

Cultivator

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USDA Predicts Less Farm Income

Net farm income may drop dramatically in 2015, according to a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report.

The report predicts total U.S. net farm income for 2015 at \$58.3 billion, a 36-percent decrease from 2014's estimate of \$91.1 billion. That would be the lowest net farm income since 2006.

"Most likely, the decrease in income is due to lower commodity prices," said Carla Hornady, Alabama Farmers Federation Cotton, Soybean and Wheat & Feed Grains divisions director. "Two years ago, corn prices were \$8 a bushel, but now farmers are getting less than half that."

Hornady said Alabama row crop farmers are more diversified than they used to be to help protect against swings in commodity prices.

Other report highlights comparing 2015 to the previous year include:

- Crop receipts are expected to decrease \$12.9 billion, or 6.2 percent, led by lower corn, soybean and wheat receipts.
- Livestock receipts are forecast to decrease \$19.4 billion, or 9.1 percent, due to lower milk and hog prices.
- Total production expenses are expected to decrease \$1.5 billion, less than .5 percent.
- Farm asset values are forecast to decline 3.5 percent.
- Farm debt is expected to increase 5.8 percent.

The USDA forecast did not provide state-specific data. To view the full forecast, visit tinyurl.com/FarmIncome2015.



Hale County catfish farmer Bill Kyser, left, hosted a farm tour for U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Birmingham, Aug. 12. Vilsack stopped in west Alabama to announce new grant funding and talk with Alabama farmers about agricultural issues.

Vilsack Visits Farmers In West Alabama

The nation's top agriculture official was in west Alabama Aug. 12 announcing rural grants and talking to farmers about regulations and foreign trade.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, was joined by U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Birmingham, to announce \$4.9 million in funds for economic development projects in Alabama's 7th Congressional District.

"The investments USDA is announcing in Alabama are vital to protect public health and safety and improve the economic well-being of the state's rural residents," Vilsack said.

Sewell said the grants will help make needed improvements in her district.

"Farming is our state's largest industry and the largest industry in my district," she said. "We want to do everything we can to promote agriculture here and to help our farmers continue to be successful and to create new opportunities."

Following a town hall meeting in Linden, Vilsack and Sewell visited with Alabama catfish farmers at Kyser Catfish Farm in Greensboro.

They discussed foreign fish imports, which are seldom inspected when they enter the U.S. Foreign fish are often produced under standards outlawed in America. Vilsack pledged to seek increased inspections of imported fish.

"I really tried to humanize our catfish farm when I was talking to Secretary Vilsack," said Bill Kyser, a member of the Alabama Farmers Federation State Catfish Committee. "Our farm is a business, but it's a family farm. There are a lot of families just like mine who work hard to make a living farming."

Farmers also talked with Vilsack about research, predatory birds and increased federal regulations.

Visit tinyurl.com/WestAlaProjects for a list of projects Vilsack announced.

Investment Will Update AAES Equipment

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units
Director Dale Monks

One of the challenges faced in agricultural research is staying ahead of equipment trends and technology.

Research station directors, associate directors and field technical staff work to ensure the Auburn University College of Agriculture's research and Extension scientists have dependable equipment and adequate support. Often, the rate of technological development outpaces our ability to procure equipment.

This year, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) is making a major investment to upgrade equipment at Outlying Units. Those updates will include tractors and implements, variable rate irrigation, remote crop sensing equipment and precision ag technologies.

The goal is to give researchers what they need to solve problems faced by Alabama farmers in a rapidly changing world where economic efficiency and environmental sustainability are critical.

Upcoming Events

- **Sept. 29** - Special primary election for Alabama State House of Representatives District 5 seat. The Alabama Farmers Federation has endorsed Danny Crawford.
- **Oct. 3** - Auburn University Ag Roundup and Taste of Alabama Agriculture at Ag Heritage Park in Auburn. For more information, visit agriculture.auburn.edu/AgRoundup.
- **Oct. 10** - Ag Discovery Adventure at E.V. Smith Research Center in Shorter. Admission is free. Go to aaes.auburn.edu/AgDiscoveryDay for details.
- **Oct. 16-17** - Alabama TREASURE Forest Association annual meeting in Alexander City. Visit TreasureForest.org for details.
- **Oct. 20-22** - Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Georgia, with announcement of the Southeastern Farmer of the Year on Oct. 20.

Federation Area 8 Farm Tours



Peanut Specialist Kris Balkcom of the Wiregrass Research and Extension Center, right, discusses peanut test plots on Tommy Thompson's farm near Andalusia with Federation members on the Area 8 tour. The two-day event, Aug. 26-27, took attendees to farms and industrial locations throughout Pike and Covington counties.

Commodity Corner

Peanuts

On Sept. 2, the national posted price for runner peanuts returned to its previous market price of \$424.51 per ton. This is good news because on Aug. 19 the price was set \$100 below the 2015 national loan rate by type. As a result, this created a \$100 marketing loan gain (MLG) for the redeemed peanuts, which counted against farmers' 2014 payment limitation.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Forestry

The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association annual meeting is Oct. 16-17 in Alexander City. Topics covered will include forest damage from coyotes; timber contracts; bear populations in Alabama; future of the TREASURE Forest Program; and the Endangered Species Act. For registration information, go to TreasureForest.org or call Rick Oates at (334) 613-4305.

