



# ARIZONA AGRICULTURE

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## A Follow-Up Conversation with a Humanitarian: Howard Buffett

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

In 2013, I sat down with American philanthropist and Midwestern farmer Howard Buffett, eldest son of billionaire investor Warren Buffett. Named after his grandfather, Howard grew up in Omaha, Nebraska and has been active in business, politics, agriculture conservation, photography and philanthropy. Knowing the interesting things he was doing with research on the Willcox farm, I reached out to him once again.

A member of Arizona Farm Bureau under Sequoia Holdings, LLC (the Willcox farm), Buffett oversees 1,500 acres in Illinois and farms 400 acres in Nebraska. These represent his personal farms. Designed and developed for agriculture-based research, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation farms include 4,400 acres in Illinois, 4,170 acres in Nebraska, 1,050 acres in Willcox and HGBF previously operated a 9,200-acre research farm.

As chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation that gives away tens of millions of dollars annually, Buffett has traveled all over the world to document the challenges of preserving biodiversity yet providing adequate resources to combat hunger and poverty. The Foundation's projects cover food security, water resource management, conflict mitigation, public safety, and conservation especially in Africa and Central America. At its core, the Foundation is trying to help small farmers increase yields without increasing costs for the world's poorest people.

His camera lens has brought him up close and personal to devastating poverty.

About his photographs of suffering children, Buffett has been quoted saying, "It becomes a set of circumstances; not just an image."

**Arizona Agriculture:** In 2013, you and I chatted about your Willcox farm and the efforts you were engaging to improve farming for third-world countries. Give us an update on your efforts on the Willcox farms and what you see as the next big outcomes with some of the research farming you're doing.

**Buffett:** We continue to focus on making the economic case to farmers – whether they are here in the U.S. or in the developing world – for conservation-ag farming practices that improve soil health and water-use management. The longer we do these studies, the stronger the case we can make. We continue to do our water conservation study comparing center-pivot irrigation versus sub-surface drip versus furrow/flood. We are also comparing no-till with cover crops versus no cover.

Another experiment we are doing compares using different winter cover crops in combination with shorter season corn and tracking the return-on-investment to demonstrate the viability of certain cover crops that have good N-fixing capability. We have recently published our preliminary research findings. We look forward to updating those as we get more years of data to compare.

Ultimately, our goal is to make sure we aren't doing too much that is new, and instead focusing on building a long-term, evidence base for the value of conservation

See **BUFFETT** Page 4



Says Buffett, "We constantly challenge ourselves on different conservation agriculture methods to aid in water conservation."

## Tamping Down the Stress Level on the Farm

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director with contributions by Liz Foster, Maricopa County Farm Bureau Executive Director

Since the farm business added all the custom work to make their business plan feasible, he hasn't had a moment to himself or the family in weeks. And, with budget expenditures ballooning, he and the spouse don't seem to be able to talk about things the way they used to. He feels like day-to-day problems are escalating. Farm and ranch families across the country and our own here in Arizona, can relate to the situation above. A recent study proves the point.

A strong majority of farmers and farmworkers say financial issues, farm or business problems and fear of losing the farm impact farmers' mental health, according to a new national Morning Consult research poll.

Sponsored by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), the poll surveyed rural adults and farmers/farmworkers in the U.S. to better understand factors affecting the mental health of farmers, availability of resources, perceptions of stigma, personal experiences with mental health challenges and other relevant issues.

AFBF Women's Leadership Committee Chair and partnered with her husband, Rick, in R&S Farms in Buckeye, Arizona, Sherry Saylor, suggests the agriculture community often gives more attention to their animals and crops than to themselves. "As farmers and ranchers, we put the care of our animals and crops as a top priority, but often don't take care of our own mental health. Our occupation is inherently stressful at best and in the present climate of low commodity prices, tariff wars, regulation, labor issues and more there is even further added pressure on the local family farm."

In leadership positions with Farm Bureau most of her adult life, Saylor and the women's committee are making the mental health issue on the farm part of their program of work efforts this year on the national level. "Now, more than ever we need to be aware of these pressures and how they can affect us physically and mentally. It is imperative that we recognize the signs of mental stress and

See **STRESS** Page 5



Decline in care of crops, animals and farm, deterioration of personal appearance, increasing life insurance, withdrawing from social events, family and friends are some of the clear signs that someone is dealing with mental health issues.

**in this ISSUE**

**Eyes on the Future - Page 2**  
Our Hearts in the Fight

**Concentrated Advocacy - Page 2**  
It Matters

**Grazing on Public Lands - Page 6**  
The Benefits are Real



# Keeping Our Eyes on the Future; Our Hearts in the Fight

*Lessons Learned from a Farm Boy Who Had Two Years and 24 Hours to Accomplish the "Impossible."*

By **Stefanie Smallhouse**, Arizona Farm Bureau President

Over 50,000 vehicles of all types and 175,000 British, American, Canadian, Free French, Polish and Norwegian soldiers came together as the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF) to invade the beaches of Normandy in the summer of 1944. It took two years of planning and millions of people to carry out an attack that lasted only 24 hours and changed the future of the world: The beginning of the end of Hitler's terror over Europe. Winston Churchill described Operation Overlord, also known as D-Day, as "The most difficult and complicated operation ever to take place." The Supreme Commander of the AEF and chief architect of the invasion was a farm boy from Kansas – Dwight D. Eisenhower.



