

Cultivator

www.AlaFarmers.org • News from the Alabama Farmers Federation

Duvall Wins AFBF President Election

Georgia Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall was elected president of the American Farm Bureau Federation Jan. 12 at the group's 97th annual convention in Orlando, Florida.

Nineteen Alabama Farmers Federation (AFF) members were among 353 voting delegates at the convention. The Federation endorsed Duvall earlier this year.

"Zippy Duvall understands the issues and concerns of our farmers and the farmers throughout the United States," said AFF president Jimmy Parnell. "Our organization was founded on his kind of leadership, and he understands those values are what will continue to make this organization great."

Duvall replaces former AFBF president Bob Stallman of Texas, who stepped down after 16 years.

In other elections, South Dakota Farm Bureau President Scott VanderWal won AFBF vice president, and Parnell was re-elected to the AFBF's board of directors as a Southern Region representative. The region includes 13 states and Puerto Rico.

During the five-day convention, Brittany Hill of St. Clair County competed in the Discussion Meet; Calhoun County's Abbie Keel competed in the Excellence in Agriculture national contest; and Garrett and Emily Henry of Montgomery County, with their children Paige and Mason, competed in the Achievement Award contest.

For convention photos, visit AFF's Facebook page.



Ronny Nicholson, who farms in Coffee County along the Pea River, said he lost more than 30 calves when his pastures flooded Dec. 25 and 26. Heavy rainfall in late December lifted the Pea River in Elba to 41.42 feet, the third highest level on record.

December Rains Flood Pastures, Fields

Flood waters have receded following historic December rainfall across Alabama, and farmers are assessing damage to fences, ponds, crops and livestock.

Ronny Nicholson of Coffee County, who raises cattle along the Pea River north of Elba, said he lost more than 30 calves in the Christmas Day flood.

"We lost some cows, too, because they wouldn't leave their calves," Nicholson said. "It's devastating, but we just had a partial loss while other people in town lost everything. But the outpouring of support has been great."

The Pea River at Elba crested at 41.42 feet Dec. 26, the third highest level on record.

In Twin Springs, north of Eufaula, farmer Allie Corcoran said late December rains destroyed an old fishing pond.

"It just ate away at the dam, and that 30-acre pond drained in 20 minutes," said Corcoran.

Other farmers reported washed-out

roads and downed fences. The rain also kept some row crop farmers out of the fields.

"We didn't plant wheat because it was just too wet for us to even try," said Scott Saucer, whose Monroe County farm received 10 inches of rain in 18 hours on Christmas day. "The wheat other farmers in my county did plant is struggling. We need some cold weather and sunshine."

Limestone County farmer Paul Looney said his farm received about 7 inches of rain on Christmas day.

"It'll take its toll," Looney said of the excessive rainfall. "The early-planted wheat is in pretty good shape, but the later-planted wheat is suffering. There will be some dead spots, especially around the bottom of terraces."

December rainfall totals at official Alabama reporting stations ranged from 6.94 inches in Muscle Shoals to 12.38 inches in Mobile and a record-setting 14.13 inches in Montgomery.

On The Move At The Farmers Federation

- **Heather Walker** joined the Alabama Farmers Federation as an administrative assistant in member benefits Jan. 4.
- **William Green** joined the Federation Jan. 11 as an intern with the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA).

Potential Gas Tax Discussion Expected At Upcoming Meetings

The Alabama Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee is hosting regional meetings with Alabama Department of Transportation Director John Cooper to discuss infrastructure needs.

David Cole of the Alabama Farmers Federation said he expects the committee to discuss a potential fuel tax increase to fund road and bridge improvements.

"It's important that our members attend these meetings to help legislators gain a better understanding of the need for good roads and bridges in rural Alabama," said Cole, Federation director of State Legislative Programs in the House of Representatives.

Each meeting runs 10 a.m. to noon. The first was Jan. 7 in Northport. Remaining meeting dates and locations are:

- **Jan. 19** at American Village, 3727 Highway 119, Montevallo
- **Jan. 26** at Mobile Marriott, 3101 Airport Blvd., Mobile
- **Jan. 28** at 103 Jamestown Blvd., Dothan
- **Feb. 1** at Calhoun Community College in Decatur.

AFBF Seeks Input Through Online Survey

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) is asking farmers to respond to an online survey about U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Results will help AFBF develop recommendations on improving USDA programs.

The survey is available online at usdaprograms.questionpro.com through March 15.

Five To Be Inducted Into Auburn Ag Hall Of Honor

Five individuals who have made significant contributions to Alabama agriculture will be inducted into the Hall of Honor at a banquet Feb. 4 in Auburn.

