

# Cultivator

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## Vote Could Reverse Inspection Changes

Catfish farmers and health-conscious consumers could feel the impact of a U.S. Senate vote May 25 to switch catfish inspections from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) back to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Alabama Farmers Federation National Legislative Programs Director Mitt Walker said the move would reverse recent gains in keeping tainted, foreign fish from flooding the U.S. market.

"Since taking over inspections in April, the USDA already has stopped two shipments of Vietnamese fish contaminated with banned chemicals from reaching American tables," Walker said. "The last two years FDA was inspecting fish, only two shipments with known carcinogens were discovered."

Walker said the Federation appreciates Alabama Sens. Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions for voting against transferring inspections back to FDA.

"The track record of past inspections shows those supporting the measure are clearly putting the interests of foreign exporters above the American people," Walker said.

The measure, S.J. Res. 28, passed the Senate 55-43 and now heads to the House of Representatives, where it's expected to get a favorable reception by coastal state lawmakers concerned about trade consequences of tighter inspections.

The Catfish Farmers of America (CFA) expressed disappointment with the Senate vote on such an important food safety issue.



*Dallas County farmer Wendy Yeager harvested the last 25 acres of wheat on her Orville farm June 3. Alabama farmers are reporting about average wheat yields this year after the crop received too much rain in winter and too little rain in May.*

## Farmers Make Hay During Dry Weather

The one good thing about dry weather across Alabama is it's allowed row crop farmers time to harvest wheat and start planting soybeans.

After a wet winter and dry spring, farmers are reporting wheat yields at or slightly below average.

"We started cutting Memorial Day, and I was upbeat but that quickly changed," said Wendy Yeager of Dallas County. "We usually harvest about 70 bushels an acre, and if we get to 55 bushels an acre this year, I'll be pleased. The weather this year just wasn't conducive to growing a great crop."

Yeager said she waited longer than usual to market her wheat because of low commodity prices. She's sold the most of the crop to local farmers for seed.

"The market just wasn't very inviting to plant many acres, but we knew we needed to plant wheat somewhere because we like to double-crop soybeans behind it," Yeager said.

In Calhoun County, farmer Doug Trantham said he is averaging 65 to 70 bushels an acre on his wheat.

"We were hoping for 80 to 90 bushels, so I think the dry weather in May had an effect on it," he said. "Some people say wheat likes dry weather, but it takes rain to make grain, and wheat is a grain."

Trantham and Yeager also roll wheat straw for livestock, and they're waiting on a good rain to plant soybeans behind the harvested wheat.

The U.S. Drought Monitor shows almost half the state is abnormally dry. Many northeastern counties are in a moderate drought, with DeKalb, Jackson, Madison and Marshall counties reporting severe drought conditions.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Crop Progress and Condition report released June 6, Alabama farmers have harvested 34 percent of the wheat crop. The report shows 95 percent of the wheat is rated fair, good or excellent.

## \$10,000 Up For Grabs In Soybean Challenge

The Alabama Soybean Producers are offering a \$10,000 award to a farmer who can grow 100 bushels or more of soybeans per acre.

Entries stating intent to participate must be submitted by July 15 to Dr. Dennis Delaney, 119 Extension Hall, Auburn University, Alabama, 36849, or [delandp@auburn.edu](mailto:delandp@auburn.edu). Supervised reports of harvest yield are due Nov. 21.

For more information, go to [tinyurl.com/Soybean16Challenge](http://tinyurl.com/Soybean16Challenge).

## Clarke County Native Joins Federation Staff

Thomasville native Marlee Moore joined the Alabama Farmers Federation Communications and Public Relations Department June 6 as an agricultural communications specialist.

Moore is a familiar face in the Federation, having interned last summer.



Moore

She graduated from Auburn University (AU) in agricultural communications in May.

"I'm thankful and excited to be back full time with the Federation," she said. "My goal is to bridge the gap

between consumers and farmers. People want and need to know where their food and fiber comes from, and I'm excited to help be a voice for the farmers of our state."

Moore will write and edit news releases and feature stories and take photographs for Neighbors magazine, county Federation newsletters and the website. She directly reports to Publications Director Debra Davis, who worked closely with Moore last summer.

