A Conversation About Arizona’s Top Agriculture Commodity: Beef

By Julie Murphy, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Arizona’s beef industry typically leads our top agriculture commodities in the state. The most recent USDA calculation is no exception with cash receipts valued at nearly a billion dollars. So, it’s only appropriate to have a conversation about our leading ag industry and who better to talk with than Jay Whetten, owner of the 76 Ranch near Bonita in Cochise County and the current president of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association.

Also a member of Arizona Farm Bureau, Whetten lived in Mexico for more than 50 years. His father started as a cowboy working on different ranches in the State of Chihuahua until eventually building his own business. Whetten credits his dad’s increased knowledge of the industry and networking with other ranchers as invaluable to the success the family had later. “I had the privilege of working with him for more than 30 years,” says Whetten. “In this time, we witnessed breed trends, market changes and the necessity to produce more pounds per animal with higher quality yields. We worked together, along with my brother, Mark, to transition from the old-time idea of running cows to raising beef. My brother and I continue to learn and produce the best beef we can in the environment we live in.”

After graduating High School in Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua, Whetten went to Eastern Arizona College for a year and then to the University of Arizona for a semester. “My father decided I could do more good at home than at school so I moved back to Chihuahua in January of 1976. We were busy, we took care of cow-calf operations and bought calves and pastured them. Apple and peach orchards were another venture. I also made horseshoes for a few years.”

In early 1994, a good friend asked Whetten to serve on the Chihuahua State Cattle Growers board of directors. During that time, U.S. cattle producers were pressured to address Bovine tuberculosis (bTB). At the time, USDA demanded to reduce, if not eradicate, the disease. Says Whetten, “A very large percentage of the disease came from Mexico and border States threatened to cease commerce with Mexico unless it was cleaned up. I was given the charge to begin an eradication campaign in Chihuahua and at the same time negotiate with USDA and Border States to keep commerce going. It was a valuable experience, I made a lot of friends and learned a lot.”

In the fall of 2008 Whetten and his family left Mexico. Described as an uneasy, tough time with much uncertainty the family felt like someone was looking out for them, because in the fall of 2010 they put a down payment on the 76 Ranch. “We have enjoyed immensely our time here along with the challenges that we face. Arizona is a fantastic place to live and work. Our son, Derryl, and his wife, Dejah, their two kids, Greysen and Charlie, live here at the ranch with us. They make it possible for me to leave as I try to serve the industry.”

The Whetten family run mostly Black Angus cows, along with a few Red Angus, with an emphasis on total pounds produced and desirable carcass traits. “We are constantly learning, I don’t think we will ever get it perfect.”

Whetten’s wife, Jennifer, are blessed with five wonderful children who have given them 16 grandkids. “Life has not always been easy, but it has certainly been worth it,” he explains.

In our conversation, I was curious about Whetten’s modern-day approach to managing a healthy herd of cattle and what makes Arizona special in the production of high-quality beef, certainly because of his global perspective having originally lived in Chihuahua.

Agriculture Industry Certification Paves Way for High-Skilled, Trade-Related Careers

By Katie Atkins, Arizona Farm Bureau Education Director and Chelsea Mcguire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

According to USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Purdue University, employers have 57,900 job openings in agriculture and related fields each year. But just 35,400 students graduate annually with a bachelor’s degree or higher in agriculture. If you make a direct mathematical correlation, there is a shortage of 22,500 ag graduates compared to the needs of the industry. Certainly, we need more students pursuing agriculture and life sciences.

Meanwhile, nearly two million college students will graduate from college with a bachelor’s degree this year. Will they find a job? If they majored in agriculture they would. In fact, some biotech companies have begun recruiting students during their junior year because the seniors in the agriculture and life sciences have already committed to an employer after weighing multiple offers.

We have the jobs; how do we get the people?

If you ask Queen Creek High School agriculture teacher, Justin Olleendick, he will tell you that we must get kids interested early. “If we can get students interested in agriculture during their freshman year, we have a better chance of them staying in the program for all four years,” he explains.

Students have a lot of program options when entering high school and their Freshman year is the year of discovery. Olleendick believes, “If we had four years of funding for ag programs [there are currently three: sophomore, junior and senior] we could better provide the newer technologies for our programs and draw students who might not have considered agriculture as a career path.”

