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A CONVERSATION ON ARIZONA WINE AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING EXTENSION: MATT HALLDORSON

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications



Matt Halldorson serves as the director of the University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension and the Statewide Viticulture Extension Agent. In this dual role, he leads a diverse team of Extension professionals who deliver programs in Agriculture & Natural Resources, Family, Consumer, & Health Sciences, and 4-H Youth development, ensuring Yavapai County's agricultural and rural communities benefit from research-based solutions, practical education, and community partnerships.

Before returning to Arizona to join Cooperative Extension in 2022, Matt spent over a decade as a viticulturist in Washington State, managing vineyards for Wyckoff Farms, Ste. Michelle Wine Estates and

Kiona Vineyards, and teaching viticulture courses at Yakima Valley College. These experiences honed his skills in vineyard management, plant health, and grower education, providing the foundation for his work in Arizona's rapidly growing wine sector.

Since arriving in Yavapai County, Matt has expanded Extension's viticulture outreach statewide, developing grower workshops, leading industry symposia, and authoring numerous Extension publications on grape pest management, vineyard water use, and soil nutrient dynamics. He has secured competitive specialty crop grants to study warm season cover crops in vineyard systems, collaborating with colleagues to bring innovative practices into Arizona vineyards. His service extends to leadership roles on boards and committees for the Arizona wine industry, including the Arizona Viticulture Symposium, Arizona Wine Summit, and the Verde Valley

Wine Consortium.

Locally, Matt supports the Yavapai County Master Gardener program, where he trains volunteers to deliver science-based horticultural education to the public. He also engages in broader agricultural and natural resource efforts, from water conservation planning to invasive plant management. His collaborative work with agencies, nonprofits, and community groups underscores Extension's mission to connect people with the university's resources while addressing local priorities.

Matt's vision for Arizona viticulture is rooted in adaptation and opportunity. With over 120 licensed wineries and more than 1,500 acres of vineyards statewide, the industry is transitioning from a boutique niche to a recognized contributor to the state's agricultural economy. By integrating research, grower experience, and strategic partnerships, he works to ensure that Arizona's wine regions—Verde Valley, Sonoita/Elgin, and Willcox—continue to build their unique identities while collaborating under a unified reputation for quality and innovation.

I met Matt earlier this year while doing a wine series for Arizona Farm Bureau's "Talk to a Farmer/Rancher Friday" over our Instagram App. His insights and passion for what he does were clearly evident and allowed us to learn more about what Yavapai County Cooperative Extension is doing on behalf of the community in that county.

Arizona Agriculture: Give me more of your background of how you ended up in the wine industry going back to your days when you were in Washington state.

Halldorson: My journey to the Arizona wine industry was a circuitous one. I graduated with a degree in plant biology from Northern Arizona University in 2006, but the great recession followed shortly after, apart shortly after, so I struggled to find my way after graduation. In 2009, the Arizona wine industry was beginning a renaissance of sorts (especially in the Verde Valley), and I thought that if I could transition into agriculture, I might be able to find a job with one of the local vineyards. To gain experience, I reached out to Markus Keller at Washington State University (WSU), who was conducting viticulture and plant physiology research, and agreed to take me on as a graduate student in his lab. So, in late 2009, I moved to Eastern Washington where my research focused on understanding the physiological effects of leafroll disease on merlot grapevines.

During this time, I lived and worked at the WSU Irrigated Agriculture

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FINDING MARGIN AND BUILDING RESILIENCE IN AG LAND

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Farmers and ranchers live in a world where the clock never stops. The demands of agricultural life—planting season, tending crops, managing livestock, repairing equipment, and navigating unpredictable weather, markets, and regulations—mean there's really no such thing as "clocking off at 5:00 p.m." So then, can downtimes; margin, be found?

The relentless pace erodes physical, emotional, and financial reserves, leading to burnout and strained livelihoods. Yet, the concept of margin: **the intentional space between one's load and limits** offer a powerful framework for agriculturalists to thrive amidst these challenges.

We might even draw a conclusion that it's even more challenging for farmers and ranchers in Arizona since we have no seasonal downtime, we're planting and harvesting 12 months out of the year. Our wonderful climate means we never have to stop. A good thing for agriculture production; a bad thing for looking to build "some margin in our lives."

Drawing on insights from experts like Dr. Richard Swenson, Michael Hyatt, Greg McKeown, and Cal Newport, as well as recent discussions on X with agricultural contexts, this article explores how farmers and ranchers can create margin in their daily lives, with practical examples.

UNDERSTANDING MARGIN IN THE CONTEXT OF FARMING AND RANCHING

Dr. Richard Swenson, in his book *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, defines margin as, "the space between our load and our limits." For farmers and ranchers, this space is often nonexistent. Your limits—physical endurance, mental clarity, financial resources—are constantly being tested. Swenson argues, "Margin is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. Margin is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations."

In agriculture, where contingencies like drought, equipment failure, or price drops are routine, margin becomes a lifeline. It becomes a critical element in the mix of what you know you need to do.

