

Cultivator

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

Register Now For Washington Trip

Alabama Farmers Federation members will travel to the nation's capital for the 2015 Washington Legislative Conference May 19-22. Registration is due April 24.

"This trip allows our members to meet with Alabama's elected officials in Washington, D.C.," said Mitt Walker, director of national legislative programs for the Federation. "We encourage members to attend this conference. Our congressmen make important decisions every day on Capitol Hill, but they need to know how bills and policies will affect farmers back home in Alabama."

First-year Congressman Gary Palmer from Alabama's 6th Congressional District will join farmers for the May 20 opening breakfast. The popular Congressional BBQ will take place that evening.

Other speakers that day include Reece Langley of the National Cotton Council, Greg Walcher of the Natural Resources Group, Kristina Butts of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and Don Parrish of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Events on May 21 include morning group meetings with the seven U.S. representatives for Alabama and a luncheon featuring remarks from U.S. Sens. Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions. Political law attorney and conservative activist Clea Mitchell will be the luncheon speaker.

The trip features a visit to the Australian Embassy and an address from Dr. Chris Parker, the country's minister-counsellor of agriculture.

For additional information, visit Events.SignUp4.com/dc15.



More than 100 legislators and other state leaders attended the Taste of Alabama legislative reception at the Alabama Farmers Federation home office in Montgomery March 4. From left are Chilton County Farmers Federation President Wendell Kelley, freshman State Sen. Clyde Chambliss, R-Prattville, and Federation President Jimmy Parnell.

Farmers, State Leaders Discuss Politics

Farmers discussed serious state issues with elected officials during the annual Taste of Alabama legislative reception March 4 at the Alabama Farmers Federation's home office in Montgomery. The event's menu highlighted products grown or raised in Alabama.

About 120 Federation members greeted Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey, Agriculture Commissioner John McMillan, Secretary of State John Merrill, State Treasurer Young Boozer, Public Service Commission President Twinkle Cavanaugh, several state judges and 98 members of the State Senate and House of Representatives.

During the gathering, Alabama farmers focused on the 2015 legislative session that began March 3.

"This gathering gives our members a chance to discuss legislative issues, while reminding our state leaders that these men and women are the backbone of our state; they grow the food and fiber

that keeps our economy strong and our country independent," said Federation President Jimmy Parnell.

The reception featured samplings of shrimp from Odom Farms in Eutaw, grits from Oakview Farms in Wetumpka, pork barbecue from Bishop's BBQ in Cherokee, beef from Mike Henry's farm in Pintlala, fried quail and biscuits with gravy from Bob and Betty Plaster of Montgomery, honey and pecans from Bill Mullins in Meridianville, grilled peanut butter and jelly sandwiches from the Alabama Peanut Producers Association, plus goat stew and lamb burger sliders from Charlie Thompson of Lexington. Catfish, chicken, cornbread, sweet potatoes, fried green tomatoes and ice cream were also served.

Event photos are available online at Flickr.com/AlabamaFarmers and on the Federation Facebook page. View the event video on the Federation YouTube channel.

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

- **March 21** - Registration deadline for Dairy Goat U on April 11 in Harpersville. This event is sponsored by the Alabama Sheep & Goat Checkoff.
- **March 28** - North Alabama Youth Livestock Judging Clinic in Horton.
- **March 31** - Deadline to update yield history, reallocate base acres and apply for ARC or PLC at Farm Service Agency offices.
- **April 1-3** - Women's Leadership Conference in Birmingham.
- **April 2** - Farm-City Luncheon in Birmingham.
- **April 11** - South Alabama Youth Livestock Judging Clinic in Atmore.
- **April 15** - Referendum on the State Cotton Checkoff.
- **April 18** - Tuskegee University Goat Day, sponsored by the Alabama Sheep & Goat Checkoff.

Researchers Release Peanut Allergy Study

A recent study out of Great Britain found that introducing peanut products into an infant's diet reduces the child's chances of developing a peanut allergy by 81 percent.

The study tested more than 600 high-risk infants, defined as babies with eczema and/or egg allergies.

"For a study to show a benefit of this magnitude in the prevention of peanut allergy is without precedent," said Anthony S. Fauci, a doctor involved with the study. "The results have the potential to transform how we approach food allergy prevention."