The reality is technology has and will continue to be more central to even the most traditional roles in agriculture and there is already a shortage of workers with the appropriate skills. The key is showing students the opportunities so they will enroll in the classes to gain the skills.

Funding an Opportunity

It’s no secret that K-12 education is gearing up to be one of the most controversial issues of this legislative session. Improving our State’s schools is a
Arizona Agriculture: Recently during the University of Arizona’s Water Resources Research Center’s “State of the Watershed” you said, “As ranchers, many years ago we used to run cows. Today we raise beef.” Talk about this.

**Whetten:** If Arizona ranchers were to keep up with the massive growing global beef market, we have to analyze what beef products are in most demand and make efficient, intelligent and swift decisions on how we as Arizona ranchers keep our businesses profitable. Markets have changed dramatically which obligates us as producers to change our production practices. The United States of America now processes a record 222.8 pounds of meat and poultry per capita, per year, thanks to five years of bumper crop grains produced by American farmers. Acronyms, like NAFTA, TPP and others are bantred about, and research shows such as Amazon are making moves to join the great grocery store wars we will see in 2018 by competing with the likes of Walmart, Sam’s Club and Costco. Protein giants like Tyson Foods and Seafood Farms are building new modernized plants to accommodate the new “normal” increase in protein ions. The U.S. beef cattle herd has expanded by 12% over the last four years. My interpretation of these facts is that the stakes are high for the Arizona rancher and we have to move from the inefficient ways of the past to a new streamlined version of beef production that accommodates the voracious appetite we call demand, which is phenomenal.

**Arizona Agriculture:** If today’s beef industry is a dynamic, fast changing industry, what are key elements for Arizona’s ranching families to keep up with this pace?

**Whetten:** History teaches us that there are always opportunities in the beef business. It is essential for each Ranching operation to find those practices that could be implemented to create a more positive bottom line. In today’s world, information is at our fingertips. We need to use it, analyze it and implement the changes that are necessary to be able to maintain profitability. Talk to people who are having success, develop relationships with those who are involved in marketing, and work on producing a product that meets today’s requirements. The folks at the end of the marketing chain set the standard, know what that is.

**Arizona Agriculture:** If our beef industry is so dynamic, what kind of market influence points can we watch for, if any? In other words, are there obvious market challenges and/or opportunities to look for that might be standard or expected.

**Whetten:** To define our influence point, it’s that point in the market curve at which a change in the direction of the curve occurs, positive or negative.

**Whetten:** The American beef has expanded to near record numbers, and people I talk to discuss two possibilities for the near future. There are as many commodity forecasters out there as there are weathermen, and as we have in the past, we have poor oil and gas prices. One theory of thinking is quite traditional which is a direct supply and demand formula that implies that as we begin to over-produce what the market can absorb, prices will back up. The other line of thinking is that prices are affected greatly by attitude and because of the strong economic policies implemented by President Trump, people will spend their extra money on beef and the increased demand will take up the slack. Also, as we are seeing an improved economic attitude around the world that also translates into more demand for U.S. Beef. Inflation points in the market are difficult for a cowboy to understand, we need to become more familiar with them as an industry in Arizona. Hedging is a great tool,contracting your cattle is also. In the end, a quality product can always be marketed well.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Make comparisons with Arizona’s beef market and other regions of the country and even globally. Why is Arizona beef so special?

**Whetten:** Arizona is a wonderful place to produce beef. We have strengths in our weather throughout most of the state in that we don’t have the hay and supplement costs some other beef-producing states have. If we can get enough rain to spread our costs, which is generally on the left side of the national average. Our quality of product that we offer is on the rise and there is a greater demand for it now than there was in the past. Our down side is the fact that our beef cattle are exported to other states and the freight comes off from the price we receive.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Talk about our opportunities in the China markets, and as buyers what they are expecting from us.

**Whetten:** The China market is still in its infancy and has not yet shown a demand that is significant, but the potential is there and soon they will be a factor that increases the value in the market. One very important fact is that they buy what they want with the bells and whistles “they” want, not what “we” want. They are more concerned with birth place of origin, traceability, quality and other factors than cost. This market will grow but we will have to meet their demands.

