

VR Showcases Arizona Ag Jobs to a New Generation

A pilot education program shows how quickly Arizona agriculture is changing — and the opportunities it creates for tech-savvy young people.

By Joanna Allhands, Arizona Farm Bureau Strategic Communications Manager

Isaiah Imholt leaned forward on his stool, captivated by the video playing on his headset.

Imholt, a fifth grader at Bologna Elementary in Chandler, had never followed a veterinarian around a dairy before.

But thanks to the magic of virtual reality, he was there, learning why the milk we buy at the store depends on this work.

"The cows were in this big place with shade," he said, wide-eyed, describing what he saw. "It was 105 degrees outside, but there were these spinning things with mist that made it feel more like 80."

Imholt and his class were part of an Arizona Farm Bureau Agriculture in the Classroom pilot that uses virtual reality headsets to teach about careers in and related to agriculture.

The hands-on lessons expose elementary students to a wide variety of jobs that support the production of food, fiber and minerals in Arizona — from flavor chemists and biologists to programmers and machinists.

Arizona Farm Jobs Are Changing

Agriculture's impact runs deep and wide in Arizona, where roughly 36% of land is used for crop or livestock production.

Though the industry only employs about 22,000, it purchases enough goods and services in adjacent fields to indirectly support an estimated 126,000 full- and part-time jobs statewide.

But the job outlook is changing — and rapidly so. Demand for food and fiber is estimated to increase over the next decade. Yet Arizona's farming and ranching jobs are expected to shrink by more than 9% during that time.

Grading, sorting and manual laborer jobs — those that are already tough to fill today — are expected to decline the most, as automation and other emerging technologies become more prevalent. That will require new skills but also create opportunities for young, tech-savvy workers.

Workers Will Need Tech, Math Skills

In Yuma County — where 1 in 4 jobs are tied to agriculture — this future is already beginning to play out.

Drones and artificial intelligence are increasingly being used to monitor crop health. Water and fertilizer are being more precisely measured and applied, even varying by the plant.

This technology has great potential to lower labor costs, complete tasks faster and grow more with less. But it will require a skilled workforce to keep it running.

"In the future, we're going to be collecting massive amounts of data," said Matt McGuire, chief agricultural officer at Yuma-based JV Farms, among the first in the industry to adopt automation and AI.

Laborers will need math and data entry skills, he said. And

foremen will increasingly become technology trouble-shooters.

"But while some new jobs will be created on the farm, I expect to see more in the auxiliary services to ag — in seed, chemical and genetic companies, just to name a few."

This changing job market requires broader thinking about the industry — which is where the Agriculture in the Classroom pilot comes in.

VR Pilot Helps Speak Kids' Language

At Bologna Elementary, fifth graders chose among VR experiences shadowing a large animal veterinarian at a dairy, a metal fabricator on a farm, or a geologist and others at a copper mine.

Additional 360-degree videos are in the works to learn from a plant scientist at a tissue lab and a drone operator who helps with cloud seeding and measuring snowpack.

"Students often think of farmers and ranchers, but they don't always realize that agriculture includes so many other careers," said Katie Aikins, Agriculture in the Classroom's director of education. "We wanted to use technology to showcase the possibilities."

Fifth graders are digital natives. And VR is becoming more popular in education — from elementary to college. A program like this speaks their language.

During the hour-long session, students attentively watched short videos of lasers zapping weeds and robots picking strawberries. They laughed as Agriculture in the Classroom manager Alicia Gutierrez clapped to maneuver a small robot on a table.

They brainstormed the jobs involved in producing gummy bears, based on the ingredients listed on packs of the sweet, gelatin-based treats (which, of course, they were later allowed to eat).

Meanwhile, school district administrators stood quietly at the edge of the library, taking notes on how Aikins and Gutierrez incorporated the technology into their lessons.