-Rick Oates, division director

Cotton

Cotton Incorporated has launched Cotton Cultivated, a new website with important industry information. Cotton farmers can learn about the latest research and market conditions by visiting CottonCultivated.CottonInc.com.

-Carla Hornady, division director

Horticulture

The Alabama Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association Fall Conference is Nov. 19-20 in Clanton. The meeting will cover recent research. Registration is \$100 for the first member and \$75 for a second attendee. Visit aces.edu/go/560 for additional details.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Hay & Forage

Massey Ferguson is the new sponsor for the Southeast Hay Contest and will award a \$1,000 grand prize plus the use of a new Massey Ferguson RK Series rotary rake for the 2016 hay season. The competition includes seven categories. All samples must be witnessed by a county Extension agent and submitted simultaneously with a \$17 payment to the contest by Sept. 28. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/SEHayContest>.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Pork and Poultry

According to the Aug. 21 USDA cold storage report, frozen pork storage is up 19 percent over last year due to increased pork production following the 2014 PEDV outbreak. Chicken stocks are up 22 percent over 2014 due to export restrictions.

-Guy Hall, divisions director

Soil Judging Team Wins International Contest

Team USA won the 2015 International Soil Judging Contest Sept. 5 in Hungary under coach Joey Shaw, an Auburn University (AU) professor.

Team member Kristen Pegues, a 2015 AU agronomy and soils graduate, received the highest score in the competition, making her the world's No. 1 soil judge this year.

Team USA competed against 28 other soil judging teams from around the world.

Upcoming Deadlines

- **Sept. 30** - Sign up deadline for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) for 2014 and 2015 and Dairy Margin Protection Program for 2016. Visit AlabamaFarmBill.com for details.
- **Oct. 16** - Sign up deadline for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Visit tinyurl.com/NRCSAla15 for more information.

Young Farmers Help Out At Camp Smile-A-Mile



Alabama Young Farmer members volunteered at Children's Harbor on Lake Martin Aug. 15 during Camp Smile-A-Mile, a family camp for children with or recovering from cancer. The group served a meal, hosted a photo booth and provided favors for a dance party.

Event Provides Update On Antibiotic Regulations

Farmers, veterinarians and feed makers gathered in Hanceville Aug. 25 to learn about new regulations on antibiotics and livestock.

Starting in December 2016, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) veterinary feed directive (VFD) will require farmers have a prescription to deliver antibiotics to livestock through feed.

"This meeting allowed farmers

a chance to hear directly from FDA representatives about reasons behind these new rules and ways the regulations may impact what they do on their farms," said Nate Jaeger of the Alabama Farmers Federation.

This regional meeting was one of 12 coordinated by the non-profit Farm Foundation. For more information, visit FarmFoundation.org.

Federation Supports National Peanut Festival



The Alabama Farmers Federation pledged \$10,000 to support the Alfa Exhibit Hall at the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds in Dothan. From left are Federation District 12 Director Fred Helms, National Peanut Festival administrative assistant Carrie Cavender and Federation Southeast Area Vice President George Jeffcoat at the fairgrounds Sept. 4. The National Peanut Festival is Nov. 6-15 in Dothan. For more information, visit NationalPeanutFestival.com

Alfa Reminds Farmers To Review Insurance

Fall is a popular time for farmers to open their land to visitors for agritourism activities.

Danny Carter, farm and commercial underwriting manager for Alfa Insurance, said farmers can speak with their Alfa agent and review policy coverage for potential property and liability losses.

"As farmers diversify their operations, they may need more than a standard farm policy to protect themselves and their businesses," Carter said. "September is a good month for a policy review before on-farm activities ramp up with fall festivals, weddings and hunting season."

Contact Carter at (334) 513-4837 or dacarter@alfains.com for more information or visit AlfaInsurance.com to find a local agent.

Fried Strawberry Pies Win Contest



Felicia Dewberry of Clay County won first place and \$150 at the Alabama Farmers Federation 40th Heritage Cooking Contest Sept. 3 at the home office in Montgomery. Her fried strawberry pies recipe was inspired by her daughter, who grew strawberries this spring. For recipes from the event, visit tinyurl.com/FriedPies15.



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EPA's WOTUS Rule Takes Effect In Alabama

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule became effective in Alabama Aug. 28.

The rule expands the EPA's jurisdiction on private lands. As a result, previously common farming and forestry practices could require a permit or be subject to large penalties.

"It's important that farmers learn about the changes included in this rule, because it will impact everyday farming activities," said Mitt Walker, National Legislative Programs director for the Alabama Farmers Federation.

On Aug. 27, a North Dakota judge granted an injunction that stops implementation of the rule, but it only applies to states involved in that lawsuit. Those are North Dakota, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota and Wyoming.

Alabama is involved in another lawsuit against the rule.

For more on the regulation's impact on farmers, visit tinyurl.com/WOTUS15.

Congressman Byrne Says "Ag Matters"



Mobile County farmer Brian Keller, second from left, welcomed U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Mobile, left, and Mobile County Farmers Federation President Calvin Freeland and his wife, Debbie, to his Oak Hill Tree Farm in Grand Bay Aug. 28. The stop was part of the "Ag Matters" tour, where Byrne visited farmers in each county of Alabama's 1st Congressional District Aug. 27-28. Byrne said the discussions helped him better understand issues facing the state's largest industry.