**Stefanie Smallhouse**

My daughter and I were fortunate enough to travel to the U.K. and France for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, retracing the journey of many of those soldiers. We stood at the barbed-wire ledges of Ponte Du Hoc, walked on Utah Beach and sat silently at Omaha Beach while Taps played for the thousands of American soldiers who lay at rest in the American Cemetery. There were plenty of reflective moments to think about the American Spirit and our resolve.

Volumes are written about Operation Overlord and what made it a success, but a few particulars stand out to me: passion for the cause, teamwork, optimism and focus on the long view. Despite President Roosevelt's own reluctance, General Eisenhower was seen by his peers as well suited to command this effort because of his commitment to teamwork and ability to bring people together. He believed that optimism was infectious and without it, "victory is scarcely obtainable." Unlike General Rommel, the Commander of Hitler's forces in France, Eisenhower believed deeply in the cause he was fighting for while Rommel approached his fight with professional competence.

There was no passion for Rommel in fighting an enemy he had no reason to hate and actually looked upon with respect. Eisenhower not only encapsulated the American Spirit with his optimism for victory and passion for freedom, but he considered himself a builder, not a destroyer. That was his long-term goal. In contrast, The Axis Powers during WWII were focused on destroying what others had built and suppressing innovation.

America has become the leader of the free world as the builder of freedom, invention, infrastructure and prosperity; its farmers and ranchers have become the world's leader in technology, efficiencies and conservation as we grow and cultivate. There will always be those whose goals are to tear down and destroy what we have built and set back the advancements we have made as an industry. Adversity and challenge are inherent in the pursuit to provide food and fiber amidst so many factors out of our control. What we can do is remain optimistic, address our challenges with a team mentality, and translate our passion into action to advance our industry. So many of those who challenge our way of doing business and way of life have never hated us but respect us. They aren't fully aware of the care we take in farming and raising livestock and are overwhelmed with propaganda.

The "Farmer of the Future" will create the future that they ultimately want by looking long into the horizon and building their business through investment and innovation. It's hard to imagine this today through the lens of tariffs, trade wars, adverse weather conditions, labor shortages and agenda driven politics. American agriculture has seen much greater challenges than we see today and yet we are much stronger today than we were when those challenges seemed insurmountable.

Of course, General Eisenhower became President Eisenhower and went on to build the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Interstate Highway System, becoming one of the great builders in American history despite the destruction he witnessed in WWII. He also famously said, "Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles from the corn field." Let's keep our eyes to the future, our hearts in the fight, and remember we are stronger when we work together to advocate to law makers, communicate to our consumers and educate our detractors.



Normandy Beach and the telltale signs that a great battle was fought here.

# Advocacy in Concentrated Form

By **Chelsea McGuire**, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

At the recent Women's Leadership Conference, we had the privilege of hearing from "The Farm Babe" herself, Michelle Miller. The Farm Babe gave a presentation that was equal parts informative and inspiring, ending with a call to each person in the audience to speak up for what they believe in. After all, if the public is going to hear a message about agriculture, it should be yours.

Speaking up matters. It's a simple truth, but not exactly a simple proposition. After all, speaking up takes time, effort, energy, and more than a little patience. The idea of presenting and defending a less-than-popular statement about agriculture from uninformed commenters on a social media site is intimidating. And in the meantime, you have a business to run, crops to plant, water to check, and a family to raise.

It's no wonder our role as advocates so often takes a back seat.

The reality is that advocacy is just as crucial to the future of agriculture as any of the other tasks we do on a daily basis. No one believes more strongly in the power of our members' stories than the Arizona Farm Bureau. And if you ask me, the easiest, most effective, and efficient place to start is by telling those stories to Arizona's elected officials.

Yes, you read that right: if you want to get used to telling your story to the public, your congressmen, senators, and state legislators are the best place to start. First, they're the ones who are making decisions about the laws and regulations that will determine how you can run your operation. And, believe it or not, they're genuinely interested in how the decisions they make will impact their constituents. In a recent study by the Congressional Management Foundation,

See **ADVOCACY** Page 4

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## Buffett continued from page 1

ag practices. A good portion of our cover crop, irrigation, and tillage research is ongoing. We are, however, preparing to start a new experiment this year where we will be investigating more viable ways to use compost to restore soil biological activity and functionality.

**Arizona Agriculture:** You mentioned in our last interview how research and knowledge transfer to farmers doesn't always translate because sometimes the research being done isn't applicable to the everyday farmer environment. Have we gotten any better at this at least with research on the global front?

**Buffett:** We recently published a summary of the farm research we or research partners we funded have conducted on our own farms or in other real-world contexts so that we could share with farmers what we've learned from "real-world" research. Because this is not an academic paper, we believe the lessons we've learned and shared are practical and will be helpful to U.S. farmers, with relevant applications for the developing world. People must understand research and the implications for farming as it relates to the world they live in if we want them to adopt different practices. This is the standard more people and organizations need to use if they want to influence farmer behavior.

Outside the U.S., we have been working for the last five years to create the Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture ([www.rica.rw](http://www.rica.rw)) – a higher education institute in Rwanda that will have a hands-on training approach to education about agriculture. Young people interested in careers in agriculture, whether that be as a farmer or working in agribusiness or as an ag-policy maker, need to understand and experience the link between education, research and real-world farming. Every student at this school will have their own smallholder farming experience during their first academic year, learn about value-added agribusinesses that are national priorities for development, and stay closely connected with and work to solve the problems local farmers face in improving their productivity and livelihoods. This kind of hands-on training and first-hand experience forces students to confront and address real-world problems in a real-world context, not in a lab setting. We think this kind of education model will help shape how we do ag education not only in Africa but in the U.S. Our first 84 students, individuals we think will be the future leaders in agriculture in Rwanda, start school in September 2019. It will be many years before we can see how well this kind of training model influences future ag development in Rwanda (or the region) but the feedback we've had from educators in both Rwanda and the U.S. is that this is really the future of ag education and how we better prepare young people for solving problems in the real world.

