

A Conversation about Our Food Supply Chain: Kevin Sheehan

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Kevin Sheehan is the Director of Processor Engagement for the National Pork Board. Kevin is a 30+ year meat industry veteran and spent 26 years with Cargill. He was Vice President of Pork Livestock Procurement for Cargill as well as Vice President of Retail Business Management for Cargill’s poultry division.

I met him for the first time on one of the Pork Board’s weekly Zoom calls during those first scary weeks of the 2020 pandemic. His insights were invaluable, and he evoked a steady calm and a hopeful tone as our fresh food supply chain went through the gyrations in those first months of lockdown.

Since then, all of us are learning so much all along the food supply chain. We have more intimate knowledge of the farm gate to family plate than ever before. The hope is our food supply chain can be more agile. Here’s why.

Arizona Agriculture: The complexity of the food supply chain certainly has challenges. What makes the fresh product supply chain so unique and explain, besides the obvious, why it’s so delicate?

Sheehan: While we often talk about one national supply chain of pork, the reality is that the U.S. food system is made up of smaller regional and local supply chains that are very finely balanced and built around “just in time” inventory systems. Because of the “just-in-time” nature of the system, farmers must work the same way. For hog farmers, they’re working up to a year ahead to make sure they have a plan for sow breeding, farrowing, weaning, growing and delivering hogs to the processor. And it’s planned out pretty meticulously, because there are more pigs coming right behind.

Because the system is built around efficiency, most business up and down the supply chain (from processors to brokers to retail and food service operations) only have storage capacity for a few days’ supply. When something like a large-scale restaurant closure, shelter-in-place orders, panic buying, or a processing plant closure happens, it has a major impact on the system. When all those things happen simultaneously like it did during the early stages of the pandemic, it throws the system into temporary disarray. Fortunately, we had talented people working up and down the supply chain to find creative solutions to keep meat -and other consumer goods - available to consumers.

Arizona Agriculture: Plants look so different today than what they did just a few months ago. As a result of the pandemic, explain what plants have had to do to protect workers and keep plants running at 75% to 95% capacity?



Says Kevin Sheehan, the food supply chain has been forthright and transparent with what has been happening in their industry even in the midst of its ups and downs during the pandemic.

Sheehan: Plants look a bit different for sure. Sanitation was a priority long before coronavirus, but now you’re seeing more personal protective equipment like face masks and face shields. Plexiglass dividers have been installed on many plant floors between workstations.

Giving workers more space to social distance when they’re not on the line means changes to break rooms, locker rooms and cafeterias, and those non-production areas are being cleaned and sanitized more frequently. We’re also seeing plants staggering work shifts, lunch and break times so fewer people are in one place at the same time. And several companies are prescreening employees prior to their shifts looking for employees who have a temperature or signs of illness.

Arizona Agriculture: Of course, the toughest part of this whole experience has been pork producers having to depopulate their herds. How is the industry working to mitigate the financial and emotional devastation to producers?

Sheehan: Once we saw the impact the coronavirus was having on the supply chain, the Pork Board started communicating with pig farmers about the resources available to them. This included education on how to slow down growth with a “hold diet” to keep hogs from getting too big. We developed overstocking recommendations and, in some cases, assistance in finding other places to house hogs.

The goal of course, was to help producers avoid the possibility of herd depopulation, which is absolutely a last resort. However, once depopulation became a reality for some farmers, we were there with resources to help them make a very difficult decision in the right way by identifying who needed to be notified and which processes were approved and appropriate based on where the farm was located. Moreover, the Pork Board helped with resources around emotional support for animal caregivers.

Arizona Agriculture: You mentioned back in May on a Zoom call that innovation will come out of this crisis. Talk about this.

Sheehan: We are still early in the process to determine what specific innovations will occur long term for the industry, but what you’ll likely see are changes to workspace, sanitizing, distancing and personal protective equipment.

Certainly, there will be advances in automation and changes to employee safety and health protocols.

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The Most Important Election of Your Lifetime (For Real This Time)

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

By delaying primaries, pushing back conventions, and putting a halt on many traditional campaign activities, the Coronavirus may have distracted us a bit from the 2020 Election. But ready or not, we’re in full campaign season from now until November. By the time you read this, chances are you’ve either already turned in your early ballot or have had the chance to vote in person in Arizona’s August 4th primary.

