

Cultivator

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17 Counties Can Get Drought Assistance

Farmers in 17 Alabama counties may apply for drought assistance in the form of emergency loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency.

In July, USDA declared Blount, Cherokee, DeKalb, Etowah, Jackson, Limestone, Madison, Marshall and Morgan counties as primary disaster areas due to drought. Assistance also is available for farmers in contiguous counties: Calhoun, Cleburne, Cullman, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, St. Clair and Walker.

Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell said this notice comes at a crucial time for Alabama farmers.

"The drought has reached a critical point for many farmers throughout the state, especially in northeast Alabama," said Parnell. "Timely rains during the coming weeks will help, but much of the damage has been done. We will continue to work with elected officials, the USDA and others to report crop conditions so affected farmers can qualify for any help available."

The U.S. Drought Monitor for Aug. 2 showed 18 percent of Alabama experiencing severe drought and almost 3 percent in extreme drought.

According to the USDA's Aug. 8 Crop Progress and Condition Report, 34 percent of the state's corn crop is rated poor or very poor.

Farmers have eight months from USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack's declaration to apply for FSA emergency loans. Contact a local FSA office for more information.



Mark Kaiser, right, welcomes Alabama Farmers Federation members to his Baldwin County cattle, hay and row crop farm during the 44th Commodity Producers Conference in Mobile July 28-31. More than 800 Federation members attended the annual event.

Conference Educates Alabama Farmers

More than 800 Alabama Farmers Federation members toured south Alabama farms and learned about new agricultural research during the 44th Commodity Producers Conference in Mobile July 28-31.

The event provides networking opportunities and educational seminars.

"The fellowship with others at the conference is always the best part, but the knowledge gained at tours and seminars is very beneficial," said Tim Whitley, Blount County Farmers Federation president.

Whitley runs a purebred Red Angus cattle farm and grows soybeans and cotton. He visited Baldwin County farms on the yellow tour.

"I learned a great deal visiting Kaiser Farms, and enjoyed hearing more about how they sell square bales of hay," Whitley said.

U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Fairhope, welcomed farmers at the opening banquet July 28, which featured a perfor-

mance by the Cold Springs High School FFA string band.

The conference included numerous firsts in technology and philanthropy. During farm tours July 29, attendees participated in the inaugural conference photo contest on social media, and the Poll Everywhere app allowed for an interactive panel during the general session July 30.

In the inaugural Stuff the Silo event, attendees raised \$6,448 for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mobile.

On the final day, winners in the Women's Leadership Committee's Sewing, Quilting and Tablescapes contests were announced during a luncheon. The closing banquet included Young Farmers award presentations for Discussion Meet, Excellence in Agriculture and Outstanding Young Farm Family competitions. Visit AlfaFarmers.org for details.

For photos, visit the Alabama Farmers Federation's Facebook and Flickr pages.

County Federations Help Feed The Less Fortunate

County Federation groups took the motto "Farming Feeds Alabama" to heart recently by donating food to community organizations that help feed those who often are unsure where their next meal will come from.



This month, the Henry County Farmers Federation board of directors donated a pallet, or 1,440 jars, of peanut butter to the Judson Baptist Association Food Bank in Henry County. From left are board members Tommy Mims, Ed White, Thomas Adams, President Johnny Lee, Kenny Woodham, Roger Scott, 1st Vice President Jim Yance, Bo Phillips, George Roselius, Billy Deal, Sammy Williams and Chappy Trawick.



On July 13, the St. Clair County Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Committee collected food for the St. Clair County Backpack Buddies Program. The charity provides healthy weekend meals to children from food-insecure homes during the school year. School principals and guidance counselors select students who receive a backpack with six balanced meals and four healthy snacks at the end of every week.

Commodity Corner

Dairy

Milk prices have dropped 40 percent since 2014, and U.S. cheese stocks in May were at the highest levels since 1917. This may be a good time for dairy farmers to evaluate coverage under the 2017 Margin Protection Program (MPP). Registration for MPP ends Sept. 30. Contact a local Farm Service Agency office for details.

-Guy Hall, division director

Wildlife

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is holding seminars on the mandatory Game Check program for deer and turkey harvests. Reports may be made by smartphone app, website or telephone. Find a seminar schedule at tinyurl.com/AlaGameCheck.