Unlike office workers who can leave tasks at 5:00 p.m. (though certainly they can take home with them and forget to separate from the stresses of work), agriculturalists face a 24/7 reality. Calving seasons, harvest deadlines, and emergency repairs don't adhere to a 9-to-5 schedule. Yet, creating margin, those intentional buffers in time, energy, finances, and emotions, can help farmers and ranchers manage this unpredictability. As Greg McKeown, author of *Essentialism*, notes, "Without margin, you're reacting, not creating."

Margin isn't just

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INDUSTRY LED SOLUTIONS ON RIGHT TO REPAIR

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

As states across the U.S. consider and debate right-to-repair legislation, the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and State Farm Bureaus remain at the forefront, advocating for practical, farmer-focused solutions. In Arizona, lawmakers have discussed the issue in recent years, and most recently, Representative Heap has shown interest in legislation modeled after Colorado’s successful right-to-repair law. By contrast, while Texas also advanced similar legislation, the final version exempted agricultural equipment and manufacturers that had signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with industry groups.

What has received less public attention, however, are the proactive steps taken by AFBF in 2023 to address equipment repair challenges through collaboration with manufacturers. Rather than pursuing federal legislative action, AFBF championed an industry-led approach. This effort led to the development of MOUs with several leading equipment manufacturers, aimed at improving access to repair tools, diagnostic information, and other key resources for farmers.

In addition, AFBF established a formal process for farmers to report repair-related issues. This process leverages the MOUs to help resolve concerns directly through partnerships with manufacturers, offering a collaborative path forward that prioritizes timely, effective solutions for producers. The MOUs include provisions for semiannual reviews with manufactur-

ers to ensure the agreements are functioning as intended and to address any emerging concerns. As technology continues to evolve and the agricultural equipment industry advances, it is essential that these agreements are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current needs and the dynamic nature of the marketplace.

In a recent press release, John Deere announced the launch and availability of a new tool for equipment owners to diagnose and repair their equipment. The launch of “Operations Center PRO” provides customers with the information and technology they need to keep equipment up and running. Deere’s announcement further exemplifies their commitment to the industry and the value of industry partnerships.

Since the implementation of the MOUs and the accompanying online portal, only two issues have been submitted, both of which were resolved promptly. Arizona Farm Bureau believes these market-based solutions are effective and responsive. While we strongly support our farmers’ and ranchers’ ability to access the tools and technology needed to repair their equipment, we cannot support Right to Repair legislation that would undermine or conflict with the effectiveness of these industry-led agreements.

For more information on Right to Repair, including the MOUs, please visit WWW.FB.ORG/ISSUE/RIGHT-TO-REPAIR 🚜

COOLERS BUILT FOR THE CANYON: CANYON COOLERS EARN ARIZONA’S TRUST

By Joel Carr, Arizona Farm Bureau Strategic Communications Manager

In Arizona, where the sun bakes the canyon walls and the terrain tests even the toughest gear, one cooler company has proven itself worthy of the challenge. Canyon Coolers, born and bred in Flagstaff, knows what it takes to outlast heat, hold up under pressure, and keep your drinks frosty long after the ice should’ve melted.

Their rugged lineup of hard and soft shell coolers has been quietly gaining a cult following among hunters, ranchers, anglers, and weekend warriors alike. But now, thanks to a new partnership with the Arizona Farm Bureau, members can reap the rewards of a good Arizona-made investment, with 18% off every purchase of Canyon’s hard and soft shell coolers. Go to www.azfb.org and select membership.

BUILT FOR ARIZONA’S BACKROADS

Canyon Coolers didn’t start with investors or market forecasts. It began with a river guide who was tired of melted ice and soggy sandwiches halfway down the Colorado. From there, the mission was simple: build a cooler that could survive the wild.

Fast forward more than a decade, and Canyon Coolers has done just that. Their rotomolded hard shells are certified bear-resistant, feature extra-thick insulation, and boast serious ice retention (we’re talking days, not hours). The soft-sided “Nomad” series brings the same commitment to durability, but in a lighter, more flexible form perfect for shorter hauls or saddlebag storage.

What sets Canyon apart isn’t just toughness, it’s thoughtfulness. Every latch, handle, and drain plug is designed with real users in mind. These coolers aren’t just thrown together in a warehouse; they’re engineered in Arizona, for Arizona.

COOLING WITH A CONSCIENCE

Beyond the build quality, Canyon Coolers stands out for its environmental and local commitments. Unlike mass-produced brands headquartered out of state or overseas, Canyon operates locally in Flagstaff and sources many of its materials from the region. Their customer service team? Also, local. Call them, and you’re talking to a real person who knows the difference between a feedlot and a float trip.

They also back every product with a no-hassle, lifetime warranty—because a company that makes coolers this tough doesn’t expect you to replace them.

TESTED BY RANCHERS, APPROVED BY FARMERS

For members of the Arizona Farm Bureau, Canyon Coolers aren’t just a luxury—they’re a tool. Whether you’re hauling water out to a remote pasture or need to keep meds chilled in the back of your truck, a dependable cooler is a must.

