

A CONVERSATION ABOUT VISION AND CALLING: JOHN BOELTS

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

A fifth-generation farmer, John Boelts, and his wife Alicia, farm 4,000 acres of fresh vegetables and melons, durum wheat, cotton forage crops and seed crops along with their partners in Yuma under the name Desert Premium Farms. Boelts was elected to Arizona Farm Bureau's president last November, ready to serve the Farm Bureau and Arizona agriculture community for the next two years.

A graduate of American Farm Bureau's PAL Program, Boelts has served 2 terms as Yuma County Farm Bureau President, 4 years as 2nd Vice President and 7 years serving as the First Vice President.

As he begins his first full term as Arizona Farm Bureau's president, we sat down with Boelts to reflect on everyone's leadership opportunities and ask him about the importance of involvement in the agriculture community.

Arizona Agriculture: What inspired your leadership involvement in the Farm Bureau?

John Boelts: I think the first and most important thing was that somebody asked me to participate. I don't know if I ever would have sought it out, but a fellow member asked me if I would participate and I said, "sure." What inspired me and continues to inspire me today is a desire to do two things: Food production and meet challenges head on.

First, we must keep food production happening in our country and serve the needs of this country. We import too much food these days.

Secondly, it's really challenging to be in farming, ranching and all the other agriculture disciplines. I find that the best intentions of the public, or of policymakers, can cut us off at the knees if we don't find our voice. If Farm Bureau isn't the voice of and for agriculture, who's going to be?

Arizona Agriculture: What would you say to young people considering more involvement in their county Farm Bureaus?

John Boelts: There's tremendous opportunity. The old cliché that all politics is local is true, and there's no part of politics that's more impactful in our daily lives than local politics.

Get to know folks that are on city councils, boards of supervisors, statewide governance, and national governance. While politics seems to suck all the air out of the room, take all the headlines and appear like that's the biggest thing, the most profound impact on our agricultural operations and on our daily lives happens at the local levels of government. When you take



the time to talk to your elected officials things happen. Additionally, Arizona and American Farm Bureau have excellent programs to help young members grow and learn. Not everyone feels confident, right out of the shoot, and everyone can benefit from the specialized training opportunities available to young members. Cultivating tomorrow's leaders in agriculture is one of our top priorities, and we can't wait to work with them!

Arizona Agriculture: Why is Farm Bureau leadership so important, especially considering all the options we have in life to be involved in various organizations.

John Boelts: The most important thing about Farm Bureau is our structure and reach. From a structure standpoint, very few organizations are controlled from the grassroots up. Farm Bureau is. There's nothing that I work on as state president or that a county president works on, on behalf of our members, that didn't go through our policy development process. And none of that happens without starting at the grassroots level. That's unique. And that is where our strength comes from, from the millions of members across our country in every community, farm or ranch that we represent.

Next, the reach of Farm Bureau is huge. To honestly represent agricultural producers of all different stripes across the country, we must be diverse. We have Farm Bureau members that raise every type of agricultural crop, from clams to cotton and cranberries to cattle. We have members that grow alfalfa in every state in our country. All these disciplines of agriculture speaking as one voice of agriculture makes us authentic, potent and effective. As a result, the U.S. Congress and Administration are listening.

Farm Bureau's messages transcend party lines. As a result, we have a receptive audience with folks of all political stripes. And when you combine all these qualities, that makes Farm Bureau the most influential agricultural advocacy organization in our country and around the globe.

Arizona Agriculture: What one experience in your life became a defining moment for you in Farm Bureau that moved you forward in staying involved and certainly ultimately becoming a leader?

John Boelts: I have two examples. One was while being a leader in Farm Bureau and serving at the county level, and the other was some Farm Bureau training. First, my home county was dealing with being bisected by a new rail line that was going to be built in

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ARIZONA FARM BUREAU'S 2026 POLICY PRIORITIES

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

Concluding the 104th Annual Convention, the Arizona Farm Bureau State Board of Directors has set the organization's 2026 policy priorities. With agriculture's broad needs in mind, the Board identified key areas where Farm Bureau must continue to lead and where meaningful progress is possible in the year ahead, including water management, tax policy, transportation, labor, farm policy, land use and environmental regulations.

Arizona agriculture stands at a pivotal moment. As pressures on water, labor, land use, continue to intensify, the Arizona Farm Bureau remains steadfast in its efforts to protect and advance the interests of farmers and ranchers across the state. Our 2026 policy priorities reflect both long-term commitments and focused short-term goals, each designed to uphold the strength, sustainability, and competitiveness of Arizona agriculture.

LONG-TERM GOALS: ARIZONA FARM BUREAU FLAGSHIP POLICY PRIORITIES

Arizona Farm Bureau remains committed to our flagship issues in which we will continue to advocate for on behalf of Arizona agriculture helping drive and shape policies around these key issues.

WATER MANAGEMENT: SECURING AGRICULTURE'S SEAT AT THE TABLE

Water remains the defining issue for Arizona's future. Farm Bureau will continue advocating for agriculture's critical role in statewide water discussions, ensuring that agriculture's contribution to the state's economy and food security is fully recognized.

We will champion legislation that safeguards agricultural water access while promoting long-term solutions that strengthen overall water availability. As Post-2026 Colorado River negotiations progress, Farm Bureau will remain actively engaged to protect agriculture's access and future stability of Arizona's producers.

TAX POLICY: PROTECTING A FAIR AND STABLE TAX CLIMATE

A predictable tax environment is essential for agricultural operations. Arizona Farm Bureau will work to keep taxes low for farm and ranch businesses, defend favorable tax classifications, and ensure clear and consistent application of agricultural property valuation statutes. Protecting these frameworks is vital to keeping production agriculture in business.

TRANSPORTATION: REDUCING BARRIERS AND SUPPORTING RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Efficient transportation is fundamental to moving Arizona grown products to market. Farm Bureau supports deregulating Arizona's transportation industry, excluding safety and licensing requirements, to reduce unnecessary burdens on producers. We will advocate for streamlined inspections and push for strategic investments in rural infrastructure to maintain reliable and cost-effective

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ARIZONA LEGISLATORS SPEAK

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

As Arizona heads into the 2026 legislative session, three key Senate leaders, Majority Whip Frank Carroll (R), Minority Leader Priya Sundareshan (D), and President Pro Tem T.J. Shope (R), are focusing the state's attention on interconnected challenges: surging property title fraud, foreign ownership threats near military bases, federal regulatory overreach, and the escalating crisis on the Colorado River and rural groundwater.

