

# Legislative Leaders Establish Their 2019 Priorities



By Karen Fann (R-Dist 1)  
Senate President

Growing up in rural Arizona and being the former owner of the Fann-M Ranch, I understand the daily challenges that are faced by many farm and ranch families across the state. Having also been the Mayor of two rural agricultural communities I understand the great difficulty in finding solutions to alleviate those daily challenges. As the future Senate President, I hope to bring together these experiences to push good legislation that will improve the lives of our farmers and ranchers.

Water is everything and is extremely vital to our food security and economy. That is why one of the most important issues coming up next session is the Drought Contingency Plan. It will be my top priority to make sure our farmers and ranchers will have enough water resources in the future. I hope to encourage cooperation and innovative ideas in the Legislature so that we may all see real positive results for generations to come.

Another critical issue is the significant changes which have been made to the federal tax code. Passage of state tax conformity legislation is of critical importance to me and I hope we can spare the future frustration and confusion for our taxpayers by acting swiftly and cautiously to avoid any unintended consequences.

This state relies on smart, hardworking individuals. Providing a solid foundation in which to foster and grow our workforce is fundamental to our state and is an important issue to me. As a business owner, I am experiencing first hand our labor shortage problem here in Arizona.

Our manufactures, construction, distribution and agricultural sectors rely heavily upon our systems of roads and bridges. Therefore, it will be important to maintain or improve our infrastructure so that we can remain competitive around the country.

I want to give our Agricultural community new ways to foster and grow. I know that with smart legislation now, Arizona can continue to thrive well into the future.



By David Bradley (D-Dist 10)  
Senate Minority Leader

Thank you very much for the opportunity to communicate with you through this Farm Bureau publication. The Democratic leadership team of the Arizona Senate looks forward to working with the ranchers and farmers of Arizona in the coming session. Our caucus reflects the rich diversity that makes Arizona so great and each of us is keenly aware of how important a role all of you play in the lives of all Arizonans. Please accept this brief missive as an open invitation to come and meet with your senators, regardless of district, at your convenience both before and during the legislative session. Also, please invite us to come and visit you so that we can experience firsthand the challenges you face daily as you work to feed not only the people of this state but of the entire world.

I am looking forward to working with our Senate President, Karen Fann, and her caucus to ensure that the farmers and ranchers of Arizona receive all the support you need to be successful in the growing, raising, harvesting and the distribution of the products that are and have been the product of your hard labor and intelligence. I consider all of you to be scientists who deal in the practical challenges that nature in all its wonder and complexity presents you daily. The resources of the state, its universities, its pre-k through high school institutions, its infrastructure. i.e., transportation and water distribution systems must be at your service.

Collectively, our focus should be on our ever-growing state and the millions of people who will follow us in the years to come. The challenges we face as we deal with this inevitable growth are only going to grow more complex over time. It is imperative that the leadership in the legislature stays in sync with the farmers and ranchers of this state. Literally, our lives depend upon it. Let's continue to work for all of Arizona together.

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# Arizona Farm Bureau Establishes its 2019 Priorities

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

We spend so much time immersed in the Farm Bureau process that sometimes we forget to step back and appreciate the uniqueness of our organization. You, our grassroots members, represent every sector of agriculture: crop and animal, large and small, conventional and organic. As the experts in your field, you drive every aspect of our policy process – we do only what our members tell us. Because of our uniqueness, Arizona Farm Bureau is positioned to lead on issues that touch every aspect of agriculture. The Arizona Farm Bureau Board of Directors has identified these issues; which include **water, taxes, transportation, trade, labor, farm policy, and environmental regulation, as our Flagship Issues.** Your Farm Bureau staff is working every day to become the undisputed experts in these areas and we're aligning our advocacy, communication, and educational resources around them. With these priorities as our guiding principles, we will work each day to give every lawmaker, consumer, and student a knowledge of the importance of agriculture and an appreciation for the unique needs of this industry.

On the advocacy front, reaching that goal starts at the State Capitol. As everyone expected, water will continue to take up much of our energy in this session. Throughout the summer we worked with **water** leaders across the state to find a way to enter a Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) that won't leave Pinal County agriculture high and dry. Now, it's time to work with the legislature to make sure that plan is realized and implemented for the benefit of all Arizona. But the DCP isn't the only water issue we're working on. We will also keep a close watch on taxes this session, as the legislature decides how to tackle federal income tax conformity in a way that will not mean a tax increase for Arizonans. Also, on the tax front, we will join a renewed effort to clarify the tax structure on business inputs, so that Arizona's farmers aren't paying tax on fertilizers – something the tax code already intends but has been muddled by differing interpretations over the last few years.

In Washington, D.C., a new Congress gives us new opportunities to fight for agriculture's needs. We're on the forefront of **H-2A and Ag Labor reform** and will not give up the decades-long fight to fix our broken labor system until we have a solution. When federal agencies overreach their authority, especially when it comes to investigating foodborne illness outbreaks, they must be held accountable. We are working on ways to increase that accountability and avoid the unnecessary market loss caused by our current system.

