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Legislative Leaders Establish Their 2017 Priorities



By Steve Yarbrough (R-Dist 17)
Senate President

Happy New Year from the State Senate! In a matter of days, Members from all over the state will convene at the Capitol for the beginning of the 53rd Legislature, 1st Regular Session. I am honored to serve you for the next two years as President of the Senate. It is a time of transition in our state and in Washington, and I look forward to the work ahead.

Having grown up on a farm in eastern New Mexico I value greatly our agricultural community and I welcome the opportunity to communicate some thoughts.

As always, the budget is what defines the priorities of the state government. Our growth continues at a steady but modest pace. We are 90 months into the current expansion, and a downturn is certainly possible in the next couple years. Although our Rainy Day Fund is approaching \$500 million, it isn't enough to handle even a 1% reduction in state revenue. In addition, formula spending uses up nearly all projected revenue increases. That includes large increases for K-12 education and health care. What it doesn't include is hundreds of millions in requests by state agencies for new spending. It is easy to see why I have been cautioning others to be very circumspect about spending taxpayer money.

So what else should we expect to see at the Capitol this session? I expect Governor Ducey to propose a continuation of his desire to diminish business regulation. The Governor has indicated a preference to reduce taxes every year, so I would expect to see that in the 2018 budget. In education, we look forward to successful reimplementation of the A-F school rating system. This gives parents clear information and helps provide a basis for rewarding outstanding teacher performance.

As Obamacare continues its collapse, we will search for the best solutions to improve health care in America. The Legislature will continue to insist on improvements at the Department of Child Safety. We also need to help make certain the free exercise of religion is not sacrificed as the federal judiciary invents new constitutional rights.

The upcoming session holds great promise. Our finances are largely in good shape, and we have strong leadership in place to work for all Arizonans. I am proud of the collegiality we have in the Senate, and I am confident we will work together to improve life in this great state. 🚗



By Katie Hobbs (D-Dist 24)
Senate Minority Leader

Education is the key to Arizona's economic success. It's a simple fact that is backed up by research, the experiences of other states and by history.

Yet for most of the last decade Arizona's priority has been to drastically slash education funding in favor of corporate tax cuts which research, experience and history have shown to have no measurable effect on economic growth. Arizona's economic recovery still trails behind the national average, despite those tax cuts being sold with wild promises of good fortune.

Seven months ago Arizona voters approved Prop 123, the school funding lawsuit settlement that paid school districts only some of what the state owed them. At the time, Governor Ducey promised to work with legislators and school districts to develop a "step two" that would make up more of the funding that was cut. But here we are, with not one word about that next step and with school funding still at 48th in the nation.

Even after passage of Prop 123, polls show that Arizonans overwhelmingly agree that our district schools still deserve more resources to succeed. We have a plan for a next step that would allocate available funds for teacher recruitment, retention and training as well as provide classroom resources to replace outdated materials and technology.

Arizona currently spends more than five times per inmate than it does per student with your hard-earned tax dollars. What does it say about our state when we prioritize prisons over schools? It says we have given up hope for children who are at risk of dropping out. It says we put more faith in locking up our fellow Arizonans than preventing this by providing the skills they need to strive and achieve. This must change.

Irresponsible budget cuts and taxes that overburden the poor and middle class while favoring corporations and the rich have left our state unable to meet the basic needs of our state. Our roads are crumbling, our schools still struggle and preventive services have been cut that keep people and families from needing expensive state intervention like child safety and the courts.

We can change our state's priorities and restore the revenue needed to achieve them - all that's needed is the will to do so. But with an entrenched majority in control of the Legislature, we will need the help of every Arizonan to tell your legislators that you prioritize education over incarceration, prevention over punishment and fair taxes for all, not tax cuts for special interests. 🚗

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Trump's EPA Selection Makes Farmers Cheer

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Communication Director

President-Elect Donald Trump's announcement last month to nominate Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to run the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is welcome news to the agriculture community since most know that Pruitt led the legal charge by the states against EPA abuses. Pruitt's efforts included the victory of a Supreme Court stay on the Clean Power Plan as it moves through the appellate courts.

