

Cultivator

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Ivey Allocation Aids State Forest Agency

Still hurting from last year's drought-related wildfires, the budget-stressed Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) is slated to receive a boost from Gov. Kay Ivey's discretionary departmental emergency fund.

State Forester Rick Oates said Ivey intends to release nearly \$500,000 to help the agency, which incurred more than \$1.5 million additional expenses in man-hours and equipment costs because of wildfires. The AFC's annual budget is \$22 million.

Unforeseen expenditures, combined with a 55 percent — or \$8 million — reduction in state funding for the AFC in recent years, severely limited the agency's ability to carry out its mission, Oates added.

"Our agency is charged with protecting and sustaining Alabama's forest resources," Oates said. "Last year's fires consumed nearly 50,000 acres in Alabama."

Forestry is an economic engine in Alabama, providing hundreds of thousands of jobs and a \$21.4 billion annual economic impact. Two-thirds of Alabama, nearly 23 million acres, is covered in forestland.

The Alabama Farmers Federation's William Green thanked Ivey for her commitment to rural Alabama.

"The AFC is vital in protecting the communities of rural Alabama and the forests that are so valuable to our state," said Green, the Federation's interim Forestry Division director. "This funding will give the strained agency a much-needed lift."

Lee County Ag Students Tour Lazenby Farms



Auburn High School agriscience students stepped out of the classroom and visited Lazenby Farms April 28 to learn more about cover crops, irrigation, crop rotation, soil health, technology, machinery and cattle. Farm owner Mitch Lazenby and Lee County young farmer Andrew Sparks, left, also talked with students about career opportunities in agriculture.

Perdue Confirmation Commences USDA Changes

Farmers gained a new advocate in Washington when Sonny Perdue was confirmed Secretary of Agriculture April 24, more than three months after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

Perdue's confirmation begins the process of selecting new USDA leadership, said Federation National Legislative Programs Director Mitt Walker.

"Alabama farmers have waited for months for state-level leadership to be named at the Farm Service Agency and Rural Development offices," Walker said. "We hope Secretary Perdue will move swiftly to fill these posts as he rounds out his team."

The day after his confirmation, Perdue and Trump met with farmers, including American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall, to discuss the agricultural economy. During the meeting, Perdue was tapped to head

a task force identifying unnecessary or overly burdensome regulations impeding agriculture's economic output.

He has already moved to reverse strict standards in the school lunch program, which the previous administration imposed.

Perdue's changes allow states more flexibility in nutritional standards, resulting in schools offering foods students readily eat, Walker said.

In other news, the Senate and House reached an agreement to fund the government for the remainder of fiscal year 2017.

Cotton and dairy interests hoped the continuing resolution would address farm bill programs that haven't performed as anticipated due to market conditions. The spending package addressed neither issue, but provides an additional \$5 million for feral swine damage.

Wildlife Committee Checks In On Game Check



The State Wildlife Committee met in Montgomery May 3 and discussed legislation, received a Game Check update from Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Director Chuck Sykes and plotted a game plan for 2017. The State Forestry Committee also met to discuss drought effects.

Upcoming Events

- **May 19** - Specialty Crop Block Grant Program applications due
 - tinyurl.com/specialtycrops17
- **May 22** - Last possible day of the legislative session
- **May 31-June 2** - Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute in Tuscaloosa
- **June 1** - Discussion Meet and Excellence in Agriculture applications due
 - alfayoungfarmers.org
- **July 15** - County Pork Cooking Contest submissions due
 - tinyurl.com/porkcontest17
- **Aug. 3-5** - Commodity Producers Conference and Alabama Farm Expo in Birmingham
 - Register by June 16 at alfafarmers.org

Peanut Producers Pass Checkoff Referendum

Alabama peanut producers approved continuing the statewide peanut checkoff program with a 99 percent favorable vote April 27.

Under state law, the checkoff must be reapproved every three years.

Twenty-eight polling sites were located in 23 counties where peanuts are grown. The Alabama Peanut Producers Association (APPA) administers the checkoff.

Alabama is the second-largest peanut producer in the U.S. APPA President Carl Sanders said he appreciated the strong show of support.

"This program funds many research and educational activities that would not exist if not for the checkoff," he said. "These programs directly impact our industry on an annual basis."



Commodity Corner

Soybeans

Alabama Soybean Producers will award \$10,000 to a farmer growing 100 or more bushels of soybeans per acre for the 100-Bushel Yield Challenge. Contestants may select the best 2.5 continuous acres in a field larger than 10 acres. Learn more at tinyurl.com/SoybeanChallenge17.

-Carla Hornady, division director

Peanuts

The Southern Peanut Growers Conference is July 20-22 at the Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Miramar Beach, Florida. Visit southernpeanutfarmers.org by June 30 for discounted registration.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Hay & Forage

True armyworms have been detected in central and north Alabama. Farmers should scout pastures and hayfields to combat this destructive pest. The economic threshold for armyworms in grasses and wheat is around four 1/2- to 3/4-inch armyworms per square foot. The caterpillar is about 1.5 inches long when fully grown. When caterpillars are 1.25 inches or larger, most damage is done. Visit tinyurl.com/scoutarmyworms for forage grasses scouting and control methods, which are the same as those used for fall armyworms.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Pork

Pork use has increased faster than any other protein in foodservice since 2011, according to Technomic, Inc.'s 2017 Volumetric Assessment of Pork in Foodservice. Consumption of pork grew on a pound basis by more than double that of chicken, the next most popular protein. Pork use increased by 1.145 billion pounds, while chicken use grew by 515 million pounds.