If these goals seem daunting, it's because they are. But thanks to the leadership, direction, and continued involvement of our grassroots members, it's nothing that Arizona Farm Bureau can't handle.

For a complete list of our Flagship Issues and Policy Priorities, visit the Public Policy page on [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org) and click on "Priority Issues." 🚜





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Our Award-Winning Farmers and Ranchers!



# How Much Time have You Spent Thinking about Agriculture Today?

By **Richie Kennedy**, Pinal and Maricopa County farmer & Arizona Farm Bureau 2nd Vice President



Richie Kennedy

For almost 30 years, my family has raised cattle in Pinal County, and we grow alfalfa and grain in Maricopa County. So, as you can imagine, I spend quite a bit of time each day thinking about agriculture. It’s my livelihood, my heritage, and my way of life. Chances are, though, that you don’t think about agriculture every day – or really ever at all. And that’s the beauty of America’s food and fiber system: you can walk into one of the many grocery stores in your neighborhood and buy almost any kind of food imaginable at any time of the year. Because we are so well-fed, agriculture is something that the average consumer can take for granted – but that doesn’t mean that we should.

I’m afraid that Agriculture may be taken for granted in the ongoing discussions about the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan. Because of our lower priority status in the lineup of Colorado River water users, Pinal County agriculture will be the first to lose all access to Colorado river water when a shortage is declared. Even under the best compromise we have available, Pinal County would still have to stop farming on more than 40 percent of its current farmland – and there are still some who view this compromise as giving too much water to Pinal Ag.

While I’m worried about the impact that following 40 percent of our farmland would have on this county, I’m more concerned about Pinal County Agriculture losing all its access to Colorado river water and about the precedent this sets. Is agriculture becoming an afterthought in the minds of our state’s decision makers? Are we ignoring the impact that agriculture has on our state’s economy? Are we forgetting the role that agriculture plays in the culture and heritage of our great state? If we are, we do so at our own peril.

Now is not the time for our water managers to think of agriculture in our state as something dispensable. Ag, in Pinal and every other county, is the foundational industry of our economy. It’s the industry that literally puts food on our tables and keeps clothes on our back. Just because you don’t make a living in agriculture doesn’t mean agriculture doesn’t keep you alive. Agriculture cannot be written off as a low priority.

Arizona’s leaders have a chance to prove that they don’t take agriculture for granted. I certainly hope they take it. 🚗

**Editor’s Note:** This article first appeared in the November 13, 2018 issue of the Arizona Republic as a “Your Turn column, reaching out to Arizona families about the focus that farmers and ranchers daily have on production operations and water.

# This Product Label Matters

By **Julie Murphree**, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Pain does produce brilliance. This latest act of brilliance in my book was after a second E. coli outbreak found in Romaine lettuce, this time traced to California, farming companies and government agencies agreed to new labeling on packaging which includes “harvested after” dates to provide clarity to consumers the romaine they purchase is not associated with the latest outbreak.



When buying fresh produce, look for a new label that identifies the harvest location and the “Harvested After” date. Industry and government pivoted quickly to help the food supply chain communicate vital information to consumers. Both labels, photos captured by Maricopa County Farm Bureau Executive Director Liz Foster and Arizona Nursery Association Executive Director Cheryl Goar, during shopping and lunch excursions tell the farmers’ harvest story in a real-time world.

This whole affair also shows the speed with which an industry can pivot. Lettuce farmers, including Dole Fresh Vegetables Inc., Taylor Farms and Fresh Express Inc, sent a letter to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USDA) offering to adapt labels on romaine lettuce to include where the lettuce was grown and when it was harvested less than

If you look at the label, some non-descript, even unattractive, you notice where it came from and the harvest date. It feels like you’ve peered into a window of that lettuce’s origins and place of birth. It made me think, even without an outbreak, maybe a harvest date and location source, consumers might feel closer to the farmer. Let me explain.

Okay, yes, you can maybe get that often at a local farmer’s market, especially if the one selling you his or her produce is the farmer. But let’s get real, most of the leafy greens this nation needs three times a day, 365 days a year won’t be coming from your town’s farmer’s market. In the winter, it’s coming from Yuma, Arizona. And, don’t give me gruff about this, my cousins in the Midwest in the dead of winter won’t be growing any leafy greens, they don’t have greenhouses. I want them to have access to my Yuma leafy greens.

See LABEL Page 4

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Leaders

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By Russell Bowers (R-Dist 25)  
House Speaker

My younger brother, Steve, had taken two large canteens of water on the overnight hike with a friend. It was early summer, it would be hot, but the canteens were big, round and canvas covered to keep them cool. They were confident that they would get them in and out of the desert mountain range they wanted to explore. They hiked a few miles late that afternoon gradually using the supply from the first canteen and spent a great evening regaling each other with stories under the subtle magic of the desert mountains around them. The next morning, as he reached for the second canteen it too was empty...a small leak draining all the water into the ground during the night. The sun was up early as they began to walk out, but the temperature was up as well, and the young boys began to worry where he might find water to get them out. Steve spied a shallow cave in the shadowed wall of a cliff and they made their way up to it and began surveying the surrounding desert for signs of a spring or a change in the rock strata that might signal a water source. Young, hot and afraid without seeing anything he prayed for help.