**Arizona Agriculture:** What does the cattle industry in Arizona need to do differently?

**Whetten:** An Arizona rancher’s first concern is to assure a viable, profitable operation with an acceptable bottom line. Imagine yourself sitting on the front porch, in serious thought, with the experience that you have in the business world, information is at our fingertips. We need to use it, analyze it and implement the changes that are necessary to be authenticated to anyone in the world. Genetics that target the beef products that the consumer demands need to be part of our overall production plan. Veterinary and nutritionist advice should be sought, prenatal vaccinations for calves at pregnancy testing assures that our down side is the fact that our beef cattle are exported to other states and the freight comes off from the price we receive.

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Careers continued from page 1

programs are the ideal way to bridge the gap between the labor we need and the young essential to making inputs more efficient and realize higher yields.

money to train a brand-new employee to handle all the technology that's become es-

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Careers

by teaching our youth the skills they need to be successful at these jobs, before 

this individual will show up, work hard, and can 

CTE also offers students access to Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) such as the FFA. The combination of agricultural knowledge and skills learned in class and the leadership skills developed through FFA produce employees that can step into these open positions and take us into the future.

Sponsored by Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Sylvia Allen, SB1269 would restore 3rd grade funding for CTE programs in five crucial areas: agriculture, auto-

A GPS unit to do the driving for them. And for a farm owner, it costs valuable time and 

Arizona Farm Bureau spent the last year work-

When you connect. Consider inviting them to one of your county Farm Bureau meetings 

Arizona Farm Bureau spent the last year work-

The Arizona Farm Bureau (AZFB) feels it is important to play a role in providing 

As the AASAC gears up to be released this month, teachers across the State are 

January at the Arizona Department of Agriculture drew 49 Arizona Legislators. 

This year’s Arizona Farm Bureau Legislative Agricultural Festival (Ag Fest) in 

Join us March 4, 2018 at the Arizona State Capitol as we honor the 2018 AASAC 

Take agriculture, for instance: an employee 

Ag Fest is only the beginning. Arizona Farm Bureau member leadership en-

But Ag Fest is only the beginning. Arizona Farm Bureau member leadership en-

This result: the 

world. The certification will serve as a 

AzFB spent the last year working with teach-

the cost of the legislation to a minimum.

focusing on these 

at Desert Edge High School is excited and eager for the AASAC’s release. “I will en-

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Focusing on these 

funding and succeed today. To this effort, AZFB spent the last year working with teach-

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Sponsored by Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Sylvia Allen, SB1269 would restore 3rd grade funding for CTE programs in five crucial areas: agriculture, automotive technology, construction, engineering, and manufacturing. Focusing on these five areas not only targets the industries where we most need the labor, it also helps keep the cost of the legislation to a minimum.

At a luncheon on January 4, a bipartisan group of legislators, business leaders, and educators came together to voice support for this proposal. Representatives from each of the industries impacted by the bill explained how restoring complete CTE programs will encourage bright and talented young people to pursue careers in these sectors. Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle explained how the bill will increase both edu-

and skilled labor to fill them. And, 

mon, the AASAC will serve as a tool to help Joint Technical Education Districts (JTED) to meet the requirement of offering industry certificates -- a requirement for legislative funding -- and will provide schools with the necessary certificates to help 

them achieve higher grades on the A-F School Accountability Plan. 

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This year’s Arizona Farm Bureau Legislative Agricultural Festival (Ag Fest) in 

the Arizona Agriculture Skills and Assessment Certificate (AASAC). This industry certification, through a variety of qualifications, establishes that a student has the attitude, 

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2018 Ag Fest: The Great Arizona Meet Up!

This year’s Arizona Farm Bureau Legislative Agricultural Festival (Ag Fest) in 

Additionally, 61 Farm Bureau member leaders were on hand to host their state 

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When specific bills are up for hearing or vote, and action on your part is needed, we will 

We encourage our students to attain the AZFB Certificate because it will add an industry-

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By teaching our youth the skills they need to be successful at these jobs, before 

Lack of labor to fill the jobs that come with expansion.

There are a few ways to explain the labor crisis. For one, today’s edu-

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Arizona Farm Bureau received American Farm Bureau Federation’s (AFBF) prestigious Pinnacle Award, the highest honor a Farm Bureau state can be awarded for program and membership achievement. State Farm Bureaus were presented awards at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 2018 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show in Nashville last month. The awards recognized excellence in implementation of outstanding member programs and membership achievement in 2017.