"President-elect Trump's selection of Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency is welcome news to America's farmers and ranchers—in fact, to all who are threatened by EPA's regulatory overreach—and should help provide a new degree of fairness for U.S. agriculture," said American Farm Bureau (AFB) President Zippy Duvall. "We know that in his position as attorney general in Oklahoma, Pruitt has stood up for common-sense, effective regulation that protects the environment and the rights of the regulated community. We have been grateful for his effective legal work in response to EPA's overreaching Waters of the U.S. Rule."

Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers spoke to the Waters of the U.S. Rule too. "It will be refreshing to have someone heading EPA that knows the difference between a river and rainwater on the side of the road, and irrigation water in a farm ditch or a low spot on a ranch. We look forward to helping the new EPA administrator protect our environment with common sense regulations."

And on the issue of working together and listening, AFB's Duvall added, "We anticipate that as EPA administrator, Pruitt will listen to our concerns and those of others who work with the nation's natural resources on a daily basis. Agriculture is a profession based on a solid ethic of conservation. It helps guide everything we do, and we expect that Pruitt will understand that in regulatory matters dealing with agriculture and the environment."

First Vice President for Arizona Farm Bureau Stefanie Smallhouse who has testified on the Waters of the U.S. Rule calls this announcement a refreshing change. "Conservation and production are not mutually exclusive goals. The mis-

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Changes to the PM10 Agricultural Best Management Practices Program

By Rusty Van Leuven with the Arizona Department of Agriculture

The PM10 Agricultural Best Management Practices Program was created in 1999 to allow farms and nurseries a wide range of choice to reduce particulate matter (PM) emissions within an established PM regulated area. In 2007, Senate Bill 1552 mandated the expansion of the program and outreach materials were distributed with these changes in 2008. The program has remained unchanged until recently when the EPA made recommendations that the program become more “specific” and “enforceable”.

Due to new legislation in 2015, there have been a couple of small changes to the program in Maricopa County and a whole new program in Pinal County.

1. The definitions have changed to meet EPA’s “specific” and “enforceable” recommendations. Many of the definitions require additional record keeping if the BMP is not easily visible. See the new Guide for suggestions on how to implement the BMPs.

2. The categories have been renamed with some BMPs moved to different categories. Some BMPs have been eliminated and others have been combined. The categories and BMPs were shuffled to better represent a complete harvest year.

3. Four new BMPs have been created which include Transplanting, Shuttle System/Large Carrier, Stabilization of Soil Prior to Plant Emergence, and Conservation Tillage.

4. Significant Agricultural Earth Moving Activities Category was created. This is not a mandatory category, but if you are doing any construction work on your farm that disturbs more than 4 inches below the soil surface (not associated with tilling) you must implement 2 BMPs from this category.

5. Reporting is now voluntary instead of mandatory. A new Best Management Practices General Permit Record Form shall be completed every year by March 31 and to be kept on file at your facility. The form will need to be submitted to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality upon request only.

As mentioned above, Pinal County growers have a new BMP program as of January 1, 2016. It is quite different from the Maricopa County program. There are five categories, a “Super” BMP, mandatory High Dust Forecast BMPs, and a 3-year survey. If you didn’t attend one of the Pinal County Grower Education meetings, contact Rusty Van Leuven at the Arizona Department of Agriculture to help guide you through this new program.

There are new guides for both Maricopa and Pinal Counties as well as dairies and feedlots. If you have not received the new *2015 Guide to Agricultural PM10 Best Management Practices* contact Rusty Van Leuven at the Arizona Department of Agriculture at 602.542.3484 or email rvanleuven@azda.gov.

Post-Election: It's Not Time for a Timeout

By Stefanie Smallhouse, Arizona Farm Bureau First Vice President and Pima County Rancher



Stefanie Smallhouse, Arizona Farm Bureau First Vice President

Are you feeling great relief following the November election? The one that must be remembered as the endless campaign. Maybe you’re thinking that you can now take a deep breath, shake that regulatory monkey off your back and relax. Don’t be so quick to check out of the political world and get back to the farm for the next four years.