The district was eager to partner with Farm Bureau because it also is testing VR in a few classrooms and plans to offer a career awareness class in all K-6 schools this fall. Based on the success of the Chandler pilot, Agriculture in the Classroom plans to offer VR career lessons in select schools statewide. 🌱



Fifth graders at Bologna Elementary School in Chandler use virtual reality headsets to learn about agriculture careers. Photo by Joanna Allhands/AZFB

IN THIS ISSUE

FALL FESTIVALS, RECIPE FOR HAWAIIAN
MEATBALLS, MAKE A SPLASH WITH EXCLUSIVE
SAVINGS AT GREAT WOLF LODGE

www.azfb.org

Fall Festivals Around Arizona

By Staff Reports

Fall in Arizona doesn't always arrive with sweater weather. Sometimes, it starts with pumpkins, corn mazes, and Arizona farms opening their gates for another season of family fun. Across the state, Arizona farmers are welcoming visitors for fall festivals that offer more than a great day out. They're an opportunity to experience agriculture firsthand, meet the people behind our food, and create lasting memories with family and friends. From pumpkin patches and hayrides to corn mazes and other seasonal activities, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Arizona Farm Bureau's Fill Your Plate makes planning your fall adventure easy. Our "Visit A Farm" resource connects you with farms and seasonal experiences throughout the state. So, even if Arizona's temperatures haven't gotten the fall memo quite yet, the season is already taking shape on our farms. Explore the fall festivals below, organized by county, and find your next Arizona-grown adventure.

Fall Pumpkin and Corn Maze Festivals

Cochise County

Apple Annie's

Fall Pumpkin Celebration: family fun picking your own pumpkins, fall vegetables, and apples.

Apple Annie's Produce & Pumpkins 6405 W Williams Rd
Willcox, AZ 85643

Daily Hours
9AM - 4PM

Corn Maze
September 26th - October 31: Open daily through 9AM-4PM (last entry)

For more information, call 520-384-2084 or visit AppleAnnies.com

Maricopa County

MacDonald Ranch

Annual Pumpkin Patch, Family fun includes: A Petting Zoo; Run through the Hay Maze; Learn to pan for gold; Hayride and Train ride to the Pumpkin Patch; Play Western Games; "New" Pedal carts for kids!

MacDonald Ranch
26540 N Scottsdale Rd
Scottsdale, AZ 85255

Fall Hours
October 3 - October 31; closed on Tuesdays; Closing at 3PM on October 31; 9AM-5PM each day.

For more information, visit <https://macdonaldsranch.com/pumpkin-patch>, or call 480-585-0239.



Mother Nature's Farm

Come to the Pumpkin Patch. Enjoy a fall gourd show, U-pick pumpkins,

squash, and much more. Mother's Nature's Farm
1663 E Baseline Rd
Gilbert AZ 85233

Pumpkin Patch
Sept. 27 - Nov. 2
Monday-Sunday
9AM-9PM

Concessions and food for the animals are CASH ONLY

For more information, visit mothernaturefarm.com, or call 480-892-5874

Rocker 7 Farm Patch

Enjoy a fun, family farm experience as you explore the pumpkin patch, corn maze, sunflower field and many farm-related activity areas for children.

Rocker 7 Farm Patch
19601 W Broadway Rd
Buckeye, AZ 85326

For more information, visit rocker7farmpatch.com, or call 623-208-8676

Schnepf Farms

Pumpkin & Chili Party starts in October 1st

Schnepf Farms
24610 S Rittenhouse Rd
Queen Creek, AZ 85142

Every Thursday - Sunday, Oct 2- Oct 31

You must buy tickets ahead of time online. For more information, visit schnepffarms.com, www.pumpkinandchiliparty.com, or call 480-987-3100

Tolmachoff Farms

Pumpkin Days & Fall Maze. Visit one of the last family farms in the city!

Tolmachoff Farms
5726 N 75th Ave
Glendale, AZ 85303

Fall Festival fun begins early October

For more information, visit tolmachoff-farms.com



tolmachoff-farms.com, or call 602-999-3276.

Vertuccio Farms

5-acre Corn Maze; Giant tube roll; Giant Jump Pad; Extreme air pillow; Mini zip line; Hayrides and lots more.

4011 S. Power Rd.
Mesa, AZ 85212

Corn Maze & Fall Festival
October 2-October 31

Closed Monday & Tuesday, except for the last week of October! They will be open Oct, 27- Oct, 28, from 3PM -9PM.

