

# Cultivator

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## Legislative Session Starts March 3

New faces will join the Alabama Senate and House Agriculture committees when the legislative session begins March 3.

House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, appointed Rep. David Sessions, R-Grand Bay, chairman of the House Agriculture and Forestry Committee (AFC). Sessions is a Mobile County Farmers Federation member.

"Rep. Sessions will be an outstanding committee chairman, because he understand the challenges our members face," Alabama Farmers Federation House Legislative Programs Director David Cole said.

Rep. Donnie Chesteen, R-Geneva, will serve as House AFC vice chair. Other new AFC members are Reps. Will Ainsworth, R-Guntersville; K.L. Brown, R-Jacksonville; Bob Fincher, R-Woodland; Tommy Hanes, R-Scottsboro; Reed Ingram, R-Mathews; and Jack Williams, R-Wilmer.

Sen. Tom Whatley, R-Auburn, retained leadership of the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee (ACFC), and Sen. Greg Albritton, R-Bay Minette, was appointed vice chair.

Other new members of the Senate ACFC are Sens. Clyde Chambliss, R-Prattville; Steve Livingston, R-Scottsboro; Tim Melson, R-Florence; Harri Anne Smith, I-Slocomb; and Larry Stutts, R-Tuscumbia.

A Federation priority in the 2015 session will be allowing farmers to purchase more than one F4 farm tag.

For updates on the session, sign up to receive the Federation's *Capitol Connection* e-newsletter online at [alfafarmers.org/about/sign-up-form](http://alfafarmers.org/about/sign-up-form).



Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries John McMillan, center, presented the agriculture strategic plan to Gov. Robert Bentley, second from right, Feb. 10 at the State Farmers Market in Montgomery. From left are Alabama Cooperative Extension System Director Gary Lemme, Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell, McMillan, Bentley and State House Agriculture and Forestry Committee Chairman David Sessions, R-Grand Bay.

## Agriculture Strategic Plan Announced

Alabama agriculture groups and leaders hope a new strategic plan will add \$7 billion to the state's economy and create 58,000 jobs by 2020.

Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries John McMillan announced the "Strategic Plan to Grow Alabama's Agriculture, Agribusiness, Forestry and Forest Products Industries" to Gov. Robert Bentley Feb. 10 at the State Farmers Market in Montgomery.

"This plan is not a wish list," McMillan said. "It tells us what we can do to work together among state agencies, private industry and other stakeholders to accomplish these goals."

McMillan said following the strategic plan will result in a 10-percent increase in employment and economic impact from the state's agriculture and forestry industries.

The plan identified seven keys to

future growth: fostering capital investment, developing a quality workforce, ensuring freedom to operate, maintaining transportation infrastructure, expanding trade, strengthening the mission of land grant universities and promoting economic development. Each key is described with a list of actions and goals.

Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell and Executive Director Paul Pinyan served on the 12-member steering committee that developed the plan.

"This committee showed what our groups are capable of achieving by working together," Pinyan said. "By continuing this partnership, we can achieve the lofty goal of increasing the state's agriculture and forestry industries by 10 percent, which will benefit all Alabamians."

The plan can be viewed online at [AlabamaStrategicPlan.com](http://AlabamaStrategicPlan.com).



The new Alabama Peanut Producers Association (APPA) Executive Director Caleb Bristow, left, visits APPA President Carl Sanders of Coffee County. Bristow's hiring was announced at the APPA Annual Meeting in Dothan Feb. 12.

## Bristow Joins Staff As APPA Executive Director

Caleb Bristow of Henry County is the new executive director for the Alabama Peanut Producers Association (APPA), a division of the Alabama Farmers Federation. His first day is Feb. 16, but the hiring was announced at the APPA Annual Meeting in Dothan Feb. 12.

Federation Governmental and Agricultural Programs Director Brian Hardin said Bristow has a tremendous work ethic that he developed growing up on a peanut farm in Columbia, Alabama.

"We are fortunate and thrilled to have Caleb join the APPA and the Federation family," Hardin said. "He will provide excellent leadership through his natural talent. Caleb is a smart, hard worker, and he has a great ability to connect with other

people and make them feel comfortable around him."

Bristow, 26, was raised on the family farm, where they grow peanuts and cotton and have a herd of brood cows.

"I am very excited about this opportunity," Bristow said. "I am ready to work not only with the farmers, but also for the farmers."