That’s why the Arizona Farm Bureau is proud to partner with Canyon Coolers to offer 18% off their entire collection of hard and soft shell coolers. This exclusive discount is available to all Arizona Farm Bureau members and is part of our larger mission to connect farmers and ranchers with high-quality, made-for-you gear.

To access your discount, log in to your member portal at www.azfb.org and navigate to the Member Benefits section.

COOLERS WITH CHARACTER

Canyon Coolers may not be the flashiest brand on the block, but that’s never been the point. These coolers are built for utility, not Instagram. They’re the kind of coolers you leave in the back of your truck all summer long without a second thought—the kind you take on branding days, camping weekends, or back-to-back county fairs.

And if you’re the kind of person who appreciates gear that works as

hard as you do without breaking the bank or the environment, then Canyon Coolers is worth a look.

In a market full of big names and bigger price tags, Canyon Coolers keeps things simple: Build gear that lasts, serve the people who need it most, and stay true to Arizona roots. 🚜

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BEATING THE HEAT: HOW AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS PROTECT EMPLOYEES FROM HEAT STRESS

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

Arizona Agriculture is no stranger to the climate that makes our agricultural prowess so unique, with its soaring temperatures often exceeding 100°F in key regions like Yuma's lettuce fields, the Salt River Valley, and the vast cotton expanses of central Arizona. This very climate, while enabling year-round production of iconic crops, poses a significant challenge for the dedicated growers who produce our nation's food. Yet, Arizona's producers are profoundly committed to their teams' safety, providing comprehensive safeguards through federal and state guidelines, time-tested best practices, and innovative tools. By ensuring access to ample cool water, shaded rest areas, and thorough training, while promoting a shared responsibility where workers actively hydrate, replenish electrolytes, and self-monitor by being trained to look for the signs of heat illness, our industry not only meets, but exceeds expectations for worker well-being. As state initiatives and ongoing research affirm, this partnership fosters a resilient workforce essential to sustaining Arizona's agricultural legacy.

HOW THEY DO IT

Arizona agricultural producers prioritize worker safety by adhering to a comprehensive framework of federal and state guidelines, viewing compliance not as a burden but as a commitment to their teams. At the federal level, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) enforces the General Duty Clause (Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act), requiring employers to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards like extreme heat. OSHA's ongoing National Emphasis Program (NEP) on heat hazards prioritizes safety in agriculture during heat events, prompting producers to demonstrate proactive measures. Additional federal support includes the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA), which indirectly aid heat safety by prohibiting hazardous work in extreme heat for children under 16 and ensuring safe housing with rest access. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommendations guide the use of wet-bulb globe temperature (WBGT) metrics for assessing heat and adjusting work/rest cycles.

At the state level, the Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health (ADOSH) administers an OSHA-approved plan enforcing standards at least as effective as federal ones, using the General Duty Clause for heat and conducting targeted inspections via its State Emphasis Program (SEP) on heat illness. These guidelines compel industries to create written Heat Illness Prevention Plans (HIPPs) accessible in workers' languages, outlining shared responsibilities for water, shade, rests, and emergencies. Agriculture continues to lead the way.

With great care, producers implement a multi-layered approach to heat stress prevention, starting with water, rest, and shade, while stressing employee accountability. Employers supply fresh, cool water freely, encouraging workers through reminders to drink regularly, with stations

positioned near work areas. Shade structures like tents or vehicles are provided for comfortable rests, with producers reminding employees to take breaks proactively, especially during advisories, ensuring they are paid and non-punitive. Acclimatization gradually increases workloads over 7-14 days for new or returning workers, starting at 20% exposure, with close monitoring for symptoms like dizziness, and producers urge employees to self-assess and report discomfort: in regions like Yuma, task rotation and cooler-hour scheduling further limit exposure.

Training is proactive and mandatory, equipping workers with knowledge to share in the responsibility. Producers hold annual multilingual sessions covering heat illness signs (e.g., cramps, confusion), prevention, including hydration and first aid, emphasizing that while supervisors provide oversight, employees must apply these lessons daily, and do, often ensuring they procure electrolytes and hydration before they even step out of their vehicle to get started in the wee hours of the morning. Arizona's Department of Agriculture (AZDA) integrates heat education into its free Agricultural Consultation and Training (ACT) program under the EPA's Worker Protection Standard, teaching workers to balance gear use with personal hydration needs during pesticide handling. Sessions incorporate mock scenarios and tools like the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety App for WBGT monitoring, empowering employees to track conditions themselves. "Buddy systems" and supervisor check-ins monitor during high-heat, but producers stress workers watching for their own and colleagues' symptoms. Emergency protocols are in place, and emphasized regularly, reminding employees to act swiftly on personal signs. Engineering controls like fans or cooling vests, plus breathable clothing and sunscreen, are provided, but workers are encouraged to use them consistently.