While doctors and researchers have called the study's findings "ground-breaking," they also remind parents allergic reactions to peanuts or other foods can be life-threatening. Parents should consult a doctor prior to feeding peanut products to children at high-risk of developing peanut allergies.

OBITUARIES

David Bitto of Elberta died March 6. He was 67. Bitto served as Baldwin County Farmers Federation president since 1990. He was previously a member of the State Soybean Committee and the Federation State Board.

Survivors include his wife, Gloria; daughters Ella Annette Bitto and Susan Bitto Noon (Brian); and son, John David Bitto (Jennifer).

Memorials may be made to Baldwin County Sheriff's Boys Ranch, 21870 Co. Rd. 32, Summerdale, AL 36580.

Norma Bradford of Cullman, a former State Women's Leadership Committee member, died Feb. 28. She was 85.

Survivors include her husband, Oscar; daughters Wilma Bailey, Wanda Bates and Donna Meeks (Billy); son Oscar Bradford (Pam); eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Noah Gerald Willis of Nances Creek, a former state representative, presidential candidate and Calhoun County Farmers Federation board member, died Feb. 16. He was 75.

Survivors include his wife of 54 years, Frances Keener; son Keith Willis (Tonyia Fox); daughters Kim Pruitt (Johnny) and LaBreeska Ponder (Kirk); eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

APPA Annual Meeting And Trade Show



A record crowd of more than 650 farmers attended the Alabama Peanut Producers Association (APPA) annual meeting and trade show in Dothan Feb. 12. Above, APPA Executive Director Caleb Bristow gives papers to Coffee County farmers James Stephens, left, and Bob Helms.

Alabama Garden Centers Report Boxwood Blight

Boxwood Blight, an incurable fungus, was recently detected in Alabama at Lowe's Garden Centers in Anniston, Cullman, Decatur, Florence, Fultondale, Graysville, Guntersville, Troy and Trussville.



Leaf Spots

The infected plants were Dwarf English Boxwoods from Scappoose, Oregon.

The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI) is destroying the infected plants.

However, some plants had already been sold to the public.

ADAI and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System are urging consumers

who purchased boxwoods in the past six months to check plants for symptoms of Boxwood Blight. Those include leaf spots, black stem lesions and defoliation.

"Once Boxwood Blight is established in an area, you can't get rid of it; the disease stays in the soil," said Kassie Conner, plant diagnostician at Auburn University.

If Boxwood Blight is suspected, consumers should place a sample from the plant in a sealed bag. Transport or mail the sample to the Plant Diagnostic Lab at Auburn University or at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Lab results may take up to six weeks.

For more information, contact Conner at (334) 844-5507 or Jim Jacobi at (205) 879-6964.

State Checkoffs Help Fund Ag Research

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks.

The Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) consists of several units including 15 outlying experiment stations. Research is conducted for beef cattle, row crops, vegetables, fruit crops, greenhouse, ornamentals and other commodities.

The primary mission for AAES is to conduct research that will provide citizens with affordable food, fiber and energy along with an enhanced quality of life in an environmentally and economically sustainable system.



Monks

Each year, a portion of research funding comes through producer checkoff programs. Over the past two months, the Alabama Wheat and Feed Grains Committee, Alabama Cotton Commission, Alabama Peanut Producers Association and Alabama Soybean Committee have considered requests and granted funding to scientists in the College of Agriculture at Auburn University.

Study results will be shared online at AlabamaCrops.com, in various journals, and through Alabama Cooperative Extension System information outlets.

Alabama Cattlemen Elect New Leaders

Jim Akin of Lexington, Alabama, was officially sworn in as Alabama Cattlemen's Association president during the organization's annual convention Feb. 20-21 in Huntsville.

Other officers are President-Elect Bill Lipscomb of Prattville, who is also Autauga County Farmers Federation first vice president; Secretary Richard Meadows of Columbia; and Treasurer L.D. Fitzpatrick of Hope Hull, a Montgomery County Farmers Federation board member.

Also during the convention, Coffee County Farmers Federation board member Max Bozeman Jr. of Elba was inducted into the Alabama Livestock Hall of Fame.