Since I’ve been old enough to vote, I haven’t made it through a single even-numbered year without being told I was about to participate in “the most important election of our lifetime.” I’m not a fan of that worn-out cliché, but it’s hard to phrase the reality of the 2020 election any other way: it really does have the potential to be the most impactful election we’ve seen in a generation.

There are many reasons this election holds so much weight. The Arizona legislature, currently held by a very slim Republican majority, is poised to change leadership in at least one chamber. A split legislature will have significant implications for Farm Bureau’s priority policies, including securing agriculture’s access to water and encouraging agriculture-friendly tax policy. The economic disruptions caused by COVID-19 are predicted to lead to significant state budget deficits, and the next legislature will decide how agency budgets, government services, and the State’s rainy-day fund are adjusted to fill some significant financial holes.

But I’d argue that the biggest impact of this election won’t actually be realized until the next one. That’s because it’s once again time for political redistricting. According to the Arizona Constitution, in each year after a U.S. Census, the state must establish a commission to adjust the legislative district

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Rural Broadband: It's Time for Solid Connections

By Tyler Davis, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager and additional contributions
by Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director



Yuma County Farm Bureau President David Sharp is as concerned about healthy broadband connections in rural areas for schools as he is for agriculture knowing that the next generation has such an important stake in our future.

For years, the rural community has suffered poor broadband connectivity and lack of technological advancement. Recently, with COVID-19 these struggles have been amplified. The Federal Communications Commission defines rural broadband as a 25 megabits per second download speed and 3 megabits per second upload speed. Not enough to move large chunks of data across the ethernet.

“Living in a rural area has great rewards, however rural residents do not have access to the same amenities as those that live in a more urban environment,” said Yuma County Farm Bureau President David Sharp. “We knew that our connection to the broadband, Internet as well as our cell service, was a bit challenging, but we got along well enough until COVID-19. When our country began the lock-down we needed to rely on our broadband and cell service even more. But with the added demands on these services by all that use them it became even slower, and more difficult.”

Sharp continued. “With the lock down, we have needed to use broadband more than ever. One example is meetings, with slower speeds this is exceedingly difficult. But I think an even greater problem is the students that live here are having trouble with inadequate services keeping up with their education. Also, our local business has their challenges also with slow speeds and the Internet down from time to time.

“All of this points to the need for more infrastructure and capacity, for both broadband and cell service. But to me what is of most importance is providing for the students, so that they can be properly educated. This can only be accomplished by reallocation of funding to provide the necessary connections and equipment for our youth.”

Arizona’s Farmers and ranchers depend on broadband just as they do highways and railways to ship food and fiber across the country and around the world. Many of the latest yield-maximizing farming techniques require broadband connections for data collection and analysis performed both on the farm and in remote data centers. However, 29% of U.S. farms have no access to the Internet according to the USDA report, “Farm Computer Usage and Ownership, 2017.”

And for decades, farmers and ranchers have embraced technology that allows their farming businesses to be more efficient, economical and environmentally friendly. For example, precision agricultural techniques to make decisions that impact the amount of fertilizer a farmer needs to purchase and apply to the field, the amount of water needed to sustain the crop, and the amount and type of herbicides or pesticides the farmer may need to apply become more and more ubiquitous in Arizona agriculture. These are only a few examples of the ways farmers use broadband connectivity to achieve optimal yield, lower environmental impact and maximize profits.

“In the past, there were funds put in place to make sure that rural America received the benefits of electrification and telephone service,” said Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture Executive Director Paul Brierley. “Unfortunately, there is no such ‘universal service’ fund to assure that our rural citizens and businesses receive the benefits of broadband internet and cellular service. The Coronavirus pandemic has brought into focus the absolute requirement for everyone to have access to reliable high-speed internet service as most everything went remote: tele-medicine, tele-education, tele-business and more. In addition, as agriculture becomes more and more reliant on technology such as remote sensing and automation to stay productive, profitable and sustainable, the need for rural broadband – truly rural broadband, that covers remote fields rather than population centers – is critical.”