Sitting under the decreasing shade he noticed doves flying up the small box canyon and disappearing, only to reappear after a time. Angling out into the sun for a better look he saw them fly right into a cliff, which intrigued him, and he followed the clue to the end of the canyon to find a sheer cliff with what appeared to be a slot canyon emptying out about a hundred feet up the face, with doves flying in and out. Climbing the side slope, he discovered a narrow ledge of rock across the face of the cliff to the base of the canyon, sometimes narrowing to a six-inch strip. He knew if he slipped – he would die and knowing that if he didn't find water it would bring the same result. He edged himself across and into the shadow of the canyon mouth, climbing up over boulders, and slippery walls, ultimately and desperately throwing his arm over a high dam of rock while trying to find a handhold and burying it in cool water. Grateful, he filled his canteen after a long drink and took it back to his companion, and they were able to get back to their car.

Later I retraced his description and found the canyon, the ledge and after struggling up a wall of stone inside found the large pool, entirely in shadow. I have gone many times since and there, in that shadowed, remote spot, is always water. In the desert, that is a treasure.

The intense work for the DCP is fraught with struggle. There are interests. There are legal challenges. There are conflicting demands. One of the biggest is trying to convince those that can order their legal limit but may not need it in any immediate time frame. That squeezes the available supply that could be used to help bring water to Pinal County Agriculture for a few more years. Such water right holders have power over life and the death of that crucial area of our states economic base. Others have plenty and are dealing to make it available. Some have water that is easier to bring into the Salt River Valley without the need for the waivers and permission. Desalinized water is an increasingly viable option which could establish stronger ties with our neighbors south. What I don't understand is why our state's leadership does not want to seek multiple water sources to contribute what they have to the needs of the urbanized core, but also for agriculture for very few years. Only one water provider seems to have the prime position.

I call upon the Governor, my colleagues and other leaders to develop multiple water partners now so that we will have surety into the future rather than the danger of fragility of an agreement with just one. Competition between sources NOW assures infrastructure development, experienced contracting between parties, and knowledgeable trust upon which to build into the future. We can do that now - preparing for a broader and accessible water supply in our future.

I know what it is like to be very thirsty. Like my little brother years ago, I look above first and around for what I can do with so many others to make wise and long-term decisions that will keep life here for many years to come.

Label

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a week after the FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued warnings to consumers not to eat romaine lettuce as they investigated the new, multistate E. coli outbreak.

Granted the industry was losing millions a day and having to dump perfectly good Romaine lettuce that was not in the impacted region, but it does show that brilliance is produced in the pain.

The new labeling scheme should allow the FDA to tailor future public advisories about romaine, or any other leafy green, to product harvested in specific regions between specific dates. You already see it added to packaged lettuce sold to consumers, like bagged whole romaine heads, or provided to retailers for display in the case of unpackaged lettuce. You can even find the labeling in pre-packaged salads as one of the photos with this article shows.

Scott Gottlieb, M.D., FDA commissioner is quoted in several publications as to the significance of this labeling. He believes the labels make it much easier to "effectuate withdrawals and recalls that are much more targeted instead of the FDA going out and saying don't eat romaine lettuce, we'll be able to say don't eat romaine lettuce from this region."

Having information on where your lettuce, or any produce, also gives you the ability to understand growing seasons within a specific crop and realize that one region of the country is concluding a season while another region begins. Because of our amazing regional seasons, we have access to fruits and vegetable year around that are produced in the United States. In the "Good Old Days" this was impossible due to lack of modern technology and transportation. Our differing seasons around the United States were always there, our capacity for modern distribution was not.

As of this writing, the most recent outbreak has now sickened 43 people in 12 states, according to the CDC. Sixteen people have been hospitalized, and one has developed a form of kidney failure.

A simple, non-descript label that can identify for consumers where their lettuce was grown and an "harvested after" date can protect you and me, save an industry and have residual benefits like informing us about harvest seasons is simply brilliant and expedient. This is a label that really matters.



By Charlene Fernandez (D-Dist 4)  
House Minority Leader

Arizona voters spoke with unprecedented clarity – and historic turnout -- in November. Their message? Arizonans want elected leaders who are willing to set aside partisan politics and work together to move our state forward.

After picking up four seats to shrink the Republican majority from 35 members to a razor-thin 31-29 margin, Democrats are ready to deliver on that mandate.

This Arizona House will feature the largest and most diverse team of Democrats in decades. We come from all walks of life and represent all corners of the state – from rural towns and tribal nations to our largest cities and most dynamic suburbs. Democrats bring an abundance of talent and multiple points of view to a suddenly larger table. We will not agree on everything. But when it comes to our schools, and addressing Arizona's most pressing needs, we are absolutely unified.