In their own words below, each lawmaker lays out their priorities and the legislation they believe Arizona must advance to protect families, farmers, landowners, and our national security.

STRENGTHENING PROPERTY RIGHTS AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

By Senate Majority Whip Frank Carroll (R-LD16)



Arizona is reaching a crucial point for protecting the property rights, economic security, and national defense of our citizens. As the Majority Whip of the Arizona State Senate, I am dedicated to leading the chamber in addressing these challenges directly in the upcoming session.

Property title fraud is increasing alarmingly across the state, particularly in rural communities. Criminals are targeting families, farmers, and landowners by forging documents, impersonating homeowners, and recording false claims to steal land, houses, and mobile homes. This situation must be addressed. I am working to develop a clear, enforceable path to protect the real and personal Phase Two personal property of every Arizonan. Additionally, I am advocating for much stricter penalties for those who attempt to falsify records, exploit seniors, or take advantage of rural landowners, who are the backbone of our state.

We must also address the increasing national security threats we face. I am working to enable Arizona to prohibit foreign adversaries from leasing land near military installations. This will align our laws with federal standards and ensure that our bases—and the men and women who serve in them—are fully protected.

I am working to clearly define the EPA's powers to prevent regulatory overreach that negatively impacts Arizona's economy. While the Clean Air Act allows for specific emissions regulations, the EPA must not exceed its authority or violate fundamental principles of separation of powers.

As we prepare for the upcoming session, my commitment is clear: Arizona's families, landowners, and service members deserve a government that defends their rights—not one that permits criminals, foreign adversaries, or federal overreach to undermine them. We will advance policies that protect property, strengthen security, and restore constitutional balance. Arizona's future depends on it, and I am ready to fight for the safeguards our state deserves.

RURAL GROUNDWATER AND A SUSTAINABLE COLORADO RIVER FUTURE

By Senate Minority Leader Priya Sundareshan (D-LD18)



Declining Colorado River water supplies, with shortages becoming a permanent reality as climate change accelerates the already-decreasing runoff and snowpack, remains one of the most important issues facing Arizona and the state legislature this year. Arizona's agricultural sector and population centers alike will be impacted. It is crucial that all Arizonans stand together to protect our state's Colorado River allocation and secure the river's long-term sustainability. Therefore, the legislature must increase funding to Arizona's Colorado River negotiation team, led by the Department of Water Resources (ADWR).

With water scarce, we must all be wiser and more efficient. Farmers have the expertise to make the best operational decisions given the inputs available. Arizona wine growers, for example, can thrive with a high-value product resulting from a low-water-use crop. And they will, especially if the legislature enacts appropriate, locally-driven groundwater management that secures Arizona's groundwater and creates a level playing field for small farms to survive and pass on to the next generation.

Hearing the pleas of local leaders and small farmers to provide rural communities with new tools to manage and protect their finite groundwater supplies from excessive pumping by outside corporate entities, I introduced the Rural Groundwater Management Act (RGMA) (SB 1475), supported by bipartisan local leaders statewide, that would have given rural Arizonans a new tool to create flexible, locally-determined conservation targets. Areas currently experiencing severe groundwater decline would immediately become RGMAs, including converting the Willcox AMA. But this bill never received a hearing.

As we did by negotiating the 2025 Ag-to-Urban bill (SB1611), Senate Democrats stand ready in 2026 to work with all stakeholders in a bipartisan, transparent process to enact the management tools necessary to protect rural groundwater from unsustainable pumping and to ensure the viability of Arizona's rural communities and family farmers for future generations.

ARIZONA'S LEADERSHIP IN COLORADO RIVER NEGOTIATIONS

By Senate President Pro Tem T.J. Shope (R-LD16),

Arizona's water future is entering one of its most consequential chapters in decades, and the Arizona Legislature is playing a central role in shaping it. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water, I'm leading our chamber's work in the ongoing Colorado River negotiations—talks that will determine how water is shared among seven Basin States for years to



come.

Unlike any other basin state, Arizona's Legislature has a formal, statutory role in these negotiations, ensuring our citizens, farmers, and rural communities have a direct voice in decisions that shape our water security. This role matters now more than ever. River flows continue to decline, the current operating guidelines expire soon, and significant disagreement remains between the Upper and Lower Basin States about how to share reductions fairly.

Arizona has already stepped up. Over the past several years, our state has made substantial, voluntary water-use reductions and enacted forward-looking legislation to conserve

groundwater and support responsible growth. Innovative approaches—such as transitioning high-water-use agriculture to more water-efficient land uses where appropriate—are helping Arizona stretch limited supplies while meeting the needs of our growing population.

But lasting solutions require every Basin State to contribute. Arizona will not accept an agreement that places disproportionate burdens on our farmers, ranchers, and communities. During recent meetings with Trump Administration officials, we underscored the need for a balanced, enforceable framework where reductions are shared—not shifted. The Administration made clear they understand Arizona's outsized role in feeding the nation, powering the Southwest, and sustaining growth across multiple states—and they recognize that a strong Arizona is essential to a strong American West.

As 2026 approaches, the Arizona Senate will continue fighting for a fair agreement that protects the river, strengthens agriculture, and secures long-term water certainty. Farmers and ranchers are the backbone of our state, and you deserve nothing less than a seat at the table—and a fair deal that reflects Arizona's leadership.



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FALLING NASS SURVEY RESPONSES THREATEN DATA

By AFBF Economist **Bernt Nelson** and AFBF Associate Economist **Samantha Ayoub**

Countless stakeholders including farmers, university Extension services, researchers and policymakers rely on the data USDA has collected for more than 150 years through agencies and programs including the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and the Economic Research Service (ERS). Though USDA has made some improvements to surveys, response rates for many surveys continue to decline.

An important element of research, price discovery and market integrity, good data is a critical part of a robust, well-functioning agricultural economy. USDA is considered the gold standard for data collection globally but decreasing responses to USDA's farmer surveys is putting the integrity of this data at risk.

This Market Intel will evaluate the changes in response rates over time for several key surveys, with a focus on three NASS examples: the Crop Production Annual Summaries report, the March Cattle On Feed report and the November Farm Labor Survey.

IT'S ALL ABOUT DATA

Paid for by tax dollars, USDA's data and reports are available to a massive number of public and private stakeholders.