-Rick Oates, division director

Beef

Summer board sales have proven that weaning and preconditioning calves adds value. Producers in Autaugaville, S.A.F.E. in Dothan and Piedmont in LaFayette all had cattle that sold at or above prices that were equal to their delivery month on the Chicago Board of Trade. Include a conservative \$6/cwt for freight, and those premiums could be \$8-\$10/cwt higher than normal. On a 700-pound calf, that still makes weaning and preconditioning worthwhile.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Cotton, Soybean, Wheat & Feed Grains

While recent rain helped crops in some areas, other parts of the state remain in extreme drought. Alabama cotton is squaring and setting bolls. Corn harvest has begun on early-planted corn. Soybean growers should scout carefully. Fall armyworms and tobacco budworms are more likely to attack young soybeans.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

Peanuts

To prepare peanut growers for harvest, the annual Field Crops Day will be Friday, Aug. 19 at the Wiregrass Research and Extension (WREC) Center in Headland. Registration begins at 8 a.m. Tours start at 8:30 a.m.

The Wiregrass Agronomy Tour is Tuesday, Aug. 30 and will leave from the WREC at 8 a.m. To RSVP, contact Charlotte Countryman at (334) 693-3800.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Bee & Honey

A recent Virginia Tech research project suggests some pesticides used by beekeepers to improve honeybee health may actually be harming bees. The research suggests the pesticides damage bacteria communities in honeybees' guts, specifically microbes crucial to honeybee health. Read the report at tinyurl.com/HoneybeesHealth.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Upcoming Events

- **Aug. 19** - Field Crops Day at Wiregrass Research and Extension Center (WREC) in Headland. Registration starts at 8 a.m. with tours at 8:30 a.m.
- **Aug. 25** - East Alabama Crop Tour at E.V. Smith Plant Breeding Unit at 8 a.m.
- **Aug. 30** - Wiregrass Agronomy Tour at WREC in Headland at 8 a.m., and Field Day at Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center in Crossville at 9 a.m.
- **Sept. 1** - Alabama Heritage Cooking Contest in Montgomery
- **Sept. 20** - Policy Development Meeting in Montgomery
- **Sept. 29** - Alabama Farmers Federation Campaign School in Montgomery

OBITUARY

Frank Hughes of Pisgah passed away July 23. He was 73.

Hughes was a member of the Jackson County Farmers Federation and was a former county president and Alabama Farmers Federation state board member.

He is survived by his wife, Alta; sons Tim Hughes (Pat) and Mack Hughes; eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Memorials may be made to Masonic Lodge #870 or American Cancer Society.

AAES To Host Field Days This Month

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

As summer draws to a close, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station's Research and Extension Centers (RECs) in Headland and Crossville will host field days.

The public is invited to field days at the Wiregrass REC Aug. 19 with tours starting at 8:30 a.m. and the Sand Mountain REC Aug. 30 starting at 9 a.m. Lunch is included. We look forward to visiting with you and highlighting AAES research and Extension programs.

Federation To Host Campaign School For Potential Candidates

The Alabama Farmers Federation will host a nonpartisan Campaign School Sept. 29 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the home office in Montgomery. The event is open to anyone interested in running for office or seeking re-election to a political office.

County Federation leaders are encouraged to share this information with potential attendees. Registration closes Sept. 1. Visit tinyurl.com/CandidateSchool for more information.

Glenn First Alabamian Elected To National Corn Growers Board

Lawrence County farmer Don Glenn was elected to the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Corn Board July 20. Glenn is plowing new ground as the first Alabamian to serve on the five-member board.

He formerly chaired NCGA's Production and Stewardship Action Team and Mycotoxin Task Force, in addition to serving on the Ethanol Committee. Glenn takes office Oct. 1.

Country Star Sara Evans To Perform At Federation Annual Meeting

Award-winning artist Sara Evans is slated to entertain attendees at the Alabama Farmers Federation 95th Annual Meeting Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the Montgomery Performing Arts Centre (MPAC).

Evans' performance is made possible by Alfa Insurance and the Federation.

Ticket prices range from \$35-65. To purchase tickets, call the MPAC box office at (334) 481-5100 or go to ticketmaster.com.

New Area Organization Directors Join Federation

Barrett Gilbert and Wiley Bailey recently joined the Alabama Farmers Federation staff as organization directors for Area 1 and Area 2, respectively.

Gilbert is an Athens native and was raised around his family's cattle business.



Gilbert

He graduated from Auburn University in 2012 with a degree in agricultural business and economics. Gilbert previously worked in sales at Trigreen Equipment.

He will coordinate with county Federations in Colbert, Frank-

lin, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison and Morgan counties. Gilbert and his wife, Hannah, live in Athens.

Bailey was raised in Sand Rock and is a 2015 Auburn University graduate.

For 18 months, he worked as a leadership and motivational speaker, following a year as a national FFA officer.

