

Cultivator

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Event Highlights Health, Farm Safety

Farm safety, heart health and agriculture education provided the focus for the Alabama Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Conference in Birmingham April 1-2.

At the opening banquet, Heather Ann Dineen of Texas, Monsanto's 2014 Farm Mom of the Year, told the crowd of 220 members about losing her son in a farm accident eight years ago. The tragedy led her to become an advocate of farm safety for children.

"Her story was so full of emotion and so very genuine," said Cheryl Lasiter, State Women's Leadership Committee chairman. "It is a sad story, but one that shows how it led her to take action that could help save hundreds of lives."

The second day of the conference featured a heart health seminar, a presentation on getting organized and an Alabama Ag in the Classroom (AITC) workshop on beef cattle.

"We raise beef cattle on our farm, and there were a lot of facts I learned through that session that I didn't know," Lauderdale County farmer Michelle Thompson said of the AITC workshop. "Those will help me be a better spokesperson for our farm and agriculture altogether."

The conference also included a talk from Federation President Jimmy Parnell and legislative updates by Federation National Legislative Programs Director Mitt Walker and Governmental and Agricultural Programs Department Director Brian Hardin.

Conference photos are available on the Federation's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/AlabamaFarmers](https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaFarmers).



Brothers Levi, left, and Dan Gaines farm with their father, Harold, in Autauga County. This year, they will plant peanuts, cotton and grain sorghum. For the first time in three years, the Gaines family will not plant soybeans, a contrast to increased soybean acreage expected in Alabama.

Farmers To Plant More Peanuts, Soybeans

Alabama farmers plan to grow more soybeans and peanuts in 2015, while cotton and corn acreage is expected to decrease. The projected acreage was included in the National Agricultural Statistics Service Prospective Plantings Report, released March 31.

The changes are due to regular field rotations and relatively low commodity prices for most crops.

"Farmers are searching for a crop that they can pencil a profit on, and it's a real struggle to find that," said Autauga County farmer Harold Gaines. "For the first time in a long time, we're going to plant grain sorghum. There seems to be a growing market for that."

Gaines said peanuts and cotton remain mainstays of his crop rotation. In contrast to the state trend, Gaines said he will not plant soybeans this year.

In Escambia County, farmer David Womack is swapping corn for more cot-

ton and peanut acreage.

"Because of our rotation, our irrigated land will be peanuts, so we won't have any corn this year; we only grow corn if we have space under irrigation," Womack said. "Our cotton acreage will actually be up, and we'll have milo. I think commodity prices will make this a tough year."

Statewide, corn is expected to decrease 10 percent to 270,000 acres, while cotton is expected to decrease 14 percent to 300,000 acres.

In place of corn and cotton, Alabama farmers intend to grow 185,000 acres of peanuts, a 6 percent increase over 2014, and 490,000 acres of soybeans, a 1 percent increase.

Nationally, the report showed an expected 1 percent increase in soybean acres and a 9 percent increase in peanut acres. U.S. corn and cotton acreage is expected to decrease 2 and 13 percent, respectively.

New "Actively Engaged" Definition Proposed

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed a rule March 24 to redefine the term "actively engaged," which determines the members of businesses who can receive farm bill payments. According to the USDA, the current definition of "actively engaged" for farm managers is too broad.

The proposal targets non-family farm general partnerships and joint ventures involving multiple people. It would require documentation to show the manager makes a significant contribution to the farm.

As mandated by Congress, family farms would be exempt. There are no changes to existing rules for contributions to land, capital, equipment or labor.

Changes would affect payment eligibility starting in 2016 for Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage, loan deficiency payments and the Marketing Assistance Loan programs.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted through May 26. For more information, visit go.usa.gov/3C6Kk.