Wednesday & Thursday, 3PM-9PM

Friday & Saturday, 9AM-10PM
Sunday 12PM- 7PM.

For more information, call 480-882-1482.

Navajo County

Willis Farm

Enjoy a pumpkin patch, Maze, Cornmaze, Laser Tag and more.



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Growing Home: Why Arizona's Water Story Belongs to All of Us

By Staff Reports

When we talk about water in Arizona, the conversation can get complicated quickly.

There are numbers, policies, regulations, and plenty of opinions about how our state's limited water resources should be used. But behind all those conversations are real Arizona families whose lives, businesses, and communities depend on the decisions we make today.

That's the story Arizona Farm Bureau's documentary, *Growing Home: Arizona*, sets out to tell.

Rather than giving viewers an academic lecture on Arizona water, the film takes us into the lives of three Arizona families: the Bales Farm Family, the Caywood Farm Family and the Lopez Urban Family.

Their lives may look different, but their stories demonstrate something we all share: Arizona is home, and water is essential to keeping it that way.

Putting a Face on Arizona's Water Story

It's easy to think of agricultural water as an issue that only matters to farmers and ranchers.

But agriculture doesn't exist in a bubble.

Arizona farms and ranches produce food, support jobs and contribute to rural communities and our state's economy. What happens to agriculture ultimately affects consumers, whether you're buying groceries for your family, eating at your favorite restaurant or simply thinking about what Arizona will look like for the next generation.

Growing Home: Arizona brings that connection to life.

By following families with different backgrounds and experiences, the documentary moves beyond statistics and shows the people behind Arizona's water conversation.

And that story isn't limited to those who make their living in agriculture. It's for all of us.



The people who count on you don't need you to have superpowers, just a plan for their future. Life insurance helps shield your loved ones from financial uncertainty, protecting the life and dreams you've built.

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More Than "Farmers vs. Cities"

One of the most important lessons we can take from Arizona's water conversation is that it doesn't have to be agriculture versus urban communities. see [Growing Home](#) page 7

Kids Haunt October 17th & October 27

*Limited supply of tickets available

*6-10 people group

Willis Farms
381 S. 1st E. Street
Snowflake, AZ

Opening Day September 26th. Closed on Sundays

*Please check the weather before coming

Marana Pumpkin Patch
14901 N Wentz Road,
Marana, AZ

October 4-October 26
Monday - Wednesday
Closed. Thursday - Friday
3PM-9PM. Saturday - Sunday
9AM-9 PM

For more information, visit maranapumpkinpatch.com or call 520-305-5481.



Pima County

Marana Pumpkin Patch
Visit their 50-acre pumpkin patch with tons of surprises in store! Wagon ride to the pumpkin patch, free access to corn mazes, and much more!

Pinal County

Rooster Cogburn Ostrich Ranch

Family-owned and operated. Stop by and feed the ostrich, deer, miniature donkeys, goats, ducks, and Rainbow Lorikeets.

Interstate-10 at the Picacho Peak exit #219
17599 E Peak Ln, Picacho, AZ 85141

For more information, call 520.466.3658 or visit roostercogburn.com.

Yavapai County

Mortimer Family Farms
Family Fun Day and Pumpkin Harvest begins September 25-October 31

Mortimer Family Farms
12907 E State Route 169
Dewey, AZ 86327

For more information, visit mortimerfarmsaz.com or call 928-830-1116.

Remember... Go to fillyourplate.org for a complete direct-market list of farmers and ranchers. Also, check out Fill Your Plate's directory called "Visit a Farm." more. 🌱



What Nutrition Does an Avocado Have? A Complete Guide to Avocado's Nutritional Value

By Joel Carr, Arizona Farm Bureau Strategic Communications Manager

When I first started paying attention to nutrition for my fitness goals, I focused mostly on protein and carbs. Protein for muscle. Carbs for energy. Simple, right?

But the more I learned, the more I realized I was overlooking another important part of nutrition: healthy fats. That's where avocado started showing up more often on my plate.

Avocado offers much more than healthy fats. It also provides fiber, potassium, folate and several vitamins and minerals. Plus, it's easy to add to meals, from eggs in the morning to chicken and rice bowls after training. So, what nutrition does avocado actually provide?