Our blueprint for Arizona includes:

- **A commitment to fully fund education.** We must work with Republicans and the Governor to create a seamless and more effective public education system that supports and prepares all kids, regardless of zip code, for a 21st century economy. That begins with restoring higher education funding and delivering the full pay raises promised to public school educators, including support staff.
- **Restoring trust.** The Governor and Attorney General have finally acknowledged serious accountability and transparency problems with Arizona's charter school system. We will work with them to safeguard taxpayer money and end the self-dealing and conflicts of interest that have eroded the public's faith in state government.
- **Protecting our Democracy.** We should be making voting easier in Arizona, not more difficult. We will work to ensure that our County Recorders and Secretary of State have the resources, equipment and training they need to ensure voter access and build on the record turnout we experienced in 2018.
- **Addressing Arizona's drought.** Agriculture is a \$23 billion industry, and the heart and soul of my hometown of Yuma. We must reach back to the bi-partisan tradition that delivered the landmark Groundwater Management Act to address our looming water crisis in a manner that treats stakeholders fairly and preserves vital industries like agriculture.

**Editor's Note:** Arizona Farm Bureau's farm and ranch leaders look forward to hosting Senate President Fann, Senate Minority Leader Bradley, House Speaker Bowers and House Minority Leader Fernandez and the rest of Arizona's legislators at this year's AgFest in January, Wednesday the 23rd. Our 14 active Farm Bureau counties will feature their agriculture at various booths at the Arizona Department of Agriculture. The event begins at 5:30pm and Arizona Farm Bureau's president, Stefanie Smallhouse, will kick things off.



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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 97th Arizona Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Mesa.

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO AGRICULTURE

**Dr. Marvin Selke and Brett Cameron**

*Distinguished Service to Agriculture:*

Each year the Arizona Farm Bureau selects a person for long-term service to Arizona agriculture. Recipients have served Arizona agriculture for several years, been active in many fields and made many contributions to the agriculture industry.



Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse presents Dr. Marvin Selke the 2018 Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award, along with his family and colleagues.



Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse presents the 2018 Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award to Brett Cameron along with his family. Maricopa County Farm Bureau Vice President Rick Evans and Yuma County Farm Bureau President David Sharp were also on hand.

### FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Jim Cuming**

*Farmer or Rancher of the Year:* The Farmer of the Year represents individuals or a family in Arizona’s agricultural community that are innovative, trend setters or have shown exceptional leadership in an agriculture area. This recognition is considered Arizona Farm Bureau’s “Oscar.”



2018 Farmer of the Year recipient, Jim Cuming was recognized for his dedication to the water issue in Yuma County. From left to right: Yuma County Farm Bureau President David Sharp, Judy and Jim Cuming and Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse.

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD

**Terry Easterday**

*Environmental Stewardship Award:* Arizona Farm Bureau looks into our backyards to discover what conservation and environmental projects are occurring in agriculture.



Presented posthumously, the 2018 honoree of Arizona Farm Bureau’s Environmental Stewardship Award is Terry Easterday. His wife, Mary Ann, along with their three daughters, Susanne Roskens, Sheridan Osborn and Stacey Dunn were present to receive the recognition on behalf of the family. They are joined on stage with Yuma County Farm Bureau Board member and long-time friend Art Allen and Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse.

### 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 Alcaida Family from La Paz County receive this year’s Heritage award on behalf of Ray Alcaida from Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse.



John Klingenberg receives the 2018 Heritage Award from Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse and Yuma County Farm Bureau President David Sharp.



The extended Rovey family receive the Heritage Award on behalf of Emil Rovey from Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse, Arizona Farm Bureau Second Vice President Richie Kennedy and Maricopa County Farm Bureau Vice President Rick Evans (far right).



Arizona Farm Bureau 2nd Vice President Richie Kennedy (far left) is on stage with the Stambaugh family to receive the 2018 Heritage Award on behalf of William “Bill” Stambaugh, from Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse.



# 13 Million and Counting ...

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

At 13,679,905 impressions for engagement and outreach efforts in the last 12 months, the Arizona Farm Bureau brand once again stands strong. Below is a small sampling of everything we did.

## AG IN THE CLASSROOM

Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom has a “boots-on-the-ground” mentality. The hands-on program actively involves teachers and students. Program results are measured by the number of individuals (teachers, students, consumers) that are directly impacted by the program.

In total, AZFB’s education component attracted 739 volunteers who assisted with classroom presentations and community events. Volunteers are very important for the program outreach as the program and help us scale the program beyond what staff could do alone.

All of Arizona’s 14 county organizations participated in Education & Outreach activities with **100,418 students, teachers and adults reached through the Ag in the Classroom Program in the last school year.** This marks a 6% increase over the previous year. Plus, 320 classrooms and 9,280 students used the 12 commodity curriculum kits marking a 320% increase over last year’s numbers.