Brierly drills down on specifics. “When it comes to rural economic development, Agriculture Technology is one of the bright spots for the future. Places like Yuma, Arizona are absolutely poised to be a center of development focused on enhancing water use efficiency, soil health, automation, and productivity. But without reliable access to get data from remote sensing equipment to the cloud for processing and back to the producer to make real-time decisions, agriculture technology development is a non-starter.

“There is hope on the horizon. The state of Arizona has created a broadband office within the Arizona Commerce Authority, and they are working with local Broadband Action Teams in communities all around the state. Those teams often include municipalities, education, industry, economic development organizations, and agriculture – all working together to develop plans for regional network infrastructure to make it viable for broadband providers to provide services. COVID-19 has been a double-edged sword: in the near term its financial toll has taken away funding that was going to help with rural broadband across Arizona; but I believe that with the stark awareness it brought to the fore of the need for broadband across all sectors and in every location, the future is bright for funding to make this happen. Just like rural electrification, rural telephone service, and the interstate highway system, broadband will bring rural areas up to par with the economic and social opportunities available to residents of urban areas.”

Rural Broadband on the Arizona Farm and Ranch

Reed Flake from Navajo County identifies with the challenges and importance of rural broadband. “Reliable access to broadband connectivity is critical to rural Arizona,” he explained. “Our businesses, schools, and communities rely on technology to function efficiently. As my family, like so many others, have shifted more of our daily responsibilities to within our home the past few months, the issue of sufficient internet access has been brought to the forefront. We have had to schedule schoolwork, college classes, video meetings and work schedules with other family members in our household based on our available bandwidth. Adequate broadband service is a vital component of the economy and quality of life for those that live and do business in rural Arizona.”

Imagine what it is like out on the ranch and also while running a vet business. “We ranch and run a veterinary practice in Apache County, Arizona,” said Hayley Andrus, also Apache County Farm Bureau’s president. “Rural broadband is a real limitation on our ranch operation but especially with our rural based, large animal veterinary practice. Right now, we pay a lot for satellite internet which works semi-well in the mornings and gets progressively worse throughout the day. If the wind is blowing it does not work at all and the wind is always blowing! Our internet speed is 0.8

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Arizona Agriculture: We hear that while some industries might have a more transparent supply chain, the food supply chain is not as transparent and seamless as it could be. The pandemic highlighted this. What’s the fix? Is it in part because of all the links in the chain and are there ways to streamline this?

Sheehan: The food supply chain has been fairly forthright and transparent with what has been happening in their industry. Just like everyone else, the food industry was learning about COVID-19 and how to best deal with it as the issues progressed. There was no playbook for this, and I think that you see a different world today than six months ago. The food industry adapted to the immediacy of the challenge quite well, and there will be long-term changes to the industry based on what we learned and experienced.

Arizona Agriculture: Beyond the bottlenecks the pandemic created, what role can you see the producers (farmers and ranchers) serving to advance supporting a streamlined supply chain in the food industry?

Sheehan: The pandemic clearly demonstrated what we all learned in our Marketing 101 classes: when something happens at any point in the supply chain, it has effects in both directions.

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Mbps. Did you get that? Less than 1! It is most frustrating to our Veterinary business when we are needing to assign Health papers, keep up on Continuing Education courses and many other factors that are all online now. Would love to see a more viable option for the internet in rural Arizona.”

Efforts on the Horizon

Currently, two separate issues exist related to broadband access in rural areas: long-term action to bring broadband services to rural areas in order to use all technologies, such as



“Rural broadband is a real limitation on our ranch operation but especially with our rural based, large animal veterinary practice,” explained Hayley Andrus, also Apache County Farm Bureau’s president.

For farmers and ranchers, I think this reinforces the importance of finding alternative outlets for livestock. It’s not just, “What’s Plan B?” but “What’s Plan C and D?”

Arizona Agriculture: Touching on a hot button issue, the White House and Congress have called for an investigation into possible collusion between the major meat packing plants. What’s your take?

Sheehan: The Pork Board is focused on education, research and promotion of pork worldwide. That’s where we best serve the producers who pay the Pork Checkoff and the industry as a whole.

Arizona Agriculture: If the price-point for investing in a local or regional packing plant (whether for beef or pork or any other type of livestock) can be overcome, what kind of landscape might we see? And, would this also mitigate the bottlenecks we’ve witnessed as a result of this pandemic?

