

## Special Session Called For Infrastructure Plan

Gov. Kay Ivey called the Alabama Legislature into special session Wednesday to consider the Rebuild Alabama Infrastructure Plan.

The plan calls for a 10-cent-per-gallon fuel tax over three years to fund improvements to the state's crumbling roads and bridges, as well as the Port of Mobile. Ivey's proposal also calls for future indexing of the fuel tax based on road construction costs.

Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell was among government and community leaders who stood with Ivey as she announced the plan Feb. 27.

"We commend Gov. Ivey for her courage and foresight to tackle some of Alabama's biggest challenges," Parnell said. "The Federation supports increased and equitable funding for farm-to-market roads.

"Members rely on roads and bridges to receive supplies; get their crops, livestock and poultry to market; and travel for work and school. Poor infrastructure is one of the greatest barriers to rural Alabama enjoying the same economic growth as larger cities."

Parnell said the Federation will monitor the plan as it moves through the Legislature, including ensuring new funds go to materials rather than overhead costs and that county roads get a fair share of new revenues.

Planned improvements to the Alabama State Docks shipping channel also are good news for Alabama farmers, Parnell noted.

"Making Mobile a deep-water port would greatly enhance markets for Alabama-grown products like poultry and timber," he said.



*Chilton County is the site of the proposed Alabama Farm Center, which will be built in Clanton. Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation President Jimmy Parnell addressed a crowd during the announcement Feb. 26. Initial plans call for a 5,000-seat air conditioned arena; 150,000 square foot exhibition building; 400-stall horse barn; 400 RV hookups; and other barns and arenas.*

## Alabama Farm Center Site Announced

Chilton County has been selected as the site of the proposed Alabama Farm Center, which could bring 300-400 new jobs and \$40-\$55 million in annual economic impact to the region.

The Chilton County Industrial Development Board made the announcement Feb. 26 at Clanton City Hall. A 500-acre parcel owned by the City of Clanton and Chilton County was chosen from about a dozen sites vying for the project. It is located on the east side of Interstate 65 at Exit 212 between Alabama Hwy. 145 and County Road 43.

"We are excited to finally be bringing to fruition a project that will forever change Chilton County and central Alabama," said Matt Mims, Chilton County Commission vice chair.

The Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation began exploring the economic feasibility of a large, multi-function event facility about two years ago. The Foundation, which supports youth livestock shows, collegiate scholarships and other agricultural education activities, hired Markin

Consulting of Minnesota to evaluate the potential of a regional livestock and event complex.

"Chilton County's central location, proximity to large cities and access to I-65 make this site ideal for the Alabama Farm Center," said Foundation President Jimmy Parnell, who also serves as president of Alabama Farmers Federation and Alfa Insurance. "There are few comparable ag centers in the U.S., so this is a great opportunity for Alabama and Chilton County to attract visitors from across the region and country. As the Federation prepares for its centennial in 2021, our board has cast a vision to make the Alabama Farm Center the premier livestock and event center in the South."

Initial plans call for a 5,000-seat air conditioned arena; 150,000 square foot exhibition building; 400-stall horse barn; 400 RV hookups; and a variety of other barns and arenas. Markin estimates livestock shows, rodeos, dog shows, festivals and events could keep the facility booked over 300 days each year.

## On The Move In Ag

**Chris Langley** of Chambers County was elected Alabama Cattlemen's Association president during its annual meeting in Birmingham Feb. 15-16. Langley is in the beef cattle and timber industries. His operation was Alabama's 2017 Farm of Distinction.

**Mike Tate** of Madison County was elected National Cotton Council (NCC) chairman for 2019 during the organization's annual meeting in San Antonio. **Neal Isbell** of Colbert County was also elected to the NCC board.

**Rachel Chastain** of Talladega County was one of eight 2019 National Excellence In Teaching About Agriculture Award winners. She teaches students about ag and animal husbandry by raising chickens and other small farm animals at the Helen Keller Campus of the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB).