AZFB’s education program increased its presence in Middle Schools and High Schools, reaching nearly 4,000 students with our 6 critical-thinking presentations. 1,657 teachers participated in this last school year’s 3 Ag Literacy events. Over 42,879 students participated in the three week-long events, marking a 7% increase over last year.

Over 2,000 consumers were reached through an Ag Day Booth held at a local Rodeo. Interactive booths were developed for beef, dairy, poultry, grains, cotton, and bees to help attendees recognize where their food comes from and the importance of agriculture in our state.

124 classrooms participated in Farm Friday Fun with Arizona Ag, pen paling and hosting Skype sessions with local farmers and ranchers with over 5,000 students. Also produced for the program this year was an Arizona Specialty Crops AgMag, a specialty crop video for each of the 10 months of the program, and a state map and producer stickers to follow along as they pen pal their way through Arizona Ag.

Ag in the classroom participated in numerous Science and STEM Night Events at schools across the State. Participation in these events increase by 24% from last year.

Finally, state specific Ag Mags continue to be produced through partnerships with commodity groups. An Arizona Specialty Crops Ag Mag have been added to the list of available FREE resources that already include Beef, Energy and Ag, Fruits and Veggies, and the Arizona Five Cs.

## PROMOTING CONSUMER UNDERSTANDING ABOUT AGRICULTURE

This year, we saw greater participation from our membership base in helping with engagement through a variety of programs including the newest one, the weekly Face-

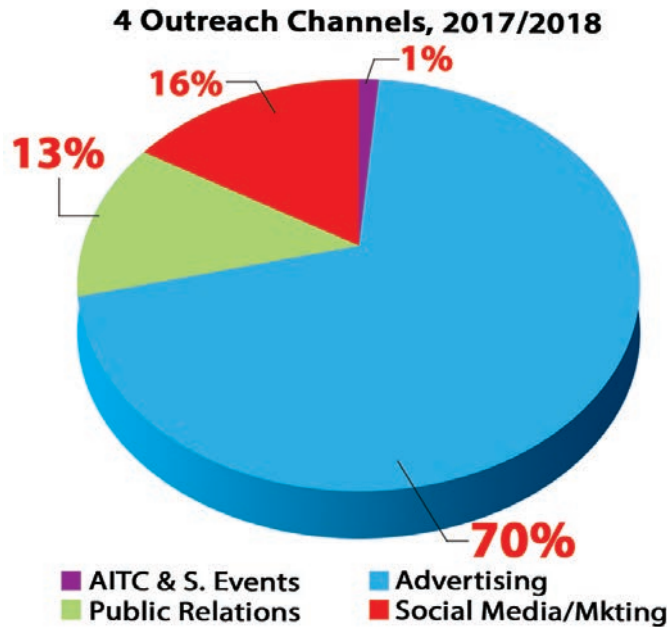
book videos. These regular videos often feature farm and ranch families and nearly all videos highlight a diverse grouping of our farmers and ranchers. Our videos have garnered as many as **12,000 views** (“Arizona’s Celebrity Wheat, the Movie”) for one video. A few of our volunteer leaders have even helped with scripting the video stories.

The idea behind these weekly 60 to 90-second Facebook and Youtube videos (except for holiday weeks) is to reach beyond our traditional audiences.

125 volunteer Farm Bureau families have so far been highlighted through the “Meet Arizona Agriculture’s” profile series and have helped us draw more viewers to [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org). These family profiles are distributed through our digital channels and effectively shared on our various social media channels. The 26 farmer member profiles with retail businesses have all said the profiles help their retail, direct-market businesses including selling more farm products.

Friday Food Facts, a weekly 30-second ad about food & Arizona agriculture has drawn a listening audience of more than 8 million this last year, a 300% increase from the previous year. From its inception, we’ve had 15 women leaders participate. The spots are aired on a radio station that hosts the largest group of female listeners (70%), 24% of those women are millennials. The spots are used in other venues and shared on our social media channels to extend the reach to our social media audiences. Also on the radio, we host a monthly “Garden Hour” show on KTAR’s “Rosie on the House” to a listening audience of 110,000 with each segment featuring a new Arizona agriculture commodity such as cotton, chilis, sweet corn and more.

68,600 people were reached this year at special events in which Arizona Farm Bureau participated. These events included the Fiesta Bowl 5K Run, and much more. The overall number includes 520 downtown professionals participating in the 16-week AZ



This chart represents the major outreach channels Arizona Farm Bureau drives to connect with the public, dispel modern agriculture misconceptions and help make farming and ranching a recognized part of our everyday lives for urban, suburban and rural Arizonans.

See **13 MILLION** Page 8



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# Arizona Farming Business Makes the Semifinals of Nationwide Innovation Challenge

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Tucson, Arizona’s Merchant’s Garden AgroTech earned a nationwide semifinalist spot with 9 others in American Farm Bureau’s (AFBF) Ag Innovation Challenge. Semi-finalists receive \$10,000 each.

The urban aquaponics fish and produce business did not make it as a final four competitor but were certainly a worthy contestant to keep this year’s event competitive.