Sheehan: We’ve certainly seen producers become investors in smaller regional packing plants and production systems, and there are many reasons why producers take this approach. While more plants mean more marketing options for producers in a normal operating environment, global pandemics don’t discriminate by size of employer. Plants of all sizes were affected by the coronavirus. 🚗

precision agriculture and the more immediate need to bridge the telemedicine and distance learning divide.

American Farm Bureau Federation’s (AFBF) Economic team recently reported that “rural hospitals were already strained for resources, but the current pandemic is quickly pushing them to an operational breaking point. To address the immediate needs of rural populations, some telecommunications providers are working with local hospitals and public libraries to provide Wi-Fi hotspots where cellular services are available. However, for areas where cellular service does not provide a strong enough signal, disaster relief tools such as cellular-on-wheels, also called COW, may be deployed. COW systems are trailer-mounted, transportable solutions for utilizing satellite and tower antenna technology to provide cellular services.”

For the 60 million people living in rural America, access to consistent, up-to-date health care services and technology is a matter of life and death. And, for farm and ranch businesses in rural America supporting the country’s economic health, it’s time we get a solid connection with our rural broadband. Afterall, we’re living in 2020. 🚗

Elizabeth Rico Joins the Arizona Farm Bureau Team

Staff Reports



Elizabeth Rico

It’s with great pleasure that we officially announce Elizabeth Rico as our new Outreach Manager – Leadership and Business Development. Rico previously worked as an Agricultural Science Teacher for Coolidge High School.

A graduate of the University of Arizona, Rico grew up in Yavapai County where her parents are in construction and have a hobby farm. As a result, she got involved in 4-H and FFA early on where she developed her passion for agriculture.

In addition to teaching and serving as the advisor for a successful FFA chapter, she serves on the Pinal County Junior Livestock Committee, and was also previously involved with the Arizona Agriculture Teacher’s Association as the member Services Committee Chair.

Says Arizona Farm Bureau CEO Philip Bashaw, “I am particularly impressed with Elizabeth’s outlook on serving members, attention to detail, and dedication to teamwork. She is passionate about working for a cause bigger than herself, and empowering leaders to do the same. Elizabeth will be a great new addition to our team, and I am looking forward to working together.”

Rico started with Arizona Farm Bureau on June 1, after the conclusion of the school year. When you see her out and about in the counties she serves (Pima/Santa Cruz, Pinal, Cochise, Graham and Greenlee) welcome her to the Farm Bureau family. She’ll also oversee leadership and business development.

“I’m so excited to be on board with the Farm Bureau family and become immersed into the different facets of agriculture across the state,” says Rico. “I’m so impressed with the diversity in people, organizations, and stories I’ve gotten a glimpse of, which I know is only a small snapshot of the overall Arizona agriculture picture. The members and leaders I’ve met so far have been incredibly welcoming and I am looking forward to meeting more and developing a relationship with them.” 🚗

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Arizona's 2020 Fire Season Was a Hot One

Staff Reports

As we've already seen, the Southwest Coordination Center forecasted an above average fire year in our region with fire risk "high." High temperatures, plenty of dry fuel and constant winds this summer are making the difficult work of containing Arizona's fires that much more challenging. As this article went to press, Arizona reported at least 13 fires larger than 1,000 acres burning within the state.



Cochise County rancher Tina Thompson visited with Arizona Farm Bureau on its "Talk to a Rancher Friday" program in June to explain how they helped the firefighter crew battle the Immigrant Fire on their ranch. Shown here, the Immigrant Fire burned about 400 acres of their own land all the while directing the firefighters to the best roads to travel to get close to the fire to put it out. (Photo courtesy Tina Thompson)

Explains Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse, "Ranchers play a pivotal role in managing fire. First, managed grazing prevents fuel build up. Plus, ranch water infrastructure aids in fighting wildfires, ranchers are familiar with the terrain and roads in areas where little is known and cooperation with firefighters makes everyone's efforts to stop fires more effective."

Smallhouse shares some little-known facts on the issue.

- 90% of wildfires are human caused, according to the Insurance Information Institute.
- During 2018 and 2019, there were more than 108,000 fires which burned over 13 million acres, according to the Insurance Information Institute.

