

# Cultivator

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## Additional Farm Bill Deadlines Set

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released details about the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs established in the 2014 farm bill.

Alabama farmers may visit local Farm Service Agency offices through Feb. 27, 2015, to update yield history and reallocate base acres.

From Nov. 17 to March 31, 2015, farmers may select either ARC or PLC for their farms, which will be used for the 2014 through 2018 crop years. Both programs offer market protection from substantial drops in crop prices and revenues.

"While ARC and PLC enrollment opens soon, farmers should take their time and make an informed decision, because once an option is selected, it can't be changed," said Alabama Farmers Federation National Legislative Programs Director Mitt Walker. "Decision tools are becoming available to help farmers weigh their options, and more information will be released over the next few months."

At [fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc), producers can view projections on how each program would affect their farms under various future scenarios. The online tools were developed by staff at the University of Missouri, Texas A&M University and the University of Illinois.

Farmers will sign contracts for the 2014 and 2015 crop years starting in mid-April 2015 through the summer. If necessary, payments for the 2014 crop year will be made in October 2015.



Lawrence County farmer Sam Spruell planted 800 acres of peanuts this year in three northwest Alabama counties. Spruell said his crop is slightly above average. However, reported yields in the Wiregrass and other parts of the state are lower than normal.

## Alabama Peanut Yields Vary Drastically

The 2014 crop season has been a mixed bag for the state's peanut farmers. In northwest Alabama, where peanut pickers are a rare sight, Lawrence County farmer Sam Spruell is harvesting an above-average crop.

"Yields look good, and the nut size is larger than normal," Spruell said. "The peanuts have been grading really good, too. We're around 200-400 pounds per acre above our normal right now."

Although peanut prices are lower than usual, Spruell remains optimistic.

"Yields trump price," he said. "I have never failed to make money with a good crop, and the prices have never been high enough to make money when I have nothing to sell."

At the southern end of the state, Baldwin County farmer Tim Mullek is on pace with five-year averages for the area.

"In August, we had spotty showers, if it even rained at all," Mullek said. "That

made most of our crops mature about two weeks earlier than normal. We started digging peanuts Sept. 18, and so far, it's an average crop."

In the Wiregrass, yields are more sporadic, ranging from very poor to average.

"Some areas of southeast Alabama didn't receive rain for eight to 10 weeks. You just can't make a crop in those conditions," said Coffee County farmer Carl Sanders, president of the Alabama Peanut Producers Association. "Yields vary from field to field this year, and grades are not where they should be — all because of dry weather."

Sanders said lower prices for peanuts mixed with the lower yields could create a financial hardship for Wiregrass farmers.

According to an Oct. 6 U.S. Department of Agriculture report, nearly 65 percent of the state's peanut crop is rated fair, poor or very poor. Twenty-two percent of the crop has been harvested.

## Alabama Peanut Farmers Reappointed

Alabama farmers Ed White of Newville and Tom Corcoran of Eufaula will continue serving on the National Peanut Board (NPB) through Dec. 31, 2017. U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the three-year reappointments recently.

White is Alabama's representative on the board. He operates White Farms in Henry County with his wife, Bonnie, and son, Jason. They grow runner peanuts along with cotton, corn and small grains.

Barbour County native Corcoran is Alabama's alternate member on the board. He and family members own and operate Liikatchka Plantation, where they grow runner peanuts, cotton, soybeans, corn and wheat.

The new term for appointees starts Jan. 1, 2015.

## Auburn Hosts Ag Discovery Adventure



Auburn University's Ag Discovery Adventure Sept. 13 at the E.V. Smith Research Center in Shorter introduced people of all ages to farming. The event included the mobile dairy classroom, farm animal exhibits, T-shirt and pumpkin painting, corn cribs and farm machinery demonstrations. The Alabama Farmers Federation and various commodity committees co-sponsored the event.

## EPA Extends WOTUS Comment Period

The Environmental Protection Agency has again extended the comment period on its "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS) proposed rule and will now accept comments through Nov. 14.

Under the proposal, the EPA could regulate areas where water flows intermittently, such as ditches, which would allow the agency to require permits for everyday farm activities including applying fertilizer or cutting trees.

Visit [capwiz.com/alfafarmers](http://capwiz.com/alfafarmers) to submit a comment and read more information.

## OBITUARY

**Luther Jackson "Jack" McGaughy**, a former commodity division director with the Alabama Farmers Federation, died Sept. 25. He was 81.