Producers go beyond compliance with voluntary best practices, ensuring measures are practical and shared. Organizations like the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension offer focused resources. The AZDA provides mock inspections and self-evaluations, addressing heat-pesticide risks and encouraging workers to maintain adequate hydration.

Agencies support this care through education and enforcement. ADOSH conducts inspections via its SEP, providing heat stress awareness resources and FAQs for employers to distribute. The AZDA focuses on training integration, offering bilingual sessions and resources. Federal OSHA's Heat Illness Prevention Campaign supplies apps and posters and other materials to ensure adequate exposure to educational materials.

By blending federal and state guidelines, practices, and innovation, Arizona agricultural producers demonstrate profound care, equipping their employees, while fostering shared responsibility for hydration and vigilance. With ongoing initiatives like the Heat Safety Task Force promising more comprehensive guidelines, protecting workers through this partnership isn't just ethical, it's vital for the industry's future. 🌱



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ARIZONA WINE AND UNDERSTANDING EXTENSION continued from Page 1

Research and Extension Center in Prosser, Washington, where almost everyone was involved in agriculture to some extent, and WSU Cooperative Extension was part of the culture. The wine industry in Washington was in a major growth phase at this time, and I had a job offer with the largest wine grape grower in Washington State before I had even graduated.

It was then that I started to understand the economic impact of agriculture. From there, I worked as a viticulturist for Ste Michelle Wine Estates (Washington’s largest winery), and then Kiona Vineyards, a smaller, but renowned operation that has been owned and operated by the Williams family since 1975. Living and working in the heart of the Washington wine industry gave me the opportunity to learn from countless growers and winemakers and see thousands of acres of grapes (and all the ways they were grown). It was really beneficial to my career growth and the knowledge I could bring back home.

Arizona Agriculture: What brought you back to Arizona?

Halldorson: Arizona is my home, and it never stopped being home even when I was gone. My plan, the day I left for Washington state was to earn a degree and return to work at a vineyard in Yavapai County, but after graduation, my advisor suggested I stick around to gain experience, and 2 years turned into 12.

During that time, I had the pleasure of working with really strong Extension agents and specialists and started to believe that this was the kind of work that I could make a career out of. I met Yavapai County Extension director Jeff Schalaus during one of my visits back home, so when he announced his retirement in 2021, it seemed like the perfect time to return. Jeff’s job did not focus on viticulture, but State Extension Director Ed Martin asked me if I would be interested in serving the entire state as a programmatic area agent, and the opportunity to deliver the kind of service that I had seen in Washington presented itself.

Arizona Agriculture: While you have a leadership role with Yavapai County Extension, for obvious reasons perhaps, why is wine so central to everything involved in Yavapai County?

Halldorson: The wine industry is a great agricultural fit for Yavapai County and the state of Arizona for a couple reasons. Wine grapes are an extremely low water use crop, consuming less than 1.5-acre ft of water, and since most of the wine made in Arizona stays in state, most of the water also remains here.

Secondly, tourism is considered the number one export product that we produce in Arizona, and this is a great opportunity, especially for Yavapai County, which has ecotourism opportunities around every corner and is conveniently located near both Phoenix, Sedona, and Flagstaff. Old Town Cottonwood, for example, has been transformed into a vibrant tourist destination over the past 20 years, and I would give a lot of credit for that change to the local wine industry.

Arizona Agriculture: Explain the Verde Valley AVA a bit more and why it is such a young entrant into that class even though most of the winemaking is done in Yavapai County?

Halldorson: An AVA (American Viticultural Area) is designated as such because the soils, topography, and climate are distinctly different from other regions. The Verde Valley AVA is a place where people have been growing grapes and making wine for a very long time, but it has gained a lot of acclaim recently as leaders of the modern-day Arizona winemaking renaissance.

The success of labels such as Caduceus Cellars and Page Springs Cellars brought a lot of attention to the area, and that success leveraged the creation of the first formal Viticulture and Enology program in the state at Yavapai College (Clarkdale) in 2009. The creation of an AVA takes time and effort, and it is thanks to the hard work of groups like The Verde Valley Wine Consortium that the area gained AVA status in 2021 (the application process started in 2017). Most of the winemaking in the state is done in the Verde Valley because it is perfectly situated near tourist hubs like Sedona, which makes it an ideal place to open a winery. That being said, probably about 75% of the grapes are grown in Cochise County, Arizona.

Arizona Agriculture: What unique characteristics of Arizona’s terroir, specifically the AVA’s, contribute to the distinct flavor profiles of wines produced here?

Halldorson: One thing that makes Arizona stand out from most wine regions in the world is the elevation. While table grapes (those that you buy in the grocery store) are grown in some of the hottest places in the world, wine grapes prefer more moderate climates, and in Arizona that means elevation, which ranges from 3,500 to 5,500 feet throughout the 3 AVAs. Another region that also benefits from high elevation viticulture is Argentina, and they have published research on the concept that elevation plays a role in the development of wine characteristics such as color and mouthfeel. The soils tend to be relatively well-drained whether they be the calcareous soils of the Verde Valley slopes or the sandy loams of Willcox, and this is key for proper irrigation management and vine nutrition.