## Events & Deadlines

**March 13** - Taste of Alabama Legislative Reception in Montgomery

**March 14-16** - Jr. Beef Expo in Montgomery  
 • [JRBeefExpo.com](http://JRBeefExpo.com)

**March 14-16** - SLE Rodeo in Montgomery  
 • [SLERodeo.com](http://SLERodeo.com)

**March 22** - Registration deadline for Alabama Farm-City Awards Luncheon April 4 in Birmingham  
 • [AlabamaFarmCity.org](http://AlabamaFarmCity.org)

**March 29** - Registration opens for Alabama Farmers Federation Beef Tour to Mississippi June 4-7  
 • [AlfaFarmers.org](http://AlfaFarmers.org)

**April 3-5** - Federation Women's Leadership Conference in Birmingham

**April 15** - Applications due for Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute in Florence  
 • [AlabamaAITC.org](http://AlabamaAITC.org)

**April 27** - Tuskegee University Goat Day in Tuskegee  
 • [Tuskegee.edu/GoatDay](http://Tuskegee.edu/GoatDay)

### AFVGA

Over 30 growers from around the state met Feb. 28 at Isom's Orchard in Athens for the Alabama Extension Commercial Fruit Tree Meeting. Participants learned about peach and apple production from Wes Isom and Auburn Horticulture Department Head Dr. Desmond Layne. A combined 1,000 years of peach-growing experience was accounted for among growers during the discussion and networking session.

-Hunter McBrayer, executive director

### BEEF, MEAT GOAT & SHEEP

As of Jan. 1, all cattle and calves in the U.S. totaled 94.8 million head, up from 94.3 million head in 2018. In Alabama, all cattle and calves totaled 1.3 million head, a 3 percent decrease from the previous year. All U.S. goat inventory was 2.62 million head, down 1 percent. Alabama goat inventory totaled 49,000 head, a 3 percent decrease.

-Brian Hardin, Governmental & Ag Programs Department director

### COTTON, SOYBEAN, WHEAT & FEED GRAIN

The Alabama Crops website is now divided into AUAgResearch.com and aces.edu/blog/category/farming. This change was part of making Auburn University websites ADA-compliant.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

### POULTRY

A Keystone Foods hatchery in Eufaula was destroyed during the March 3 tornadoes that tore across Alabama. Chick availability is expected to affect growers' time between flocks and could affect processing in the area.

-Brian Hardin, Governmental & Ag Programs Department director

### FORESTRY

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is proposing to repeal and replace an existing regulation offering reciprocity for out-of-state burn managers. The current rule recognizes equivalent or prior training regardless of the state where a person's training is received. A new rule would specify fees the AFC can charge for prescribed burn training and certification. The new rule should not raise fees above current levels.

-William Green, division director

### PEANUTS

March is National Peanut Month. The Alabama Peanut Producers Association is thankful for its approximately 900 peanut growers who produce an average of 180,000 acres of peanuts a year and provide over 3,000 jobs in Alabama. To learn more about the peanut industry, visit [alpeanuts.com](http://alpeanuts.com).

-Brian Hardin, Governmental & Ag Programs Department director



## Young Farmers Conference Features Tours

Farm tours branched out across central and east Alabama during the 2019 Young Farmers Conference. The Alabama Farmers Federation's annual event welcomed nearly 400 farmers to Montgomery March 1-2. Tours ranged from seed orchards to meat processing plants and from agritourism farms to operations like Dennis Nursery & Greenhouse in Selma, pictured.



## Freezing Temps Could Impact Peach Crop

**B**elow-freezing temperatures the first week of March potentially significantly impacted the central and south Alabama peach crop.

Adequate chill hours combined with warm temperatures caused many fruit cultivars, including peaches, plums and blueberries, to be in bloom – making them more susceptible to colder weather.

North Alabama crops received some damage, but farmers are cautiously optimistic, said Alabama Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association Executive Director Hunter McBrayer.