McGaughy is survived by his wife Kathleen Slawson McGaughy; daughters Debbie (Sid) Coleman and Alecia (Chandler) Muller; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to First Baptist Church, 305 S. Perry St., Montgomery, AL 36104 or the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra, P.O. Box 1864, Montgomery, AL 36102.

## Commodity Corner

### Greenhouse, Nursery & Sod; Horticulture

The STARS Act, or H.R. 5213, a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, could help seasonable employers avoid hefty fines under the Affordable Care Act. Visit [tinyurl.com/fbSTARSAct](http://tinyurl.com/fbSTARSAct) for more information.

*-Mac Higginbotham, divisions director*

### Meat Goat & Sheep

The Alabama Sheep & Goat Checkoff referendum is Tuesday, Oct. 21. Farmers will vote at local Alabama Cooperative Extension System offices from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on continuing the 50-cents-per-head checkoff for five more years. The program funds sheep and goat research, product promotion and farmer education. Email [njaeger@alfafarmers.org](mailto:njaeger@alfafarmers.org) or call (334) 613-4221 for more information.

*-Nate Jaeger, division director*

### Wildlife

The Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) and the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences have fitted some white-tailed deer with collars for a study. Deer with brown collars may be harvested, but avoid harvesting deer with orange collars. Contact a state wildlife biologist if you shoot one of these deer.

*-Rick Oates, division director*

### Peanuts

The National Peanut Festival Recipe Contest is Oct. 26 at the Wiregrass Commons Mall in Dothan, preceding the festival which runs Oct. 31 - Nov. 8 at the fairgrounds. For more information, visit [NationalPeanutFestival.com](http://NationalPeanutFestival.com).

*-Jim Cravey, division director*

### Dairy

The Alabama Farmers Federation, Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Farm Service Agency are hosting five meetings on the Dairy Margin Protection Program: Oct. 21 at the Oxford Civic Center, Room 116, in Oxford; Oct. 28 at the North Alabama Agriplex in Cullman; Oct. 30 at the Fayette County Extension Office in Fayette; Nov. 5 at the Dale County Government Building in Ozark; and Nov. 18 at the Jon Archer Agricultural Center in Mobile. Meetings start at 9:30 a.m.

*-Guy Hall, division director*

### Soybean, Wheat & Feed Grains

The U.S. Department of Agriculture issued its final decision Sept. 17 deregulating Enlist™ corn, Enlist soybeans and Enlist E3™ soybean traits in the U.S. This concluded one of the most thorough reviews of a biotechnology trait. It's good news for Alabama farmers struggling with hard-to-control weeds.

*-Carla Hornady, divisions director*

## Highlights From Ag-Related Court Cases

- **Oct. 6** - U.S. Supreme Court denies review of the Lynch v. Alabama lawsuit. This action upholds Alabama's current property tax system.
- **Oct. 3** - A federal judge dismisses a six-state lawsuit asking the court to strike down California's law requiring eggs sold in the state come from laying hens with larger-than-normal cages. The judge said the suit cannot be refiled or amended, but plaintiffs have the ability to appeal.
- **Sept. 22** - The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decides not to appeal a federal ruling in its case against Virginia farmer Lois Alt. The 2013 court ruling rejected EPA's contention that the Clean Water Act regulates ordinary stormwater runoff from non-production areas of farms.

## New Tuskegee University President Welcomed



Alabama agricultural leaders welcomed new Tuskegee University President Brian Johnson at a Sept. 10 meeting. From left are College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences Dean Walter Hill; Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell; Johnson; and Federation Executive Director Paul Pinyan.

## Book Donation Brings Farming Into Classrooms

The Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation (AFAF) donated more than 900 books for the state's public and private elementary school libraries Sept. 23. The donation of the book "Who Grew My Soup?" is meant to educate students about farming and how food is grown.

"Book donations are everything and basically how we survive," said Tanner School Assistant Librarian Donna Hammett. "We don't have a budget for books, so we fundraise and ask for donations."

The book tells the story of picky-eater Phineas Quinn who prefers sodas and candy to vegetable soup, until he takes a trip to a local farm.

"I think students will really enjoy this book, because it introduces them to farming in a fun way," said Federation Women's Leadership Division Director Kim Ramsey.

"Who Grew My Soup?" is on the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Accurate Ag Books list and was reprinted in 2013.

