

Cultivator

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Alabama Scores Record Corn, Soybean Yields

Record yields for state soybean and corn farmers in 2017, combined with higher yields for cotton and peanuts, raised the value of Alabama crops by nearly \$100 million over 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Alabama's 11 percent increase in crop values bucks a national trend, where American farmers typically saw a slight decrease in the value of last year's crops. Alabama's crop value increased for soybeans, corn, cotton, hay and peanuts in 2017, while winter wheat and cottonseed experienced slight declines.

"The increase is good news for Alabama farmers, but it's important to remember production costs for farmers also rose," said the Alabama Farmers Federation's Carla Hornady. "Farmers experienced lower prices for their crops in 2017, so they needed increased yields to overcome higher costs for seed, fertilizer, equipment and labor."

In addition to favorable weather for much of the state last year, on-farm investments like irrigation and soil analysis helped farmers increase their income, Hornady said.

2017 Crop Yields And Value

- **Soybeans:** 46 bushels per acre, \$155.5 million
- **Corn:** 167 bushels per acre, \$157 million
- **Cotton:** 904 pounds per acre, \$266 million
- **Peanuts:** 3,650 pounds per acre, \$156 million
- **Hay:** 2.5 tons per acre, \$208 million

Learn more at nass.usda.gov.



Nearly 400 up-and-coming agriculturalists attended farm tours during the 2018 Young Farmers Conference. Tours branched out across central and southeast Alabama March 3 and covered cattle, catfish, forestry, horticulture and row crop operations.

Farm Tours Headline Conference

Nearly 400 young farmers representing 54 counties headed to the Capital City March 2-3 to network and learn from the best in the business during farm tours.

The Young Farmers Conference kicked off with a welcome from Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell and entertainment from Fun Pianos by 176 Keys, a dueling piano show.

Buses departed for central and southeast Alabama farms early March 3, a feature back for its second year.

Tour A in Dallas County visited Pearce Catfish Farm, the Orrville Farmers Market and Bell Place Farms.

Tour B began at Robertson/Lanier & McKay Cattle Co. in Chambers County before heading to Auburn University's National Poultry Technology Center. The tour ended at Young's Plant Farm in Lee County.

"It's not easy to get away from our farms throughout the year, so this

conference is a great way to catch up with friends," said Bibb County Young Farmers Chair Ashton Cottingham, who attended Tour B. "The tours help us learn from more experienced farmers so we can better our operations."

Parkman Land & Cattle Co. in Montgomery County kicked off Tour C, followed by a stop at Gene and Jana Renfro's TREASURE Forest in Pike County. Steve Stroud's poultry and hay farm wrapped up the tour.

Saturday evening, a live auction raised \$10,830 for the Alabama Farmers Agriculture Foundation, and 2018 Outstanding Young Farm Family finalists were announced. They are Chad and Heather Grant of Butler County, Gannon and Kristin Nunley of Franklin County and Chris and Jordyn Upchurch of Clay County.

Learn more in the April Neighbors and on Federation social media channels.

Events & Deadlines

- **March-May** - Extension Health Management Workshops For Sheep & Goat Herds
 - aces.edu/urban/smallruminants
- **March 15-17** - Alabama Jr. Beef Expo in Montgomery
 - jrbeefexpo.com
- **March 21-22** - Food Entrepreneur Conference in Auburn
 - Register by March 14 at tinyurl.com/FoodEntConf
- **March 23, 27** - Extension Cover Crop Field Days for south and central Alabama
 - tinyurl.com/covercropfielddays
- **April 2** - Nominations end for Bama's Best Pork Ribs contest
 - fb.com/alabamafarmers
 - instagram.com/alfafarmers
- **April 4-6** - Women's Leadership Conference in Birmingham
- **April 5** - Alabama Farm-City Luncheon in Birmingham
 - Register at alfafarmers.org by March 23.
- **April 15** - Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute registration deadline
 - AlabamaAITC.org
- **May 3-5** - The Alabama Master Gardener Conference
 - Register at AlabamaMG.org by April 1.