CEO Chaz Shelton inspects some of his produce. His Merchant’s Garden AgroTech business earned \$10,000 from the competition and he plans to invest in the farm’s data strategy.

“It’s a pleasure to recognize these 10 outstanding rural businesses,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “Recognition of the faith, courage and creativity these entrepreneurs have shown in starting their rural businesses is well-deserved. Startup funds provided to the semi-finalists through the Challenge will help them take their food and

agriculture businesses to the next level.”

Merchant’s Garden AgroTech has big plans for the \$10,000 award that each semifinalist received. “We plan on investing in our farm’s data strategy,” said Chief Executive Officer Chaz Shelton said. “We really believe that with a stronger grasp on collecting and analyzing our farm data will make us greater farmers and wise stewards of our resources. We also think we can develop something that can help other farms and food supply chain members.”

The competition provides an opportunity for individuals to showcase ideas and business innovations in agriculture. This is the fifth year of the Challenge, which is the first national business competition focused exclusively on rural entrepreneurs launching food and agriculture businesses. And, this is the first time an Arizona farming business made it into the top 10.

For Shelton, this competition was perfect. “From a business perspective, the agriculture industry is an extremely attractive market to get involved with,” he said. “With modern technology adoption, it’s an industry that can impact billions of people. From a passion perspective, I got involved with farming because I worked in healthcare and recognize that food is the best medicine. I saw that the changes I wanted to make in the health outcomes started with the food we eat.”

Merchant’s Garden AGroTech competed with nine other innovative agricultural businesses for the final-four selection.

- AgHelp Corp., <https://www.aghelpapp.com/>, Belding, Michigan. Team lead: Feliciano Paredes
- Continuum Ag, <http://www.continuumagllc.com>, Washington, Iowa. Team lead: Mitchell Hora
- Elite OviGen Inc., <https://www.eliteovigen.com>, Beverly Hills, Florida. Team lead: Anette Skoog
- FarmlandFinder, <https://farmlandfinder.com>, Ames, Iowa. Team lead: Steven Brockshus
- Glean LLC, <http://www.liveglean.com>, Farmville, North Carolina. Team lead: Laura Hearn
- Nebullam LLC, <https://www.nebullam.com/>, Ames, Iowa. Team lead: Clayton Mooney
- Pasture Labs/Trackter, <https://trackter.us>, Newnan, Georgia. Team lead: Josh Whitlock
- Texas Mobile Mill LLC, <http://www.texasmobileolivemill.com>, Madisonville Texas. Team lead: Cathy Bernell

See **CHALLENGE** Page 8



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\*\*NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. A PURCHASE WILL NOT INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING. MUST BE A LEGAL RESIDENT OF U.S. OR D.C., 21 YEARS OR OLDER WITH A VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE TO ENTER AND A CURRENT FARM BUREAU MEMBER. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY. Void where prohibited. Sweepstakes ends 9/30/2019. For entry and official rules with complete eligibility, prize description and other details, visit FordFarmBureauAdvantage.com. Sponsored by Ford Motor Company, One American Road, Dearborn, MI 48126.

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## We Owe a Lot to Pinal County’s “Few Hundred Farmers!”

By Arizona State Senator Frank Pratt and Representatives David Cook and TJ Shope

Many of us in Pinal County have been following, with great interest, the progress of the Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) discussions. The future of the Colorado River is important to our state as a whole, but it’s especially important to Pinal County. We rely heavily on Colorado River water to support our agricultural industry. If the DCP were adopted in its most basic form, Pinal County agriculture would lose access to Colorado river water – and most of its farms as a result.

Great minds have spent countless hours and energy to develop ways to mitigate the impact a shortage will have on Pinal County’s farmers, and the discussion is still ongoing. In the midst of those discussions, some have asked why we are spending so much time, effort, and resources attempting to find a solution for what ultimately boils down to a “few hundred farmers.”

Let’s take a moment and examine the impact those few hundred farmers have on this great county.

First, according to the USDA, each of Pinal County’s farms generates almost \$1 million in sales each year. But even that doesn’t take into consideration all the other ways our farm community drives our economy. In order to keep their farms running, farmers have to buy inputs and supplies from Pinal County’s vehicle and equipment dealerships, fertilizer companies, seed companies, and hardware stores. The people who work for those dealerships, companies, and stores then turn around and use their paychecks to pay rent and mortgages on Pinal County homes. They purchase food from our grocery stores and clothes from our small businesses. And their tax dollars go to support Pinal County’s schools and public safety institutions.

What’s more, the products our farmers grow are also responsible for keeping our county strong. For example, our state’s dairies rely heavily on alfalfa and grains produced in Pinal County to feed their cows. Then, the milk from those cows goes to make sour cream at the Daisy Brand factory, cream cheese at Franklin Foods, desserts at Ehrman Dairy, and baby formula at Abbott Labs. Not only do these businesses provide essential food items that we consume each day, they are also economic powerhouses in Pinal County. They provide hundreds of jobs and invaluable community support, and we owe it all to our farmers.