A related project, and where much of RICA extension efforts will take place initially, is our NASHO Irrigation Cooperative Project. We put in place 63 center pivots -- and built a solar farm to offset electricity costs -- on land owned and operated by 2,000 smallholder farmers in the Eastern Province of Rwanda, an area prone to drought. NASHO is a real-world experiment in transferring improved practices to farmers. It's not been easy – there have been many problems that we are still working through. Despite these challenges, farmers have more than quadrupled their yields for maize, while increasing their revenue by five times; bean productivity has been less dramatic – 80% improvement over three years – mainly due to lack of availability of soybean seeds. We are testing seed multiplication at the site on several pivots to address this problem. It's a good start but we know we have plenty of work to do – despite these gains, our demonstration pivot is outperforming area farmers by nearly two times on every measure. But we've been pleased with how the farmers have responded to this experiment, and it's been really interesting to see certain farmers stand apart as early and committed adopters of improved farming practices. Their results in the field make it much easier to get the rest of the farmers to then follow them. We will have a lot more to share and say about NASHO in the coming years.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Any new perspectives about farming in Arizona?

**Buffett:** The types of challenges we face farming in Arizona have not changed, they just keep getting more difficult to manage. Water, heat, extreme weather events – these are variables that are not in our control, even when we have the best management practices in place.

**Arizona Agriculture:** One of Arizona Farm Bureau's priority issues is water. That

happens to be yours also. As technology improvements help us lower our water use in agriculture, we also know that in certain regions of the country we'll be constantly challenged to use this limited resource, certainly the desert southwest. What's your latest assessment of water use in agriculture and are we moving fast enough to continue preserving an adequate water supply for the future?

**Buffett:** Water is precious, and we continue to see it decline here on our farms in Arizona. We monitor our irrigation wells bi-annually and water levels are dropping in the static level. It continues to be more expensive to pump water from the depths where it still exists. We constantly challenge ourselves on different conservation agriculture methods to aid in water conservation. But we are not collectively moving fast enough, certainly not here in Arizona.

We need more farmers to recognize that we all must work together to address water use management, because my neighbor's water use affects my water availability, no matter how efficient I am in my own farming. Arizona's water-use policies where we are farming are not sustainable – we will all run out of water, it's not really a question of if, it's more a question of when.

**Arizona Agriculture:** From your perspective, what else should we be talking about in agriculture?

**Buffett:** There's a lot that should be keeping everyone working in agriculture up at night that we need to be talking about more:

**We have a population of aging farmers** – how do we get young people back to the farm? Agriculture needs to rebrand itself for a new generation that will be compelled more by the science, technology, entrepreneurship, and mission (feeding our country, helping to feed the world) aspects of farming than by just the tradition of farming. We've worked hard on rebranding agriculture to attract applicants for our school in Rwanda for these same reasons – most young people there think of agriculture as working in the fields for a subsistence existence. We are working to attract the country's best and brightest to engage in agriculture to help address the challenges we face feeding the country and the world in the future. I would say we've had some early success: we had 7,000 applicants for our first 84 student slots at RICA.

**Related to the above, and exacerbated for years by our broken approach to using foreign labor, we face a real farm labor shortage in the U.S.** I used to advocate for improving our H2A guest worker program and that remains an important tool, but I'm less optimistic that we can get productive solutions out of Washington, D.C. We really need to see how we can expand the use of mechanization in fruit and vegetable farming, so we are less reliant on manual labor.

**Absentee ownership continues to be a problem because owners tend to value the short-term (yield) over the long-term (soil health).** We need owners to value and demand adoption of improved farming practices the same way they value production output.

**World phosphate reserves are finite and concentrated outside of the U.S.** We should be viewing the availability of and access to this critical and constrained input to agriculture as a national security imperative. And we should have a Plan B.

Finally, we need global thought leaders who have the ability to influence policymakers and farmers in the U.S. and around the world to be smarter about making the connection between bad practices in agriculture and the long-term effects on our ability to produce. I recently read a piece by a well-respected philanthropist working on agriculture issues in the developing world who was celebrating the invention of the plow as a symbol of progress in agriculture. This individual also works to address climate change but made no connection between how his statement of support for tillage undermines his work on climate change. As Ohio State University Professor Rattan Lal has noted: "between 1750 and 2017, the amount of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere [due to soil disturbance] in carbon equivalents was 235 gigatons, plus or minus 95 gigatons. This is almost half the amount emitted by fossil fuel burning and cement production, which was 430 gigatons, plus or minus 20 gigatons."

We cannot continue to operate the way we have in the past. We hope that our research will provide support for a wider range of adoption of conservation practices. 📧

## Advocacy continued from page 2



A recent study reveals that 96% of congressional staffers said that if their member of congress had not yet arrived at a firm decision on an issue, personalized messages would have either "some" or "a lot" of influence on how that member would ultimately vote.

revealed that 96 percent of congressional staffers said that if their member of congress had not yet arrived at a firm decision on an issue, personalized messages would have either "some" or "a lot" of influence on how that member would ultimately vote. That means that nearly all Congressional offices are reading and paying attention to constituent messages, when those messages contain unique personal stories.