More Than Healthy Fat

Avocado is technically a fruit, but nutritionally, it's different from fruits like bananas, oranges or berries. Instead of getting most of its calories from carbohydrates, avocado gets much of its energy from fat, particularly monounsaturated fat.

According to USDA FoodData Central, 100 grams of raw avocado contains roughly 160 calories, 14.7 grams of fat, 8.5 grams of carbohydrates, 6.7 grams of fiber and 2 grams of protein.

Much of avocado's fat is monounsaturated fat, particularly oleic acid. The American Heart Association recommends replacing saturated and trans fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats as part of a heart-healthy eating pattern.

Dietary fat also helps the body absorb fat-soluble vitamins,

including vitamins A, D, E and K.

Don't Forget the Fiber

Healthy fats get most of the attention, but avocado is also a good source of fiber.

Fiber supports normal digestive function and can help you feel fuller after eating. Diets rich in fiber are also associated with cardiovascular and metabolic health.

This combination of fiber and fat is one reason avocado can help make a meal more satisfying. Avocado also contains carbohydrates, but much of its carbohydrate content comes from fiber. That makes it nutritionally different from carbohydrate-rich foods such as rice, oats, potatoes or bananas. Those foods serve different purposes. Rice might provide the carbohydrate foundation of my meal, while avocado adds unsaturated fat, fiber and micronutrients.

Potassium, Folate and Vitamins

Avocados provide potassium, an essential mineral and electrolyte involved in nerve transmission, muscle contraction and fluid balance.

They also provide folate and several B vitamins. Folate is important for DNA synthesis and cell division, while B vitamins help the body carry out processes involved in energy metabolism.

Avocados also contain see [Avocado's Nutritional Value](#) page 6



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Make a Splash with Exclusive Savings at Great Wolf Lodge

By Staff Reports



If you're looking for a getaway that blends relaxation, excitement, and quality family time all under one roof, Great Wolf Lodge might just be your next favorite destination. For Arizona Farm Bureau members, it's not only a fun escape, it's also an opportunity to save while creating unforgettable memories.

Let's be honest, planning a family trip can sometimes feel overwhelming. Between finding activities everyone will enjoy, booking accommodations, and staying within budget, it's easy to get stuck in the details. That's where Great Wolf Lodge stands out. It simplifies the experience by offering everything you need in one place, making it easier to focus on what really matters, spending time together.

At the heart of every Great Wolf Lodge is its **colossal indoor water park**, and it's truly the main attraction. No matter the season or weather outside, you'll find warm, splash-filled fun waiting inside. From thrilling waterslides that twist and turn to lazy rivers perfect for unwinding, there's something for every age and comfort level. Kids can burn off energy while adults can relax or join in on the fun.

But the experience doesn't stop at the water park. Great Wolf Lodge goes above and beyond by offering **fun-filled daily activities** designed to keep families engaged from morning to night. Think interactive games, themed events, story times, and

hands-on adventures that bring a sense of excitement to your stay. These are the moments that often turn into lasting family traditions.

When it's time to recharge, you won't have to go far. The lodge features a variety of **fantastic dining options**, making mealtime easy and enjoyable. Whether you're craving a casual bite or a sit-down meal, there's something to satisfy every appetite. There is no need to leave the property or search for nearby restaurants since everything is conveniently located right inside the resort.

And then there are the accommodations. Great Wolf Lodge offers **spacious family suites** designed with comfort and convenience in mind. With plenty of room for everyone to relax, these suites make it easy to unwind after a full day of activities. It feels like having your own cozy retreat within a lively, adventure-filled environment.

What really makes this experience even better for Arizona Farm Bureau members is the exclusive savings available. By using the **Arizona Farm Bureau Offer Code AZFB852A** when booking, members can take advantage of special rates that make this getaway more affordable. Just remember that you will need to present your Farm Bureau Membership Card at check-in to redeem the offer.