To earn the Pinnacle, Arizona Farm Bureau had to earn recognition in all four areas of programming excellence: Advocacy; Engagement and Outreach; Leadership and Business Development; Membership Value.

The Awards of Excellence are awarded to state Farm Bureaus that demonstrate outstanding achievements in four program areas: Advocacy; Engagement and Outreach; Leadership and Business Development; and Membership Value.

Because AFBF gives out six Pinnacle awards based on member size, Arizona joined Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Tennessee in earning top honors. But the recognition didn’t stop there. Arizona Farm Bureau earned the New Horizon Award during the General Session in recognition of the Farm to Football Program, designed to reach children with the agriculture story tied to a popular sport, in this case football.

“We are so pleased that the Farm to Football Program was recognized by the American Farm Bureau as one of the best innovative programs by a Farm Bureau this year,” said Arizona Farm Bureau Ag Education Director Katie Aikins. “We really couldn’t agree more! Farm to Football has proved to be a wonderful way to reach people where their interests are and educate them about an industry that, although impacts everyone multiple times a day, they are often disconnected from and is often misunderstood. I wish I were a kid again and could participate in this program. Arizona Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom (AITC) is honored that Hickman’s Family Farms entrusted us with this program.”

This is Arizona Farm Bureau’s second time to win the Horizon Award. The first time was in 2014, for its publication series project aimed at providing information in various mediums to Arizona’s farmers and ranchers.

Arizona Farm Bureau: A Small State Doing Big Things

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Drum roll please: Our “Arizona Agriculture in 60 Seconds” garnered 12,000 views on Arizona Farm Bureau’s Facebook newsfeed (posted February 28, 2017). The “Farm Bureau Multiplies Your Time” earned 6,800 views on Facebook. The “Beef Leads in Arizona Agriculture Revenue” posted 5,400 views. Our latest, “Trade Talks! Just Listen” earned almost 4,000 views on the digital social media channel.

And while Facebook tells us it’s changing its algorithm a bit in a way that might hurt brands, if we engage with the content we post organic reach will still have merit.

But why does this have any value for Farm Bureau and agriculture in general? Well, it’s another way to tell our story, tell it correctly and engage the public. Plus, the marketing gurus say by 2019, video content will be the driving factor behind 85% of search traffic in the United States. Whether it’s Snapchat, Instagram, or Facebook, video content on social media is what marketers need to focus on in for now, say the experts.

So, Arizona Farm Bureau is dedicating some of our outreach efforts to video engagement. Most of our efforts are unable to garner these type of immediate views and engagement with most of that taking place within the first 24 hours the video is posted. Plus, we’re covering our critically critical issues including water, GMOs, wildlife management, food safety and more!

The video series we’ve begun on Facebook and YouTube is called “Food for Thought.” Watch for it every Wednesday. That’s the day we release the latest video.

See you online and fully engaged. Oh, don’t forget to share the video to your newsfeed if on Facebook!
Arizona’s Young Farmer & Rancher Program Brought home a Winner and had two competitors competing in Nashville

One of our Arizona ranchers comes back a national winner. Fourth place Young Farmer & Rancher Achievement Award winner Cassie Lyman of Arizona received a Case IH 40” combination roll cabinet and top chest and a $500 Case IH parts card, courtesy of Case IH.

Our Gila County Farm Bureau President, Lyman is a cattle rancher from Central Arizona. She and her husband, Jared, have four boys and are very involved in Farm Bureau. Cassie just retired as the Arizona Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher chair but was recently elected to be the Gila County Farm Bureau President. You can usually find Lyman volunteering for Ag in the Classroom or working on the ranch. Lyman also homeschools her boys and is very involved in her 4-H community and church. Though she is a native of Utah she has made herself home here in the great state of Arizona!

Lyman is not new to the YF&R contests, she has already competed in Discussion Meet and the Excellence of Ag Contest. Additionally, Alanna Riggs of Cochise County, competed in the Discussion Meet on behalf of Arizona Farm Bureau. Riggs is a fourth-generation Arizona cattle rancher on both her mother and father’s side of the family.

American’s Zippy Duvall Re-elected and national Priorities Set

While the main Annual Meeting concluded by Monday, delegate work was just getting started. Delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 2018 Annual Convention last month unanimously re-elected American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. Delegates also approved measures to help assure a prosperous agricultural and rural economy in the coming year and beyond.