Upcoming Events

- **April 15** - Referendum on the state cotton checkoff and application due date for Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute June 3-5 in Huntsville.
- **April 16** - Extension workshop on local food grants at the Richard Beard Building in Montgomery.
- **April 18** - Tuskegee University Goat Day, sponsored by the Alabama Sheep & Goat Checkoff.
- **April 20** - Registration deadline for Auburn University's DAIRY U May 2 in Auburn. Cost is \$10.
- **April 21** - FFA Day on the Hill in Montgomery.
- **April 24** - Registration deadline for the Federation Washington Legislative Conference May 19-22 in Washington, D.C.
- **April 28** - Extension workshop on local food grants at the North Alabama Agriplex Heritage Center in Cullman.
- **May 4-8** - Alabama Farmers Federation Beef Tour in Alabama.



Rickey and Connie Cornutt of Marshall County, seated, were named Alabama's 2015 Farm of Distinction at the April 2 Farm-City Awards Luncheon in Birmingham. Standing from left are program sponsors Jim Allen of Alabama Farmers Cooperative; Kenneth Williams and Chris Cline of Snead Ag; Lynne Morton and Jay Hamlett of TriGreen Equipment; Lester Killebrew of SunSouth; and Jimmy Parnell of Alabama Farmers Federation.

Cornutt Farms Named Alabama Farm of Distinction

Marshall County farmers Rickey and Connie Cornutt received the 2015 Alabama Farm of Distinction award April 2 at the Alabama Farm-City Awards Luncheon in Birmingham. Cornutt Farms, near Boaz, is a grain, soybean and beef cattle business.

They won a John Deere Gator from SunSouth, TriGreen and Snead Ag dealers; a \$1,000 gift certificate from Alabama Farmers Cooperative (AFC); \$2,500 from

Swisher International and an engraved farm sign from Alabama Farmers Federation and Alfa Insurance. They will represent Alabama this October in the Southeastern Farmer of the Year contest at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Georgia.

Other finalists were Lance and Heather Whitehead, Fayette County; Mitch and Dawn Lazenby, Lee County; and Joe and Edria Todd, Henry County. Each finalist received a \$250 gift certificate from AFC.

Coosa County Federation Helps Local FFA



Coosa Central High School FFA members visited the Coosa County Farmers Federation March 13 to discuss their newly constructed greenhouse. The county Federation donated \$2,000 to the project. From left are FFA adviser Alex Davis; students Labrandon Maxwell and Tucker Cowart; county President Ronnie Brown; student Tanner Cleveland and FFA adviser Jordan Creel.

Commodity Corner

Gun Raffle Benefits Ag Foundation

Tickets are on sale now for a gun raffle to benefit the Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation. Cost is \$5 per ticket or \$20 for five tickets.

The winning ticket for the Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon I shotgun will be drawn during the Alabama Farmers Federation 94th annual meeting Dec. 6-7 in Montgomery.

For tickets, contact an Area Organization Director.

The Foundation supports agriculture education projects including scholarships and Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute.

AAES Uses Social Media To Spread Ag Message

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

Over the past three years, state agricultural leaders have encouraged Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) staff to find new ways to communicate with the general public. AAES now has Facebook and Twitter pages, along with a smartphone app focused on research information.

The research shared through these channels primarily targets farmers and may benefit the general public. Social media is just one way AAES continues to ensure the general public knows about and appreciates Alabama agriculture.

To find AAES on social media, search for "Alabama Crops." The Alabama Crops app is available on iPhone and Android smartphones.

OBITUARY

Dr. Robert "Bob" Lea Carson Jr., president of the Chambers County Farmers Federation, died March 21. He was 66.

Carson recently retired from the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine, where he taught 36 years.

Survivors include his wife of 41 years, Karen; daughters Jennie Hill (Joel) and Kelly Barrett (Jay); son Robert "Trace" Carson III (Sara Beth); and a grandson.

Memorials may be made to Gold Hill United Methodist Church, 2240 Co. Rd. 20, Waverly, AL 36879.