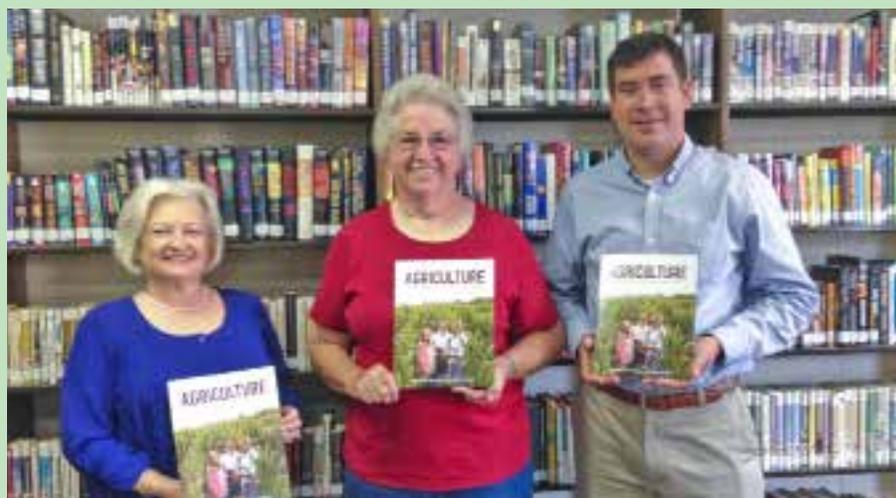
He will work with county Federations in Cullman, Fayette, Lamar, Marion, Walker and Winston counties.

Bailey and his wife, Sara, live in Cullman.



Bailey

Booklet Introduces Students To Ag Careers



The Cherokee County Farmers Federation recently purchased and distributed the Alabama Farmers Federation's ag career booklets to FFA advisers and school counselors throughout Cherokee County. From left are Marilyn Williams, Cherokee County High School (CCHS) librarian and county Women's Leadership Committee (WLC) member; Charlotte Grimes, county WLC chairman; and Seth Neyman, CCHS principal.

Federation Starts Local Member Benefits Program

Alabama Farmers Federation members can now save at hundreds of local businesses across the state simply by showing their membership card.

Savings include discounts on restaurants, oil changes, haircuts and shopping.

"This program adds value to your membership and helps hometown, Alabama businesses," said Paul Brown, Federation member benefits director. "We don't make money on this program. It's a goodwill gesture to help members save money while supporting local businesses."

About 800 businesses already are offering discounts through the program.

Participating businesses are listed free in printed and online member benefits directories. Members can view local benefits by selecting their county in the top-right corner of AlfaFarmers.org. While savings vary by business, a 10-percent or greater discount is typical.

Brown said members can look for window clings, table tents and stickers featuring the red and black Alfa Farmers logo where they shop, and present their membership card to take advantage of the discounts. Local businesses interested in joining the program can apply at any Alfa office.

Byrd Wins UAV Giveaway



Dale County farmer Jerry Byrd, left, won a drawing for an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), or drone, from Farm Bureau Bank during the 44th Commodity Producers Conference in Mobile. He is pictured with Farm Bureau Bank President and CEO Will Hileman. For more on the Farm Bureau Bank member benefit, visit AlfaFarmers.org/benefits.



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AFVGA Joins Alabama Farmers Federation

The Alabama Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association (AFVGA) is now a member of the Alabama Farmers Federation.

AFVGA President John Aplin of Slocomb said he expects the merger to be mutually beneficial.

"Partnering with the Federation brings more tangible benefits to our members and will hopefully increase membership in AFVGA," said Aplin.

Federation Horticulture Division Director Mac Higginbotham now serves as AFVGA executive director.

AFVGA began in 1980 and is a nonprofit organization with about 200 members in 51 of Alabama's 67 counties.

Goals for the partnership are to promote Alabama horticulture; increase membership; expand educational programs with Alabama Cooperative Extension System and state land grant universities through field days and research variety trials; and increase legislative and regulatory involvement on issues affecting speciality crop growers.

Goshen Restaurant Catfish Reigns Supreme



The Old Barn Restaurant in Goshen won the inaugural Best Alabama Catfish Restaurant Contest, sponsored by the Alabama Farmers Federation's Alabama Catfish Producers. From left are judges Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries Commissioner John McMillan and WSFA-TV anchor Judd Davis of Montgomery, restaurant owner Amy Chandler, judge Jim Allen of Alabama Farmers Cooperative and Alabama Catfish Producers Chairman Will Pearce. For more information on the contest, visit AlabamaCatfish.org.