In a world where schedules are packed and time together can feel limited, trips like these offer a chance to slow down and reconnect. Whether it's racing down a waterslide, sharing a meal, or enjoying an evening activity, Great Wolf Lodge creates the kind of environment where memories come naturally. 🌿

HEALTH CARE	VEHICLE	INSURANCE/FINANCE	TRAVEL

Keep Your Fall Adventures Cool With Canyon Coolers

By Staff Reports

Fall in Arizona looks a little different than it does in most of the country. While other states are pulling out heavy coats and preparing for colder weather, many Arizonans are finally getting outside and enjoying some of the best weather of the year. From weekend road trips and afternoons at the park to youth sports, tailgates, camping trips, and family get-togethers, fall gives us plenty of reasons to pack up the car and head outside. And your Arizona Farm Bureau membership can help you save on a cooler built to come along for the adventure.

Arizona Farm Bureau members can save **18% on Canyon Coolers** by using our discount code at checkout.

Made for Arizona Adventures

Canyon Coolers is an Arizona-based company that understands what it takes to keep things cold in our climate. Its coolers are designed to stand up to demanding conditions, making them a practical companion well beyond the summer months.

A quality cooler can come in handy almost anywhere.

see Canyon Coolers page 7

Avocado's Nutritional Value

continued from Page 4

vitamins E and K. Vitamin E functions as an antioxidant, while vitamin K plays an important role in normal blood clotting and bone health.

Rather than thinking of avocado as a "superfood," I find it more useful to consider what it contributes to the entire plate.

Avocado and Your Fitness Goals

Avocado isn't the first food I'd choose for immediate workout fuel. Before demanding exercise, carbohydrates are generally the priority because they provide readily available energy. Instead, avocado works well as part of a balanced meal around training. One of my go-to combinations is:

Grilled chicken + rice + vegetables + avocado

Rice provides carbohydrates to replenish energy stores. Chicken provides protein for muscle repair. Vegetables contribute fiber and micronutrients. Avocado adds unsaturated fats, fiber, potassium, and additional vitamins and minerals.

Sometimes nutrition really can be that simple.

What About Weight Management?

Because fat contains more calories per gram than protein or carbohydrates, avocado is relatively calorie-dense. But that doesn't mean it needs to be avoided when trying to lose weight. Weight management depends largely on overall energy intake and expenditure over time. Avocado's combination of fat and fiber may make meals more satisfying, but portion size still matters. A common serving is around one-third of a medium avocado, although half an avocado can easily fit into many people's diets depending on their calorie needs, activity level and goals. The bigger picture matters more than labeling a food "good" or "bad."

Whole Avocado vs. Avocado Oil

Whole avocado and avocado oil aren't nutritionally identical.

Whole avocado provides unsaturated fats along with fiber, potassium, folate, vitamins and minerals. Avocado oil is primarily a source of fat. Neither needs to be considered better. They simply serve different purposes. Avocado oil can work well for cooking and dressings, while whole avocado provides additional fiber and micronutrients.

Putting It All Together

When I started taking my fitness goals seriously, I spent a lot of time thinking about protein and carbohydrates. Eventually, I learned that good nutrition isn't built around one nutrient or one "perfect" food. It's about balance. Avocado is a great ex-

ample. Yes, it's a source of healthy unsaturated fat, but it also provides fiber, potassium, folate, vitamins and other nutrients that contribute to normal body function and overall health. That doesn't mean avocado needs to be on every plate. Instead, pair it with quality protein, carbohydrates, vegetables, fruits, whole grains and other nutrient-dense foods.

For me, that's what sustainable nutrition is about. Not fearing foods or chasing the latest superfood, but understanding what I'm eating, why I'm eating it and how it fits into a balanced lifestyle. 🥑

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Canyon Coolers continued from Page 6

Heading north to see the changing leaves? Pack drinks, snacks and lunch for the drive.

Camping for the weekend? Keep food and beverages cold while you enjoy some time away from home. Spending Saturday at your child's soccer tournament? A cooler filled with cold water, fruit and snacks can make a long day on the sidelines a little easier.

And, of course, football season means tailgating. Whether you are heading to a game or watching with friends at home, having plenty of cold drinks and fresh food nearby is always a win.

Canyon Coolers offers a variety of sizes and styles, so members can find an option that fits how they spend their time outdoors.