- The largest fire in Arizona history was the Wallow Fire in 2011, burning 538,049 acres.
 - Benefits of periodic, smaller wildfires are significant:
 - 1) prevent catastrophic fires from happening through the control of fuel buildup;
 - 2) recycle nutrients back into the soil;
 - 3) can improve watershed health.
 - Catastrophic wildfires are a danger to human life and property, cause long-term resource damage, destroy ranching infrastructure, and endanger livestock.
- Although we have seen fires persist for long periods of time already this season, the Southwest Coordination Center has provided the following information regarding fighting fire in a COVID 19 environment.
- Tactics to fight fire amid the COVID 19 environment are in place:
 - 1) fires will be put out quickly rather than letting some burn out;
 - 2) in some areas prescribed burns have been cancelled;
 - 3) firefighters will be screened for signs of COVID 19;
 - 4) fire camps will look much different;
 - 5) crews will be isolated from other crews;
 - And, 6) limiting crew members in vehicles.

Fire can be an important tool for resource management. Whether planned, or unplanned, it is vitally important for safety, natural resource management and the livelihoods of those impacted to recognize and respect local land uses and expertise. During this summer season, remember to check fire restrictions and report spot fires to authorities you may observe. 🚒

Election

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map to reflect the new population statistics. This independent redistricting commission is chosen in two steps. First, the state Commission on Appellate Court Appointments reviews all applicants and creates a list of 25 candidates – ten Democrats, ten Republicans, and five Independents. From that list, it's the legislative leaders of each party who pick two Democrats and two Republicans to sit on the commission. That means that when you vote this year, you're selecting the people who will decide who will be responsible for re-drawing Arizona's legislative maps for the next 10 years.

In short, this election literally has the potential to shape what Arizona politics will look like for years to come.

As the election draws near, Arizona Farm Bureau is committed to providing timely, helpful, and insightful resources to our members. We're doing all we can to make it easy for you to identify and support the candidates who will protect agricultural livelihoods and lifestyles. Our website is continuously updated with top news and information to keep you up-to-date on political current events. On our 2020 Election Resources web-

page, you can find candidate surveys, voter registration information, and more. Our bi-weekly "While You Were Working" newsletter will give you all the latest policy news from the State Capitol and beyond. We're extremely excited to announce a new tool made possible by the American Farm Bureau Federation, the iFarmiVote 2020 Election Toolkit. All in one convenient location at www.fb.org/vote, you can see whether you're registered to vote, locate your official polling place, and access information about the candidates and races in your district.

Finally, from now until September 30, 2020, all contributions to AgPAC, Arizona Agriculture's political action committee, will be doubled through a matching contribution to the Educational Farming Company. You can contribute to a strong political future for agriculture by supporting today's candidates and educating tomorrow's voters, all in one contribution. Go to www.azfb.org/agPAC to contribute today.

After all, it is the most important election of your lifetime... at least until the next one. 🗳

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What Does School Look Like in 2020?

By Katie Atkins, Arizona Farm Bureau Ag Education Director

Masks, plexiglass, hand sanitizer, social distancing, virtual learning oh my! The new school year is bringing new challenges to teachers, students, and the organizations that serve them. Each School District has their own protocols in place for keeping their students and teachers safe and healthy. This presents quite the challenge for a program such as Arizona Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom (AZFB AITC) that spends its days working in classrooms providing in-person presentations and interactions with teachers and students.

Challenge accepted!

AZFB AITC was able to rise to the challenge during the Spring school closure shifting gears quickly to provide a variety of resource:

- 43 *Online Story Time* sessions created and watched 47,335 times
- 6 *Virtual Lessons* recorded that were viewed 4,215 times
- 33 interactive *Google Slide Lessons* developed and included on Social Media & website
- Over 100 chicks were hatched during our *Hatch from Home* program.

AITC goes hybrid

To continue the flexibility that virtual programs and resources afforded schools this past year, AITC is going hybrid! With every District adopting their own rules for the start of the year, we felt the best way to move forward was to provide options. Although we will continue to offer in-class presentations, we will also provide a virtual option for those School Districts that are not allowing outside organizations on campuses and in classrooms.