Monsoon rains are another key factor that heavily influences the wine made in Arizona year to year, as very rainy years will probably mandate earlier pick dates, which influences wine style.

Arizona Agriculture: Which grape varieties have shown the most promise for Arizona’s wine industry, certainly the lesser-known varieties?

Halldorson: One of my favorite parts of working with the Arizona wine industry is that they are not interested in being anywhere else, and they are experimenting with unique and lesser-known varieties in an effort to find out what produces the best Arizona wines.

Arizona has done well with Rhone Valley (France) varieties like Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre and Spanish varieties like Tempranillo, but there is also a lot of promise in many of the Italian cultivars. This is because one of the greatest challenges in a warm viticulture region is acid retention. Montepulciano, Sangiovese, and Graciano are food-friendly reds that hold their acid well in the heat.

Arizona Agriculture: From your perspective, how are consumer preferences for Arizona wines evolving, and are there specific styles or varieties gaining popularity?

Halldorson: In my short time in the wine industry, I have found it fascinating to watch consumer preferences change. For a long time, in the United States, consumer preferences tended to lean toward the big, bold, red wines that you might pair with a steak (or just drink alone), but around 2015, I noticed this trend changing. Consumers seem to be more interested in lower alcohol, lighter, food-friendly wines, which are perfect for Arizona, as we tend to pick our fruit earlier due to either falling acid (due to extreme heat) or monsoon rains on the horizon. Because of that, I believe that many Arizona wines are made in an “old world” style, which to me means that they are more fruit forward, food friendly, and generally “drinkable.”

Arizona Agriculture: How is Arizona leveraging its wine industry to boost tourism, and what role does Yavapai County play in this effort? You can also speak to the recent study NAU conducted.

Halldorson: The Arizona State Government has been extremely supportive of the wine industry, with the Legislature previously allocating 1.1 million to the Arizona Office of Tourism to promote Arizona wine. Dr. Feifei Zhang and her colleagues at NAU, along with local wine industry legend Tom Pitts put together a brilliant study on the economic impact of the Arizona wine industry on tourism and its colossal growth.

In 2023, the industry was responsible for \$351 million in total output, the creation of 2,430 jobs, and \$40 million in total taxes (\$10 million state and \$7 million local). While that is impressive in its own right, what I find to be truly amazing is the rate of growth. Between 2011 and 2023, wine visitor spending increased 677% from over \$31 million to over \$241 million, economic output increased 588% from \$51 million to \$351 million, and wine related employment increased 500% from 405 people to 2,430. This industry is an economic driver and a creator of jobs that I am proud to support as an Extension agent for the University of Arizona.

Arizona Agriculture: As a former member of the Arizona Wine Growers Board, what trends are you seeing in the growth of Arizona’s wine industry, and what steps are being taken to promote it both locally and nationally?

Halldorson: First of all, working for two years on the AWGA Board was an honor, and though I termed-out, I still continue to work closely with them as we are organizing the Arizona Wine Summit and AWGA Annual Meeting, taking place at Yavapai College Clarkdale, January 2026.

Regarding trends and growth, it’s funny you ask: I believe that one of the challenges that a relatively small and developing industry faces is not completely understanding what the trends are year to year. That is why the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension is rolling out a “Grape Crush Report” pilot project in November of 2025. A Crush Report is a survey designed to measure size, growth, and economic impact of wine industries on a statewide level. In California, it is state mandated and organized by the California Department of Food & Agriculture and the National Agricultural Statistics Service, while in Texas, it is managed by Texas A&M University as well as several industry associations and is funded by the Texas State Wine Commission. These types of surveys can be challenging because they are asking the growers for sensitive information, but it is imperative that we get the greatest percentage of buy-in possible, especially given the size of our industry.

Arizona Agriculture: As someone deeply involved in Arizona’s wine scene, what are you enjoying the most about Arizona wines?

Halldorson: Honestly, there is so much to enjoy. I have wanted to do this job for a long time, so the opportunity to actually work with the Arizona wine industry, getting to know the growers, varieties, sites, and intricacies of Arizona viticulture is exciting.

Arizona Agriculture: Explain why extension is so important to these subindustries within the big \$31 billion Arizona agriculture industry? What do we need to be promoting more on this front?

Halldorson: When I lived in Washington, WSU’s Extension viticulture specialist and Benton County Ag. agent were important sources for continuing education, local research, and providing answers to questions. In my current position this is what I try to achieve, but there’s even more to it than that. Because we are public servants, we operate in a rare yet important sphere that allows us to advise or consult without conflict of interest. This is important, especially for new farmers and ranchers, as the world of agriculture is a big place where there is always a new product that claims to grant users access to great quality and/or quantity. Some do, and some don’t. When trying to determine whether or not to use a new product, piece of equipment, or cultural practice, I often found myself contacting Extension personnel to determine whether or not this was something I really needed or just good marketing.