While most fruit and vegetable growers are diversified – with farms including peaches, strawberries and various vegetables – peaches often drive summer produce sales.

## Calhoun Women Host Legislative Breakfast

*The Calhoun County Women's Leadership Committee (WLC) hosted its annual Legislative Breakfast Feb. 26 before the legislative session began March 5. From left are Rep. Steve Hurst, R-Munford; Teresa Wilson; County WLC Chair Linda Loveless; Delle Bean; Rep. K.L. Brown, R-Jacksonville; Rep. Ginny Shaver, R-Leesburg; and Rep. Randy Wood, R-Anniston.*

## Roberts, Hall Assume New Federation Roles

**T**he Alabama Farmers Federation's Preston Roberts and Guy Hall began serving the state's largest farm organization in different roles last month.

Roberts was promoted to director of agricultural legislation, while Hall became Area 7 organization director and will work with Barbour, Bullock, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Montgomery and Russell counties.

Roberts, 29, formerly served Area 7 since 2014. The Shelby County native graduated from Auburn University (AU) in fisheries and allied aquaculture and previously worked for the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. Roberts, wife Mandy and son Sam live in Auburn.

Hall, 56, served as Poultry, Pork and Dairy divisions director nearly 14 years. Previously, he was an Alfa Insurance adjuster. The AU animal science graduate grew up on a row crop and cattle farm in Bullock County. He and wife Julie have two adult daughters.

New assignments for Area 4 Director Stephen Blackmon and Area 5 Director David Heflin also were made. Blackmon's area now includes Chambers, Clay, Cleburne, Randolph, Talladega, Tallapoosa and St. Clair counties. Heflin's counties are Autauga, Chilton, Coosa, Elmore, Jefferson and Shelby.

## Ag In The Classroom Applications Due April 15

**E**ducators wanting to incorporate food and fiber information in their classrooms should apply for the Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute.

The free, three-day training program is May 29-31 in Florence. Applications are due April 15 at [AlabamaAITC.org](http://AlabamaAITC.org).

The workshop includes integrated agricultural activities for grades K-6,

along with farm visits. Participants receive professional development hours, as well as innovative materials and teaching strategies to increase student knowledge of the nutritional and economic importance of food and fiber systems in their daily lives.

Activities incorporate language arts, science, social studies and mathematics skills.



## Farmers Hear Checkoff Research Proposals

*The Alabama Soybean Committee met in Montgomery Feb. 26 to hear proposals for using checkoff dollars. Checkoff funds can be used for research, promotion and education. The Alabama Wheat & Feed Grain Committee and Alabama Cotton Commission also met that week to discuss which proposals to fund.*



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## Alfa Responds To Fatal Storms

Severe storms ripped through Alabama and Georgia March 3, including a fatal EF-4 tornado in Lee County. Alfa Insurance adjusters like J.R. Jung, right, were on the ground March 4 visiting affected customers like Garrett Dixon of Salem, whose barns and fences were destroyed.

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## Farmers Talk Trade, Disaster Relief During DC Visit



The Alabama Farmers Federation hosted a barbecue reception for Congressmen, staff and agency officials March 6 in Washington, D.C. From left are Federation District 4 Director Tim Whitley of Blount County; U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Alabama; Caroline Aderholt; U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Georgia; and Federation President Jimmy Parnell. The reception allowed members to interact with those who develop and implement policy.

Alabama farmers met with lawmakers and agency representatives during the Alabama Farmers Federation's biennial Washington Legislative Conference March 5-7.

Briefings and small group meetings focused on disaster relief, farm labor,

feral swine control and crop insurance.

Farmers visited the Environmental Protection Agency; hosted a barbecue reception; interacted with Alabama's U.S. representatives; and met with Ambassador Gregg Doud, the Chief Agricultural Negotiator in the Office of

the U.S. Trade Representative.

A special ceremony honored U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Alabama, who received the American Farm Bureau Federation's Golden Plow Award. The award recognizes members of Congress who exemplify ag leadership and support of Farm Bureau policies.