The Alabama Farmers Federation State Equine Committee sponsored a booth during the trade show at the Alabama Horse Fair at Garrett Coliseum in Montgomery Feb. 28 and March 1. From left, committee members Jimmy Fetner of Randolph County, Gean Harris of Cleburne County and Jim Roulaine of Bibb County discuss membership opportunities with a fair visitor.

Commodity Corner

Equine

More than 2,500 people from across the Southeast attended the Alabama Horse Fair Feb. 28 and March 1 in Montgomery. Guest speakers included Dan James of Australia; Pat Parelli of California; and Jim Swanner and Taylor McIntosh of Alabama. State Equine Committee members participated in the trade show.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Greenhouse, Nursery & Sod; Bee & Honey; Horticulture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will grant more than \$30 million to states for healthier meals and snacks in schools. Issued as equipment and training competitive grants, funding may be used to implement federal programs. Read more information at tinyurl.com/grant30.

-Mac Higginbotham, divisions director

Pork

The USDA predicts a 5.5 percent increase in hog production for 2015, compared to a 2 percent decrease in 2014. Record-high meat prices and low feed costs last year led to more hogs going to market at heavier weights. Due to this expansion, wholesale prices are now down 40 percent since last July. On a positive note, consumer spending on pork is up 15.7 percent in the past five years.

-Guy Hall, division director

Cotton, Soybean and Wheat & Feed Grains

At recent respective budget meetings, the Alabama Cotton Commission, State Soybean Committee and State Wheat & Feed Grains Committee voted to fund research projects, the Alabama Farm-City Luncheon and judging events hosted by 4-H and Auburn University. The Soybean and Wheat & Feed Grains committees also funded promotional ads.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

Wildlife

The Conservation Advisory Board (CAB) met March 1 in Montgomery. Agenda items included adding 15 days to the 2015-16 squirrel and rabbit hunting seasons and adding acreage to the Geneva State Forest and the Wildlife Management Areas in Lowndes and Autauga counties. No changes were proposed for the upcoming deer or turkey seasons.

-Rick Oates, division director

Peanuts

Six peanut production meetings were held across Alabama in February. Attendees gained valuable information for their 2015 crops. As planting season nears, current indicators point to an increase in peanut acreage. Farmers are also busy preparing for farm bill deadlines.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Celebrating Read Across America



The Dale County Women's Leadership Committee celebrated "Read Across America" Week at Ariton School March 4. Committee Chairman Sharon Byrd, left, donated agriculture books to librarian Cyndi Barefoot. The group also read to a third-grade class and led students in a sunflower craft activity while they discussed farming.



P.O. Box 11000
Montgomery, AL 36191-0001

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #310
Montgomery, AL

THE CULTIVATOR is published monthly by the Alabama Farmers Federation, a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Correspondence may be addressed to **THE CULTIVATOR**, Mary Johnson - Editor, P.O. Box 11000, Montgomery, AL 36191-0001.

Alabama Farmers Visit Washington, Help Shape AFBF Policies, Strategies

Five Alabama Farmers Federation members joined nearly 500 other American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) members from 43 states for the group's Issue Advisory Committee Meeting the last week of February. The committee helps shape AFBF policy and strategies.

Bill Cook of Montgomery County, Brian Glenn of Lawrence County, Dennis Maze of Blount County, Brandon Moore of Madison County and Ricky Wiggins of Covington County represented Alabama. The main topics discussed were the farm bill, ag labor, irrigation and technology.

"Everyone is still unsure exactly how parts of the farm bill will be implemented," Wiggins said. "It was interesting to discuss different opinions and interpretations about how the farm bill will affect us individually in different regions. It's very different from the South and Midwest."

Federation members also met with elected representatives to discuss a wide range of issues including immigration, tax reform, international trade, the Endangered Species Act, water regulation and biotechnology.



Alabama Farmers Federation members who attended the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Advisory Committee Meeting also visited with U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., who serves on the House Agriculture Committee. From left are Dennis Maze of Blount County, Rogers, Brandon Moore of Madison County and Ricky Wiggins of Covington County. Brian Glenn of Lawrence County and Bill Cook of Montgomery County also attended the AFBF meeting.