**More Than
a Summer
Essential**



It is easy to think of coolers as something you only pull out when temperatures hit triple digits, but they can be useful year-round. Keep one packed for a family road trip, bring it along

for a day at the lake or use it to transport groceries when you have several stops to make before heading home. A dependable cooler can even provide extra cold storage when hosting family and friends during the holidays. That versatility makes a quality cooler less of a seasonal purchase and more of an everyday Arizona essential.

Put Your Membership to Work

You do not have to be a farmer or rancher to take advantage of Arizona Farm Bureau membership. Our member benefits are designed to provide value for all our members, including discounts that can help with travel, entertainment, shopping and everyday life.

The Canyon Coolers discount is another opportunity to put that membership to work.

So, as Arizona's temperatures finally start to drop and your fall calendar starts filling up, make sure you have the gear you need wherever the season takes you. Before your next road trip, camping weekend, tailgate, or family adventure, explore Canyon Coolers and find the cooler that fits your lifestyle. And don't forget your Arizona Farm Bureau member savings. Your Arizona Farm Bureau membership gives you access to 18% savings on Canyon Coolers, making it easier to gear up for your next Arizona adventure. 🌱

Growing Home continued from Page 3

Our futures are connected.

The Bales and Caywood families bring viewers into Arizona agriculture, while the Lopez family offers an urban perspective. Together, their experiences help illustrate the shared values connecting rural and urban Arizona.

For Associate members of Arizona Farm Bureau, that's an important part of the story.

You may never irrigate a field, grow a crop or raise livestock, but you depend on agriculture every day. The food on your table connects you to farmers and ranchers in Arizona and across the country.

The decisions surrounding water today can help determine whether Arizona maintains a strong agricultural sector tomorrow.

Stewardship in the Desert

Farming in Arizona has always required innovation.

Producing food in one of the hottest, driest parts of the country means farmers must continually look for ways to use resources efficiently while adapting to changing conditions.

That commitment to innovation and conservation is an important part of Arizona agriculture's story. Farmers and ranchers have a direct interest in protecting the natural resources their operations depend on, not only for today but for the generations that may follow them.

Growing Home: Arizona puts a human face on that stewardship and shows why maintaining water resources for agriculture matters beyond the farm.

Water isn't simply another input used to grow a crop. It's connected to our food supply, communities, economy and Arizona way of life.

And while the challenges surrounding water are complex, understanding the people affected by them doesn't have to be.

Start With the Story

That's ultimately what makes Growing Home: Arizona worth watching.

You don't need to be a water expert. You don't need to understand every policy proposal. And you certainly don't need to be a farmer or rancher.

You just need to be an Arizonan who cares about where our food comes from and what our state looks like in the future.

As Arizona continues having important conversations about water, hearing directly from the people whose lives are connected to it gives us a better place to start.

Because Arizona's water story isn't only an agricultural story.

It's our story.

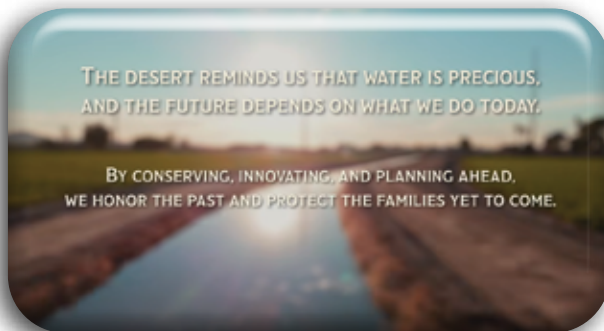
Watch Growing Home: Arizona

Want to see Arizona's water story through the eyes of the families who live it?

Visit the **Growing Home: Arizona** page on the Arizona Farm Bureau website at www.azfb.org to watch the documentary and learn more about the people, agriculture, and water issues featured in the film.

The page also provides additional resources to help you better understand why Arizona's water future and the future of agriculture are so closely connected.

Watch the documentary and learn more at azfb.org/News/Growing-Home-Arizona-Water-Documentary. 🌱





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Arizona Agriculture's

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JEFFREY SILVERTOOTH PH.D

Professor & Extension Specialist, Agronomy/ Soil Science
Department of Environmental Science, University of Arizona

“Water is the lifeblood of the desert. Water is life, literally and figuratively.”

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