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# PRESS

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Arkansas Farm Bureau leaders met with representatives in Washington, D.C., during American Farm Bureau's Advocacy Conference to discuss issues critical to farmers and ranchers. Meeting with Congressman Rick Crawford (sixth from left) were (left to right) Rich and Tina Hillman, Lori and Terry Dabbs, Rusty Smith, Jeff Rutledge, Joe and Leah Christian, Jon and Jana Carroll, Thelma Veach, Benton and Sherry Felts, and Randy Veach. For more on the conference, see the enclosed insert.

STEVE EDDINGTON photo

## In Farm Bureau

### Dairy foods contest

The 60th Annual Arkansas Dairy Foods Contest will be May 31 in Little Rock. This event is sponsored by Arkansas Farm Bureau and the Arkansas Dairy Cooperative Association.

The contest is divided into two categories: Main Dish and Party Ideas. Each county may enter one recipe in each of the two categories.

Arkansas students enrolled in 4-H ages 9-19 or in the 4th through 12th grades as of Jan. 1, 2017 may enter. Home-schooled students also may enter. Entries must be approved by the county dairy committee or the county extension agent. Each contestant must agree to participate in the state cook-off if his or her recipe is selected for the semifinals.

As in previous years, the state dairy foods contest has a three-hour time limit for the contestant to work from unprepared product ingredients to a finished end product for judging. For 2017, the judges will allow a pre-prepared

dish to be brought to the contest for those contestants that cannot complete their dish within the three-hour time frame. However, the contestant must prepare the same dish at the contest, from unprepared product ingredients to finished end product, for the judges to compare the finished dishes.

The deadline for entries to be received

in Little Rock is April 28. Additional information and a contest entry form are available at [www.arfb.com/uploads/resources/documents/2017\\_dairy\\_foods\\_contest\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.arfb.com/uploads/resources/documents/2017_dairy_foods_contest_booklet.pdf).

### FBs help feed America

The farm and ranch families of Farm Bureau raised more than \$1.1 million and



County Judge Troy Tucker (right) signed a proclamation declaring March 4-12 **Farm Bureau Week** in Clark County. The signing was at a Legislative and Media Appreciation Breakfast presided over by ArFB state board member and Clark Co. FB legislative chairman Troy Buck (left). The event was a joint effort between the Clark, Dallas and Hot Spring County FBs.

CLARK CO. FB photo

donated a record 28.9 million pounds of food

to assist hungry Americans in 2016 as part of Farm Bureau's Harvest for All program. Combined monetary and food donations reached a record level of 31 million meals.

Now in its 15th year, Harvest for All is spearheaded by members of Farm Bureau's Young Farmers & Ranchers program, but Farm Bureau members of all ages from across the nation contribute to the effort. By heeding the call to action, they help ensure Americans in need can enjoy the bounty of food farmers and ranchers produce.

In addition to raising food and funds for the initiative, farmers and ranchers tallied 9,067 volunteer hours assisting local hunger groups in 2016.

"Farm Bureau has a long tradition of helping provide nourishment for those who need it the most," said Kalena Bruce, a cattle farmer from Missouri who chairs AFBF's national YF&R Committee. "More than 50 percent of Americans struggling with hunger live in rural areas and farming communities. We're pleased to help families in our communities who are in need."

## In Arkansas

### NRCS conservation planning

Landowners in Baxter, Fulton, Izard, Marion, Searcy and Stone counties can request a free conservation plan through a pilot program offered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.



STEVE EDDINGTON photo

A large number of farmers, including Bob Shofner of Centerton, chairman of Benton County Farm Bureau's Natural and Environmental Resources Committee, turned out and spoke in support of C&H Hog Farm during an Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality public hearing held March 7 at Jasper High School.



VAN BUREN CO. FB photo

The Van Buren Co. Women's Committee created a soup contest for area high school students. South Side-Bee Branch contestants Makenzie Mosley, Maci Gunn and Kaitlyn Wilkerson posed with committee members Cindy Wilson (left), Becky Wood (second from right) and Judy Brown (right), and teacher Lori Rooney, after winning first place for their team's potato soup.

The project, designed to combine the farming or ranching skills of the operator with the science-based knowledge of an NRCS conservation planner, began March 3 and runs through April 3.