USDA collects data in a variety of ways. For example, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) relies on producer-reported data during enrollment for programs such as Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage. Other agencies, such as NASS, often rely on data collected through various surveys including USDA's Census of Agriculture, which occurs every five years. NASS alone conducts hundreds of surveys every year, ranging from county-level production to cattle on feed.

SURVEYS RESPONSES: TIMING IS EVERYTHING

One of the biggest challenges to getting good survey response rates is timing. Unfortunately, many survey collection periods overlap with farmers' busiest times. For example, leading up to the June 30 planted acreage report, NASS contacted nearly 92,000 farmers across the nation to collect data to determine planted crop acres as of June 1. This overlaps with the end of planting season and spraying season for many row crop farmers. This survey is critical because it helps determine expected acreage, the foundation for estimating future supply for several major U.S. commodities. The weaker the survey response rates, the less accurate the data.

CROP PRODUCTION

Estimates for row crop acreage and production come from USDA's quarterly Agricultural Production survey issued in March, June, September and December in all states other than Hawaii. This data, published in the Crop Production Annual Summaries, is used widely due to the wide swath of information it contains. It is used by farmers to make decisions about marketing or storing grain, financial institutions for analyzing credit decisions, industry analysts for developing forecasts and many more. This makes data integrity crucial. Response rates for these surveys have fallen from 80%-85% in the 90s to just 46% in 2024. Notably, between 2019 and 2024 the response rate dropped below 50% for the first time with fewer than 74,000 responses out of an average of 148,000 surveys issued since 2020.

CATTLE ON FEED

USDA's monthly Cattle on Feed report estimates the inventory of cattle on feed, cattle placed into feedlots, cattle marketed, and other disappearance by weight class. This report is important because it provides estimates for cattle in the pipeline for beef production. Stakeholders rely heavily on this data for beef cattle price discovery and market decisions for all levels of production, from the farmer or rancher all the way to the retailer. Surveys for this report are issued to farmers and ranchers with feedlots with a capacity of 1,000 head or more in 17 states. For quality measures, USDA uses the March report as a benchmark. The total number of March surveys sent to farmers and ranchers by USDA has increased by 3%, from 2,070 to 2,129 since 2019. During the same period, total responses have fallen by 6%, from over 1,300 down to about 1,200 for an overall response rate drop of 8% since 2019. Survey response rates for this market-moving report have steadily declined, slipping from over 62% in 2019 to just above 56% in 2024, edging closer to a concerning 50% threshold. As fewer feedlot operators respond to USDA's benchmark March survey, confidence in cattle supply data used for price discovery and market decisions becomes increasingly fragile.

FARM LABOR

USDA's Farm Labor report is an annual publication containing regional data for all hired, unpaid and self-employed workers directly hired by U.S. farms and

ranches (excluding Alaska), including wage rates.

The Farm Labor survey has crucial policy implications as it is used by the Department of Labor (DOL) to establish minimum wage rates, known as the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), for the H-2A temporary agricultural guestworker program. Because of flaws in using this survey as a policy discovery tool, NASS has tried multiple changes to the survey over the years.

In 2019, NASS added additional questions on base wage rates – those excluding incentive pay, overtime pay, etc. – to try to better serve DOL's use of the survey as an indicator of base wages across the country. To accommodate these extra questions, as well as to include more information on wages, NASS increased their sample size to over 35,000 surveys. These surveys are divided among the 18 state and multistate regions by which the data is aggregated and reported. The survey historically had survey response rates of over 50% or 60%. However, when the survey sample increased to 36,000 surveys in 2020, the response rate declined to less than 44%.

NASS abandoned their new methodology after only two years and reverted to a sample size of only 17,000. This is still above the historic average sample size of 12,000 surveys. Yet response rates have not recovered. As wages in the Farm Labor report – and the H-2A AEWR – continue to volatily increase compared to nonfarm wages, many farmers view the survey with increased skepticism. As of the May 2025 survey, the response has again decreased, dropping 4 percentage points from the November 2024 survey. The trends in the Farm Labor survey are a prime example of how lack of transparency, falling data quality and improper use can weaken industry trust, participation and expectations for public data.

FALLING SURVEY RESPONSE IMPACTS

Among the many reasons falling response rates are a problem, perhaps the most glaring is the declining data integrity that goes along with it. Lower response rates could lead to lower accuracy. If too few responses are collected for any certain statistic, NASS will remove that statistic from public data to maintain confidentiality for farmers that did respond. If a certain group or demographic has a particularly high number of responses compared to another, this can also lead to added bias.

Reliable survey data helps keep markets fair and competitive. USDA is the gold standard in agricultural data publications that are used for price setting across the globe. A decline in data quality could lead to less reliance on U.S. data, reducing global competitiveness.

Price discovery is the process where buyers and sellers negotiate and agree on a price for agricultural commodities. It involves the interaction of supply and demand, as well as other market factors, to determine the market price for a certain good. Less reliable data leads to less transparent markets, which can cause problems for price discovery.

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SURVEY RESPONSE RATES

NASS has taken several steps to attempt to increase survey response rates. In the past, NASS issued surveys by mail. NASS began offering surveys online in the early 2000s. Online surveys cut down on time and cost of data collection for farmers and NASS alike. NASS has streamlined the process by developing shorter questionnaires and expanding communications to include email and text messaging. These methods are far more time-efficient and cost-effective than the in-person requests and phone calls that used to be standard. NASS has also enhanced data analysis methods and outreach. Lastly, NASS seeks to educate farmers on the importance of survey responses. It takes time to fill out these surveys, but robust survey response rates are integral to keeping USDA data the gold standard of agricultural data.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the data published by USDA relies on farmers stopping their daily work to respond to surveys, which is no small ask. Surveys compete with weather, veterinary emergencies and a variety of endless seasonal farm activities. This competition for time has led to a major decline in response rates to surveys that produce the data that farmers rely on to make daily decisions.

Though USDA has made some improvements to surveys, response rates for many surveys continue to decline. USDA leadership should continue to examine ways to increase participation, and data reliability, without imposing more burdens on the already busy growers whom the data is designed to serve. 🛠️

Editor's Note: This article is reproduced with permission from American Farm Bureau Federation, originally appearing in its Market Reports.