Resolutions approved by farmer and rancher delegates from across the nation ran the gamut of issues, from trade to regulatory reform, crop insurance, biotechnology and more.

“Today’s actions give us a clear roadmap at a time when farmers are on the verge of their fifth consecutive year of shrinking net farm income,” Duvall said. “Despite these difficulties, we remain optimistic. Official Washington feels more like a partner than it did just a short time ago. We have real opportunities to make progress in policy that we have not had in the past.”

In the meantime, three of Arizona’s measures pushed to the national level were approved. Among other things, delegates approved measures supporting:

- An improved Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program to decrease risk-management disparities across counties
- A flexible cotton support program that considers cotton seed, cotton lint or both to help beleaguered cotton growers
- Strengthened and more flexible risk management and safety-net programs for dairy farmers
- Permission for workers to seek employment from more than one farmer under the H2A program
- Trade and trade agreements that strengthen market opportunities for U.S. agriculture
- Elimination of sunset provisions in trade agreements, to give certainty to businesses into the future
- Modification of NAFTA to improve market access to difficult Canadian dairy markets, in addition to improved food-safety standards for imported products
- An end to use of non-GMO labels on products that do not have GMO alternatives
- A $1 per member increase in dues paid by state affiliates of the American Farm Bureau Federation
- Support for the use of gene-editing techniques such as CRISPR, along with a voluntary and uniform labeling program for such products.
It only took one unpleasant experience speaking with individuals at a casual dinner party to realize I needed to make a change in the way I approached socially-and emotionally-charged topics related to agriculture.

Initially, the conversation was amicable with thoughts and ideas freely exchanged. But when I mentioned that conventional and organic milk had the same nutritional value, oh my, did that set one of the guests off on a tirade against conventional farmers. I felt I needed to match her level of hysteria – and I easily obliged!

Nothing positive was accomplished through that exchange and I left feeling upset and angry with myself for not maintaining my composure. I missed a fantastic opportunity to at least give some thoughtful, calm insight about how every type of farmer cares for their animals and the quality of the milk they produce.

I decided to get help and get help fast! I needed to look only as far as my Farm Bureau. I began to participate in training events that offered resources and genuine experience in how to relate to people’s concerns regarding how their food is produced. I learned why I needed to keep my emotions in check, how to listen first, ask a few key questions, then calmly and factually share how we care for our cows and crops on our farm.

It took some practice shaping my message, but over time it became easier to control my own emotions and I could tell that people really were listening even when they didn’t completely agree. I no longer dread an encounter or embarrass myself. Not every conversation ends with the other person totally on board, but at least the needle moves in the right direction.

When Duty Calls

In the meantime, I became more and more involved. It really began through Arizona Farm Bureau’s Women’s Leadership Committee’s events such as Legislative Ag Fest and Legislative Day at the state capitol, plus Farm Bureau trips to Washington D.C. to meet our congressional delegation. Ultimately, because of a vacant seat in my district for the upcoming election in 2018, I filed the necessary paperwork early with the Secretary of State’s office and just like that I became a candidate running for the Arizona House of Representatives.

Then, in an unforeseen turn of events, Arizona Congressman Trent Franks resigned his seat, my legislative district Senator then resigned to run for the congressional seat, and my district was left with an empty senate seat. To fill the seat, three of us were nominated from the same area of the district. Each of us gave a three-minute speech with the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors ultimately voting on a chosen candidate. My vote placed me in the Legislative District 13 senate seat formerly held by Steve Montenegro, R-Litchfield Park, who is now running for the congressional post formerly held by Representative Franks.

As I write this (January 7th), tomorrow morning I will raise my right hand and with my left hand on my late father-in-law’s Bible, I will become the next state Senator from LD13.

When passion for your livelihood meets leadership training and preparation, there is no limit to what opportunities are available.

Farm Bureau not only teaches and trains you, they take you! With so few of us producing our food and fiber, it is even more critical that when we have opportunities to engage with our non-farming friends, we do so in a manner that has the best chance of success to change their mind and transform their view of modern agriculture.

I encourage everyone to take advantage of the fantastic seminars and courses available through Arizona Farm Bureau on the topics of consumer engagement. It can be a real game changer for you too!

Editor’s note: Senator Kerr is a recent graduate of Project CENTRL, the statewide rural leadership training program.

Surrounded by family, Sine Kerr was sworn in last month as senator from legislative district 13.