This does not mean that Extension knows everything. They don’t. However, I always found it valuable to contact Extension to get their input when making these decisions, as I knew that they were going to give me the best, science-based, data-driven information that was available.

What’s more, Extension is a 111-year-old publicly funded institution, that was born out of a time when a community’s success was contingent upon its ability to work together for the common good, and today’s program still has roots in that principle. I often find that an important part of my job is bringing people together to share information amongst themselves.

For many years now, UA Extension has held a “Growing Season in Review” Workshop for Arizona winegrowers, where we split participants up into groups, prompt them to discuss different periods in the growing season and then have them share with the larger group. There is so much knowledge for a new grower to learn from a more experienced one, but conversely, a new grower might be using a piece of technology that other growers have not been exposed to. I have also conducted workshops where all I provided was an introduction and some context and then let the growers lead the demonstrations.

What I wish more people understood about Extension is the wide range of offerings that it provides, the countless talented members it employs, and the fact that most of our programming is available at no cost. I recommend that everyone go to our website (<https://extension.arizona.edu/>) to see what we have to offer. 🍷

FINDING MARGIN AND BUILDING RESILIENCE *continued from Page 1*

about rest; it's about building resilience to sustain your operations and well-being.

Recent discussions, including a 2025 thread on X by a mental health advocate @MindfulMoments, emphasize margin as "emotional bandwidth" to process challenges like market uncertainty or crop failure.

Margin, then, becomes a strategic tool for farmers and ranchers to navigate their demanding, unpredictable lives. But how can we apply this to farm and ranch life, when so many factors create unpredictability?

TYPES OF MARGINS FOR AGRICULTURALISTS

According to the experts, margin can be applied across four key areas: time, energy, financial, and emotional. Each offers unique opportunities for farmers and ranchers to create space in their lives.

1. Time Margin

Time margin involves reserving uncommitted time to handle unexpected tasks or to rest. Michael Hyatt's "80% rule"—filling only 80% of your schedule—offers a practical approach. For farmers, this might mean scheduling downtime during less intensive seasons (e.g., post-harvest) or leaving gaps between tasks. Hyatt explains, "Margin in life is like margin on a page—it gives us room to breathe, to reflect, and to live intentionally." A 2023 Journal of Applied Psychology study supports this, finding that flexible schedules increase job satisfaction by 15% due to reduced stress.

Example: A corn farmer in Nebraska, inspired by a 2025 X post by @TimeWise2025 adopts a "15-minute rule," starting tasks like equipment maintenance 15 minutes early to account for delays. During planting season, they block off one afternoon weekly for planning or rest, reducing the chaos of reacting to every issue immediately. This buffer allows them to address a sudden tractor breakdown without derailing the entire day.

Another example involves a 20-plus year Alaska fishing trip that's grown to approximately 30 Arizona farmers, ranchers and dairy farmers. They force themselves to leave the farm for three intense days of Alaskan fishing to get away. Coordinated by farm family member Carrie Hamstra, the margin is found in doing something completely separate from day-to-day farm activities. At the end of one trip, one farmer said, "It's now back to the farm but I feel refreshed and ready to go back to it all."

2. Energy Margin

Energy margin preserves physical and mental stamina. Farmers and ranchers often push themselves to exhaustion during peak seasons, risking burnout. Experts on "margin" advocate for micro-breaks: Research showing that 5- to 10-minute breaks reduce cortisol levels by 20%. For agriculturalists, this could mean short pauses during the day to recharge.

Example: A dairy farmer in Wisconsin, following a 2025 X thread on minimalism @LifeMinimalist, limits non-essential tasks like excessive paperwork to preserve energy for milking and herd health checks. They take a 10-minute walk after morning chores to clear their mind, boosting focus for the rest of the day.

For me, while my work is mainly office, once I complete one major task on my "to do" list I always make myself get up and walk around, even gazing outside my office window just to view the beautiful day and do some deep breathing. Even 5 minutes revives my soul and then I can take on the next task.

3. Financial Margin

Financial margin involves maintaining reserves to absorb economic

shocks, like low commodity prices or unexpected repairs. Swenson emphasizes saving as a buffer: "Financial margin is having resources beyond immediate needs." A 2025 personal finance blog echoed this, suggesting a "margin fund" of 10% of income for emergencies. The USDA's 2025 Agricultural Outlook Forum highlights how non-traditional financing, like microloans, supports beginning farmers, creating financial breathing room. Successful farm and ranch businesses know this and apply "financial margin."

Example: A rancher in North Dakota, inspired by the USDA's Heirs' Property Relending Program, sets aside 10% of cattle sale profits for a rainy-day fund. When a hay shortage hits due to drought, this reserve covers feed costs, avoiding debt and maintaining cash flow.

While these efforts to build financial margin are not always sustainable or practical, one Arizona farmer told me, "Julie, I've lived through more than one downturn in my lifetime. Over the years, I've always worked to build reserves. It's the only way to survive in this business. Really, any family business needs this philosophy."