Instead of being intimidated by the seemingly impossible task of being the next public crusader for agriculture, just start by sending a simple note to your state senator about how a bill they're proposing will impact your farm. Dropping a postcard in the mail or clicking "send" on an email is all it takes to make sure a key decision maker knows your story – no comment monitoring required. It's advocacy in its most concentrated form.

Arizona Farm Bureau has an alert system to make sure you're up-to-date on the latest breaking political news and issues. By

signing up for our calls to action, you'll receive our regular legislative update. You'll also have the option to communicate with our elected officials about key bills and regulatory issues with just a few simple clicks (but don't forget to personalize the form letter we'll provide!). Go to [azfb.org](http://azfb.org) today, click on "Public Policy," and then "Action Center" to sign up for alerts.

And once you've gotten in some practice talking to your legislators, let's start talking about that Twitter account. 📧

**Editor's Note:** Advocacy can be an editorial. See page 6 this issue about public lands.



## Stress continued from page 1

seek help when needed. Most people in agriculture tend to be rugged individualists not used to asking for this kind of help, but we need to remove the stigma of getting professional help. It could save your life or your neighbor!"

Saylor carries this message with her everywhere she goes across the country. She spoke on the issue last month at Arizona Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Conference in Tucson to more than 140 women throughout the state.

Farmers and farmworkers surveyed said financial issues (91%), farm or business problems (88%) and fear of losing the farm (87%) impact farmers' mental health. Other factors included stress, weather, the economy, isolation and social stigma.

A strong majority of rural adults (91%) said mental health is important to them and/or their family, while 82% of farmers/farmworkers said the same. The Morning Consult polling found that a majority of rural adults have either personally sought care (31%) or have a family member (24%) who has sought care for a mental health condition. But, the numbers of individuals that sought help seem low.

"We all know how stressful farm life can be, and things are even tougher now because of the farm economy. More of us are affected, either directly or by having a friend or family member in distress. This poll proves what we already knew anecdotally: Rural America is hurting not just economically but also emotionally," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. "Even as the rest of the economy has boomed, farmers and ranchers are in year six of a widespread commodity-price slump. We can and must do more to address farmer stress and mental health issues in rural America."

Perhaps eliminating the stigma would cause more farmers and ranchers dealing with stress to seek help. Three in four rural adults (75%) said it's important to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community, while two in three farmers/farmworkers (66%) said the same.

Large majorities of rural Americans polled agreed that cost, social stigma and embarrassment would make it harder for them to seek help or treatment for mental health conditions.



**Said AZFB President Smallhouse, "Our farms and ranches tend to be the center of our universe, but we need to look outward and know that others are going through similar struggles. Asking for help is also a sign of great strength."**

"I am very troubled by the stories I have been hearing from my fellow agricultural producers around the country about close acquaintances who are suffering with depression which can and has led to the worst outcome," explained Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse, who runs a farm and ranch with her husband, Andy. "Depression is a tough subject for most people, but particularly hard to talk about in the farming community just because of our culture of self-reliance. It is as a community that we need to be perceptive and on the lookout for these signs and lean in to help our neighbors and our friends through these tough times. Our farms and ranches tend to be the center of our universe, but we need to look outward and know that others are going through similar struggles. Asking for help is also a sign of great strength."

Highlighting the need for awareness and training, the survey showed that farmers and farmworkers are less likely than rural adults in

general to be confident that they would be able to spot the warning signs of a mental health condition (55% versus 73%).

So, what can we do? While mental health resources abound the first thing is to try and identify the warning signs.

### Tell-Tale Signs of a Mental Health Crisis

Ruth Tutor-Marcom, with North Carolina Agromedicine Institute advises that clear signals can be identified. "Communication is not weakness," says Tutor-Marcom. She gives a list of signals.

- Decline in care of crops, animals and farm
- Deterioration of personal appearance
- Increasing life insurance
- Withdrawing from social events, family and friends
- Change in mood and or routine
- Increase in farm accidents
- Family shows signs of stress
- Increase in physical complaints, difficulty sleeping
- Increase in drug or alcohol use
- Giving away prized possessions, calling or saying goodbye
- Feeling trapped (no way out)
- "Nothing to live for"
- "My family would be better off without me; don't want to be a burden"

Tutor-Marcom, during a recent national conference of Farm Bureau safety coordinators, listed the most commonly diagnosed issues: relationship problems with spouses, parents and children (40%), adjustment problems such as anxiety and depression due to

stress (24%), anxiety disorders including excessive worry and panic (11%).

"Anxiety is so potent that it will effect you physically," says Tutor-Marcom. "Some lose feeling in hands, others have heart palpitations."

And, in today's current environment, farmers and ranchers have a combination of conditions compounding the typical stress that can be found down on the farm or ranch.

### Issues Compounding the Stress

- Weather
- Increased production costs
- Tariffs
- Trade/foreign competition
- Increased labor costs/shortage
- Tax re-evaluations
- Health issues
- Plant/animal disease
- Intergenerational tensions
- Development encroachment
- Litigation
- Environmentalists
- Commodity of scale
- Immigration
- Regulation
- Equipment failures

This list just names a few, though the list could be longer. Farmers and ranchers, according to research, manage their stress four main ways.

1. **Figure, reassess and reassure:** Notepad and sticky notes. Always figuring out how to make ends meet. If they can convince themselves it's going to be ok, they can convince family and loan officers.

2. **Distraction:** They go get parts, ignore troubling issues, take the day off.

3. **Repression:** Eat or drink or even do drugs.