Arizona Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom will offer a mix of in-class (Spring 2021), virtual and hybrid presentations, all influenced by what each school district commits to during the pandemic.

Fall Ag Literacy Event

With so much uncertainty and the amount of planning and organization that normally has to be done with this event, we have made the decision to offer this event ONLY virtually. Teachers will be able to sign-up their classes and will receive presentation materials in advance. Instead of the presenters visiting the classrooms, Katie and Tori will offer 15 virtual events the week of October 26th where classes can jump on and interact through a virtual platform. We are confident that we will be able to reach the expectations and standards that teachers have come to expect from AITC using this platform. By adapting, we are sure to be able to reach our 850 teachers and over 20,000 students through this event regardless of what is happening with COVID 19.

Dr Seuss and Ag Literacy Events

We will offer these programs as in-class presentations with a virtual option for those schools who might still have tighter requirements as we move into Spring 2021.

Classroom Presentations

We will continue to offer in-class presentations but will also include a live and pre-recorded virtual option for several of our presentation:

- Who Grew My Burger?
- Grow Your Own Pizza
- Arizona Five C's
- Apple Presentation
- Compost Stew
- Daisy's Dairy Dream
- Bees

Curriculum Kits

AITC's many Curriculum Kits will still be available for schools to check-out on a monthly basis. Sanitizing procedures have been put in place to minimize the spread of germs.

Farm Friday Fun with Arizona Ag

This monthly digital curriculum program will continue as usual. Teachers can register for this FREE program by visiting www.azfb.org/aitsc . Each month, classes will receive facts, videos, family profiles, and lesson plans on the commodity of the month! 🚜

USMCA Implementation Is Finally Here!

By Tyler Davis, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

On July 1, the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement was officially implemented. The USMCA offers a fair free trade agreement that focuses on modernization and impartiality.

Under its predecessor trade agreement, NAFTA, many agricultural products that were exported from the U.S. to Canada suffered from an unfair pricing scheme, poor market access and protective regulations. The USMCA provides new market access for all U.S. agricultural products, a fair non-discriminatory pricing plan, and improved grading standards for products going forward.

Over the past 20 years, there have been many technological advancements, especially in the agriculture sector. Unfortunately, the provisions in NAFTA were no longer up to date with these advancements and the agreement was quickly becoming obsolete.

USMCA includes provisions that enhance science-based trading standards among the three nations as the basis for sanitary and phytosanitary measures for ag products, as well as progress in the area of geographic indications. The USMCA is also the first free trade agreement to address cooperation, information sharing, and other trade rules related to biotechnology and gene editing.

The overhaul of NAFTA into the USMCA was completely necessary and could not have come at a better time. The agriculture industry is rapidly changing and advancing with new conservation measures, genetic modification advancements, geographic indicators and many other technological advances. Simply put, the industry needed an updated trade agreement that would serve the best interests of all the countries and be relevant in times to come.

In Arizona, this trade agreement is also completely necessary and will greatly help the agriculture economy. The agriculture sector of the state brings in \$23.3 billion yearly in state revenue, 138,000 full and part-time jobs, and 58,000 on-farm labor jobs. This number was stagnant under NAFTA with all the unfair regulations and prices. With the USMCA, the number will only continue to grow.

The Arizona Farm Bureau is pleased about the new trade agreement and is happy to announce the new and exciting trade markets available for agriculture producers in the state of Arizona to do trade with Mexico and Canada.

Nationally, expected \$2 billion annual increase in U.S. agricultural exports to Canada and Mexico and overall increase of \$65 billion in gross domestic product will provide a welcome boost for farmers and ranchers, many of whom are struggling to recover from COVID-19 losses and a depressed agricultural economy.

This agreement will set the stage for future trade agreements. The future of agricultural trade is bright and will only enhance the agricultural industry in Arizona. 🚜

Save the Date:

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Arizona’s Public Lands: Supporting Ranchers in Keeping them Pristine

Christy Davis, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Manager – Program Excellence

Recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions the outdoors beckons for adventure, open space and freedom from lockdown. Our Arizona ranchers observe first-hand, the public exploring and camping in Arizona, whether in the forest or out in the desert. They’ve also witnessed the abuses.