He is a two-time Auburn University graduate, earning his master's degree in agronomy in 2012 and his bachelor's in agronomy in 2010.

Most recently, Bristow was a manager and salesman for Kelly Ag in Headland.

He will work with Interim APPA Director Jim Cravey during the transition. Bristow and his wife, Freda, live in Headland.

## Catfish Farmers Accept Increase In Checkoff

The state catfish checkoff referendum passed with 80 percent of the vote Jan. 22. Alabama catfish farmers supported renewing the program for an additional five years at a new collection rate.

The amount collected will increase 50 cents to \$1 per ton of catfish feed sold and raise an additional \$120,000 annually.

The additional funding will, in part, support research on Aeromonas disease. Researchers estimate the disease caused more than \$12 million in catfish losses in the Southeast since 2009.

## Federation Announces FarmPAC 2018 Effort

FarmPAC is looking to build on its success in 2014 by launching FarmPAC 2018. Members who join the effort commit to giving a special annual contribution for four years, beginning in 2015.

Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell said the organization's political action committee is asking members to make that four-year commitment to help elect candidates who share the organization's core values.

"We must be prepared to stand up for our freedom, our rights, our values and our way of life," Parnell said. "This year, the Federation and FarmPAC triumphed over political powerhouses with five times our budget. We were able to do this because we take a stand for what's right; we invest our resources wisely, and our county leaders are active in the political process."

In 2018, every seat of the Alabama Senate and House of Representatives will be on the ballot, and most of Alabama's statewide elected offices will be open due to term limits. Prospective candidates already are positioning themselves for heated and costly primaries in four years.

"FarmPAC 2018 donors understand good government begins with an engaged, informed and invested electorate," Parnell said. "Their four-year commitment will help provide a solid foundation as we build on last year's success."

In the 2014 general election, 151 of 158 FarmPAC-endorsed candidates won.

To join FarmPAC 2018, contact a Federation Area Organization Director or call Stacey Thrash at (334) 613-4222.

## Upcoming Events and Deadlines

- **Feb. 23-Feb. 27** - Peanut production meetings in south Alabama. Visit [AlPeanuts.com](http://AlPeanuts.com) for details.
- **Feb. 27-March 1** - Alabama Farmers Federation Young Farmers Conference in Montgomery. For more details, visit [events.signup4.com/2015AlfaYoungFarmer](http://events.signup4.com/2015AlfaYoungFarmer).
- **Feb. 27** - Registration deadline for the Federation Women's Leadership Conference in Birmingham April 1-3. For information, go to [tinyurl.com/2015womensconf](http://tinyurl.com/2015womensconf).
- **Feb. 27** - Deadline to update yield history and reallocate base acres at Farm Service Agency offices.
- **Feb. 28-March 1** - The Alabama Horse Council's Horse Fair at Garrett Coliseum in Montgomery.
- **Feb. 28** - Conservation Advisory Board Meeting in Montgomery. Visit [OutdoorAlabama.com](http://OutdoorAlabama.com) for details.
- **March 4** - FarmPAC Meeting and Legislative Reception at the Home Office in Montgomery.

## Calls For Applications

- The Alfa Foundation is doubling its commitment to higher education by awarding \$100,000 in scholarships to students at Alabama schools. Applications are due March 15. More information is available at [Alfalns.com](http://Alfalns.com).
- Applications for the Alabama Ag In the Classroom Summer Institute are due April 15. Visit [AlabamaAITC.org](http://AlabamaAITC.org) for details.
- Nominations for Monsanto's Farm Mom of the Year will be accepted Feb. 27-March 31. The winner receives \$10,000. Find more information at [tinyurl.com/FarmMom2015](http://tinyurl.com/FarmMom2015).

## OBITUARIES

**Mary Ann Collins Bowden** of Eufaula, a former Alabama Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Committee chairman, died Jan. 6. She was 80.

Survivors include children Franke Speake, Kathryn Bowden Gale, Ben Bowden III and Nick Bowden; seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to First Presbyterian Church of Eufaula or Oasis Counseling for Women and Children in Birmingham.

**George Douglas McCarthy** of Tallassee, a former Elmore County Farmers Federation president and FarmPAC trustee, died Nov. 8. He was 91.

Survivors include his wife of 69 years, Louise Funderburk McCarthy; children Jean Kirby, Beth Stone and Charles McCarthy; six grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the Friendship Volunteer Fire Department, First United Methodist Church of Tallassee or the Community Hospital Foundation in Tallassee.