THE BEST IN ARIZONA AGRICULTURE CELEBRATED

By Staff Reports

Arizona boasts some of America's finest farmers and ranchers, a fact that shines through during every inspiring opening night of the Arizona Farm Bureau's Awards Banquet. All candidates, after being submitted by county leadership, are voted on by the Arizona Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

As a result, each year the Arizona Farm Bureau celebrates the outstanding contributions of our state's farmers, ranchers and dairy producers. The following honors were presented at the Service to Agriculture Awards Banquet, held as part of the 104th Arizona Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Mesa last November.

AG COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR: JOANNA ALLHANDS



Arizona Farm Bureau presented the "Ag Communicator of the Year" to Joanna Allhands, a trailblazing voice in journalism whose dedication has informed her readers of the vital role of agriculture in our state's future, especially when it comes to water.

With over 21 years at The Arizona Republic, Joanna joined the editorial board in 2004, initially covering Mesa and Tempe before overseeing opinions for the southeast valley.

By 2012, she ascended to digital opinions editor, a role she held for more than a decade, shaping online discourse with insight and integrity. In this role she consistently focused sharply on Arizona's water policy and the Colorado River—issues linked to agriculture's sustainability.

Joanna's passion for Arizona agriculture shines through her pragmatic, well-researched coverage. She delves into critical topics like surface and ground-water management, advocating for the sector's needs amid growing scarcity. Her

articles explained complex realities, with fairness and positivity.

Her work countered misconceptions, highlighting innovations in conservation and the economic imperatives of agribusiness. Joanna's commitment extends beyond the page; attending meetings especially when water is the big topic, educating fellow media professionals on the nuances of Arizona agriculture, from crop challenges to policy impacts.

What sets Joanna apart is her ability to open the public's eyes to agriculture's truths while explaining a complex subject, fostering informed dialogue. Her columns on data centers' water use, forest health's ties to water supply, and urban-rural water tensions demonstrate a holistic view, always grounded in fact.

Having recently retired from the Arizona Republic, Joanna plans to continue tracking our Arizona agriculture water story.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: GEORGE RUYLE



George Ruyle was raised in a farming community in south-central Illinois. Throughout high school, he worked on a local farm, where he developed a love of agriculture and ecology, and an appreciation for wide open spaces. After graduation, he moved to Arizona to work on his uncle's ranch and earned his bachelor's degree in environmental resources and agriculture from Arizona State University. He then went on to earn a master's degree in rangeland management from the University of California, Berkeley and his doctorate in rangeland science from Utah State University.

In 1983, George returned to Arizona and began his career with the University of Arizona as a professor and

VISION AND CALLING: JOHN BOELTS *continued from Page 1*

Yuma County. Union Pacific was looking to build that rail line to connect to a port in Mexico. I was county vice president that year. I watched and worked with my fellow leaders to bring the grassroots message that we didn't want this rail line. It didn't serve our community. We found our voice, rose up, and spoke out. At the time, people inside agriculture and beyond said, "Why are you fighting this? You're going to lose."

Ultimately, we were successful in making our community around us aware of the proposed rail line, using our grassroots strength and making our voice heard that this was not a good thing for the community and that if Union Pacific was going to do it that they would need to do it in a way that worked beneficially for our community. We looked at different routes, considered all options, and advocated for not cutting our community in half. In the end, we were successful. Even though we had naysayers, we were successful. Our voice got heard and that rail line didn't get built.

Secondly, I had the privilege of participating in the PAL program, the Partners in Advocacy Leadership program. Not a lot of people have participated in it since selected classes are small, but it is mighty in capacity. All of us trained through PAL have received a tremendous amount out of it and continue to throughout our leadership. Prior to PAL, I wasn't big on using social media. But the PAL training showed me that using these new engagement tools extended our voice. In fact, I signed up for X, at the time it was called Twitter. I signed up since they expected us to use this and other social media tools during the two-year program. While social media has its good and bad aspects, most of it has been good from an advocacy standpoint, allowing me to share with people what growing fresh produce in Yuma is like or about issues that are important across the state of Arizona. So, I feel that my involvement with PAL helped stretch and grow me in a way that was good for me personally, helping prepare me for additional leadership roles, and to have a skill set that was valuable, not just to me personally, but for our Farm Bureau organization.

Arizona Agriculture: What is your vision for your leadership tenure?

John Boelts: That is easy for me. Implement our policy book while keeping our organization healthy and growing the next generation of agricultural leaders.

We have our policy book that is as diverse and is as detailed and as amazing as our Arizona landscape. Arizona Farm Bureau's policy book covers a lot and tries to do it succinctly, but it's still 100-plus pages. So, to me that's the marching orders. That's what the delegate body, our members, our county leaders and our state board, are all working on. How to get each policy implemented though, that's art.

We may have our marching orders within our policy book, but to implement those policies, we must have a strong organization that is well run and has the resources necessary to get the job done.

Lastly, and probably the most important, is the work we do to grow the next generation of leaders. Ask your young neighbor or friend to join our ranks, and to become an effective part of the Voice of Agriculture. Sometimes our problems seem to do nothing but multiply. The solution to that is to make sure that we have young folks coming up in our ranks who will meet those challenges head on with solutions, and that they are ready for that challenge.

Arizona Agriculture: With the understanding that Arizona Agriculture's readership consists primarily of our farm and ranch members, what would you most want them to know?

John Boelts: For the last 10 years, I've been playing hockey and coaching youth hockey, and there is one universal truth in sports and life. There will always be times when we must play defense. So as a goalie (that's the position I played), I am the last defense, but I was most effective defending the net when I had a good offensive team in front of me that not only helped play defense but also was going out on the offense. Like in sports, we must play the game from a position of strength if we want to win.

We can play defense all day long, but if we don't step forward and be proactive, if we don't take our destiny in our hands, talk about what we need, what the future should look like, and begin to shape the future, we'll just be hunkered down in the defensive end, playing defense all day and all night.

19th-century British philosopher John Stuart Mill said, "He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that." We must understand what the other side's viewpoint, perspective, and strategy is. Studying the opposition and then knowing it so well that we are effective. The whole point is to take a genuine interest in what others have to say, understanding them intimately so that you can interact with them, so that you can share ideas with them and make positive changes.

I will never stop fighting for our members, whether on the defense or offense. We are engaged in a noble and necessary effort.

Arizona Agriculture: And speaking of policy and our priority issue, what do we need to do to move forward in 2026 and beyond related to the water?