Grain Commodity Experts See No Major Changes in Grain Prices

Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

U.S. grain prices and crop demand for 2017-2018 will likely show no major changes, according to Dr. Keith Coble, former chief economist for Senate Agriculture Committee Republicans and the head of the Agricultural Economics Department at Mississippi State University. Coble spoke to workshop attendees during the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 2018 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show recently about global crop trends and the U.S. farm policy outlook for the upcoming year. Trends for 2018 will be like 2017, unless a major disruption occurs, such as weather or a foreign market change, Coble said. “We are not seeing anything that is significantly moving the markets up or down in the short-term,” said Coble. “Markets are going to see mostly sideways movement. Cotton is the most promising of the commodities.”

Arizona’s own grain commodity expert concurs. “Without a significant crop production disruption in a major production hub there will be little reason for price strength,” concluded Eric Wilkey, Arizona Grain, Inc. President. “Further, pressure on U.S. prices will be exerted by the relative dollar strength, threats to export trade by lack of progress on NAFTA updates and any meaningful progress in bilateral trade negotiations in lieu of the multilateral negotiations that have been abandoned.”

Wilkey didn’t stop there but suggested clear strategies for improving agriculture commodity markets. “Improving our rural and transportation infrastructure, bringing meaningful competition to rail transportation rates and the successful engagement in new trade agreements that are mutually beneficial are the best way out of the malaise of our growing surplus of farm commodities. Our competitors in the world are all working diligently to capture our market share as we wallow in dysfunctional behavior.”

The Workshop’s Coble addressed the outlooks on global and U.S. markets for each of the major crop markets separately – corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton and rice – predicting not much change will occur. He also spoke about the future of crop insurance. “The overall percentage of the farm bill taken up by the farm commodity program has diminished, because of the shift away from Title I programs toward crop insurance programs,” he said.

The presentation concluded with audience questions about Coble’s opinion of the next farm bill and the North American Free Trade Agreement. Coble said the farm bill will likely receive minor tweaks because of the shortened window that comes with an election year.

Celebrate Ag Day with Ag in the Classroom!

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National Ag Day began 44 years ago. It was created to recognize and celebrate the contribution of agriculture in our everyday lives. At a time when people are so far removed from agriculture, on average 3 to 4 generations, it is important that they understand where their food and fiber come from.

Did you know that today, one farmer can produce enough food to feed 155 people for the entire year? In 1960, that same farmer could provide enough food to feed just 26 people. Come learn farm and ranch facts such as these and participate in hands-on activities with Ag in the Classroom at the Roots N Boots Rodeo in Queen Creek March 16-18.

This FREE educational booth will be open March 16th from 2:00pm-7:00pm, March 17th 9:00am-7:00pm, and March 18th 11:00am-4:00pm.

Questions? Contact Ag in the Classroom at aitc@azfb.org

A Word of Thanks

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very year, Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company raises funds for the ag-related youth programs that we support. This year, we raised more than $67,000. We extend a hearty “Thank You” to the many donors that contributed either through our letter writing campaign or through a special grant. Your generous donation to the Educational Farming Company helped us reach our goal of connecting with nearly 100,000 students, teachers and parents.

We could not do our educational outreach without you. Your donation is making a world of difference for our youth and our ag-related outreach to the community! This school year we believe we can reach over 100,000 students, parents and teachers.

Please consider a donation in 2018! If you’re still like to donate, you can go online to azfb.org and under programs find the “donor” button on the “Educational Farming Company” page. Or simply write a check to Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company to 325 South Higley Road, Gilbert, Arizona, 85296. For questions and further information about our program, contact Katie Aikins at 480.635.3608.

Questions? Contact Ag in the Classroom at aitc@azfb.org
Arizona Agriculture Loses Another Hero

O n my hero list, I have those who I call the quiet heroes. Sylvia Manterola, who passed away recently, was one of those. She and her sisters were always doing. Doing something. And, that’s beside running a family business, which I’ll get to in a moment.

Her family will remember Manterola for all sorts of things, but the Farm Bureau family will remember her for her work, along with her sisters Marie and Carmen, cooking the lamb burritos at Arizona Farm Bureau’s annual Ag Fest. Over the decades if you’ve eaten at least one lamb burrito you can say you’ve digested a bit of history and tradition.