We sure owe a lot to those “few hundred farmers.”

Agriculture in Pinal County is significant, essential, and worth protecting. The LD8 team urges Arizona’s water users to make every effort to mitigate the loss of water to Pinal County Agriculture so that the industry can continue to thrive. The future of this county depends on it! 🚜

**Editor’s Note:** Water remains Arizona Farm Bureau’s leading issue going into 2019. See lead story on Page 1 about our priorities.



13 Million *continued from page 6*

Capitol Farmers Market in Phoenix in partnership with various Ag groups including the Arizona Department of Agriculture.

Leaders of the Farm to Football Program developed a radio ad that airs during Cardinals Games allowing for an unlimited number of people to be exposed to the agricultural messages of the program. A Farm to Football article was also published in several newspapers and magazines.

As a direct result of our Ag in the Classroom tailgate, AITC was contact by Cronkite News and the program was profiled on-air on Arizona PBS. Arizona PBS is one of the largest public television stations in the country with more than 1 million viewers.

The Farm Bureau Website grew in viewership to 190,305 showing an 8% increase from last year. The blog, The Voice, garners the second most pageviews, after our Benefits page. Plus, our Fill Your Plate website provides recipes, farm products, and farmers market locations for Arizona families including a weekly blog. Views to this website this year reached 142,342 with its weekly blog attracting the largest viewership. Also, our social media outreach through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest allowed us to engage with 41,400 users.

We finish our year over the 11 million impressions goal at 13,679,905. We also built more in our advocacy base. Today, youth know the real modern ag story. Blogger influencers are explaining agriculture with the facts and we're building more ag advocates on a regular basis. 🚗

**News Briefs**

**Bashaw Elected to ATRA Board Seat**

At the 78th Annual Meeting following the Outlook Conference, the Arizona Tax Research Association newly elected Arizona Farm Bureau CEO Phillip Bashaw to a seat on the Board of Directors for a term expiring in 2023. Other newly seated board members include James Busby, The Cavanagh Law Firm; Rodney Ross, Pinnacle West Corp; William Dvorak, AT&T; Thomas Marin, Ernst & Young; Frank Crociata, Gallagher & Kennedy; Hugh Donahue, Freeport McMoRan; Scott Leedom, Southwest Gas Corp; Jason Baran, Salt River Project; Michael Galloway, Ryan, Rapp & Underwood; James Barash, RSM.

**Nutrition Students Fill the Pages of the Fill Your Plate Blog**

For four years now, Arizona State University nutrition students have been helping Arizona Farm Bureau's Outreach Team fill the pages of the Fill Your Plate blog. This year for the first time, University of Arizona nutrition students are also adding to the editorial mix.

"In 2015 the offer came to us from ASU to utilize the talents of senior-level nutrition students that had to commit 60 hours of volunteer time to extracurricular nutritional pursuits," said Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director Julie Murphree. "Trying to post three articles a week on our Fill Your Plate blog with everything else we have on our plate was just too hard. Plus, nutrition students are getting a taste of what it's like to inform and educate on nutrition. We're excited to add U of A students to the mix."

Go to [fillyourplate.org](http://fillyourplate.org) to check out the blog and discover of the nutritional areas ASU and U of A nutrition students are covering.

Fill Your Plate, an online, searchable database of Arizona farmers and ranchers that can sell food products and certainly local Arizona food directly to Arizona families launched in 2007.

Arizona Farm Bureau's Fill Your Plate serves to help form a unique relationship -- a common bond -- between Arizona farmers and ranchers and Arizonans.

On the site, Arizona families have all sorts of entertaining opportunities to engage beyond just the searchable produce-based database. You can search for recipes, read what local celebrities are saying about food and much more! The site even provides information about how food prices are trending and nutritious tidbits that highlight Arizona fruits and vegetables and meat products. It's a cornucopia of insights that once someone's begun to use Fill Your they will continue to return especially knowing the blog article has new content weekly.



Challenge *continued from page 6*

- Vinduino LLC, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4RnVSBV22o&feature=youtu.be>, Temecula, California  
Team lead: Reinier van der Lee

The final four teams (selected from the 10 semi-finalist teams) were announced Dec. 5 and will receive an additional \$5,000 and have all expenses paid to compete in a live pitch competition at AFBF's 100th Annual Convention in New Orleans on Jan. 13. The final four teams will compete to win:

- Farm Bureau Rural Entrepreneur of the Year award and \$15,000 (chosen by judges), for a total of \$30,000
- People's Choice award and \$10,000 (chosen by public vote), for a total of \$25,000

**The following four Finalists will compete in New Orleans:**

1. AgHelp Corp., <https://www.aghelpapp.com/>, Belding, Michigan. Team lead: Feliciano Paredes
2. Elite OviGen Inc., <https://www.eliteovigen.com>, Beverly Hills, Florida. Team lead: Anette Skoog
3. FarmlandFinder, <https://farmlandfinder.com>, Ames, Iowa. Team lead: Steven Brockshus
4. Glean LLC, <http://www.liveglean.com>, Farmville, North Carolina. Team lead: Laura Hearn

Arizona Farm Bureau celebrates our Innovation Challenge candidate. "I heard about the competition through my state's Farm Bureau team," explained Shelton. "I had a chance to express my passion of growing our business through technology development and they have done a fantastic job of keeping me aware of any opportunities that cross my plate. It's a competition that Arizona Farm Bureau has encouraged me to apply to for the last three years."