"Marlee gives me hope for agriculture's future," Davis said. "She is a bright, talented writer. She is passionate about agriculture and sharing our farmers' stories, innovations and challenges."

Moore is a former Federation scholarship recipient. While at AU, she was an Ag Ambassador, Ag Council reporter and the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow vice president.

## FFA Convention Hits A Home Run



The State FFA Convention in Montgomery was in full swing June 7 with FFA Night at the Biscuits, Montgomery's minor league baseball team. From left are state officers Sentinel Whitney Hamby, Reporter Ivy Harbin, Treasurer Anna Pollard, Secretary Cassidy Catrett, Vice President Jordan Stowe and President Wade Gossett. Other convention events took place at the Montgomery Performing Arts Centre and the Convention Center June 8-10.

## Commodity Corner

### Catfish

Alabama, Arkansas and Mississippi catfish farmers will visit Southeastern congressmen in Washington, D.C., June 14-15. This year's annual trip will focus on preserving the catfish inspection program, which was transferred from the Food and Drug Administration to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It will also include the annual Catfish Fry for senators, representatives and staff.

-Rick Oates, division director

### Horticulture

Alabama is blessed with sources for nutritious food, especially this time of year with fresh fruits and vegetables. The state has 160 registered farmers markets and roadside stands. Search for one near you online at [BuyLocalAlabama.com](http://BuyLocalAlabama.com), and help support the local economy.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

### Peanuts

The National Peanut Board (NPB) and the Culinary Institute of America recently hosted the first-ever Millennial Dining Summit with professional chefs in California. During the two-day event, NPB awarded \$10,500 in scholarships for participants of the Peanut Recipe Innovation Challenge. Go to [NationalPeanutBoard.org](http://NationalPeanutBoard.org) for more information.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

### Cotton, Soybean and Wheat & Feed Grains

Recently, we've seen price increases in the commodity market for corn, soybeans and wheat. Cotton prices, on the other hand, remain steady.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

### Meat Goat & Sheep

The 10th Small Ruminant Field Day at Alabama A&M University (AAMU) is July 1-2. The educational field day is sponsored by AAMU, Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the College of Agriculture at Tennessee State University. It will cover small ruminant production research from those institutions. The event is free, but attendees must register by June 15. Contact Maria Leite-Browning at (256) 372-4954 or [mll0002@aces.edu](mailto:mll0002@aces.edu).

-Nate Jaeger, division director

### Pork

William J. Even started work June 6 as chief executive officer of the National Pork Board. He previously worked for DuPont Pioneer as global industry relations lead. He was also South Dakota agriculture secretary for three years under Gov. Mike Rounds, who now is a U.S. senator. He and his family operate a diversified crop and livestock farm in South Dakota.

-Guy Hall, division director

## Upcoming Events

- **July 7** - Deadline for nominations in the inaugural Catfish Restaurant Challenge. For contest details, visit [AlabamaCatfish.org](http://AlabamaCatfish.org).
- **July 12-14** - Aspire Youth Leadership Conference in Columbiana. For details, visit [tinyurl.com/AspireYLC](http://tinyurl.com/AspireYLC).
- **July 14** - Sunbelt Ag Expo Field Day in Moultrie from 7:15 a.m. to noon. The free event is open to agriculture and agribusiness professionals. Go to [SunbeltExpo.com](http://SunbeltExpo.com) for more information.
- **July 21-23** - Southern Peanut Growers Conference in Miramar Beach, Florida. For details, visit [AlPeanuts.com](http://AlPeanuts.com).
- **July 28-31** - Alabama Farmers Federation Commodity Producers Conference in Mobile. Visit [AlfaFarmers.org](http://AlfaFarmers.org) for more information.

## Jackson Named Interim Alabama State Forester

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) recently announced Dan Jackson as interim state forester.

Jackson was assistant state forester and replaces Greg Pate. Jackson has worked with AFC since 1988 when he was Walker County forester and manager.

AFC's mission is to protect and sustain Alabama's forest resources using professionally applied stewardship principles and education, ensuring the state's forests contribute to abundant timber and wildlife; clean air and water; and a healthy economy.