"Conservation plans are the basis for all assistance NRCS provides to clients and the basic tool for clients to manage their natural resources," said NRCS state conservationist Mike Sullivan. "The greatest value comes by having the client engaged in every step of the planning process. Through participation, the client develops an understanding of



KEITH SUTTON photo

More than 130 attended ArFB's State Women's Conference March 10-11 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Little Rock, including these members of the State Women's Committee: (left to right) Joyce Doyle, Magen Allen, Kelly Swinney, Peggy Miller, Teresa Fawcett, Carlee Helms, Donna Bemis and Alechia Meador.



ArFB photo

ArFB's Steven Stroh, Mollie Dykes, Autumn Wood and Jeremy Wesson helped in the Farm Bureau booth at the 65th annual Mid-South Farm & Gin Show March 3-4 in Memphis. The booth was a joint effort of Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee Farm Bureaus to promote Farm Bureau, its efforts and member benefits. Thousands attended to talk with the 400 exhibitors.

the natural resource issues, interactions and treatments necessary for resource sustainability."

The voluntary plan is developed with input from the producer and prepared by NRCS. The plan addresses resource concerns dealing with soil, water, air, plants and animals.

A conservation plan includes producer/landowner determined objectives and goals; an aerial photo or diagram of the farm; a soil map and soil description of the property; resource inventory data, which can include forage or crop production potential, or potential livestock carrying capacity; a list of treatment options; the location and schedule for applying conservation practices; and a plan of operation and maintenance of conservation systems.

To sign up for a free conservation plan, visit your local USDA field service center. To locate the local office, visit <http://offices.sc.gov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

### New ag program website

Arkansas Grown, Arkansas Made and Homegrown by Heroes – agriculture marketing programs of the Arkansas Agriculture Department – have launched a new website to improve accessibility to Arkansas products. Locally grown and/or locally made products now can be searched by buyers, grocers, restaurateurs, chefs, and consumers in a one-stop database at [arkansasgrown.org](http://arkansasgrown.org).

Almost 800 growers, producers and makers have items listed for purchase. Searchers can query data at no cost according to points of sale (restaurants, markets, schools, retail stores and more); locally grown produce, including specialty crops, row crops, meat, dairy, fruit varieties and more; and locally made items such as sauces, candies, confections and lumber.

Arkansas Grown was launched in 2012 to help make the critical connection between local growers and producers with consumers. Arkansas Made and Homegrown by Heroes were later added to expand products listed and promoted by the program. Arkansas Made includes goods and products made in Arkansas. Homegrown by Heroes includes locally grown or made products by Arkansas veterans.

“We hope the new website makes locating and purchasing Arkansas products more convenient for consumers,” said Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward. “We have found that one of the biggest reasons consumers don’t buy local is they don’t know where the products are located. The new [arkansasgrown.org](http://arkansasgrown.org) site helps to bridge the gap between growers and producers with consumers.”

To have products listed at [arkansasgrown.org](http://arkansasgrown.org), individuals and/or companies must become members of one of the agricultural marketing programs. Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made have free levels of



On March 3 in Little Rock, the **Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame** honored five individuals whose leadership and service brought distinction to the state’s largest industry: (left to right) Allen Bedell of Hot Springs, Gary Sebree of Stuttgart, Neely Cassady of Nashville, Mark Simmons of Siloam Springs and (not pictured) the late Dr. Bobby Wells of Fayetteville.



Members of the **Siloam Springs FFA** were on hand March 3 in Little Rock to see Mark Simmons (center), chairman of the board of Simmons Food, inducted into the Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame. Attending were (left to right): FFA advisor Mike Rogers, Chate Rogers, Casey Rogers, Melissa Rogers, Luke Vancuren and FFA advisor Rodney Ellis.

membership, as well as membership for a fee. Any Arkansas veteran can join the Homegrown by Heroes program at no cost. Membership options for all programs can be found at [arkansasgrown.org](http://arkansasgrown.org). For more information, contact Rachael Tucker at [rachael.tucker@aad.ar.gov](mailto:rachael.tucker@aad.ar.gov) or 501-219-6321.

### Livestock field day

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture will hold a free educational meeting for beef producers at the Livestock and Forestry Research Station near Batesville April 18.