John Boelts: There's that adage about water that your viewpoint on water is shaped by how deep in the stream you stand. If the water's up above your head, then you're looking for a life raft, right? And if you can't even get a toe in the water, then you are thirsty. It's important that we look at Arizona, each area of Arizona and we evaluate what water we have in that specific geographic location, what assets we have in that area. We must speak up, be a loud and thoughtful voice in this conversation that's been happening around us that we've largely been excluded from and frequently only brought to the table when we're already on the menu.

Advocating for Agriculture is a long game, but as I mentioned earlier, we need to play this game more on offense. Most of the water and power infrastructure in Arizona was built by farmers and ranchers. We don't talk enough about that. These projects are the backbone of our life, lifestyles and livelihoods in Arizona. They were built by our first settlers who were farmers and ranchers. The Arizona land that was cultivated grew the things that sustain us. They didn't come out from under a crack in an asphalt freeway or a paved over parking lot.

We also have an amazing story to tell about what the future of Arizona agriculture looks like. Our voices often get drowned out because we don't take the opportunity to go on the offense to talk about what our future should look like. Agriculture has an important place in our economy and an important story to tell. We don't do enough to talk about reality, about what goes on in our rural communities, what an agricultural producer makes, grows, and the impact on the community and our state. We must lead proactively, influencing policy makers at every level of government and as thought leaders in the public discourse.

Arizona Agriculture: What about labor? It's one of the biggest challenges for Arizona producers right now. You know this very well as a Yuma farmer. From your

perspective as both the grower and the Farm Bureau president, where do you see the most promising solutions?

John Boelts: Thankfully and unfortunately, H2A is a lifeline. The thankful part is you always must be thankful when there are people that are willing to work on your operation, helping you grow and harvest. So, I'm very thankful for the folks in H2A.

The unfortunate part is two-fold. We have a lot of work to do to get H2A to where it needs to be, to be a useful and usable program. We've come some distance by talking to people about that and now it's on us to drive that across the finish line. But the other unfortunate part is that H2A is a temporary guest worker program that does not fulfill the needs of agriculture. We need to expand H2A to where it is available for all types of agriculture.

H2A needs to be simple and user-friendly. One of the reasons we see American agriculture continuing to shrink is that not only are we dependent on foreign labor to come in, but we are not adequately advocating for people to be able to correctly immigrate into this country and work in agriculture. We have allowed agriculture work to be undervalued by our society.

Possibly no industry is lacking in available people at all levels more than agriculture. We're short of people and we do ourselves and prospective employees a huge disservice to say you can never legally immigrate into the United States. We are fooling ourselves if we think we can fill all the shopping carts and food baskets in the United States, day in, day out, from here to eternity if we think we can do that on a temporary guest worker program.

We should welcome hardworking, solid, good citizens who want to make their living in agriculture, and we should pave a pathway for them to be able to do it legally.

Arizona Agriculture: You've farmed in Yuma for decades. What's the one change, whether it's in technology, regulations or the Ag market in general, that has been most transformative?

John Boelts: You asked for one, but I'm sorry, I'm going to have to give you two.

First, food safety regulation and risk. And it doesn't just touch Yuma, but it touches everybody who produces a crop that's normally eaten raw. So that's a challenge. It has been challenging for farmers to navigate this because the science has been evolving and every time we get some new science, we implement the best practice we can right away.

Secondly, and somewhat related, is managing the risk and tighter margins in agriculture. Our margins have narrowed, and our need for more effective risk management has increased over the years.

Arizona Agriculture: If you could wave a magic wand and fix one regulatory or policy issue facing Arizona agriculture tomorrow, what would it be and why?

John Boelts: It would be labor. Up until the last three years, and still probably to this day, I would say labor is still our number one challenge across all segments of agriculture. We lack enough people to milk cows and harvest lettuce, so we lose market share to Mexico and other countries daily. We crossed over what I considered to be a Rubicon roughly three years ago. When the United States started importing more food than we export, that just shouldn't happen in this country. And that's a testament to us not having a robust labor supply that is literally withering on the vine.

Arizona Agriculture: Can you share a recent example of a policy that started at the county level, made its way through the state process and became law or influenced legislation.

John Boelts: I think I'll take a forward-looking viewpoint. I think we're on the cusp of changing for the first time in more than two decades how we deal with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), especially with the administration's recent announcement of efforts to modernize and improve it. The best example is the Mexican Gray Wolf, a poster child of the ESA. The wolf is a horror show for Arizona and New Mexico ranchers, and it has been a robust experimentation on our landscape to see what's been going on. I'm very excited to see the opportunity that we have before us. We need to continue to drive this conversation. How it's managed, what is its range, what the scope of the project is. The Endangered Species Act has been used to stifle growth and put companies out of business, to turn our state into a non-productive place; we can't continue to see these sorts of things happen. We must be on the offense and in a thoughtful way and drive that message.

Arizona Agriculture: For the farmer and rancher reading this, who feels like they're just one voice, what would you tell them about the real impact one committed person can have in Farm Bureau?

John Boelts: I can certainly relate to that. I welcome you to membership. I am just one farmer and so are the rest of our members. We farm, dairy, ranch, feed sheep, goats and cattle, raise nursery stock, and so on. The salt of the earth. We work on ideas that come from each of our individual lives and experiences. Working together, with the support of our professional staff, we work to implement those grassroots ideas.

We are the most effective force for positive change that can make our way of life, our communities and our country better for ours and generations to come. We are Farm Bureau, the Voice of Agriculture. Thank you for being an important part of our team. 📱



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2026 POLICY PRIORITIES *continued from Page 1*

tive distribution channels.

TRADE: EXPANDING GLOBAL MARKETS

With more than 95% of consumers living outside the United States, international trade remains essential to Arizona agriculture. Arizona Farm Bureau will pursue new markets and expand existing trade opportunities to ensure that Arizona farmers and ranchers benefit from the global demand for high quality agricultural products.

LABOR REFORM: BUILDING A STABLE, RELIABLE WORKFORCE

Arizona agriculture depends on a legal and reliable workforce. Farm Bureau will advocate for federal labor reforms that acknowledge the unique needs of agricultural employers while reducing regulatory barriers and inefficiencies that burden farm operations.

FARM POLICY: SUPPORTING PRODUCTION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

From market instability to natural disasters and disease outbreaks, today's producers face unprecedented challenges. Farm Bureau will push for policies that protect farmers and ranchers, ensuring continued access to risk-management tools, disaster assistance, and support systems necessary for producing safe and affordable food.

LAND USE & ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION: PROTECTING ACCESS AND REDUCING BURDENS

Arizona farmers and ranchers are stewards of our natural resources, which is essential to food production. Arizona Farm Bureau will advocate for accessible land and water while removing excessive regulatory burdens.