I also took a deep breath on November 9th as if the air was somehow more refreshing than election morning the day before and straightened and stretched my back as if a weight had been lifted. The stress of an 18-month vitriolic election cycle, not to mention eight years of playing defense against an egregious regulatory machine has left all of us battered, frustrated and plain worn out.

As sometimes happens in our elections, we now have one party in control of both houses of government as well as the Presidency. History tells us this window of opportunity is likely to last for only two years. Now is the time to dust ourselves off, shake off our disappointments from the last decade and get the heavy lifting done.

We have common sense regulatory reforms which have been sitting on the shelf for years; Reforms to environmental rules and laws which make sense for both the environment and productivity. Our need for a legal source of labor for our farms and ranches has come to a tipping point while border ranchers have seen little relief from the wave of drug smuggling crossing our borders and endangering their families. We have an Antiquities Act which swallows millions of acres of public land every four years and needs to be dealt with early on in a Presidency rather than at the 11th hour as we are doing now. Global trade agreements are sitting in limbo at risk of falling apart.

I believe President-Elect Trump won out in the end because he garnered votes from both Republicans and Democrats who are literally sick and tired of our government representatives not fixing anything. Every issue has become more of political football used to manipulate the electorate rather than a problem to be solved. Immigration reform which snares the issue of a temporary foreign worker program is an issue on both sides of the aisle, but instead of fixing it, the problem is left to fester for the benefit of party politics. Mr. Trump is somewhat of a hybrid of both parties at this point, which means when presented with a reasonable solution he may be more inclined to be a problem solver rather than a party puppet.

As they say, “the only poll which matters is on election day” and as it turns out that was the only accurate poll. It sends a clear message to both parties that neither has been effective at governing our country. We are tired of the strategic pontification of the issues by folks who spend all their time strategically pontificating while we struggle to keep the wheels of progress moving. We get up every morning to earn a living, provide for our families and follow the golden rule as much as possible. We ask those representing us to do their job and govern, fix the problems, protect us, and let us do our jobs to keep this country humming.

So drink a Red Bull, have a double shot of espresso and let’s get to work while we have the opportunity. Now is not the time to take a timeout!

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2017 Priorities continued from page 1



**By J.D. Mesnard (R-Dist 17)
House Speaker**

Leading the Arizona House of Representatives is a tremendous honor and a serious responsibility, and my legislative goals for the House in 2017 reflect the significant challenges facing Arizona. Sustaining an environment conducive to economic growth, ensuring the state has a quality education system, and restoring civility to government have been priorities of mine since entering public service, and they will continue to be next year.

By simplifying our tax code and reducing the regulatory burden on small businesses, Arizona can empower the private sector to create jobs and foster innovation. While Arizona certainly stands out among our neighbors as a good place to invest capital and grow a business, more can be done. Collapsing Arizona's five income tax brackets down to one will create a fairer, simpler system that encourages, rather than penalizes, success.

In order to ensure that Arizona stays on a prosperous path for decades to come, we need a steady stream of capable and skilled workers entering our labor force. That will require meaningful reform in how we fund education. Arizona's K-12 financing system is the most complicated in the country. Too many dollars never make it to the classroom, and those that do often times come with strings that tie the hands of parents and teachers. Not only do teachers deserve greater freedom over how education dollars are spent in their classroom, but they deserve salaries that reflect the vital work they do.

Finally, after an unusually acrimonious and partisan election cycle, I hope to restore a sense of confidence in and a spirit of cooperation within our government institutions. Republicans and Democrats certainly won't always agree on how best to solve the challenges facing our state, or even what constitutes a challenge. However, there will be many areas where we can work together, and when we must oppose each other, I pledge to do so with respect and civility.

As the Arizona House of Representatives prepares to confront looming challenges next year, we also stand ready to capitalize on the many opportunities that surely await the state. I'm optimistic and excited about what's in store for Arizona in 2017. 🚗



**By Rebecca Rios (D-Dist 27)
House Minority Leader**

As the new legislative session approaches, Arizona House Democrats are committed to the priorities that will best prepare our state for the future: improving public education and strengthening our economy. As a more than \$17 billion industry in Arizona, agriculture plays an important role in the state's economy. In an effort to support Arizona agriculture, and our economy more broadly, we will continue to support policies that foster the state's trade infrastructure.