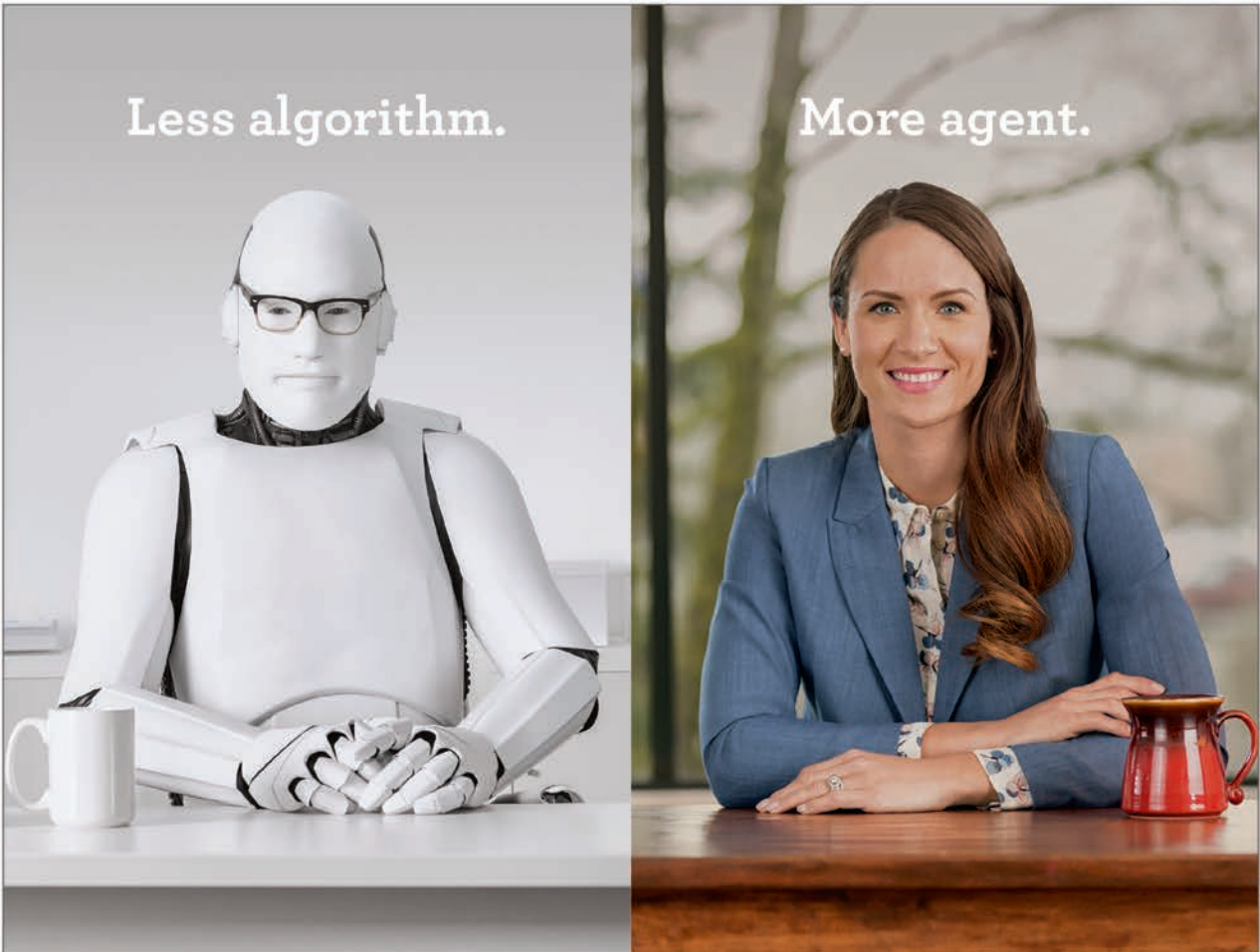
"We're pleased to Have Chaz and Merchant's Garden make it to the semifinals," said Arizona Farm Bureau President and southern Arizona rancher Stefanie Smallhouse. "We're pleased that rural businesses are being recognized for their innovation. It's sweeter when we see one of our own in the top 10."

Arizona Farm Bureau profiled Chaz Shelton and Merchant's Gardens a few years ago. To read more of their story, go to [azfb.org](http://azfb.org) and search "Chaz Shelton." 🚗

**Editor's Note:** Startup funds for the 2019 Ag Innovation Challenge are provided by sponsors Farm Credit, John Deere, Country Financial, Farm Bureau Financial Services and Farm Bureau Bank.



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