SHORT-TERM GOALS: A FOCUSED AGENDA FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

In 2026, Arizona Farm Bureau will work to embed our priorities directly into state legislation, federal advocacy, and agency actions.

AGRICULTURE'S ACCESS TO WATER

- **Promote Balanced and Practical Water Management:** Engage in the development and implementation of Active Management Areas (AMAs) and Irrigation Non-Expansion Areas (INAs) to protect agricultural interests and ensure regulations remain practical and consistent with law.
- **Colorado River:** Protect agriculture's access to Colorado river water.

AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE POWER

- Arizona Farm Bureau will advocate to ensure rural communities and agri-



The work the Arizona Farm Bureau delegate body conducts during the Annual Meetings translates into the key priority issues the Board of Directors votes on after the main meeting. Like previous ones, this year's work covered a wide range of issues. Here, Apache County delegate Jackson Brown addresses the delegate body at the microphone.

culture have robust access to affordable and reliable electricity, including preference hydropower.

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- **Strengthen Agricultural Resources and Capacity:** Advocate for adequate staffing, funding, and infrastructure to support Arizona's agricultural programs and services.
- **Enhance Livestock Health and Market Access:** Expand local processing options and continue collaborative efforts to address animal health issues such as Bovine Trichomoniasis and the Screwworm outbreak.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA - COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICES & AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS

- Advocate for adequate and long-term reoccurring funding.
- Collaborate with University and College of Agriculture leadership to help shape priorities.

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES (OHV)

- **Collaborative Solutions:** Work closely with industry partners, land managers, and the OHV Study Committee to develop balanced, practical solutions addressing the growing challenges of OHV use in Arizona.
- **Protect and Sustain Communities:** Prioritize strategies that safeguard private and public lands, encourage responsible recreation, support law enforcement and educational programs.

FARM BILL ADVOCACY

- **Advance a Modernized Farm Bill:** Advocate for passage of a modernized 5-year Farm Bill that reflects current agricultural realities and supports long-term stability for producers.

MEXICAN WOLF

- **Secure Federal Support:** Advocate for adequate USDA resources to provide technical assistance, mitigation programs, and funding to livestock producers impacted by the Mexican Wolf.
- **Advance Practical Solutions:** Promote balanced, science-based management strategies for the Mexican wolf, including a "pay-for-presence" model.
- **Support Species Management Independence:** Encourage the delinking of the U.S. and Mexico wolf populations to allow for clear, regionally based management with the long-term goal of achieving recovery and delisting.

STATE AND FEDERAL LANDS

- **Protect Agricultural Use of Public Lands:** Safeguard agricultural leases on state lands and ensure renewable energy development aligns with existing agricultural operations.
- **Strengthen Federal Collaboration on Grazing and Resource Management:** Work with federal agencies to increase and maintain grazing access, improve rangeland, forest health and watersheds.
- **Enhance Wildfire Preparedness and Recovery:** Advance strategies that improve wildfire response, mitigation, and recovery efforts.

AGRICULTURAL LABOR

- **Advance Comprehensive Federal Labor Reform:** Advocate for broad, bipartisan labor reform that ensures a stable, legal, and reliable agricultural workforce while addressing the unique needs of U.S. and Arizona farmers and ranchers.
- **Promote Practical Regulatory Solutions:** Support reforms within the regulatory framework that reduce compliance burdens and improve the efficiency of agricultural labor programs.

REGULATORY REFORM

- Farm Bureau will prioritize and engage in federal regulatory reform forthcoming under this administration.
- Engage in state regulatory reform to ensure regulations are practical and economically feasible.

Arizona Farm Bureau's policy priorities reflect both the enduring values and evolving needs of agriculture. Through strategic advocacy, strong partnerships, and unwavering commitment to our members, we will continue working to protect the future of farming and ranching in Arizona, ensuring that rural communities, natural resources, and agricultural producers remain resilient for generations to come.

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Program #32524: \$500 Bonus Cash offer exclusively for active Arizona Farm Bureau members who are residents of the United States. Offers are valid from 1/3/2025 – 1/5/2026 for the purchase or lease of an eligible new 2025 model year Ford vehicle. Incentive not available on Mustang Shelby GT/GT500, Mustang Boss 302, and F-150 Raptor. Offer is subject to change based on vehicle eligibility. This offer may not be used in conjunction with other Ford Motor Company private incentives or AXZD-Plans. Some customer and purchase eligibility restrictions apply. You must be an eligible Association member for at least 30 consecutive days and must show proof of membership. Limit one \$500 Bonus Cash offer per vehicle purchase or lease. Limit of five new eligible vehicle purchases or leases per Farm Bureau member during program period. See your Ford Dealer for complete details and qualifications.

BEST IN ARIZONA AGRICULTURE

continued from Page 4

extension specialist in rangeland management. Throughout his career, George's work helped build capacity in collaborative conservation, usually in rural communities and involving publicly held resources, and provided the ecological foundation essential for the implementation of effective rangeland management.

In 2012, George became the inaugural Marley Endowed Chair for Sustainable Rangeland Stewardship. In this role, George's work was to provide leadership for statewide educational programming backed by problem-solving research and focused on the sustainable use of rangelands. He was often assisting ranchers in commenting on lawsuits and NEPA related filings.

He specialized in conservation ranching for sustainable rangeland livestock production, primarily through the practices of grazing planning, monitoring, and collaborative, and adaptive management. In 2019, Arizona Farm Bureau featured him in the ongoing "Conversation" series in its publication Arizona Agriculture where he said, "I am confident that Arizona agriculture will survive and thrive well into the future. But it will need to change and adapt to numerous challenges, including water availability, weather patterns, land use and vegetation changes and societal shifts."

In 2023, George "retired" and became a professor and extension specialist, emeritus. However, retirement still has George engaged with Arizona's rangelands and natural resources. He continues to serve as the Assistant Director of Natural Resources for the U of A's Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center and continues to keep his finger on the pulse of Arizona rangelands.

LIFETIME SERVICE TO AGRICULTURE: LANCE FITE



Arizona Farm Bureau presented the Lifetime Service to Agriculture Award to Lance Fite, a third-generation rancher whose lifelong dedication has profoundly shaped Arizona's farming and ranching legacy.