Arizona must be active in ensuring its competitiveness in the future. The effects of the last economic downturn still linger in this state. Job creation and education must be priorities because, while many Arizonans are prospering, many are still struggling to recover.

Education will always be a top priority for House Democrats because investing in education is crucial for long-term economic strength. Our children will carry our state through the 21st century, and they must be prepared to navigate its increasingly interconnected economy. Arizona needs rigorous standards and common sense accountability in our schools. And our schools need more robust and sustainable funding than they have received in years. Agriculture benefits, along with every other industry in Arizona, from reliable and skilled workers. And the best way to guarantee that Arizona's businesses will have the workforce they need is to ensure that our schools have the resources they need to prepare students for college and 21st century careers. We are encouraged to know that community and business leaders are already working together to support Arizona's schools. House Democrats will continue to work with those leaders to expand sustainable, high-wage jobs in the industries Arizona counts on, and especially those, like agriculture and biotechnology, that thrive in rural areas.

Sensible budget solutions will be the key to safeguarding Arizona's economic strength. House Democrats are eager to work with our colleagues to pass a balanced budget that fosters job growth without hurting Arizona families and businesses by under prioritizing education. We are ready to set aside strict partisanship and focus on common-sense policies because our only goal is to move Arizona forward. 🚗

Farmers Cheer continued from page 1

management of the EPA in the last 8 years is a reflection of a narrow minded special interest agenda which intended to set back our advances as a leader in the world for production efficiencies. This appointment is a breath of clean air!"

Most in the agriculture community are encouraged that Pruitt is known as an attorney specializing in constitutional law. In particular, he's often the one arguing against the regulatory power of the federal government.

Arizona Farm Bureau's Rogers and Smallhouse expect a newfound respect for the Constitution and cooperative EPA rule-making from here on out. A notable change from the previous 8 years. 🚗

The state minimum wage poster is available online at the Industrial Commission of Arizona's website, www.azica.gov. The 2017 edition is now available.

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The Best in Arizona Agriculture Celebrated

Farm Bureau Members Honored for Achievements

Arizona hosts some of America's top farmers and ranchers. The Arizona Farm Bureau annually recognizes them for their achievements. The following awards were given out during the Service to Agriculture Awards Banquet during the 95th Arizona Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Litchfield Park.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO AGRICULTURE

Alan Seitz



Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers announces Alan Seitz as the 2016 recipient of the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award. With Seitz and Rogers on stage is Jeanie Seitz and Cochise County Farm Bureau Vice President John Hart (far left).

FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD

David Sharp, Art Allen and Harold Maxwell



2016 Farmer of the Year recipients, David Sharp, Art Allen and Harold Maxwell were recognized for their exhaustive work dealing with PM10 Dust Regulation issues in Yuma County. From left to right: Media Celebrity Jan D'Atri, Yuma County Farm Bureau President Cecil Pratt, Harold Maxwell, Art Allen, David Sharp and Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD

Warner Glenn



Rancher Warner Glenn was recognized as one of the 2016 Environmental Stewardship Award winners for his unwavering commitment to the environment and the ranching industry.

George and Sharon Yard



Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers announces the additional recipients of a 2016 Environmental Stewardship Award as George and Sharon Yard. The Yards were on-stage with media celebrity Jan D'Atri.

HERITAGE AWARDS

Introduced in 2006, the Heritage Awards were announced during the Service to Agriculture Awards Banquet. The award, which can be given to an individual or family, was developed by Arizona Farm Bureau to recognize extended service to agriculture. Additionally, those awarded the Heritage Award are recognized for their significant contributions to their county or state Farm Bureau.



The Sossaman Family received this year's Heritage award.



Steve and Sharla Flake receive the 2016 Heritage Award from Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers and Navajo County Farm Bureau President Marguerite Tan.



The Tayler family received the 2016 Heritage Award from Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers and Greenlee County Farm Bureau President Donald Merrell (far left).



Graham County Farm Bureau President Jay Larson (far left) is on stage with Norman Pete Brawley as he received the 2016 Heritage Award from Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers.