The agencies overseeing our public lands while the ranchers work on these same lands, are witnessing the abuses too. Ranchers use public lands and the resources on them to raise their cattle and in return ranchers make improvements to the land including,

- 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, and
- Offering recreational opportunities, such as hiking and wildlife viewing.



Ranchers often find fence cut on public lands leading to several problems including the challenge of constant repairs.

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.”

Multi-use Opportunities

Public lands are also used in many ways by other people from Hikers to Hunters to UTV riders. While these folks are welcome to use the land for these activities, ranchers would like those recreating on these lands to remember that it is also a rancher’s place of business and damage to infrastructure like broken or purposely-cut fencing has a cost associated with it. Respect for the land is often something that everyone assumes will be exercised unfortunately many times that doesn’t happen. You hear stories of people in UTV’s driving reckless and pushing ranchers off to the shoulder of the road when the rancher is just simply trying to check a water tank. Gates are often left open and water tanks are shot full of holes.

Sometimes people think that pulling the wooden stays out of the fence for a fire is acceptable but when a rancher has to utilize that corral to work cattle and the fence is in pieces it makes for a difficult day on the ranch. Even worse is when there is a report of livestock being harmed, intentionally or not, that is a rancher’s profit. And Ranching in the great state of Arizona doesn’t always provide a large profit.

Arizona Farm Bureau has made some effort to reach out to the public and explain the importance of respecting public lands. We’ve communicated how ranching and recreating must work hand in hand for everyone using the lands to get along. We’ve explained when a person or persons is on public lands and sees that a rancher is working in an area, it’s best to try to find a way around the area or stop and ask if they are causing a problem.

While today we may use the pandemic of 2020 as our excuse to get out and go crazy. The fact of the matter is that disrespect for public lands continues to be a problem regardless of the circumstances. And our Arizona ranchers continue to persistently protect these lands. Perhaps if we increase our communication of the importance of preserving our lands to the public for the future a greater public/rancher partnership will blossom and keeping these lands pristine will be a natural outcome. 🚗

Every Friday Arizonans Hear from a Farmer or Rancher

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Begun over a year ago, 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 in Arizona. To date we’ve connected with just under 50 Arizona farmers and ranchers (well, and one Iowa farmer, The Farm Babe).



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

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.

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.

Every Friday morning between 10:00 and 11:00 we’re asking about the family farm or ranch, what inspired them to continue and why they are Farm Bureau members. We’ll continue to visit with farmers and ranchers from all over the state. During the 20 to 25-minute live sessions with the farmers, anyone joining has a chance to pose a question if they follow Arizona Farm Bureau on Instagram.

One interesting conversation on “Talk to a Farmer” was with a wine grower, Emil J. Molin of Cover Mesa Vineyard from Cornville and a current Yavapai County Farm Bureau board member. He had great insights about the wine industry that are surely valuable for those who listen to the taped conversation we later posted on “Friends of Arizona Farm Bureau’s” Facebook newsfeed.

Additionally, we had the honor of visiting with UArizona’s new dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine Dr. Julie Funk as she gets ready for the first class this fall. We had a handful post about their excitement for the new college and the unique program course students will experience.

If you would like to participate contact Julie Murphree at juliemurphree@azfb.org. Additionally tell your urban friends and family about the program and to follow us at @AZfarmbureau. 🚗

Don’t Miss Your County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting!

Influence Policy, Elect Leaders, and Have a Great Time

By Staff Reports

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.

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic our 14 active counties are reviewing ways to gather either in-person, completely virtual or a hybrid version. Invites with instructions will inform county ag members exactly how they’ll be able to operate. Regardless, the state office is committed to helping the counties design the technology needed to host their county annual meetings in August and the first part of September.

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 1st 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 Annual meetings whether in person, virtual or a hybrid,” says Boelts.

County Annual Meeting information is available online at 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 Ana Otto at 480.254.2172, Christy Davis at 480.635.3615, Elizabeth Rico at 480.635.3611 or Taylor Rogers at 480.635.3609. 🚗

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Save the Date:
Arizona Farm Bureau
Annual Meeting November 11 – 13

Meet Arizona Agriculture’s Dr. Poudel

By Ana Kennedy Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

Bindu Poudel, Ph.D., is an Extension Plant Pathologist Plant Diagnostician in Yuma. So, in Yuma you’ll find Dr. Poudel covering all area as it relates to plant pathology, plant disease diagnosis, research, extension and outreach and even hemp research.