Born and raised on the Alpine Hereford Ranch, Lance expanded the family operation into Fite Farms, spanning ranching in Alpine and farming in Safford. His diversified herd of cattle and lambs, bred for county fairs statewide, exemplifies innovation and resilience in livestock production. For 34 years, Lance has been a pillar of agricultural education as an FFA advisor and Career and Technical Education (CTE) director at Safford High School.

His greatest achievement lies in mentoring youth: coaching over 30 student teams to state victories and national competitions, while establishing a 20-acre land lab for hands-on training in planting, irrigation, equipment maintenance, and harvesting.

Recently honored with the Arizona FFA Honorary State Degree, Lance's impact extends to opening its program to students from Thatcher and Pima schools, broadening agricultural appreciation across the Gila Valley. Countless alumni now thrive in ag careers, including his daughter, who teaches agriculture at Pima High School.

Lance's biggest challenge came early when the Safford School District superintendent threatened to cut the FFA program. Undeterred, he rallied supporters, one being the Arizona Farm Bureau. Arizona Farm Bureau mobilized certified letters to board members and engaged Graham County farmers and ranchers, packing the meeting with advocates, including a young student in a blue jacket who later would become Arizona Farm Bureau CEO, Phil Bashaw. The program was saved, ensuring generations of youth could engage with agriculture.

He, like others, upholds Arizona Farm Bureau's mission through leadership in the Arizona Agriculture Teachers Association and as chair of the State Star Committee, spotlighting young agriculturalists' accomplishments.

Lance's contributions benefit the community broadly: over 34 years on the Graham County Fair's junior livestock auction committee, serving as lamb and beef superintendent, and as superintendent at the Arizona National Livestock Show. His mentorship instills life skills in youth, emphasizing responsible animal care and dedication.

Lance's true legacy? Instilling an immeasurable appreciation for agriculture in students, whether they pursue it professionally or not.

LIFETIME SERVICE TO FARM BUREAU: BRUCE CAIN

With roots in central Louisiana farm production and a Bachelor of Science degree from Louisiana Tech University, Bruce began his career in insurance with Texas Farm Bureau before making Arizona his home. His work ethic, quick humor, and heart for service have made him a beloved figure across the agricultural community. Whether behind a desk or behind the grill, Bruce has consistently embodied Farm Bureau's mission of service to members, families, and youth.

Bruce retired in January 2024 after 38 years with Farm Bureau Financial Services, during which time he served as the Arizona Business Center Director, managing staff responsible for personal lines and agriculture claims and underwriting. His leadership, professionalism, and commitment to serving others left a lasting



impact on colleagues and Farm Bureau members alike. Beyond his professional career, Bruce is perhaps best known for leading the Farm Bureau Goodwill Grill Team. Inspired by former Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers, Bruce helped grow the program into a powerful outreach effort serving communities across the state. Under his leadership, the Grill Team has supported county fairs, FFA events, livestock auctions, and countless Farm Bureau activities—preparing schedules, coordinating volunteers, and serving thousands of meals each year. Over the last decade, the team has averaged more than 30 events annually, providing more than 77,000 meals statewide.

What began as a job with Farm Bureau turned into a career. And what began as a career grew exponentially as Bruce was led by his passion for people and his heart for service. Via his work with the Farm Bureau Goodwill Grill Team, he's taken Farm Bureau's brand, it's face, across the state of Arizona.

Bruce's influence has been felt at every level of Farm Bureau and the broader agricultural community in Arizona. His work with Farm Bureau Financial Services helped countless customers to bring in membership dollars to help support Farm Bureau. At county levels, his hands-on leadership with the Goodwill Grill Team has fostered a spirit of unity and service, bringing Farm Bureau members together and strengthening ties with youth organizations such as 4-H and FFA. At the state level, Bruce's dedication to organizing and executing outreach events has raised public awareness of Farm Bureau's mission and values, directly benefiting Arizona's agricultural families and communities. Bruce's ability to connect, mentor, and support others has left a lasting legacy, making Farm Bureau more visible, accessible, and impactful throughout Arizona and beyond.

In 2024, Bruce was recognized with the Arizona FFA Foundation's prestigious Blue & Gold Award, further underscoring his lifelong commitment to agriculture and youth leadership.

FARMER OF THE YEAR: MARK FREEMAN



Despite his many duties and time constraints in his role as Mayor of Mesa, Mark Freeman continues running the farm property at Center and Brown in Mesa, Fitch Farm. This includes the seasonal farm stand, The Freeman Corn Patch. Truly a man of many hats, Mark can still be found on the tractor, continuing to stay dedicated not only to his operation but to the public advocacy for agriculture within his urban environment.

Mark has cared for the Fitch Farm for many years and continued to allow it to thrive even as the urban environment grew around its location. These days he has catered to that audience and holds events for the public and the seasonal farm stand in summer.

As Mayor of Mesa with strong ties to the city, he continues to use his voice and platforms to advocate for agriculture. He is diligently working on building bridges between our urban and rural communities in his role whether that be as Farmer Freeman on the tractor, or Mayor Freeman in his office or at public events.

Mark has dedicated his time to service in agriculture. Prior to his term as Mayor of Mesa he served as President, Past President, and 1st Vice President of Maricopa County Farm Bureau. Through all his title changes, his voice has never wavered from promoting agriculture and educating those audiences who are far removed from our industry.

A lifelong resident of Mesa, Mark Freeman exemplifies the values of family, hard work, and community that have defined his career. Elected in 2024 as the 41st Mayor of the city, which is the 36th largest in the United States, he previously represented District 1 on the Mesa City Council, where he honed his skills in local governance and policy-making.

Before entering politics full-time, Freeman retired from the Mesa Fire Department after a distinguished career, including roles in public information and emergency management, showcasing his commitment to public safety and community resilience.

In his mayoral leadership, Freeman has focused on elevating Mesa through bold initiatives, strong partnerships, and sustainable growth. He has been appointed Vice Chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Energy Committee, where he advocates for innovative energy policies at a national level.

Through it all, Mark's dedication to agriculture remains a cornerstone, using his platform to educate and bridge divides, ensuring Mesa thrives as a vibrant, connected community. 🚜

ARIZONA FARM BUREAU CELEBRATES ITS CENTURY FARMS AND RANCHES

By Staff Reports

Arizona Farm Bureau celebrated two families during its Annual Meeting last November that earned Century Farm and Ranch recognition, an evergreen program the organization will celebrate each year.