## Upcoming Deadlines

- **Oct. 30** - Registration deadline for the Alabama Farmers Federation annual meeting. For more details, visit [events.signup4.com/2014AlfaAnnualMeeting](http://events.signup4.com/2014AlfaAnnualMeeting).
- **Nov. 30** - Registration deadline for scenic California tour at the 2015 American Farm Bureau Federation annual convention. For more information, contact Brittany Daniel at (334) 613-4750.

## Auburn Ag Professor, Alumnus Honored

Auburn University professor Christy Bratcher and alumnus Dr. Chance Armstrong were recently named to the Vance Publishing Corp. Agribusiness Group's "40 Under 40" list. The honor recognizes 40 of the brightest leaders in today's agriculture industry.

Bratcher joined the Auburn faculty in 2008 as an associate professor of meat science and food safety in the Animal Sciences Department.

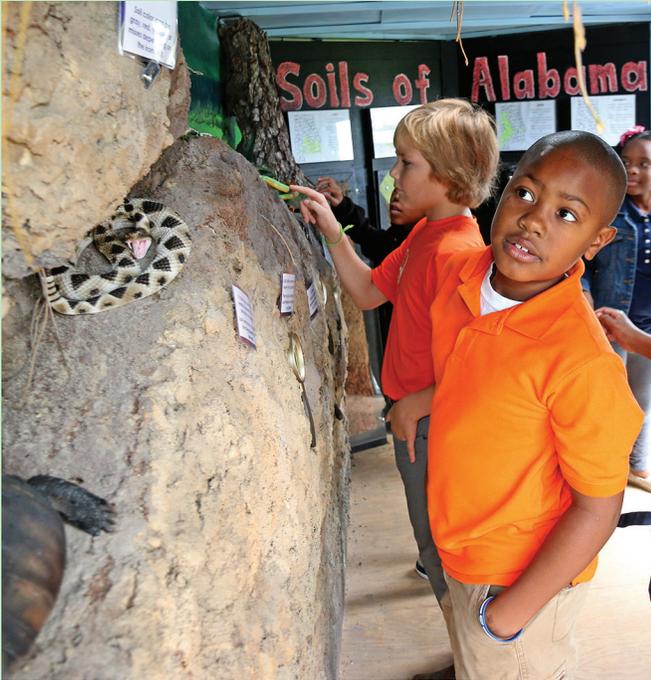
Armstrong, an Abbeville native, earned his doctor of veterinary medicine degree from Auburn in 2010. He works at Auburn as a clinical resident.

For profiles on all 40 honorees, visit [40under40ag.com](http://40under40ag.com).



Limestone County Farmers Federation President Paul Looney, standing, and his wife, county Women's Leadership Committee member Donniss, read "Who Grew My Soup?" to a fourth-grade class at Tanner School. More than 900 books were donated to Alabama school libraries.

## Kids Enjoy Pike County Farm Day



More than 400 Pike County third-graders attended Farm Day Sept. 25, hosted by the Pike County Young Farmers at the county's Cattlemen's Park. Students made stops at stations throughout the park where they learned about farm animals, safety, peanuts, soil science, nutrition, cotton ginning and more.



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## Gadsden State Adds Poultry Science Courses

**G**adsden State Community College in Centre now offers a poultry science program through a partnership with Auburn University. The program was announced at an Oct. 3 press conference.

Students studying poultry science may complete core coursework and introductory poultry science classes at Gadsden State-Cherokee during freshman and sophomore years. They would then transfer to Auburn for junior and senior years to complete their bachelor's degree.

"Poultry has a huge economic impact in northeast Alabama, and students from that area who want a career in poultry science can now complete part of their education close to home," said Alabama Farmers Federation Poultry Division Director Guy Hall. "We applaud Gadsden State and Auburn for working together to make this degree program a reality."

Poultry is a \$15 billion industry in Alabama and Cherokee County's top agricultural commodity with \$18.5 million in poultry production.

## Federation Policy Development Meeting



State Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, second from right, spoke at the Alabama Farmers Federation annual Policy Development Meeting Sept. 23 at the home office in Montgomery. Orr is chairman of the Senate General Fund Committee and said developing the next state budget will be a challenge. From left are Federation Central Area Vice President Dean Wysner, Morgan County Farmers Federation President Mark Byrd, Orr and Federation President Jimmy Parnell.