4. **Broaden and Build:** Build their positive reserves. When times get bad remember the good or fun times. (go fishing, camping, other recreational activities).

While some ways to manage the stress are positive, others will obviously have a long-term negative impact. And, if a family member recognizes some telltale signs, the experts suggest a few immediate ways to positively improve the situation.

1. **Listen, don't blame.** While time to talk on the farm may be rare it's important, so listen to what needs to be said and show empathy. Many experts suggest that listening non-judgmentally with care and concern may be most of what's needed.

2. **Recognize the problem, don't avoid it.** Family members can give encouragement and provide resources for help.

3. **Cultural and religious beliefs can have a positive impact.** Faith for many is the strongest hope to hang on to.

4. **Keep Resources Handy.** Employee Assistance Program = [www.workhealth-life.com](http://www.workhealth-life.com), National Alliance on Mental Health = [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org), Make It Ok = <https://makeitok.org/resources>, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline = 1.900.273.8255.

Finally, in a time when issues on the farm are more pressing than ever, strengthening your own health and wellness may be your best strategy for staying mentally healthy. What are these? Tutor-Marcom has several suggestions.

1. Exercise.
2. Get plenty of sleep.
3. Eat healthy.
4. Balance work and play.
5. Avoid working to weary (a common occurrence on the farm).
6. Take time to unwind before bedtime.
7. Contemplate, pray, sing, meditate or do activities that require mental focus.
8. Be in the moment.
9. Laugh. Keep your sense of humor.
10. Accentuate the positive. Inventory your skills and strengths.
11. List the things you're grateful for. (Many suggest making this a regular exercise)

"Although I think farmers and ranchers are some of the most optimistic folks around," says Arizona rancher Smallhouse, "because you just must be – there is a certain somber mood currently out in farm and ranch country. Although the general economy is humming, the farm economy is stagnant. There are so many factors out of our control in getting our products to market that it can be overwhelming. We can't control our circumstances; we can nurture our heart and soul."

Farm Bureau is advocating for programs that provide America's farmers and ranchers with critical support and mental health resources and are pleased the U.S. Congress funds the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, at a level authorized in the 2018 farm bill. 📧

**Editor's Note:** This article first appeared in Arizona Farm Bureau's "The Voice" blog on azfb.org. We share it here with some updates for a broader audience and to provide key tools for helping deal with stress and mental health.

## Taylor Rogers Joins the Arizona Farm Bureau Team

### Staff Reports

Arizona Farm Bureau is pleased to announce that Taylor Rogers has joined the Outreach department as Outreach Manager – Membership Value. Rogers will oversee member benefits, serve as an agent liaison and do outreach management for two counties: Gila and Yavapai. Additionally, she also provides support to Maricopa County, working with Liz Foster, Executive Director of Maricopa County Farm Bureau.

Rogers, a 5th generation agriculturalist, attended the University of Arizona where she received a bachelor's degree in agricultural technology management. While at the U of A, she worked closely within a few different membership organizations including the Arizona Association FFA, Pima County 4-H, AmeriCorps, Sigma Alpha Professional Sorority, the CALS Ambassador Program, and the CALS Alumni and Development Office. The roles served in these organizations included coordinating, leading and hosting member events, enhancing both recruitment and retention efforts, alumni membership relations, and advertising.

Rogers continued her education by receiving her master's degree from Texas A&M University in Agriculture Communications.

Rogers possesses a passion for cultivating and maintaining professional relationships to better serve and work for the farmers and ranchers in Arizona. Having grown up around the Arizona agriculture community, her top priority remains to ensure Arizona Farm Bureau members feel they are a part of a family and their needs are valued.

Contact Rogers at 480.635.3609 or email at [taylor-rogers@azfb.org](mailto:taylor-rogers@azfb.org) to welcome her and certainly if you have a specific member benefits question. 📧



**Rogers had interned for Senator McCain during her master's program at Texas A&M.**



# The Science-based Benefits of Grazing on Public Lands

By Benny Aja, Northern Arizona rancher and president of Coconino County Farm Bureau and Cattle Growers Association

As President Dwight D. Eisenhower once wisely noted, “Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the corn field.” And when I read the July 7<sup>th</sup> article titled “Arizona Charges Less than almost Anyone Else to Graze Cattle” in the *Arizona Republic*, this quote immediately came to mind.

Unfortunately, the article compares apples to oranges, or since we’re talking about landscapes, a desert to a forest. Ranching in Arizona is unique, challenging and as diverse as the great state of Arizona and certainly unlike other states, even other western states.

As a cattle breeder himself, Eisenhower recognized the hard work and dedication it takes to feed a nation and **the importance of a stable and abundant food supply to national security**. The public trust entrusted to us is not taken lightly by any rancher in Arizona. For us, state lands don’t just represent a way to fund the schools our children attend or preserve the heritage of the state we love. They represent the resource that sustains our livelihood.

And to the cost issues, Arizona’s grazing rates are low because that’s what the market will sustain. State lands with no other use than grazing means demand for the land is low, and the grazing rate reflects that. The comparison that the article sets up is that Arizona’s rates are lower than any other state, therefore it’s assumed the grazing fees are too low. The real comparison is that Arizona’s rates are low because the land has no other use but grazing, and grazing is actually the best way to maximize the value of that land both to the State Trust and to other taxpayer-funded services, in the meantime as a rancher I’m responsible for building and maintaining any improvements on the land I use for grazing. I pay for those improvements, not the taxpayer. And, an added benefit is I’m also feeding you a high-quality beef.