The conference is built around the theme, “Is it Fescue, or is it Just Me?” UA researchers will share information on practices that can minimize or eliminate livestock production losses resulting from toxic fescue pastures. Registration begins at 9 a.m., and the program begins at 9:30 a.m.

Don Hubbell, station director, said Division of Agriculture scientists “will show how management changes, large or small, can have a big impact on productivity and profits.”

The Livestock and Forestry Research Station is on Arkansas Highway 106, 10.5 miles northwest of Batesville. The station is about three miles west of the Highway 106 intersection with Arkansas Highway 69.

For more information, go to <http://aaes.uark.edu/research-locations/batesville.aspx>.

## Elsewhere

### Health insurance survey

Farmers and ranchers are invited to complete a survey about their experiences with health insurance and how it relates to

their family’s health and farm business. The survey, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will be used to better understand how health insurance influences household and farm enterprise decision-making. It also will identify policies and programs that can help farm and ranch families succeed and grow their enterprises.

“We’re interested in hearing from multi-generation, beginning and first-generation farm and ranch families across all ages and sectors of agriculture,” said lead researcher Shoshannah Inwood, rural sociologist and professor at the University of Vermont. “We want to understand what parts of health insurance are working well for farmers and ranchers and what types of policy and program modifications need to be made. Results will be shared with agriculture and health policy makers.” All responses are confidential, and only summary statistics will be reported.

“We know from our prior research that farmers identify the cost of health insurance as a key barrier to growing their farms or farming full-time,” said Inwood. This study is a joint effort with the NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Policy and the four USDA Rural Development Centers. Findings will be used to guide the development of training materials for professionals who work with farmers and ranchers — such as extension educators, farm consultants and tax accountants — so they can support farmers’ and ranchers’ ability to make well-informed decisions regarding health insurance.”

To participate, visit <https://survey.uvm.edu/index.php/132344?lang=en>.

## In the Market

As of March 14, 2017

### New soybean facility

Southern soybean growers will reap the benefits of an expanded breeding program from Bayer, which includes a \$6 million Soybean Breeding and Trait Development Station surrounded by 180 acres of research and showcase plots in Marion, Crittenden County. Bayer and local leaders celebrated the grand opening of the facility earlier this month.

The innovative facility builds on a proven history of profitable, high-yielding soybean varieties that Bayer brings to market through its flagship Credeenz soybean brand. Work here will focus on providing the maturity group (MG) 4 and 5 varieties that are essential to soybean production in the South.

### Chinese pork imports

China will likely import around 3 MMT of pork in 2017, which would be similar to last year's level, despite rising domestic production, Juhui Huang, the Shanghai-based vice president of the Brazilian food conglomerate BRF SA, told Reuters. He explained that global prices are still attractive for importing pork, most of which is used for processing into sausages and bacon.

### Soybean, corn reports for Brazil

The week of March 6, AgRural reported that 56 percent of Brazil's soybean crop had been harvested as of March 9, versus 52 percent last year at this point and 47 percent for the five-year average pace. The top-producing state of Mato Grosso remains well ahead of the norm at 88 percent complete. The group also said that 88 percent of the safrinha corn crop has now been planted, also ahead of 85 percent last year and 83 percent for the five-year average.

### Cotton auctions spur optimism

China sold 30,000 MT of the cotton offered at its state reserve auction March 14, which was 93.79 percent of the total available. Throughout the week, users have been aggressive buyers, scooping up nearly all of the cotton available. Their impressive appetite for cotton has sparked hopes of stronger global cotton demand.

### Perdue nomination hearing

The Senate Agriculture Committee is expected to set a date for U.S. Department of Agriculture nominee Sonny Perdue's confirmation hearing soon. President Donald Trump noted his absence during his first cabinet meeting on March 13. With Perdue's ethics paperwork and FBI background check complete, the Senate ag panel is reviewing the documents and will soon announce a date for the former Georgia governor's confirmation hearing.

### Avian influenza in Tennessee

A flock of chickens at a commercial poultry breeding operation in Giles County, Tennessee has tested positive for low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI), according to state officials. The flock is operated by a separate company from the one where a high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) strain was found in Lincoln County, and officials do not think that one farm sickened the other. State officials said the case in Giles County involved the H7N9 LPAI strain. The primary difference between LPAI and HPAI is the former has a lower mortality rate in domesticated poultry.