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Arizona Cotton Leader Remembered

By Cary Blake, *Western Farm Press* (reprinted with permission)

Arizona agriculture has lost a great leader and stalwart - Mr. Rick Lavis - to the dreaded 'C' - cancer. For 36 years, Lavis led the Arizona Cotton Growers Association (ACGA) as the grower group's executive vice-president where he strongly advocated for producer success.

"He was a respected and fierce advocate for the cotton industry in the Grand Canyon State and the entire U.S. cotton belt. His lobbying efforts helped craft cotton and agriculture-friendly legislation in the halls of the Arizona legislature. He worked tirelessly with the National Cotton Council to help craft pro-cotton provisions in federal farm bills.

A memorial service for Lavis is scheduled on Jan. 21, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. at All Saints' Episcopal Church, 6300 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, Ariz. 85012.

Lavis was respected by many, including fellow lobbyist Bas Aja, executive vice-president of the Arizona Cattle Feeders Association.

"In my view, we lost a prince and a diplomat. Rick unabashedly called it like he saw it. He would have been a great umpire, 'Ball...strike...you're out!' I loved Rick; he was a friend and mentor and will be missed."

Lavis was a thinker who thought out of the box to see the bigger picture.

"Mr. Lavis was instrumental in the formation of the Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council (ACRPC) and authored most if not all of the Council's formative statutes," says ACRPC Director Leighton Leisner. "Rick continually guided and supported the Council and its staff in many capacities since then."

Leaders of the ACRPC heled develop the successful pink bollworm (PBW) eradication program in Arizona and other cotton-growing areas. The program included raising sterile male moths at a facility in Phoenix and then releasing the moths by airplane over cotton fields which in the end halted the insect's reproductive ability and new generations of the moths. Today, formal eradication of the pest is close at hand.

Leisner adds, "Rick was always challenging, teaching, and helping to provide opportunities for people and industry to grow and thrive. His influence made a large impact on my life and success both professionally and personally."

Paul (Paco) Ollerton, a Casa Grande, Ariz. cotton grower and ACGA board chairman, says Lavis was fair and honest with everyone.

"Rick was the grandfather of the lobbyists involved with the Arizona political realm," Ollerton states. "Legislators respected Rick as did other agricultural lobbyists in the state. He was honest and fair with everyone."

Lavis was considered 'old school' by many, notes cotton grower and industry leader Dan Thelander.

"Rick used a typewriter until just a few years ago and he took a lot of ribbing about

his lack of computer skills, but he finally learned the basics. Old school folks write letters and cards, and I remember years ago when he sent me a short note congratulating me for something. It was unexpected and very much appreciated."

Thelander adds, "Lavis' telephone greeting was never 'Hello.' It was just 'Lavis' - old school and getting down to business."

Rick's right arm at the cotton grower's office was administrative assistant Michelle Van Heemst.

She says, "Rick had a big personality and I will miss how he used to joke with me. I typed countless 'thank you' notes from him to many people. He always took the time to recognize the accomplishments of those he loved and worked with. He made a difference in the lives of everyone he met. Rick will be sorely missed by many."

This *Western Farm Press* editor worked with Rick for 13 years though he pretty much didn't trust the media in general. I understood his point since the Arizona cotton industry was 'burned' in several articles written by general media which targeted cotton as a water-wasting crop and as an environmental polluter due to alleged high pesticide use.

In reality, Arizona cotton growers actually use far less water today to grow cotton and pesticide use in Arizona cotton fields has dropped about 90 percent or more today - a total of 1 to 1.5 sprays per year.

Rick served as a source for me on cotton issues, and shared names of cotton growers to consider as candidates for Farm Press' annual High Cotton Award.

In recognition of his hard work and service to Arizona agriculture including cotton, Lavis will be inducted into the Arizona Farming and Ranching Hall of Fame next spring. Thankfully, he knew about his selection for the award before his death, and the award will now be presented posthumously.

Prior to taking the ACGA helm, Lavis worked in Washington, D.C. as an assistant to U.S. Senator Paul Fannin, a lobbyist for the El Paso Gas Co. and the deputy assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of Interior.