Arizona Farm Bureau launched the Century Farm and Ranch Program to recognize those Farm Bureau members who have a Century farm or ranch in the state. The organization launched the Century Farm and Ranch Program during Arizona Farm Bureau's Centennial in 2021 to annually recognize those Farm Bureau members who have been continuously farming or ranching for more than 100 years. This year we recognized **two families**.

COOLEY FAMILY

First, we first shine the spotlight on the legacy of the Cooley family, true pillars of Arizona farming in Navajo, Maricopa, Yuma and Pinal counties, whose family story embodies resilience, innovation, and community service.

The Cooley family's Arizona roots trace back to the early 20th century. Freeman Cooley, born in 1888 in Utah, and his wife, Pearl Whipple, born in 1893 in Mexico, married in 1912. They settled in Lakeside, Arizona, farming crops and raising livestock. In 1919, seeking better opportunities, they relocated to Gilbert in Maricopa County, establishing a farm focused on cotton, alfalfa, grain, and dairy. By 1922, their son Eldon, was already part of this budding enterprise in the sparse desert settlements.

Growing up amid the Great Depression's hardships, Eldon learned the value of hard work, plowing fields and milking cows from a tender age. The 1930s and

1940s saw the family persevere through economic challenges, with census records capturing their steadfast presence in rural Maricopa County. In 1941, Eldon



married Elona Peel and immediately launched a custom harvesting business and acquired his first farmland on Gilbert Road in Mesa. Over the next five decades, he expanded operations across the valley and the state, farming vast acres of cotton, alfalfa, and grain. Key acquisitions were the 1948 plot at Cooper and Guadalupe roads, the 1950s land in Higley that would later become Cooley Middle School, as well as his expansion into Yuma County. Every acquisition marked his visionary growth.

But Eldon's impact extended far beyond the furrows. A devoted member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he and Elona raised six children, all college graduates, while serving church missions in Salt Lake City and New York. His civic leadership shone brightly:

SEE CENTURY FARM AND RANCHES PAGE 8

CENTURY FARM AND RANCHES *continued from Page 7*

serving on the Mesa City Council from 1966 to 1972, as vice-mayor, and as mayor from 1972 to 1976. Honored as Mesa's Outstanding Citizen in 1962, he contributed to boards for First Security Bank, the YMCA, Boy Scouts, and more, helping transform Mesa from a farming outpost into a thriving city.

Eldon and Elona's legacy live on in their descendants: 27 grandchildren and 67 great-grandchildren. Eldon passed away in 2007 at age 89. Elona followed in 2022 at 101. The couple were married for 66 years.

Eldon was succeeded on the farm in the mid-1970s by his son, Jeff, who made farmed for 36 years. And when development pressed against the farm in Gilbert, the farming operation transitioned to Eloy and Coolidge in Pinal County. Today, Cooley Farms is operated by Jeff's son Todd, who carries on the family's legacy of farming.

Cooley Farms, operational for over a century through family hands, exemplifies Arizona's agricultural endurance. The family's spirit reminds us: from the desert soils rise abundance.

THE WELLS FAMILY



This family's legacy starts with Amandus Peters, born on January 19, 1879, on an 80-acre farm northeast of Shelby, Iowa. The third of six children to German immigrants Fritz and Christiana Peters, Amandus grew up in a world of hard work and opportunity. At 21, with a silver watch and some financial aid from his parents, he ventured west, seeking adventure.

He worked on a Montana horse ranch, ran a hotel restaurant in Boise, Idaho, and even homesteaded 160 acres in

quarter to a stranger, then boldly approached Steinfeldt's Bank. With a \$1,000 loan, he started a 20-acre dairy. Times improved, but feed shortages led them to Casa Grande in 1913, a year after Arizona became a state.

On a rented farm, Amandus built a thriving operation: a solid house, barn for 20 cows, and fields of alfalfa. Marie handled the milk route until her untimely death in 1917. Amandus later married Edna Forbach, who had three children of her own.

The farm expanded dramatically. By the 1920s, Amandus owned 80 acres, then added 160, 320, and more, reaching 1,500 acres owned or rented in Pinal County. He raised alfalfa for dairy cows, steers, hogs, mules, and horses. World War I and the Depression tested them, but innovations like his patented Cross Rotary Harrow machine in the 1940s revolutionized cotton planting, manufactured and sold by the thousands and found to this day in equipment yards. Cotton emerged in the mid-1930s, making the family shift from feed crops to this cash staple using Coolidge Dam's irrigation.

Amandus passed in 1953, leaving 520 acres and nine houses. His legacy lives on through his children. Son Amandus Fritz continued farming, but it was daughter Marie Christina who married into the Wells family, intertwining the Peters roots with new horizons. Her descendants carried the torch, founding the Wells Cotton Company in Casa Grande, a testament to their forebears' vision. Today, on Peters Road, Wells cotton thrives, growing premium cotton that honors Amandus's pioneering spirit.

Dean and Polly Wells carry this legacy forward into this young century with cotton as a key crop. Their long-time commitment to Pinal County Farm Bureau and Arizona Farm Bureau extends the perseverance and determination of this farm family.

From Iowa farms to Arizona fields, the Peters-Wells story is one of resilience. 🚜

Editor's Note: This program of the Arizona Farm Bureau (AZFB) is ever-green. The organization makes the application available on [azfb.org](https://www.azfb.org) every year and asks our Arizona farm and ranch families to apply if their family runs a century farm or ranch. Go to <https://www.azfb.org/News/Century-Farms-Ranches> to download an application and submit for the 2026 year's recognition.

South Dakota's Rosebud country with a neighbor. In 1905 he married Marie Eggerss. Together, they welcomed three children, Marie, Amandus and Paul.

Harsh Dakota winters threatened Marie's health, prompting a move to warmer climates. After trials in El Paso and Pasadena, they settled in Tucson, Arizona, in late 1910. Tragedy struck when baby Paul passed, leaving the family devastated. In a moment of desperation, Amandus gave his last



CONTRIBUTE TO ARIZONA FARM BUREAU'S AGPAC

As we look ahead to 2026 there is no doubt that this election cycle will be extremely important in electing candidates that support agriculture.

The AgPac Board of Trustees met in November and set an ambitious goal of securing \$50,000 in contributions to our AgPac to strengthen our political influence while allowing for meaningful contributions to candidates who support Arizona agriculture.



Scan the QR code to donate today. We thank all our generous supporters and look forward to growing our political action committee, our influence and representing agriculture in 2026.

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