Cattle ranchers serve as a tool for land management on behalf of the state. As a rancher, I like to identify the illuminating number of very important science-based, environmental benefits responsible grazing does for public and private lands.



Benny Aja with his cattle.

Those benefits include:

- Increased diversity of plant and animal species.
- Reducing wildfire threat from rangeland fires (an important one in Arizona and California).
- Habitat restoration for wildlife including threatened and endangered species.
- Control of invasive plant species.
- Controlling erosion from water runoff for improved water quality.
- Improving vegetation along stream banks and watershed health.
- Offering visually attractive vistas.
- Preventing fragmentation of habitat from housing and commercial development and maintaining connected wildlife corridors.
- Preserving open space in a rapidly growing state.
- Offering recreational opportunities, such as hiking and wildlife viewing.

Much of our state lands currently under grazing are not suitable for other enterprises; yet the forage grown on these lands can be used by cattle to produce an agricultural product while the water we maintain for our cattle also allows wildlife to thrive.

Ultimately, my role as an Arizona rancher is to steward the land for future generations, including my own grandchildren. Providing food for my family and you are what gets me out of bed every day. This is our commitment as ranchers 24/7. And I have a personal, vested interest to do that the right way. 🐄

**Editor’s Note:** Benny Aja is a generational rancher in Northern Arizona and serves as the current president for Coconino County Farm Bureau and Cattle Growers Association. A version of this editorial first appeared in the *Arizona Republic* last month.

## Playing Catch Up on Water Management Plans

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

As most of you already know, the Groundwater Management Act of 1980 created five Active Management Areas, or AMAs, in Arizona. Within an AMA, groundwater users are subject to a stringent set of rules and regulations that determine who can use groundwater, how much groundwater they can use, and how they are required to mitigate the effect of groundwater pumping within the AMA.

Many of these rules are set forth in formal management plans for each AMA, written and adopted by the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR). The 1980 Act created five management plan periods, starting in 1980 and running through 2025. Right now, Arizona is in the tail end of the fourth management period which runs from 2010 to 2020. The fifth period, which is the last for which the 1980 Act accounts, runs from 2020 to 2025.

But, there’s a bit of a hiccup: though we’re almost done with the fourth management period, no fourth management plan has been adopted in the Phoenix, Pinal, or Santa Cruz AMAs. A recent audit of the Arizona Department of Water Resources focused significant time and concern on the fact that the department is so far behind its required adoption of the fourth management plan, and cited lack of staff as one of the major reasons for the delay (from 2009 to 2014, staff positions at ADWR were reduced by more than 60 percent).

At the urging of the Governor and in response to the audit, the Department has developed a plan for writing the next two management plans. First, taking advantage of some new staffing opportunities, ADWR has hired someone to focus specifically on the management plan revisions and adoptions. Thanks to the additional staff capacity, they already have a draft of the fourth management plan for the Phoenix AMA, the Pinal AMA, and are working on the draft for Santa Cruz.

If you’re like me and you try to think in terms of working smarter, not harder, you may wonder why they’ll even bother with a fourth plan if there are mere months left in the period. The bureaucratic answer to that question is “the statute tells us we have to.” And, technically speaking, that’s true. But also coming into play is the fact that the management plans are intended to impose increasingly rigid conservation requirements as time goes on. So, if the Department misses the chance to add water use restrictions to the fourth plan, it’s one step behind, and won’t be able to impose even more rigorous conservation standards to the fifth plan.

In a briefing on the proposed fourth management plan for the Phoenix AMA, it was clear that the requirements are indeed increasingly rigid. The plan proposes up to a 10 percent decrease in water duties for the top 25 percent of agricultural users in the AMA, with an estimated savings of 9,000-acre feet per year. It also proposes to require irrigation districts to line 100% of the canals that deliver agricultural water. Finally, it modifies the Best Management Practices (BMP) program by requiring more points for a farm to comply, and re-weighting the point structure so that fewer points are assigned to less impactful BMPs. Similar changes are proposed for municipal and industrial users as well.

The fourth management plan drafts are far from set in stone, and the Phoenix Groundwater Users Advisory Council (GUAC) met recently to begin its discussions on the plan. Farm Bureau will continue to be engaged and will be sure to let our grassroots members know when the opportunity for public comment on the plans becomes available.

And remember: that’s just the fourth management plan. We still must adopt a fifth management plan, to be effective from 2020 to 2025. But unlike the fourth plan, which was developed almost exclusively by the agency, ADWR has convened a public workgroup to allow for industry input on the terms of the fifth plan. The first meeting of that workgroup took place last month, and subgroups will continue to meet to discuss the needs and concerns of specific industries, including agriculture. In addition, a subgroup to discuss the management goal in Pinal County, which is focused specifically on preserving agricultural economies, will convene to determine whether that goal needs clarification.

Long story short: there’s a lot of work to be done, and not much time to do it. But Arizona Farm Bureau is here to stay on top of the issues and keep you informed along the way. If you want to attend, participate, or just stay up-to-date on the work of the fifth management plans workgroup, meeting dates, materials, and other important information will be posted at <https://new.azwater.gov/5MP>.

This update first appeared in the bi-weekly “While You Were Working” legislative update. To receive these updates in your email inbox, sign up for Action Alerts on [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org). Click on “Public Policy,” then on “Action Center.” 🐄

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# Farm Friday Fun with Arizona Agriculture Superstars

By Staff Reports

Ag in the Classroom (AIRC) is excited to celebrate the deep history of agriculture in Arizona by partnering with the Arizona Farm and Ranch Hall of Fame for Farm Friday Fun with Arizona Agriculture. This 10-month digital curriculum program will expose classrooms of all grade levels to Arizona's diverse agricultural landscapes. Topics highlighted in this year's program include beef, sheep, dairy, cotton, alfalfa, careers, eggs, vegetables, pecans, and wheat.