Rick and his parents moved to Arizona in 1946. Lavis is survived by his wife, Marti; their two children, Danny and Ben; and two grandchildren, Addison and Nicholas. 📷

Editor's Note: Mr. Lavis will be remembered for carrying the Arizona Cotton Growers' brand well. Arizona Farm Bureau's Chief Administrative Officer Jim Klinker recently told Arizona Capitol Reports' Yellow Sheet, "You could count on Rick's word. He was very forthright and a trusted political figure in this state," Klinker and Lavis began working together in 1980.

Saving Water; Saving Dollars

By Julie Murphree, *Arizona Farm Bureau Communication Director*

Recently, a student journalist asked, "What incentivizes an Arizona farmer to save water?"

Did I hear the question correctly? In fact, her comment was one of the easiest questions to answer I've had from a student journalist.

The answer is cost, of course.

Compared to a state like Louisiana, water in a desert state is certainly scarce and the cost of it in certain areas of our state is high (like all rare and precious finds, the price is premium). If I'm a farmer in Central Arizona drawing my water from the Central Arizona Project (CAP), I might pay as much as \$74 an acre-foot (average 2015 rates from CAP; varies from water district to water district). Imagine that I need to water a 600-acre alfalfa field, and I must water more than once a year. Alfalfa will use 5 to 7 acre-feet per acre each year depending on application efficiency and weather patterns.

As a result, Murphree Farms (where I partnered with my parents and brothers) was **motivated by the cost** to improve our water use. Additionally, we envisioned a more environmentally sustainable future by conserving our precious water resource. If future generations wanted to farm, we were going to make a way. And, we did by implementing a variety of modern technology methods for reducing water use. One was laser leveling all our land so it would be flat to then conduct what is known as basin irrigation, a method of watering fields. In this way, we reduced as much as 2- to 3-acre-feet per acre in water use (some farmers have been able to achieve even higher rates of water reduction using this irrigation method).

The public loves the idea of more farmers using drip irrigation, another method



Water in a desert state is certainly scarce and the cost of it in certain areas of our state is high.

of reducing water use in crop farming since drip can have the most dramatic water-reduction results. However, it's also very expensive. My farmers I talk to will have to spend anywhere from \$2,000 to \$2,500-an-acre to put a system in. So, while you would think every farmer in the valley would institute a drip system, cost to implement prevents it.

Also, if I'm farming on leased land, I'm not motivated to invest in a drip system based on the risk of losing the leased ground I'm currently farming. Several of our farmers lease from the tribes; you won't find drip on this land unless the tribe decides to make that business investment on their own.

"The benefits to basin irrigate or flood irrigate means farmers help provide a habitat for a substantial number of bird species that is not present with drip," explained Arizona and California

cotton farmer Ron Rayner.

As in life, we make tradeoffs. Decisions will always be based on risk, cost and future benefit.

I must confess too, that a reporter's naive question can make you think.

Often, an uninformed public - and certainly uninformed politicians - think they must take our farmers and ranchers by the hand and lead them to wise business choices. What they don't realize is because of the complex nature of managing a sophisticated agriculture business that most of these future-focused business farmer professionals have already plotted out strategies for conservation of precious resources, food safety, nutrition and solid profitability. Ultimately, they've already figured out what will work.

The most sophisticated, sincere, and razor-sharp business professionals are our successful farmers and ranchers. I know, I talk to them daily. 📷

Rogers Earns Agriculturalist of the Year



In December, Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers was recognized as the Ag100 Council's Agriculturalist of the Year for 2016. This award is presented every year at the council's winter meeting in Phoenix. The recognition aims to highlight substantial and longstanding contributions to the agricultural industry in Arizona. Rogers is pictured with his wife, Janel. 📷



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Duncan Family Farms Gets its Own Label

In agriculture, we always celebrate local markets and local labels. And, we get to do it again with Duncan Family Farms. This family farm operation out of Arizona and California is distribut-



ing organic strawberries to the market for the first time under their own label this winter.

A 100% organic grower of a wide selection of leafy greens and vegetables, Duncan Family Farms grows their strawberries in Goodyear, Arizona and is proud to currently be the only organic commercial strawberry grower in Arizona.