Agriculture Spotlited On Alabama Public TV

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

Alabama Public Television recently aired the first in a series of specials highlighting Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES), Alabama Cooperative Extension and Auburn University College of Agriculture projects that improve consumers' quality of life.

The quarterly series highlights the AAES mission — to provide unbiased, research-based answers that positively impact Alabamians.

The first episode focuses on eliminating water pollution, conserving water resources and maximizing soil quality and productivity.

Watch episodes at aptv.org.

Commodity Corner

Pork

Walker County's Daniel Tubbs attended the 2018 National Pork Industry Forum in Kansas City, Missouri, as a delegate. Over 350 pig farmers and industry professionals discussed emerging technology, the We Care initiative and new cooking recommendations for pork products. Learn more at pork.org.

-Guy Hall, division director

Cotton

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue unveiled a Cotton Ginning Cost Share program to offset a portion of 2016 crop season ginning costs. Payments will be calculated based on 2016 cotton acres reported to the Farm Service Agency. The program will help fill a safety net void until the seed cotton ARC/PLC program begins in 2018. Cost share sign-up ends May 11.

-Carla Hornady, division director

Forestry

Rex Lumber has announced a new sawmill will be built in northern Pike County. The \$110 million investment will bring 110 new jobs to the area. The mill will produce Southern yellow pine lumber typically used for construction. Annual production will be a minimum of 240 million board feet.

-William Green, division director

Equine

The biggest concern in the Equine Division this year is the electronic logging device mandate, effective March 18. We are working with state and national groups to push for a five-year delay on implementation for livestock and insect transporters. Most non-commercial transporting is exempt. However, farmers should determine personal impact at tinyurl.com/FMSCAMandate.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Peanuts

Nearly 300 peanut farmers attended production meetings across Alabama in February and March. Growers received disease, insect, weed and production updates from Alabama Extension and Auburn University's peanut team. Farmers also received a 2018 market outlook from the National Peanut Research Lab.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Horticulture

The 2015 revised Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is very complex. The WPS-Compliance Assistance Library is a convenient guide that breaks up and sorts information by user types to tailor the learning experience for workers, handlers, employers and more. Learn more at tinyurl.com/agworker.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Hornsby Farms Honored By Auburn Chamber



Lee County's Beth and Josh Hornsby received the Auburn Chamber of Commerce (ACC) Young Business Persons of the Year Award Feb. 27. Hornsby Farms, a horticulture farm, also specializes in jams, jellies and pickles. Beth serves on the State Horticulture Committee and was a 2017 Outstanding Young Farm Family finalist. From left are ACC Chair Taylor Buckner, Beth and Josh.

Lawrence County Hosts FFA Discussion Meet



Lawrence County Young Farmers (LCYF) hosted an FFA Discussion Meet Feb. 22 for county students. Preston Hughes from East Limestone High School (ELHS) won, while ELHS's Grace Harrison received second place. Toby Jones from Lawrence County High School (LCHS) was third. Back row from left are ELHS's Hughes and Garrett Miller; LCHS's Jones and Kayley Peebles; and LCYF Chair Mitchell Henry. Front row from left are ELHS's Harrison and Trey Nelson.

Equipment To Increase Speed For CWD Deer Testing

The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI) recently announced the state acquired testing equipment to monitor for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) — a fatal neurological disease of white-tailed deer.

The equipment was bought through a partnership between ADAI and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR).

It will be housed at Auburn University in the State Diagnostic Lab.

"CWD currently exists in about 25 states, but fortunately not in Alabama," said Alabama Wildlife Federation Executive Director Tim Gothard. "But whether you're a state that has CWD or a state that does not have CWD, surveillance and monitoring are key parts of the equation to stay vigilant."

ADAI Commissioner John McMillan said Alabama established a testing and

monitoring program in 2002, but the state's CWD testing equipment became outdated a few years ago. Samples have been sent out of state since, delaying results.

Officials estimate the new equipment will provide results within three days and process around 90 samples in one batch.

"Having this system in place in our state where we can test that many samples at one time with such a short turnaround will be very effective for us instead of having the delayed time of sending samples off," said ADCNR Commissioner Chris Blankenship.