And American farmer Greg Peterson (@gregpeterson33) of the well-known Peterson Brothers, said, "My dad never missed a single football game, baseball game, track meet, concert for all four of his kids. Did it cost our farm's profitability in those years? Absolutely. Does he regret it? No. And neither do his kids. I acknowledge it looks different for every farm and every family, but..."

Greg Peterson and his brothers, Nathan and Kendal, are fifth-generation farmers from Assaria, Kansas, collectively known as the Peterson Farm Brothers. They operate a family farm, established in the 1880s by their Swedish ancestors, spanning about 2,500 acres where they raise beef cattle and grow crops like wheat, corn, soybeans, milo, alfalfa, and sunflowers. The brothers—Greg (born 1990), Nathan (1993), and Kendal (1996)—work alongside their parents, David and Marla, and their wives, BrookeAnna, Riley, and Caelan, respectively. Their sister, Laura, is an honorary "bro" in their social media outreach endeavors.

Beyond farming, the Petersons are renowned for their agricultural advocacy through social media, particularly their YouTube channel started in 2012, which has over 307,000 subscribers and 250 million combined views across platforms. Greg, a 2013 Kansas State University graduate in Agricultural Commu-

nications and Journalism with a music performance minor, spearheaded their first viral parody video, "I'm Farming and I Grow It," a take on LMFAO's "I'm Sexy and I Know It." This led to other popular parodies like "Farmer Style" (Gangnam Style) and "Pasture Road" (Old Town Road), blending humor with education to bridge the gap between farmers and the public.

On further examination, even this social media influencer endeavor meant family time together and absolute "fun" in creating these viral parody videos, perhaps another way they created margin.

4. Emotional Margin

Emotional margin is the capacity to process stress and maintain mental health. The 2022 USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum addressed rural mental health, noting that farmers face unique stressors like social isolation and volatile markets. Swenson's framework, echoed in a 2025 X thread by @MindfulMoments, describes emotional margin as "bandwidth" to handle life's challenges, like setting boundaries to protect mental space.

Example: A vegetable grower in California, following McKeown's essentialism, audits weekly commitments and declines non-critical community board meetings to focus on family time. This creates space to process stress from a late frost, reducing emotional stress.

On the Murphree farm, most evenings on the farm meant we piled into dad's truck (mom included) and drove around the farm and simply talked while checking fields, pumps and livestock. Mom and Dad spent time visiting by asking questions, telling funny stories and making us all laugh. At the time, we thought nothing of it but looking back we understood it was a time to share and grow. It was emotional margin for us.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR CREATING MARGIN

Arizona and American farmers and ranchers can adopt specific strategies to build margin, tailored to their 24/7 lifestyle. Below are actionable approaches.

1. Prioritize and Simplify

McKeown's philosophy of focusing on high-impact tasks is critical for agriculturalists. His advice to "audit your commitments weekly to eliminate non-essential tasks" helps farmers prioritize what drives their operation's success.

For example, a 2025 X post by @LifeMinimalist highlighted

SEE FINDING MARGIN AND BUILDING RESILIENCE PAGE 8



Margin is emotional bandwidth. It's a view to the horizon as one looks over a wheat or cotton field, any field, in Arizona that some margin in our lives must be found.

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YOUR LEGACY, THEIR FUTURE: PRESERVING ARIZONA’S FARMING AND RANCHING HERITAGE

By Staff Reports

Farming and ranching are more than livelihoods—they’re legacies rooted in hard work, tradition, and a deep connection to the land. For Arizona’s agricultural families, passing down this way of life to future generations is a profound responsibility. The Changing Hands seminar, hosted by the Arizona Farm Bureau and Farm Bureau Financial Services, is here to help you safeguard that legacy.

Join us on **Tuesday, November 4, 2025, from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm** at the Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wrigleyville West in Mesa, Arizona, as the Arizona Farm Bureau’s Annual Meeting kicks off.

This seminar will cover critical topics like asset transfer, distribution strategies, and risk reduction to ensure your family’s farm or ranch thrives for generations to come.

Generational farming and ranching are the backbone of Arizona’s agricultural heritage, preserving not just land but values, knowledge, and community. By planning strategically, you can protect your operation from financial and legal challenges, ensuring your legacy endures. You’ll also hear from a ranch family that’s gone through the succession process on their own operation.

For more details, contact Katie Booth at 480.635.3605 or email at katiebooth@azfb.org. Secure your family’s future—join us for the Changing Hands workshop! The nearby Annual Meeting registration provides a place for you to register for this special workshop.



**REGISTER BY
OCTOBER 14TH**

5 WAYS TO REGISTER!

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Call Katie Booth
at (480) 635-3605

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to (480) 635-3781

BY E-MAIL
Scan document form
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BY MAIL
Include this form, send to:
Arizona Farm Bureau
325 S. Higley Rd., Ste 210
Gilbert, AZ 85296-4770

ONLINE
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☐ President’s Luncheon - Wednesday Noon #ppl _____

Include your Arizona Farm Bureau Membership Fee:

☐ Maricopa and Yuma County \$180.00 ☐ All other counties \$142.00

☐ Registration Fee Per Person \$185.00 x _____ = _____
#ppl

FINDING MARGIN AND BUILDING RESILIENCE *continued from Page 6*

declining non-critical tasks to focus on essentials, a strategy that gained traction among farmers on the platform.