"We are very excited about this year's partnership with the Arizona Farm and Ranch Hall of Fame," says Director of Education, Katie Aikins. "We want to show students how our Arizona farm and ranch families are rooted in the industry and have generations of knowledge that allow these farms to continue to be in production."

Each month, Participants of Farm Friday Fun receive a farm family profile, facts about the month's commodity, lessons plans, videos and other links that will allow them to dig deeper into each commodity. As a bonus to this year's program, classrooms will be able to compete in the Farm Friday Fun Contest. This will occur each quarter. Classrooms will participate in a STEM Challenge which will include developing solutions to real problems that are happening in the industry. Winners will receive an amazon gift card to be used for classroom materials. To learn more or to sign-up your class, visit us at [www.azfbaitc.org](http://www.azfbaitc.org).



# Agriculture Signing Bonus for New Farm Bureau Financial Services Agents

Farm Bureau Financial Services is looking for motivated individuals with ag backgrounds who would make great Farm Bureau Financial Services agents. If you are passionate about agriculture and take pride in helping people in the community, you could earn up to \$25,000 in an "Ag Affinity" bonus.



Why work for Farm Bureau Financial Services? As the #1 Ag insurer, Farm Bureau values agents with agricultural experience and is committed to helping them succeed by offering:

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- Support and training to help market to and service client/members and prospects
- A brand synonymous with protecting livelihoods and futures

Because you're an Arizona Farm Bureau member, if you know someone who might be a good fit for this position you could earn a \$25,000 referral bonus when you refer a quality candidate who has ag experience.

To be a candidate, you must have at least 3 years of experience or history with an agriculture-related company or operation and a signed ADP contract for payment.

Go to [BeAFarmBureauAgent.com/Managers](http://BeAFarmBureauAgent.com/Managers) for more information and to connect with an agency manager in your area. We look forward to you joining the Farm Bureau Family!



**Save the Date:**

## 2019 Arizona Farm Bureau Federation 98th Annual Convention "Empowering Ag Leaders"

**Who:** Ag Members of the Arizona Farm Bureau  
**What:** Farm Bureau members from throughout Arizona will set policy, elect leaders, hear informational and political speakers, attend awards and recognition events and the Ag Trade Show.

**When:** November 13, 14 and 15, 2019  
**Where:** The Wigwam  
300 East Wigwam Blvd.  
Litchfield Park, Arizona 85340

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# Don't Miss Your County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

*Influence Policy, Elect Leaders, and Have a Great Time*

One of the highlights of the Farm Bureau year is your County Annual Meeting. Members can spend time with fellow farmers and ranchers from their area, hear from a speaker or two, and work on solutions for the issues affecting agriculture. In addition, members get to elect leaders for their county Farm Bureau as well as who will represent them as delegates at the state annual convention in November.

If nothing else, you should go for the food, which is always guaranteed to be excellent at a Farm Bureau meeting!

Once a suggested solution is approved by your fellow members as official Farm Bureau policy at the County Annual Meeting, you are no longer a single voice in the field. You now have the power of Farm Bureau behind you, and that is a formidable force for getting things done.

John Boelts is 1<sup>st</sup> vice-president of Arizona Farm Bureau and chair of the Policy Development Committee. "Farm Bureau is the Voice of Agriculture because we speak for our members. I encourage all Ag members to have their voices heard by attending their county's policy development and Annual meetings," says Boelts.

County Annual Meeting information is available online at [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org) in the Calendar of Events under the Events tab. Select your county in the top right drop-down and look in August or September.

To discuss this further or to get involved, contact our Outreach Managers Christy Davis at 480.635.3615, Amber Morin at 480.635.3611 or Taylor Rogers at 480.635.3609.

2019 Annual Meetings			
	Location	Date	Time
LA PAZ	Havasu Springs Resort 2581 North Highway 95, Parker	Aug 2nd	6:00 PM
PIMA	The Mountain Oyster Club 6400 East El Dorado Circle, Tucson	Aug 9th	3:00 PM
COCONINO	Williams Rodeo Grounds	Aug 10th	8:30 AM
YAVAPAI	Hassayampa Inn 122 East Gurley Street, Prescott	Aug 10th	5:30 PM
YUMA	Booth Machinery 6565 East 30th Street, Yuma	Aug 14th	4:00 PM
COCHISE	Willcox Elks Lodge 247 East Stewart Street, Willcox	Aug 16th	6:00 PM
NAVAJO	La Cocina De Eva 201 North Main Street, Snowflake	Aug 22nd	6:00 PM
GILA	DJ's Casa 1855 South Holder Drive, Globe	Aug 23rd	5:30 PM
MOHAVE	Hualapai Recreation Area 6250 Hualapai Mountain Road, Kingman	Aug 24th	11:00 AM
MARICOPA	Pera Club 1 E Continental Dr, Tempe	Aug 27th	9:00 AM
PINAL	The Property 1251 West Gila Bend Hwy., Casa Grande	Aug 28th	5:30 PM
GRAHAM	Branding Iron Steakhouse 2344 North Branding Iron Lane, Safford	Aug 29th	6:00 PM
APACHE	TBD		
GREENLEE	Duncan High School Cafeteria 108 Stadium Blvd, Duncan	Sept 4th	6:00 PM

## Every Friday You Can Talk to An Arizona Farmer

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Began this summer, Arizona Farm Bureau has made it even easier for you to talk to a farmer, or rancher! Through Instagram, Facebook and the social media channels, "Live" feature, we're taking the time to visit with our farmers and ranchers here in Arizona. Arizona Farm Bureau's "Talk to a Farmer Friday" program launched so Instagram and Facebook followers to our social media accounts would have an opportunity to see our farmers and ranchers live on their places and even post a question on the Instagram Live feed. It's turned out to be more of a hit than we anticipated.



