator starting January 2022.

In this role, Bush will be responsible for the development, organization, oversight and execution of all activities involving TFB youth outreach programs. That includes the Clover Cash Grant Program, Student Success Series, scholarships, Free Enterprise Speech Contest, Speak Out For Agriculture Challenge and Collegiate Farm Bureau.

Previously, Bush was the graduate assistant for the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at Texas A&M University in College Station. She also held a variety of student and entry-level positions with Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Texas A&M College of Engineering throughout her collegiate career.

She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Agricultural



McKenna Bush



Carson Read

Leadership, Education, and Communications with an emphasis in curriculum development and instructional design at Texas A&M. She earned her undergraduate degree from Texas A&M in Agricultural Communications and Journalism and Agricultural Leadership and Development.

Bush received numerous awards through Texas FFA while in high school, including her American FFA Degree, and held several leadership positions at the chapter and district level.

Bush also serves as a court-appointed special advocate for Brazos Valley Voices for Children and is a Texas FFA Ford Leadership Scholar mentor.

In the Organization Division, Jordan Bartels continues to oversee all educational outreach efforts, and Dakota Massey handles urban outreach efforts. Roger Hall is the associate director of Leader Development for the division, which is overseen by Whit Weems. As the director, Weems is directly responsible for all activities within the division.

Agritourism venues have new Farm Bureau promotional opportunity

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is looking for orchards, pumpkin patches, corn mazes and more to showcase on a new app dedicated to connecting consumers with agritourism venues.

The American Farm Trail app, created by the Foundation and sponsored by Corteva, allows farmers, ranchers and farm attraction managers to sign up for free to showcase their agritourism venues.

Farms and attractions can create a profile promoting their business, history, available products and more.

Consumers using the app will be able to connect directly with local farms by searching area, type of attraction or products for sale.

The Foundation plans to launch the app in spring 2022.

"The Foundation is ecstatic to offer this new resource to help connect agritourism businesses to consum-

ers interested in visiting farms and ranches. There is nothing quite like picking your own apple or hunting for the perfect pumpkin and meeting the farmer who put the time and effort into growing that crop," said Daniel Meloy, executive director of the Foundation. "We think the American Farm Trail app will be a great opportunity for farmers and ranchers to bring curious consumers to their farms and for those consumers to connect in-person to where their food comes from."

Resources are available to farmers interested in listing their farm on the app, including a video overview of the app and a how-to guide for filling out the attraction listing information.

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture aims to build awareness, understanding, and a positive public perception of

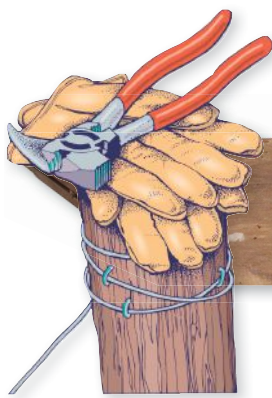


The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is launching a new app dedicated to connecting consumers with agritourism venues.

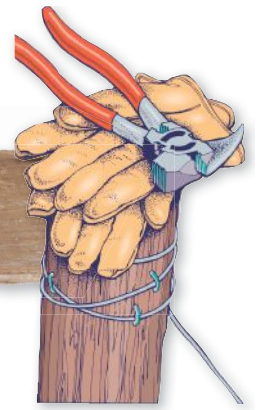
agriculture through education by offering learning opportunities, educational resources and a selection of

accurate books about agriculture.

Learn more about the app and other resources at agfoundation.org.



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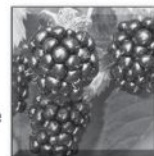
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