A soybean farmer in Illinois reviews weekly tasks and delegates routine maintenance to their workforce, freeing up time for strategic planning, like exploring alternative crops or assessing their crop portfolio in general. This reduces workload and opens opportunities for innovation. Of course, the farm and ranch business requires reliable and available employees, often in short supply.

2. Schedule Buffer Time

Hyatt's "80% rule" is adaptable to farming's unpredictable schedule. By leaving 20% of your time uncommitted, farmers can handle emergencies like equipment breakdowns or weather delays. The 2025 X post by @TimeWise noted farmers using "margin blocks" for planning, reducing stress during planting season.

A cattle rancher in Montana schedules a weekly "white space" afternoon, as inspired by X discussions, to review herd health or catch up on paperwork. When a sudden storm requires moving livestock, this buffer prevents schedule chaos.

3. Leverage Technology for Efficiency

The 2025 USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum emphasized advanced technologies, like precision agriculture, to save time and resources. Cal Newport's Slow Productivity suggests limiting tasks to three priorities daily to create space for deep work. Technology can automate repetitive tasks, freeing up margin.

Arizona farmers continue to adopt precision agriculture tools and other technologies to monitor soil health remotely, saving hours of manual checks. This time margin allows them to focus on market analysis or family time.

4. Build Financial Buffers

A variety of agriculture agencies and finance groups underscore the importance of financial margin for farmers, with programs like microloans providing critical support. Swenson's advice to save beyond immediate needs aligns with this, ensuring resilience against market fluctuations.

Often farmers allocate 10% to 15% of income to a reserve fund. This buffer covers unexpected veterinary costs, maintaining financial stability and acts as a buffer against downturns.

5. Protect Mental Health

The USDA's 2022 Forum highlighted mental health resources for farmers, noting the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network as a tool to build emotional margin.

A Minnesota hog farmer takes 10-minute daily breaks to meditate or walk, reducing stress during a volatile pork market. They also connect with a local stress assistance network, as promoted by the USDA, to share challenges and build resilience.

6. Love What You Do

David Jackson of Bentwood Dairy is quoted in Better With Dairy saying, "Do what you love to do and be around things that make you smile. The cows make me smile every day."

John Devos of Fox Dairy is also quoted in Better With Dairy saying, "Working with family makes what you do worthwhile, as you teach kids responsibility and the importance of life."

Farmer and author Wendell Berry in Good Reads said, "They love to live where they work and to work where they live. ... they like to work in the company of their children and with the help of their children."

Describing why he does what he does to a reporter for Yuma's KYMA, Arizona Farm Bureau President John Boelts said, "I think the most important thing is being able to grow, you know, an important part of people's diets. That's why I got into farming: the opportunity to provide something to people that they really need every day."

Despite long hours, tight margins, one of the most important aspects of sustaining the "farm life" is loving what you do even amid the challenges.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR AGRICULTURALISTS

Farmers and ranchers face unique barriers to creating margin. But margin can be found, and it comes in a variety of forms.

A variety of solutions follow:

- **Community Support:** Engage with organizations like the Farm Bureau, which offer resources and programs to share burdens and learn new things. The networking with other Farm Bureau leaders often produces insights, advice and

encouragement from a simple conversation. Isolation produces discouragement and confusion.

- **Policy Advocacy:** Support policies that further Arizona and American farming, which funds conservation and loan programs to create financial margin. Said former Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse, "We are a close fraternity of specialized Americans contributing to the food security of this nation. We are a primary industry contributing to the economic stability of our state and we are a people deeply rooted in the land and water." By advocating to protect your farm and ranch business, you create protection and peace-of-mind for your future and the future of agriculture.
- **Technology Adoption:** Use today's agriculture technology to save time and even money where it makes sense, as seen in Arizona and American farmers adoption of advanced tools.
- **Mental Health Resources:** Access programs like the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network to build emotional margin. In Arizona, a crisis helpline dedicated to serving Arizona's agricultural and forestry communities is now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The **AgriStress Helpline** is free and confidential and can be reached by calling or texting 833.897.2474.

For farmers and ranchers, margin is not a luxury, it's a necessity. The relentless demands of agricultural life, where "clocking off" often appears impossible, make intentional downtime space for sustaining the family farm and ranch.

By creating margin, agriculturalists can transform reactive, stressful lives into purposeful, resilient ones. As McKeown says, "The ability to choose cannot be taken away, it can only be forgotten. Margin gives us the space to choose what matters."

For farmers and ranchers, that choice is the foundation of a sustainable future, ensuring they can feed the world while sustaining themselves. 🌾👨👩👧👦



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