ADCNR collects and delivers samples to the diagnostic lab.

Blankenship said about 500 deer are tested annually using samples from all 67 Alabama counties.

CWD does not affect domestic livestock or humans.

Registration Opens For Farm & Land Expo

Exhibitor registration is now open for the Alabama Farmers Federation's Alabama Farm & Land Expo Aug. 4 at the Montgomery Convention Center in the Capital City.

In its second year, the expo fosters relationships to help farmers engaged in production agriculture and forestry improve their operations.

Exhibitors include equipment dealers, ag lenders, agriculture and land consultants, livestock health specialists and real estate brokers, plus feed and seed professionals. Nonprofits and educational groups are also welcome.

To learn more, contact Brittany Daniel at bdaniel@alfafarmers.org.

Contest Hunts For Bama's Best Pork Ribs

The Alabama Pork Producers are smoking out Bama's Best Pork Ribs in an inaugural contest, which runs through April 2 on Facebook and Instagram.

Judges will visit the Final Four restaurants before announcing a winner in May. A cash prize and People's Choice Award will also be given.

OBITUARIES

Jimmy Durbin of Clanton died March 6. He was 74 years old.

Durbin, who owned J. Durbin Farms and Sunshine Farms, was a pioneer of Alabama horticulture. He also owned one of the fastest-growing seedstock cattle farms in the U.S. He served on the Chilton County Farmers Federation board.

He is survived by wife Jettie Merle Durbin; sons Gary Minor (Marlene) and Tim Minor; and two grandchildren.

Percy Ray McIntyre of Florence died Nov. 3. He was 89 years old.

McIntyre previously served on the Alabama Farmers Federation state board and Lauderdale County Farmers Federation board.

He was preceded in death by a son, Philip McIntyre. He is survived by wife Betty Jean Greshman McIntyre; son David McIntyre (Mary); four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

F-150 Up For Grabs In Ford Sweepstakes

One lucky Alabama Farmers Federation member will soon cruise into a two-year lease of a 2018 F-150 truck thanks to an exclusive sweepstakes with Ford.

The "Alabama Farmers Federation Sweepstakes" closes May 31 with the winner to be notified in June. One entry

is allowed per membership number.

To access the entry form:

- Text SWEEPS to 46786 or
- Visit FordSpecialOffer.com/farmbureau/sweeps

Click the box above SUBMIT to enter Alabama's sweepstakes. No purchase necessary.

Soybean Farmers Meet In Mobile



U.S. soybean farmers visited Mobile Feb. 21 during a United Soybean Board (USB) meeting. Alabama farmer Annie Dee of Pickens County, right, serves on the 73-member USB. Dee and Alabama Farmers Federation Soybean Division Director Carla Hornady distributed boxes of Alabama-produced gifts to attendees.



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Farmers Encouraged To Evaluate Need For ELDs

In light of potential electronic logging device (ELD) mandates, farmers and ranchers who haul livestock should evaluate their need for a commercial driver's license (CDL) and commercial motor vehicle (CMV) label.

The rule on ELDs — which record a person's driving hours — was published in 2015. Requirements on trucks hauling ag commodities and livestock are delayed until March 18.

"We would like more flexibility in rules for those who haul perishable commodities and livestock," said the Alabama Farmers Federation's Nate Jaeger. "As cattle and livestock are moved across regions, the well-being of animals involved must be considered. Multiple stops or repeated offloading of animals hurt a farmer's bottom line and result in unnecessary stress on livestock."

The Federation, American Farm Bureau Federation and other associations are pursuing exemptions to help farmers.

Visit tinyurl.com/FMSCAMandate to learn more.

Isbell Earns Final Four Finish In National Contest



During the national Young Farmers & Ranchers Conference, Ellie Isbell of Colbert County made the Collegiate Discussion Meet Final Four, a first for an Alabama representative. She and other young farmers attended the conference Feb. 16-18 in Reno. From left are state Young Farmers Division Director Jennifer Himburg; O'Neal and Cooper Holmes, Perry County; Isbell; Sara and Jonathan Sanders, Coffee County; and Ashley and Jerry Allen Newby, Limestone County.