Among the honorees are former Alabama Farmers Federation Commodity Department Director Jim Cravey, recipient in the agribusiness sector.

Cravey retired in 2004 after 34 years with the Federation. He returned to the Federation as Alabama Peanut Producers Association interim executive director from January 2014 to February 2015.

Along with his brother, Albert, Cravey now operates a farm and hunting lodge in Covington County.

Cattleman Wayne Thames of Conecuh County will be honored for the

production sector, and Stanley Wilson of Lee County, former Auburn University (AU) vice president for agriculture, home economics and veterinary medicine, will be honored as the education/government inductee.

Two Pioneer Award winners will also be inducted posthumously into the Hall of Honor. They are long-time Federation member Walter "Sonny" Corcoran of Barbour County and Ralph Harris, an AU animal sciences professor.

Tickets for the banquet are \$50. For more information, contact Amanda Martin at amanda.martin@auburn.edu or (334) 844-8900.

Honorees are selected by the AU Agricultural Alumni Association.

Calhoun County Spreads Christmas Cheer



Several members of the Calhoun County Farmers Federation Women's Leadership Committee visited Rainbow Omega in Eastaboga Dec. 11 and shared Christmas gifts with residents. Rainbow Omega is a faith-based non-profit that provides residential and vocational programs for adults with developmental disabilities.

Budget, Tax Talk Expected In Legislative Session

Budgets and taxes are expected to dominate deliberations when the Alabama Legislature convenes Feb. 2.

During January budget hearings, state department heads were asked to defend funding requests using a concept called "zero-based" budgeting, which the Alabama Farmers Federation supports.

In past years, state appropriations were heavily influenced by the prior year's spending. The new process calls for agencies to disregard past funding and make requests based on need.

Legislation to un earmark funds for

some agencies also is expected to be discussed this session. Supporters say it would allow government to use funding where it's most needed.

Prior to the session, Senate budget committee chairmen switched roles. Sen. Trip Pittman, R-Daphne, is now the Senate Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee chair, while Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, is chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee.

For updates during the session, visit alfafarmers.org/stories/publications/capitol.connection.

Upcoming Events

- **Jan. 25** - Registration deadline for the Alabama Farmers Federation Young Farmers Conference Feb. 26-28 in Montgomery. For details, visit alfafarmers.org/about/events.
- **Jan. 28** - Precision Ag Workshop at Auburn University. Go to tinyurl.com/PrecAg16 to register.
- **Feb. 2** - Alabama legislative session begins.
- **Feb. 2-4** - Federation Commodity Organizational Conference in Montgomery. For details, visit alfafarmers.org/about/events.
- **Feb. 4** - Auburn University College of Agriculture Hall of Honor Banquet in Auburn.
- **Feb. 9** - Registration deadline for Annie's Project courses held Feb. 11, 18 and 25 in Huntsville. Visit anniesproject.org for details.
- **Feb. 11** - Alabama Peanut Producers Association Annual Meeting and trade show in Dothan. Visit alpeanuts.com for more information.
- **Feb. 12-15** - American Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference in Kansas City.

Auburn Researchers Provide Status Reports

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

Auburn University (AU) agricultural research and Extension scientists are currently reporting on projects funded by wheat, feed grains, cotton, peanut and soybean producer checkoff programs.

Reporting happens early each year and leads to funding requests for new and continuing projects.

AU College of Agriculture research and Extension scientists work with Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) regional agents and farmers to ensure research projects solve problems and are applicable to Alabama farms.

The staff at outlying experiment stations across the state appreciates support from Alabama farmers as we ask for input on these research projects.

Funding Research, Improving Farms



The Alabama Farmers Federation State Wheat & Feed Grains Committee met Jan. 6 at the home office in Montgomery to review funding proposals. The committee supports research, promotional and educational efforts through the farmer-funded checkoff.

Commodity Corner

Cotton, Soybean and Wheat & Feed Grains

At its Jan. 6 budget meeting, the State Wheat & Feed Grains Committee voted to fund research projects, the Alabama Farm-City Luncheon, TV ads and 4-H and Auburn University judging events. The State Soybean Committee and Alabama Cotton Commission have budget meetings later this month.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

Forestry

Last month, Congress passed legislation with new tax provisions on capital gains for timber corporations, increased business deductions on equipment and an extended charitable donation deduction on qualified conservation easements. A one-hour webinar, available at tinyurl.com/ForestryWebinar, covers these changes.