### More countries ban U.S. poultry

The number of nations imposing bans on U.S. poultry in the wake of documented avian flu cases in both Tennessee and Wisconsin now stands at 33. On March 8, Cuba, Ukraine, Jamaica, Curacao, Uruguay and Macedonia joined the list maintained by U.S. Department of Agriculture, which also includes Hong Kong (an

autonomous territory of China). Most countries have limited their bans to Lincoln County, Tennessee, and Barron County, Wisconsin, where the diseased birds were discovered, but a few are blocking poultry from the entire states of Tennessee and Wisconsin.

### More on Syngenta takeover

Two officials with ChemChina say that on Feb. 9 the company submitted an application seeking approval of its \$43 billion takeover of Syngenta to China's Commerce Ministry. This contradicts statements from Gao Hucheng, who retired from his position as commerce minister less than two weeks ago. He said that ChemChina "has not submitted for [ministry of commerce] approval yet." He added that the company first has to complete "all those regulatory approvals ... in the U.S. and Europe." This comes a month after Syngenta pushed back its expected closure date for the deal to the second quarter.

### Global food prices inching higher

Global food prices climbed slightly in February, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) Food Price Index. The index climbed 0.9 points from January to February to 175.5 points, which is up 26 points (17.2 percent) from year-ago levels. FAO says that all of the indices for other commodities climbed last month, with the exception of vegetable oils. Cereals posted one of the more significant gains. FAO also pegged the 2017 global wheat crop at 744.5 MMT in its first forecast of the season. This would be down 1.8 percent from last year's record crop but above the five-year average.

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# 2017 FARM BUREAU ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

The American Farm Bureau Advocacy Conference held Feb. 27-March 1 in National Harbor, Md., gave Farm Bureau leaders, members and staff the opportunity to attend workshops and training sessions while networking with Farm Bureau leaders from across the country who share a passion for agricultural advocacy. Attendees visited Capitol Hill March 1 where they met with representatives and received briefings on agricultural issues. Thirty-six Arkansas Farm Bureau leaders attended.

photos by [STEVE EDDINGTON](#)



ArFB leaders Mike Freeze of Little Rock (left) and Renee and Joe Thrash of Conway (right) had the opportunity to discuss agricultural issues with Rep. French Hill of Arkansas' Second Congressional District.



**Above:** American Farm Bureau Federation staff members, including Arkansas native Jordan Craig (left), provided a political issues briefing before Farm Bureau leaders visited Capitol Hill. **Above right,** ArFB President Randy Veach and his wife Thelma posed for a snapshot in front of the nation's capitol.

New EPA administrator Scott Pruitt announced the Waters of the U.S. rule had been rescinded by President Donald Trump. Pruitt, former attorney general for Oklahoma, received two standing ovations from the audience.



Rep. Bruce Westerman (fourth from left) discussed topics of concern with leaders from the Fourth Congressional District, including (left to right) Sandra and Bruce Jackson of Lockesburg, Caleb Plyler of Hope, Grant and Gay Pace of Monticello, and Dan and Belinda Wright of Waldron.

Third District Representative Steve Womack spoke to Arkansas Farm Bureau members during a meeting at the Rayburn House Office Building.



ArFB leaders (left to right) Kenneth May, Jon Carroll and Rich Hillman discussed some of the subjects covered during the first day of the Advocacy Conference.

## 2017 FARM BUREAU ADVOCACY CONFERENCE



While in D.C. for the AFBF Advocacy Conference, Arkansas Farm Bureau board members gathered for a meeting to discuss actions in the Arkansas General Assembly that required timely attention.



**Above:** ArFB leaders from the Third Congressional District — Tom Jones of Pottsville, Gene Pharr of Lincoln, and Bob and Janice Shofner of Centerton — met with Rep. Steve Womack (center). **Right,** Grant and Gay Pace of Monticello posed for a photo in front of the Capitol.



**At left,** Sen. Tom Cotton was recognized with a Friend of Farm Bureau award for his support of agriculture and Farm Bureau's priority issues. Honorees are nominated by Arkansas Farm Bureau and approved by the American Farm Bureau Board of Directors. ArFB President Randy Veach presented the award.