-Guy Hall, division director

Horticulture

Strawberry growers or those planning to grow a crop next spring should attend "All Things Soil" June 8 at 6 p.m. in Morgan County. Alabama Extension's Edgar Vinson and Virginia Tech Extension's Allen Straw will speak. Visit tinyurl.com/StrawberryMeeting17 for more information.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Forestry

First quarter Southern timber prices decreased from 2016, with most pulpwood and pine log products falling over 5 percent. The U.S. economy's second quarter growth should increase pulpwood and sawtimber demand. The Canadian lumber tariff may aide growth, but surplus logs may stagnate prices.

-William Green, interim division director

North Alabama Beef-Forage Field Day A Win

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

Agricultural research specifically benefitting Alabama producers is being conducted across the state at Alabama Agricultural Experiment Stations (AAES). An Alabama Cooperative Extension System and AAES Beef-Forage Field Day was at the Tennessee Valley Research and Extension Center in April.

Topics included hay storage and quality demonstration; tall fescue recovery from drought; pasture composition and identification; and creep feeding and pre-conditioning calves.

Auburn University beef systems scientist Kim Mullenix, along with other research and extension specialists, provided research-based information to producers and other guests.

Parnell Continues County Visits At Girls Ranch



Federation President Jimmy Parnell, right, visited with members from Chambers, Lee and Tallapoosa counties at the Tallapoosa County Girls Ranch in Camp Hill April 21. The ranch uses farming to teach faith to and build a family atmosphere with abused and neglected children.

Upcoming QuickBooks Classes For Farmers

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is offering sessions in 16 counties on the banking software QuickBooks Pro. Cost for the two-session class is \$25.

Class size is limited. Laptops will be provided. For a full list of meetings or to register, visit aces.edu/go/734.

- **May 16 & 18** - Pell City Civic Center, Pell City
- **May 23 & 25** - Sand Mountain Research & Extension, Crossville
- **June 6 & 8** - Lawrence County Ag Center, Moulton
- **June 20 & 22** - Cane Creek Community Gardens, Anniston

Federation Welcomes AU Agriculture Interns

Three Auburn University (AU) College of Agriculture seniors began summer internships with the Alabama Farmers Federation May 8.

Agricultural communications students Caleb Hicks and Ellie Isbell and agricultural business and economics student Kelsey Cassebaum will intern through the Commodity Producers Conference in August.

Ramer native Hicks is working with the Alabama Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, where he will photograph and promote the state's industry.

Isbell, who was raised on a row crop farm in Muscle Shoals, is interning with the Public Relations and Communications Department. She will write and take photos for Neighbors magazine, manage social media, develop web content and more.

The Soybean and Wheat & Feed Grain Producers will benefit from Lillian native Cassebaum's work. She grew up on a farm and will document and develop use of checkoff dollars in education, research and promotion.

All are Federation scholarship recipients and College of Agriculture leaders. Hicks and Isbell are Ag Ambassadors. Cassebaum is the AU Young Farmers chairman.

Alfa Specialists Flock To Stroud Poultry Farm



Alfa Insurance underwriters and farm specialists toured Steve and Valorie Stroud's poultry farm in Goshen April 28. The group discussed poultry house construction and the state's billion-dollar poultry industry. From left are Business Intelligence Analytics Director Jason Thompson, Senior Vice President of P&C Underwriting Tommy Coshatt, District Manager Mark Whitlow and Stroud.

Gov. Ivey Meets Board Members



Gov. Kay Ivey met with the Alabama Farmers Federation state board April 24 to discuss her vision for steadying the ship of state, which includes a commitment to rural development. She also stressed Alabama agriculture's economic importance. Ivey talked with each board member, including District 5 Director Joe Anders of Tuscaloosa.



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Register Now For Farm Bureau Contest, Camp

Female farmers and rural entrepreneurs have two opportunities to grow their influence on the agriculture industry through American Farm Bureau Federation programs.

The 11th Women's Communication Boot Camp is Oct. 24-27 in Washington, D.C. The three-day intensive training offers sessions on public speaking, testifying, targeting messages and working with the media.

Fifteen women will be selected to participate. Applications are due June 15 at tinyurl.com/womensbootcamp.

Participants in the 2018 Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge must run for-profit businesses focused on food or agriculture and be 18 years old at the time of online submission.

Applicants will compete for almost \$150,000 in startup funds. Four finalists receive \$15,000 and compete for an additional \$25,000. Six best-in-show winners receive \$10,000.

Apply at strongruralamerica.com before June 30.

Ag Communicators Hone Skills At Home Office



Auburn University agricultural communications students visited the Alabama Farmers Federation home office in Montgomery April 18 to learn about its Communications Department, tour the "Simply Southern TV" studio and do an on-camera exercise. Front row from left are Julie Glover, Mary Kendall Dixon, Abby Himburg, Olivia Watts and Brittany Carter. Back row from left are Hannah Corcoran, Caleb Hicks, Kelsey Cassebaum, Cole Sikes and Morgan Graham.