## Seeking Faces of Farming

The U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance is seeking its new class of Faces of Farming & Ranching. Online applications are due July 10 and must include two references and a short video of the entrant's farm.

For more information or to apply, visit [FoodDialogues.com/Faces/](http://FoodDialogues.com/Faces/) Apply.

## Court Ruling Reinforces Private Property Rights

A unanimous ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court May 31 clarified that private property owners may sue the Army Corps of Engineers over wetland determinations under the Clean Water Act.

In *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers v. Hawkes Co., Inc.*, the eight justices agreed that courts should be allowed to review the agency's decisions on wetlands and streams it regulates. The Corps and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) jointly administer the Clean Water Act.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange joined 22 other states in filing an amicus brief in the case supporting private property owners.

"The Supreme Court unanimously

ruled in favor of property owners' rights to immediately challenge in court U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' declarations that their property is subject to the Clean Water Act," said Strange. "This property rights defense is even more important with the threat of an expansion of federal jurisdiction under the EPA's Waters of the U.S. rule."

A lawsuit against the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule is still pending in the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. The Corps and the EPA developed the WOTUS rule.

The 6th Circuit issued a nationwide stay on WOTUS implementation in October 2015. Alabama is one of 18 states that petitioned the court for the stay.

## Alabama Soybean Producers Fight Hunger



Alabama Soybean Producers (ASP) members Annie Dee of Pickens County and John E. Walker III of Tuscaloosa County donated \$10,000 to the Alabama Food Bank Association May 31. The presentation was made at the West Alabama Food Bank (WAFB) in Tuscaloosa. ASP and Invest An Acre donated \$5,000 each. From left are Alabama Farmers Federation Soybean Division Director Carla Hornady, Dee, Walker and WAFB Executive Director Jean Rykaczewski.

## Construction Starts On Poultry Research Center

Construction began the first week of June on Auburn University's Charles C. Miller Jr. Poultry Research and Education Center.

Alabama Farmers Federation Poultry Division Director Guy Hall said the center will be an asset to Alabama poultry producers.

"Alabama is one of the largest poultry producing states," Hall said. "We need to provide our farmers with researched solutions that will yield greater profits for their operations."

The center is named in honor of an

industry pioneer and Auburn graduate whose family contributed \$2.5 million to the project. The Alfa Foundation has pledged \$100,000 to construction.

This is the first phase of construction which will include two Auburn Poultry Science Department broiler research houses. Research will center on cost-effective ways to improve housing, ventilation, equipment, lighting, heating, feed, bedding materials and energy issues.

Future plans include live bird research houses, processing facility, visitor center and administrative building.

## Young Farmers And Fatal Vision



Alabama State Trooper Kevin Cook, third from left, talked about the Fatal Vision program at the Coffee County Young Farmers meeting May 26. With Cook, from left, are Coffee County Young Farmers Sara Bell, Jonathan Sanders, Cindy Kinney, Ashley Jeffers, Amanda Money and Josh Elliott.



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## Cotton Ginning Cost-Share Program Available

The new Cotton Ginning Cost-Share program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide \$300 million in cost-share assistance to cotton farmers.

Farmers may sign up for the program June 20 through Aug. 5. Payments are expected to begin as early as July.

The program goal is to maintain and expand domestic cotton marketing by helping farmers cover ginning costs during tough times.

"This program provides timely assistance to cotton producers facing economic uncertainty due to the low market price, large global supply and high input costs," said Carla Hornady, Cotton Division director for the Alabama Farmers Federation.

To be eligible, farmers must be actively engaged in the farm and meet conservation compliance. Payment limit per farmer is \$40,000 and adjusted gross income is limited to \$900,000.

For more information, contact a local FSA office or go to [fsa.usda.gov/cgcs](http://fsa.usda.gov/cgcs).

## AFBF's Duvall Visits Ag Commissioners



American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall delivered the keynote address to commissioners of agriculture from across the southern U.S. June 6 in Mobile at the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) annual meeting. From left are Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell, Duvall and Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries and current SASDA President John McMillan.