"After our strawberries went out under the Dole label last year, we noticed tremendous inter-

est from our local customers. They loved the berries but really wanted to see a local brand on them, so that's when we decided to move production to the Duncan Family Farms label," said Patty Emmert, Specialty Crop Manager at Duncan Family Farms.

Although their strawberry program is in its third year, it's the first time they'll be distributing organically-grown strawberries under the Duncan Family Farms label. After a great test run in their first year of growing berries in the West Valley near Phoenix, they ramped up their efforts in 2015 and are now ready to distribute under their own label for 2017 and into the future.

"We've got a really unique product that's perfect for the local market since we can pick our berries at the optimal harvest point and deliver them to the market with significantly reduced shipping times," said Patty. "It's a great opportunity for all retail

outlets within the Phoenix metropolitan area, and even the state of Arizona, to profile a local berry and take advantage of product that's going to have superior flavor and shelf life."

Duncan Family Farms began harvesting their berries in mid to late December and expect harvest to last until either the end of March or beginning of April, depending on what the weather brings. Look out for organ-

ic strawberries with the Duncan Family Farms label in retail stores throughout Arizona.

"The berries are big, beautifully red, sweet and Arizona grown," says Arizona Farm Bureau's Communication Director Julie Murphree. "I was first introduced to Duncan's strawberries last winter at the Arizona Capitol Market when Duncan Family Farms was our "featured farmer" at our booth and they brought us the berries. They were doubly tasty because the Duncan Family grew them."

The Duncan family, along with so many of our generational farmers, will say that the land makes the difference ... or should we say soil. "Great strawberries start with high quality soil and the foundation of Duncan Family Farms' agronomic practice is their composting program which aids in building up the biodiversity of the soils and water retention. Local dairies, horse racing tracks, golf courses and municipalities bring their green waste to Duncan's facilities to be turned into compost," said the family.

Members of Arizona Farm Bureau, Duncan Family Farms is a family-owned, multi-regional grower of over 8,000 acres of certified organic produce, specializing in baby lettuces and greens, kales, beets, chards and herbs using sustainable, state-of-the-art farming practices. Founded in 1985 by Arnott and Kathleen Duncan, the company is one of the largest growers of organic produce, nationally recognized for their environmentally-sensitive farming techniques and premium-quality food for processors, retail and foodservice distributors. To learn more, visit duncanfamilyfarms.com. 

Hope and Reality Live on the Farm

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Communication Director

The Presidential Election of 2016 will be marked as one of the more difficult elections of our time. This is the one prediction I'm confident of being accurate about.

Fortune Magazine discusses well how the Democratic Party is "antagonistic toward business" and over the last eight years driven a "strangling entanglement of new regulations." On the other hand, Donald Trump "has built his campaign on an attack on the very principles of globalization that fueled post-World War II prosperity" and "conspiracy theories."

It leaves one convinced that our political future is mixed at best. But politicians were never really the ones that could truly fix things and make things better. It's always been the American people, united and hopeful about the future that really move our great country forward.

Business and farm and ranch leaders move our tomorrows. So, I reached out to a handful of our leaders and ask them about the "day after" on their farm or ranch. Here's what a few of them said.

Hope and Reality Living on the Farm and Ranch

- "The elections don't bother us much. We scoop poop everyday anyway. Plus, on the ranch, we have to know the difference between fly specs and pepper. The same talent helps us evaluate politicians."

Glenn Hickman, President and CEO of Hickman's Family Farms

- "Elections and politicians come and go, farmers farm, and people eat. God is good!"

Steve Sossaman, Sossaman Farms

- "Regardless of the cow, a true cowboy will undoubtedly eventually get her corralled. The difference cow to cow is how much blood, sweat, and tears it takes to get her in the pen. Kids and politics are much the same."

Lance Knight, Apache County Farm Bureau President and rancher owner/operator of the Diamond K Angus Ranch in Northeastern Arizona

- "I would just comment that it is a responsibility to be informed and a privilege to vote; a privilege denied to many in other countries."

Vickie Parks, Arizona Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee

For more than 200 years Americans have observed the peaceful transition of 43 different presidents (I'm only counting Grover Cleveland once) from competing parties, ideologies and leadership styles. That alone makes us exceptional. 

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