

Cultivator

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New Commodity Leaders Sought

Mark your calendars for the Alabama Farmers Federation Commodity Organizational Meeting Feb. 7-9 in Montgomery.

Over three days, hundreds of farmers will attend educational seminars and vote for leaders on 16 of the Federation's state commodity committees.

"We encourage county leaders to thoughtfully consider who from their county would make a good nominee for the committees and which members should be appointed as voting delegates," said Brian Hardin, Federation Governmental and Agricultural Programs Department director. "During lunch at the event, we'll recognize those who have served the maximum nine years on a commodity committee."

Members may only serve on one state commodity committee. After serving three consecutive terms, a member must wait a year before running for that same committee.

Event registration website will be available soon. Contact Jessica Mims at (334) 612-5096 with questions.

Feb. 7 - Bee & Honey; Beef; Catfish; Pork; Soybeans; and Wheat & Feed Grains

Feb. 8 - Cotton; Equine; Horticulture; Meat Goat & Sheep; Poultry; and Wildlife

Feb. 9 - Dairy; Forestry; Greenhouse, Nursery & Sod; and Hay & Forage. The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association Board of Directors will meet in the afternoon.

Elections for the Alabama Peanut Producers Association will be held at the group's winter meeting.



Shelby County farmer Terry Wyatt planted corn this season for the first time in seven years. It suffered after almost six weeks of no rain this summer. Wyatt said he hoped to harvest 70 bushels per acre, but in a good year, he would harvest nearly double that amount.

Dry Weather, Low Prices Hurt Farmers

In a good year, Shelby County farmer Terry Wyatt expects to harvest around 140 bushels an acre on non-irrigated corn fields. After a dry summer that brought only 4 inches of rain in June and July, Wyatt would be happy with 70 bushels per acre this year.

"We had rain early on, and the corn looked great," said Wyatt, who planted corn this season for the first time in seven years. "Then, it stopped raining. Once we started harvesting, we hit spots with good-sized ears of corn, but for the most part, they were small and undersized."

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, parts of Blount, Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Cleburne, DeKalb, Jackson, Jefferson, Lee, Madison, Marshall, Shelby and St. Clair counties are in an extreme drought. Exceptional drought, the driest conditions, has been recorded in Jackson and DeKalb counties.

"My soybeans should have been at least waist high in September, but they're

barely above ankle height," said Jackson County Farmers Federation President Phillip Thompson. "They just didn't grow because it was too dry."

Thompson, who raises soybeans, corn and hay, said he had no significant rain from April to August, and he expects yields to be drastically lower than normal.

Alabama Cooperative Extension System specialists said they expect lower-than-normal yields for corn and average yields for soybeans and cotton across the state. Alabama Peanut Producers Association Director Caleb Bristow predicted slightly above average peanut yields in Alabama – about 3,500 pounds per acre.

Due to low commodity prices, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service forecasts 2016 net cash farm income at \$94.1 billion, down 13.3 percent from 2015. Net farm income is predicted to drop 11.5 percent to \$71.5 billion, which would be the lowest in seven years.

Upcoming Events

- **Oct. 17** - Registration deadline for Alabama Farmers Federation annual meeting Dec. 4-6 in Montgomery. Go to tinyurl.com/AnnualMeeting16.
- **Oct. 18-20** - Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Georgia. For more details, go to SunbeltExpo.com.
- **Oct. 28 - Nov. 6** - Greater Gulf State Fair in Mobile with \$5 admission for Alabama Farmers Federation members Nov. 1. Find details at TheGroundsMobile.com.
- **Oct. 28 - Nov. 6** - Alabama National Fair in Montgomery with \$5 admission for Federation members Nov. 2. For details, go to AINationalFair.org.
- **Oct. 28** - Registration deadline for HORSE U Nov. 12 at Auburn University. Visit ansc.auburn.edu/horse-u to register.
- **Nov. 2** - North Alabama Extension Corn and Soybean College at Guntersville State Lodge. For details, Call Eddie McGriff at (256) 557-2375.
- **Nov. 4-13** - National Peanut Festival in Dothan with \$5 admission for Federation members Nov. 7 and 8. Find more information at NationalPeanutFestival.com.