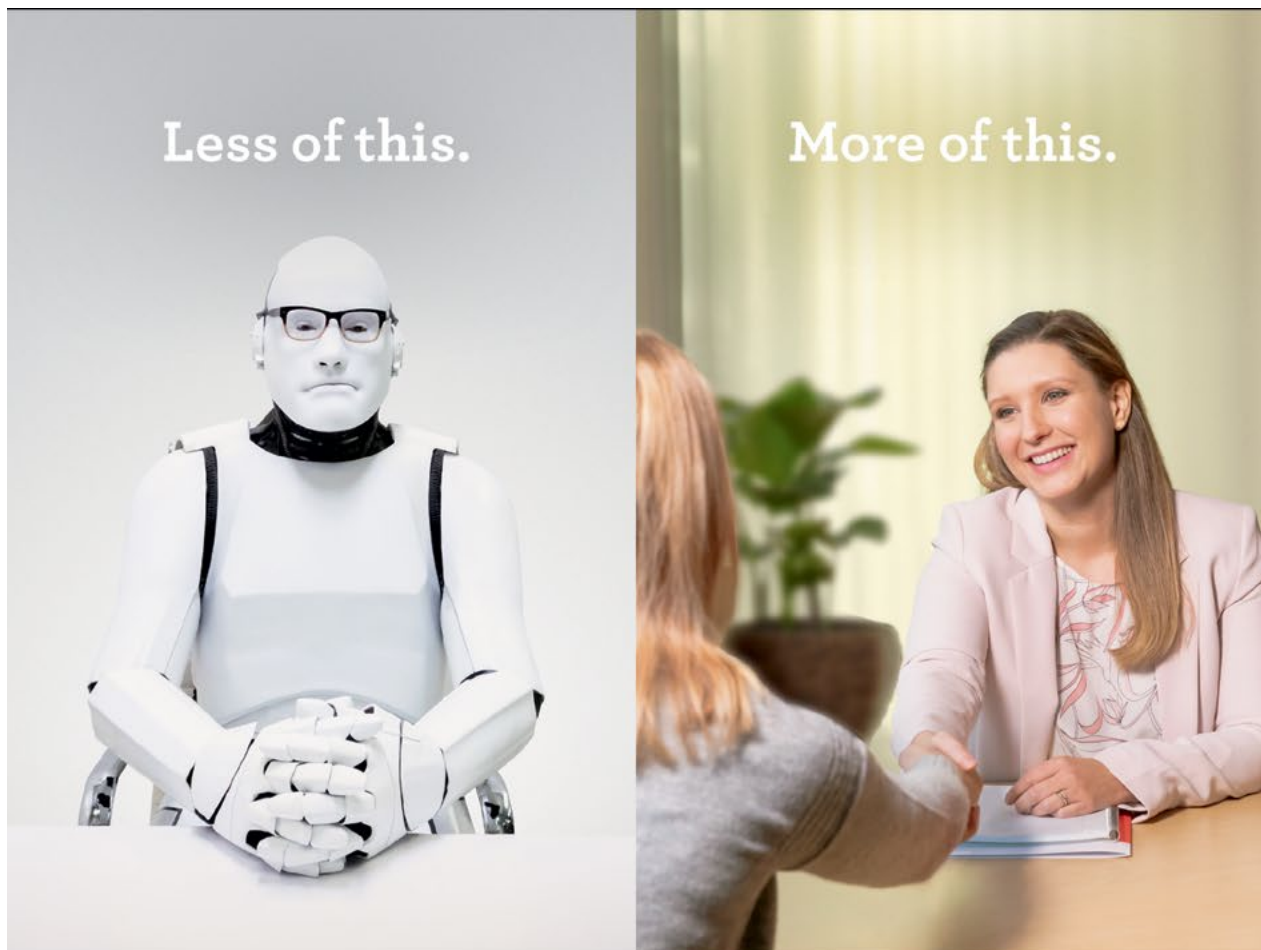
We'll be talking with farmers and ranchers from all over the state.

During the first Instagram Live, more than 100 Instagram followers logged on to view the conversation we had with Trevor Bales, an alfalfa and Sudan grass hay farmer from Buckeye, Arizona. Bales has already attracted quite a following with friends and fans that watch him daily talk about farming in Arizona.

The plan is to do this every Friday morning between 10:00 and 11:00 in the morning. We'll be talking with farmers and ranchers from all over the state. During the 20 to 25-minute live sessions with the farmers, you'll have a chance to pose a question if you follow Arizona Farm Bureau on Instagram.

One of our more recent "Talk to a Farmer" sessions was with a wine grower, Emil J. Molin of Cove Mesa Vineyard from Cornville. He had great insights about the wine industry that are surely valuable for those who listen to the taped conversation.

Join us and stay connected to your Arizona farmers and ranchers that love to share their stories about farming in this vast and diverse agriculture state! Contact Julie Murphree at 480.635.3607 if you'd be willing to participate as one of our farmers or ranchers.



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