Bee & Honey

In 2014, U.S. honey production increased 19 percent from the previous year to 178 million pounds. Colonies producing honey increased 4 percent to 2.74 million, while yield per colony averaged 65.1 pounds, a 15 percent increase.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Beef

Farmers should begin considering marketing options for fall- and spring-born calves. Many farmers sold calves early and missed additional gains of retained ownership. Fear of beef prices dropping should not overrule sound market fundamentals that indicate supply is short, especially for counter-cyclical fall calves or spring-borns that can be stretched out on abundant southeastern forages this fall.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Dairy

For the first time since the Dairy Margin Protection Program (DMPP) began, the national average DMPP milk margin has dropped below \$8 per hundredweight (cwt). While the catastrophic coverage rate starts at \$4/cwt margin, farmers had the option to purchase coverage for \$4-8/cwt. Farmers can change DMPP coverage for 2016 starting July 1.

-Guy Hall, division director

Cotton

The referendum to amend the state cotton checkoff is Wednesday, April 15. If passed, the uniform assessment would replace the current voluntary assessment. For 30 years, the checkoff has supported cotton research, education and marketing. Polls will be open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit tinyurl.com/Cotton15 for poll locations.

-Carla Hornady, division director

Wildlife

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources reminds hog hunters to protect themselves from diseases carried by feral hogs. Use sharp, clean knives for field dressing and butchering hogs. Wear eye protection and gloves to handle a carcass. For more information, visit OutdoorAlabama.com.

-Rick Oates, divisions director

Peanuts

The National Agricultural Statistics Service report states national peanut acreage will increase 9 percent to 1.48 million acres in 2015. Increased acreage can be attributed to low commodity prices for other crops. Alabama's peanut acreage is expected to increase 6 percent to 185,000 acres, while Georgia, the largest peanut-producing state, will see a 20 percent increase to 720,000 acres.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Tuskegee Honors Carver With Lecture Series



Tuskegee University (TU) hosted the George Washington Carver Lecture Series on global food security and agricultural innovations April 8 on campus. The Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation co-sponsored the event. From left are Alabama Peanut Producers Association (APPA) President Carl Sanders, APPA Executive Director Caleb Bristow, TU College of Agriculture Dean Walter Hill and former APPA Interim Executive Director Jim Cravey. The center artwork depicts Carver and was included in a silent auction during the event.

Randolph County Ag Day



More than 40 students and teachers from Randolph and Clay counties attended the Randolph County Young Farmers inaugural Ag Day at Walker Lands and Cattle Farm in Delta March 27. Left, Alabama Farmers Federation Beef and Hay & Forage Divisions Director Nate Jaeger quizzes students on cool- and warm-season grasses.



P.O. Box 11000
Montgomery, AL 36191-0001

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THE CULTIVATOR is published monthly by the Alabama Farmers Federation, a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Correspondence may be addressed to **THE CULTIVATOR**, Mary Johnson - Editor, P.O. Box 11000, Montgomery, AL 36191-0001.

Congress Considers Death Tax, Label Bills

The Alabama Farmers Federation is supporting two bills moving through Congress: H.R. 1105 to permanently repeal the death tax, and H.R. 1599 to create a voluntary food-labeling program.

The U.S. House Ways and Means Committee passed H.R. 1105 March 25. U.S. Reps. Robert Aderholt, Mo Brooks, Bradley Byrne, Martha Roby and Mike Rogers, all Republicans from Alabama, co-sponsored the bill.

Known as "The Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015," H.R. 1599 would establish a uniform, voluntary labeling program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service. It would also establish standards for biotech foods.

The legislation is a response to opponents of biotechnology who have pushed for mandatory labels on biotech food products at a state level, which could confuse consumers.

The Federation stands behind the health and safety of biotech foods, ingredients and products.

Lee County Donates Beach Towels, Swimsuits



The Lee County Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Committee donated money for swimsuits and more than 50 beach towels to BigHouse Ministries, a nonprofit group in Opelika. The donations will go to children in foster care to prepare for summer trips, and each towel will be embroidered with a child's name. From left are committee members Carol Southern, Carolyn McConnell, Brenda Reese, Chairman Jamie Lazenby, Mary Richburg, Shell Gullate, Carol Clements, Barbara Whatley and Lynda Adair.