New Program Helps Improve Herd Genetics

Guest column from Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

Northeast Alabama cattle farmers may now participate in a program designed to help improve herd genetics.

Alabama Cooperative Extension System Animal Science and Forages team members Dr. Lisa Kriese-Anderson, Kent Stanford and Landon Marks worked with Bill Clements and Clint McElmoyl of the Sand Mountain Research Extension Center (SMREC) to develop a beef cattle heifer improvement program at the station.

Five cosigners entered 48 cattle into the improvement program last year, and it's again open to farmers this season. Contact the SMREC at (256) 528-7133 for more information.

Online Registration Open For AFVGA Conference

Farmers may now register online for the Alabama Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association's (AFVGA) annual fall conference Nov. 17-18 at the Clanton Conference and Performing Arts Center in Clanton.

Conference registration has been reduced to \$85 and includes a one-year membership to the AFVGA. Alabama Farmers Federation members can save an additional \$30 by registering with their Federation membership number.

The conference includes a trade show and seminars on growing methods, crop production and pest management. For

\$15, attendees may take a tour of Penton Farms, a pumpkin patch and U-pick operation in Verbena.

The Federation's Horticulture Division Director Mac Higginbotham said this conference is a prime networking opportunity.

"We're creating a community for farmers to share groundbreaking ideas that will change Alabama agriculture for the better," said Higginbotham. "Our goal is to help farmers improve their bottom lines."

Registration ends Nov. 7. For more details, visit AFVGA.org.

Leaders Meet New State Superintendent



Alabama State Superintendent of Education Michael Sentance spoke with the Alabama Farmers Federation Board of Directors and guests at the home office Sept. 19. His first day as superintendent was Sept. 12. From left are Sentance, Houston County Women's Leadership Committee Chair Gloria Jeffcoat, Southeast Area Vice President George Jeffcoat of Houston County and Area 2 Director Paul Looney of Limestone County.

U.S. Files Trade Complaint With WTO Against China

The U.S. took the first step in trade enforcement action Sept. 13 by filing a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) that claims China provides excessive support for domestic wheat, corn and rice production. In addition to violating WTO commitments, the complaint alleges China's actions deny American farmers the ability to fairly compete for exports.

An investigation by the Office of U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. Department of Agriculture claims China exceeded its "market price support" commitments under WTO rules by \$100 billion for the three commodities from 2012 to 2015. This inflated China's

prices above market levels and provided incentives for Chinese farmers to increase wheat, corn and rice production.

"These programs distort Chinese prices, undercut American farmers and clearly break the limits China committed to when they joined the WTO," said U.S. Trade Ambassador Michael Froman.

A study from Iowa State University suggests Chinese programs cost U.S. wheat farmers between \$650 and \$700 million annually due to suppressed global prices and lost export opportunities.

The U.S. Wheat Association, National Association of Wheat Growers and the American Farm Bureau Federation support the action against China.

Applications For NRCS Programs Due Oct. 21

Alabama farmers have until Oct. 21 to apply for funding through U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs for 2017.

Individuals must complete farm bill eligibility requirements to qualify for USDA assistance.

Available programs are Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

Special emphasis participants, such as socially disadvantaged, limited resource and beginning farmers, are eligible for higher payment rates. These farmers can also receive up to 50 percent advanced payment for contracting or purchasing materials.

For more information, visit a local USDA Service Center.

Agriculture Accolade

Lionel Evans of Limestone County was named the 2016 Beekeeper of the Year at the Alabama Beekeepers Association's (ABA) annual meeting in Clanton Oct. 1.

Evans tends 48 hives and is a member of the Alabama Farmers Federation's State Bee & Honey Committee. He teaches honeybee workshops to FFA teachers, speaks to county beekeepers associations and gave honeybee books to Limestone County schools.

OBITUARY

Clifford Meigs of Daviston passed away Sept. 30. He was 87.

Meigs was a member of the Tallapoosa County Farmers Federation and the Tallapoosa County Cattlemen's Association.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Betty Jean Townley Meigs; daughters Donna Blackmon and Kim Shelton (Greg); five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to Daviston Baptist Cemetery Fund, P.O. Box 115, Daviston, AL 36256.