-Rick Oates, division director

Bee & Honey

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is sending two surveys to U.S. beekeepers this month. The group hopes survey results will help reduce honeybee colony loss during winter to no more than 15 percent within 10 years. For details, visit tinyurl.com/BeeSurveys.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Dairy, Pork and Poultry

Livestock producers under the AFO/CAFO program are encouraged to contact state representatives and senators to request \$100,000 in supplemental funding to cover cuts in the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's FY2016 budget. The Federation will also ask the Legislature for \$570,000 in the FY2017 budget to cover CAFO registration fees for farmers.

-Guy Hall, divisions director

Hay & Forage

Despite wet weather, 2015 was good for hay and forage growers. Timely rain across most of the state brought average-to high-quality production, which should help those marketing to livestock farmers who need additional energy for animals during cold, wet periods this winter. Hay tested by the Auburn Lab with a Relative Forage Quality (RFQ) value of 125 or higher may be sold at a premium.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Peanuts

The Alabama/Florida Annual Trade Show is Feb. 11 at the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. Peanut grower meetings have also been scheduled for February. Find the schedule at alpeanuts.com.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Turner Wins National Award



J.B. Turner of Harvest in Madison County was named the national 2015 Lloyd Wright Small Farmer of the Year. The award is presented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Turner's 152 acre farm includes vegetables, hay and registered Angus and Hereford/Simmental cattle.



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Health Care Open Enrollment Ends Jan. 31

The open enrollment period to sign up for health care coverage ends Jan. 31.

Alfa Health is helping Alabama Farmers Federation members and non-members navigate health care reform and choose affordable coverage options from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama.

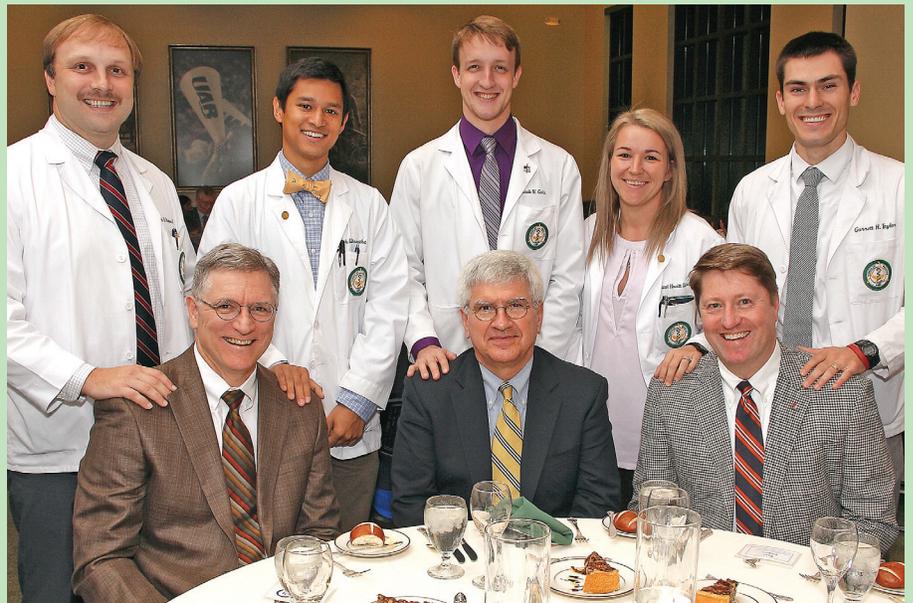
Many self-employed people, including farmers, may qualify for premium tax credits.

"Customers are often surprised to find out that they qualify for a tax credit to help with health insurance costs," said Janet Bradford, Alfa Health director. "Alfa Health has saved many customers hundreds of dollars each year on health insurance by helping them apply for the premium tax credit."

Tax credit eligibility also extends to early retirees not yet on Medicare and workers who do not have coverage through their employer.

Call Alfa Health at (800) 392-5705 to learn more about health care coverage options.

Med Students Dedicated To Serve Rural Areas



The University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine hosted its 10th annual scholarship dinner last November with Alabama Farmers Federation Executive Director Paul Pinyan as a special guest. The Federation supports medical students through the Alfa Rural Medical Scholars Program Endowed Scholarship Loan Fund. Front row, from left are Rural Medical Scholars Program Director Dr. John Wheat, UAB Montgomery Regional Medical Campus Dean Dr. Wick Many Jr. and Pinyan. Back row, from left are Alfa Scholar Scott Thomas, a third-year medical student; Kevin Shrestha, first-year; Alfa Scholar Jacob Guin, second-year; Alfa Scholar Crystal Skinner, first-year; and Garrett Taylor, second-year.