Known by some as the Hempress for her work with hemp, Dr. Poudel will come to your house or your commercial field (of course observing COVID19 Safety protocols) in Yuma and help you diagnose what’s ailing that poor lemon tree of yours. She loves what she does, and her enthusiasm shines through with her smile.



Bindu Poudel, Ph.D.

She might not be a generational farmer from Arizona, but she is a generational farmer from Nepal. She was caring for plants before she was even in school. And the rest is history. So, we asked Dr. Poudel a few questions.

She’s classically humble and insists we call her Bindu. But we must at least call her amazing and not just because she can speak three main languages (English, Nepali, Hindi and few local dialects of Nepal), but because she speaks the language of farming, a universal language.

What is your educational background (i.e. Degree(s), certifications, honors)?

I have a PhD in plant pathology. I work with the agriculture community in plant disease diagnosis and management. With my upbringing and my training, I have a mind of a scientist.

Tell us about your background? Did/does your family farm?

I was born and raised in a farm in Nepal where agriculture is a way of life more than a business. It is a small country with small size farms and lands. Other than in the cities, everyone has their own little piece of land/garden where they grow. I started growing flowers and vegetables when I was not even 5 years old. And I learned to pick Himalayan raspberries before I learned about candies. It was me and my sibling’s chore to take care of baby goats in the farm. I could not have asked for a better childhood.

What do you love the most about farming, ranching, or the agriculture industry in general?

Farming is freedom. It is believing in tomorrow, working hard, and sometimes dealing with unexpected circumstances but not giving up hope and starting over again with same level of enthusiasm.

What excites you about Arizona’s agriculture?

The diversity. Diversity in terms of crops grown, the size of farms from commercial farms to family farms, the camaraderie within the community and the people (growers, farmers, company reps, PCAs, home growers) I work with.

What do you enjoy doing, and what is one fact/achievement that nobody knows about you?

I love being the Yuman (transplant) plant doctor. I love field disease diagnosis. Clinical diagnosis is very important part of diagnosis, but site visits are equally important and fun. I love house visits to look at retired couples’ citrus plants in their backyard and hearing their stories. I love being agriculture extension personnel. As extension is not just about how much you know, it is also about how much you care, and I love representing University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

One fact that very few people know about me is that I was 12 when I wanted to get a PhD and I was 18 when I wanted to be a plant pathologist. Also, I am fluent at 3+ languages.

Why are you a Farm Bureau member?

I first found out about Farm Bureau from our local farmer John Boelts [current Arizona Farm Bureau First Vice President]. As I learned more about Farm Bureau being the voice of agriculture, I decided to join the Bureau.

How will the next generation of agriculturalists have to operate?

We need new and young faces in agriculture, and we need to make more effort towards sustainable agriculture. And it makes me happy to see that the younger generation is striving towards it. Sustainability in terms on environment, resource use, and in terms of profitability. It is not just business; it is a livelihood.

Farmers, especially the new generation should be provided with incentives to continue farming. Every year, we are losing farming lands, we are losing people from the farming community. We must make a combined effort on making farming appealing for the new generation. We need agriculture advocates.

What is the best business advice that you’ve received and/or have given?

“Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.” By Henry David Thoreau

Talk about Hemp in Arizona. What is it’s potential?

Hemp is a new crop to Arizona and the United States. It is going to take a few years for the crop to adapt and for us to understand the crop itself. Just like Yuma did not become the winter vegetable capital overnight, it will be a few years before hemp becomes a mainstream crop in Arizona.

With the limited experience we have in hemp production (do not believe anyone who says they are an expert in hemp), it is hard to say now what does the future look like for Arizona hemp. There is need of a lot of work and research on hemp. We need to find a stable variety that grows in the Arizona heat. And there is a need for more work in fiber/grain varieties of hemp. But the enthusiasm in the agricultural community for hemp production has been phenomenal, so I am hopeful. 🌿



Instagram live!

Remember talk to a farmer/rancher ever Friday morning.



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