Shaping Farmers Federation Policies



County leaders attended the Alabama Farmers Federation's Policy Development Meeting Sept. 30 at the home office in Montgomery. Groups considered policy changes and additions submitted by county Federations. Approved proposals will be considered by 500 voting delegates during the Federation's annual meeting in December.

Commodity Corner

Cotton, Soybeans, Wheat & Feed Grains

Farmers enrolled in either Agriculture Risk Coverage or Price Loss Coverage programs can expect to receive safety net payments from the U.S. Department of Agriculture due to market downturns in the 2015 crop year.

Producers who grew feed grains in 2015 or planted for harvest in 2016 are eligible to vote in the Nov. 15 Wheat & Feed Grains Referendum. Poll locations will be open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in every county. For poll locations, visit GrainsOfT-ruth.net.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

Forestry, Wildlife Resources

The Alabama Forestry Commission issued a burn ban Oct. 10 for 46 counties in the state. According to the Commission, there have been 621 wildfires since mid-September, and fire crews responded to 65 fires Oct. 9. For a county list, go to forestry.alabama.gov.

-Rick Oates, divisions director

Dairy, Pork

It's time once again for Federation-sponsored agricultural, livestock and youth competitions at the Alabama National Fair Oct. 28-Nov. 6. Last year, 298 exhibitors participated with 1,482 entries and won over \$52,800 in prizes.

-Guy Hall, divisions director

Horticulture

Fruit, vegetable and tree nut producers are encouraged to take a 15-minute survey to help Auburn University researchers study the impact the industries have on Alabama. Respond at tinyurl.com/FruitVegNutSurvey by Oct. 31. For more information, email zzg0001@auburn.edu or fieldde@auburn.edu.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Peanuts

New guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration allow for peanuts to be labeled "healthy" based on high levels of unsaturated fat that provide plant-based protein. The guidelines focus on types of fat in foods rather than amount.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Meat Goat & Sheep

Tuskegee University will host the third National Goat Conference Feb. 17-19 in conjunction with its 125th Farmer Conference. Over 400 people from across the country are expected. Presentations will cover goat research; regulatory and marketing issues; and how to improve linkages between private and public entities to enhance the U.S. goat business. Early registration ends Nov. 30 and costs \$150. Go to tinyurl.com/GoatConference for more information.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Rounding Up Good Grub



Alabama Farmers Federation State Meat Goat & Sheep Committee member Clay Mims of Chilton County and Chairman Stacey Nestor of Montgomery County served goat stew during Ag Roundup Oct. 1 at Auburn University. The annual event raises funds for College of Agriculture scholarships and increases awareness of agriculture.



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Register Online For AFBF Convention, Tour

Alabama Farmers Federation members may now register online for the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) annual convention Jan. 6-11 in Phoenix and a special post-convention Canyon Country Bus Tour Jan. 11-15.

The annual AFBF event draws thousands of U.S. farmers for national Young Farmers & Ranchers competitions, the IDEAg Trade Show and educational agriculture workshops.

The Canyon Country Bus Tour is only available to Alabama Farmers Federation members. AFBF convention attendance is not required for tour registration.

The five-day tour includes stops at the Petrified Forest National Park, Painted Desert, Grand Canyon and Hoover Dam. The first day features agriculture and history tours in Arizona.

Tour cost ranges from \$1,300 to \$1,825, which includes five meals but excludes airfare. Registration deadline is Nov. 30, but space is limited.

For more details, go to tinyurl.com/AFBFCanyonCountry.

State Committee Dons Pink For Alfa Cares



Members of the Alabama Farmers Federation's State Women's Leadership Committee attended the Sept. 30 Alfa Cares Kickoff at the home office in Montgomery where President Jimmy Parnell announced a \$25,000 donation to the American Cancer Society (ACS). The Alfa Cares Campaign continues through October as the Federation and Alfa Insurance collect additional donations for ACS. Visit AlfaCares.com for more information. From left are Secretary Kathy Anderson, Jefferson County; Debbie Roberts, Fayette County; Federation Women's Leadership Division Director Kim Ramsey; Vice Chair Nell Miller, Blount County; and Chair Regina Carnes, Marshall County.