**Wayland Smith Sherer** of Jasper, a member of the Walker County Farmers Federation, died Jan. 20. He was 83.

Survivors include his wife of 49 years, Wilene Banks Sherer; children Conra Reeves, Madonna Benson, Phillip Freeman and Jennifer McClendon; and six grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to New Prospect Baptist Church of Jasper.

## Commodity Corner

### Horticulture

According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report, 2014 was a tough year for horticulture in Alabama. Blueberry production was down 13 percent; peach production was down 51 percent and pecan production decreased 42 percent.

*-Mac Higginbotham, division director*

### Meat Goat & Sheep

The division is planning to fund projects for 2015. Checkoff funds are dispersed on a cost recovery basis, meaning only pre-approved projects that are completed, reviewed and endorsed by the committee are reimbursed for expenses. The committee budgets from the previous year's revenue, which was around \$9,000 in 2014. Requests for proposals are due Feb. 25. To apply, call (334) 613-4221 or email [njaeger@alfafarmers.org](mailto:njaeger@alfafarmers.org).

*-Nate Jaeger, division director*

### Cotton, Wheat & Feed Grains

A National Agricultural Statistics Service report shows Alabama farmers increased yields in 2014. Corn production was up 4 percent from 2013 with a total 45.3 million bushels and a record high 159 bushels per acre. Cotton acreage was down slightly from last year, but production estimates show a 12 percent increase with 660,000 bales total.

*-Carla Hornady, divisions director*

### Poultry

China banned U.S. poultry imports Jan. 12 after highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was found in backyard poultry in the Pacific Northwest. Since, HPAI was also detected at a single commercial turkey flock in California. In 2014, U.S. exports to China totaled more than \$272 million. However, China's nationwide ban goes against international guidelines. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has said there is no public health concern with HPAI.

*-Guy Hall, division director*

### Catfish, Forestry and Wildlife

Landowners in Autauga, Baldwin, Coffee, Colbert, Dale, Dallas, Elmore, Fayette, Geneva, Henry, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Macon, Mobile and Pickens counties may apply for funds to address feral swine populations. Applications are due to local Natural Resources Conservation Service offices on Feb. 20.

*-Rick Oates, divisions director*

### Peanuts

Leading up to planting season, hundreds of peanut farmers attended the Alabama-Florida Peanut Trade Show in Dothan Feb. 12. The event included more than 80 vendors and gave farmers insight into what to expect in 2015.

*-Jim Cravey, interim division director*

## Ag Groups Host Food Drive At Inauguration



Twelve Alabama agriculture and forestry groups raised \$1,000 and collected 300 pounds of food for the Montgomery Area Food Bank as part of the Jan. 19 state inaugural events. Alabama Agribusiness Council Executive Director Leigha Cauthen, left and Alabama Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Division Director Kim Ramsey helped promote the food drive.

## Spring Judging Clinics In Auburn



*Wilcox Central High School agriscience teacher Willie Gholston, right, talked with Alabama Farmers Federation Area 7 Organization Director Preston Roberts about member benefits. The promotion was part of the Spring Judging Clinics hosted by Auburn University's College of Agriculture and sponsored, in part, by the Federation.*



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## NRCS Grant Will Fund Irrigation Initiative

A \$1.7 million grant from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will help develop a statewide strategy to increase irrigated cropland. The Alabama Farmers Federation will lead the effort while partnering with NRCS, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and other organizations.

The funding will be used for construction of on-farm reservoirs and other irrigation techniques.

"The ability to harness and better utilize Alabama's abundant water resources will be pivotal in the agricultural and economic development of our state," Federation President Jimmy Parnell said. "This program will help farmers overcome financial barriers to invest in the most efficient irrigation technologies available."

The project is one of 115 initiatives nationwide funded through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Alabama has more than 2.7 million acres of cropland but only 112,000 acres of irrigated land.

## Randolph County Ag Center Receives Donation



*Randolph County Farmers Federation members presented a \$10,000 donation from the Alabama Farmers Federation to the Randolph County Ag Center Feb. 6 at the county's youth hog show. From left are Federation Central Area Vice President Dean Wysner, Scott Noles, Randolph County Farmers Federation President Jimmy Fetner, Alfa Insurance agent Greg Norred, Ag Center board member Brad Johnson, Larry Bowen, Jack Johnson, Ben Johnson and Jason Meadows.*