“She always just kept the family together and the business,” says her younger sister Carmen Auza, former Arizona Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committee Chair. “She was instrumental in making rural Arizona and agriculture more healthy, vibrant, and sustainable. The mission of Project CENTRL is to equip and empower leaders to meet the needs of rural Arizona. It is you choose to do to improve rural Arizona.” Goar

This year, everyone noted something was missing at Ag Fest. It was the Manterola sisters. It was a bit of tradition for them to be there with their smiles and engagement. But, we took our posts and moved on during the event. Sylvia would want it that way.

“I don’t know if I can stop crying,” said Rhonda

The three Manterola sisters, Marie, Sylvia, and Carmen Auza, have always been involved in industry and community activities and fully devoted to family.

Vanderslice, Farm Bureau member from Pinal County and agent for Farm Bureau Financial Services that evening at Ag Fest. “Sylvia was so special to me; to all of us.” Vanderslice helps with the Pinal County Farm Bureau booth at Ag Fest and has done so for years. She’s shouldered right along with the Manterola sisters in passing out the popular lamb burritos. “They made me an expert burrito tortilla roller. Sylvia is truly a legacy. All the sisters are a legacy.”

Sylvia’s Story

Inheriting a rich Spanish and French Basque heritage, Sylvia Manterola was born in Winslow, Arizona the oldest of three sisters and one brother. She grew up on the Tillman ranch 75 miles south of Winslow. She spoke only Spanish when she started school in Glendale but quickly learned English and taught the rest of the family. She and her sisters were instrumental in helping their parents become American citizens.

She attended ASU when it was Arizona State College and majored in business. While trying to decide what her career would be, she tragically lost her Dad at age 21 and began helping her Mom manage the family’s farm business. She quickly became the Chief Executive Officer. If you want to know about what it takes to get sheep herders from Peru, Mexico and Chile, ask the Manterola family. She was active in her church, the Arizona Wool Producers, Cattle Growers and Pinal County Farm Bureaus.

In 2014, Sylvia Manterola received the Arizona Farm Bureau Heritage Award during the organization’s 93rd Annual meeting celebrating farmers and ranchers throughout Arizona. The Heritage Award is given to individuals and families that are involved in agriculture and have given extraordinary voluntary service to their industry and to their Farm Bureau.

With never much fanfare, Sylvia simply did what had to be done. And, my take on how she approached things is that she was a bit stubborn. We’ve all been told that even when bankers and other business professionals told her to just sell the family business, she and the family remained steadfastly determined to succeed.

So, Sylvia Manterola is one of my heroes: Much was done; little was said. She was a doer and will always be loved and appreciated by family and friends.

Rural Leadership Program Applications Due March 15th

Arizona’s Center for Rural Leadership, Project CENTRL, is now accepting applications for Class 27. Rural leaders, farmers, ranchers, and individuals working in businesses that serve agriculture or rural Arizona who want to make a difference in their community are encouraged to apply.

Project CENTRL is a premier leadership development program with over 600 graduates since the first class started in 1983. Alumni are active community leaders and dedicated volunteers who share a common vision of making rural Arizona and agriculture more healthy, vibrant, and sustainable. The mission of Project CENTRL is to equip and empower leaders to meet the needs of rural Arizona.

Project CENTRL gives participants a life-changing experience in just one year,” explains CENTRL Board President Cheryl Goar. “The people you will meet in your class, the travel across the state and the leadership skills you will gain promise to give you that boost you might be looking for to go to the next level, whatever it is you choose to do to improve rural Arizona.” Goar serves as the Executive Director of the Arizona Nursery Association, and is a Past President of AZ Society of Association Executives.

The program is a competitively selected, tuition-free, 12-month leadership development program. Each class has 16 people, and visits seven different sites throughout the state and includes seminars in Mexico and in Washington, D.C. The curriculum is designed to meet you where you are in your leadership journey and builds personal leadership skills, educates on issues facing rural Arizona, and connects leaders to each other and experts.

Project CENTRL is a partnership between the nonprofit Center for Rural Leadership and Arizona Cooperative Extension in the UA College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Applicants must be at least 25 years of age by June 2018 and a full-time resident of Arizona.

Detailed program information and an application packet are available online at www.centril.org. Additional information is available by calling the Project CENTRL office at 602-827-8227. All application materials are due on March 15, 2018 but candidates are encouraged to complete and submit earlier.

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