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CONVERSATION ABOUT PORK, NUTRITION, AND THE MODERN CONSUMER : KRISTEN HICKS-ROOF

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Kristen Hicks-Roof, Ph.D., has more than a decade of experience spanning academia, clinical practice, corporate nutrition and industry leadership.

She currently serves as the Director of Human Nutrition at the National Pork Board, where she leads the organization's strategic nutrition initiatives on behalf of more than 60,000 American pig farmers. Her work focuses on advancing the role of pork in balanced dietary patterns, guiding and overseeing nutrition research, building collaborations to bridge the gap between nutrition science and consumer behavior.

I got to know Hicks-Roof during several visits including hosting her as a guest on our new podcast, Fill Your Plate Now. Her wealth of knowledge on nutrition and pork seems endless and I always have a great conversation with her about pork's nutritional value. In this article we explore more about this and what the National Pork Board's new consumer campaign comprises.

While Arizona is known as a small pork state, we're recognized as a major consumer of pork. The value to our pork producers and Arizona families is immeasurable. So, here's to the pork story in Arizona and across the country.

Arizona Agriculture: Talk about your role at the National Pork Board.

Hicks-Roof: I serve as the Director of Human Nutrition at the National Pork Board, where my role is to help bridge the gap between pork producers, nutrition science, nutrition guidance, and the healthcare professionals who influence how Americans eat. My team and I focus on ensuring that conversations about pork and human health are grounded in credible, peer-reviewed science and communicated in a way that is practical, relevant, and trustworthy.

Everything we do—from presentations and webinars to educational tools and partnerships with researchers—is evidence-based. We provide references for all of our communications because science-based integrity is core to our work. Ultimately, my role is about translating science into clarity: helping health professionals, consumers, and producers understand where pork fits into a healthy, balanced, and affordable diet across life stages and cultures.

Arizona Agriculture: Help us understand what the main purchase drivers for food choices with today's consumer are.

Hicks-Roof: When it comes to food choices, today's consumers are navigating a lot of competing priorities. Decades of consumer research, including data from the [International Food Information Council](#) (IFIC), consistently show that



Kristen Hicks-Roof, Ph.D.

taste and flavor are the number one drivers of food choice, followed closely by price and perceived health or balance.

Consumers want food that tastes good, fits their budget, and aligns with their health goals, according to the recent Food Health [Survey by the International Food Information Council](#). Increasingly, they also care about sustainability, transparency, and how food fits into their lifestyle—whether that means convenience, cultural relevance, or versatility in the kitchen. These drivers don't operate in isolation; consumers are trying to balance them all at once, often under tight time and financial constraints.

Arizona Agriculture: What about the key purchase drivers that pork delivers on?

Hicks-Roof: Pork performs exceptionally well across the various drivers consumers care about most. First and foremost, [pork delivers on flavor](#)—something we know is essential if we want people to enjoy and stick with nutritious eating patterns. According to the article "Perspective: The Place of Pork Meat in Sustainable Healthy Diets," Pork also delivers strong value, offering a high-quality protein at a competitive price point compared to many other proteins.

From a nutrition standpoint, pork supports **health and balance**, providing high-quality protein along with key micronutrients, according to the same article just mentioned. According to the article "Modeled Sustainability Impacts of Increasing Pork Consumption Among Adults in the United States," Sustainability is another area where pork producers have made meaningful progress, and that matters to consumers who are paying closer attention to how their food is produced.

In short, pork checks the boxes that matter including taste, affordability, nutrition, versatility, and responsible production.

Arizona Agriculture: Explain how the National Pork Board supports science and research to support nutrition purchase drivers of pork.

Hicks-Roof: Science is the foundation of everything we do at the National Pork Board. Since 2022, NPB has invested over a million dollars year over year in human nutrition research to better understand pork's role in health.

To date, we have supported **more than 40 nutrition research studies** examining pork across different life stages, socioeconomic groups, cultural dietary patterns, and health conditions.

Once that research is published, our work doesn't stop there. We collaborate with researchers to [SEE PORK, NUTRITION, AND THE MODERN CONSUMER PAGE 5](#)

ENHANCING SAFETY FOR ANIMALS ACT, H.R. 4255 ADVANCES IN CONGRESS

By Chad Smith, Director of Government Relations

Arizona Farm Bureau continues to actively engage in federal legislation that directly impacts livestock producers and our rural communities. One measure currently drawing significant attention is **H.R. 4255**, the *Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025*, introduced by Arizona Congressman Paul Gosar, co-sponsored by 12 Republican lawmakers, including Arizona's Congressmen Biggs, Hamadeh and Crane.

The legislation addresses the management of the Mexican gray wolf and would remove the species from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) list. If enacted, the bill would return primary wildlife management authority to state agencies and local stakeholders, those closest to the land and best positioned to balance conservation goals with the realities facing working ranches and rural communities.

In January 2026, H.R. 4255 advanced out of the House Natural Resources Committee following a markup hearing, passing on a recorded vote of 23-13. The measure now awaits consideration by the full U.S. House of Representatives.

The advancement of H.R. 4255 builds on the efforts of Arizona Farm Bureau members and their advocacy on this issue. Most notably, in March 2025 Arizona Farm Bureau member, Dalton Dobson, testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources – Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee on the impacts of the Mexican gray wolf which was instrumental in advancing this legislation.

During his testimony, Dobson said, "I was seven years old when the wolves were reintroduced into Arizona and New Mexico so have been dealing with this issue for my entire life." Dobson's testimony noted he estimates \$320,000 in indirect costs to his family's ranching operation in 2024 due to wolf predation.

For many ranching families across Arizona and the broader Southwest, Mexican gray wolf management remains a significant and ongoing challenge. Producers forced to co-exist with the Mexican gray wolf continue to report livestock losses, increased operational costs, and additional burdens tied to monitoring and regulatory uncertainty. These impacts affect not [SEE ENHANCING SAFETY FOR ANIMALS ACT PAGE 5](#)



Rancher Dalton Dobson (far left) spoke before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in March 2025 along with other American ranchers impacted by the wolf.



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DEADLINE FOR PROJECT CENTRL SIGN-UP LOOMING

By Staff Reports

It's been said that "Arizona Farm Bureau has a deep leadership bench!" A partner in building that bench since 1983 has been the Arizona Center for Rural Leadership and Project CENTRL, its flagship experiential-learning leadership development program.

Over the past two years, all four Vice Presidents of AZ Farm Bureau are Project CENTRL alumni: Ben Menges, Class 25; Shaw Wood, Class 20; Sharla Mortier and Richie Kennedy, both from Class 19. Are you going to be the next in the long line of leaders to strengthen our agricultural industry by applying for Project CENTRL's **Class 35 before March 15?**

Project CENTRL is a competitively selected and tuition-free program for 16 people connected to rural Arizona. Over the course of nine seminars across seven Arizona counties, Washington, D.C., Gettysburg, PA and Sonora, Mexico participants build personal leadership skills, learn new perspectives on issues facing rural Arizona and connect with leaders and experts.

"My Class 7 had so many perspectives from inside agriculture and out" shares the Center's Board Chair, Matt Eyrich a retired agricultural lender. "All those different viewpoints helped me not only in my profession but challenged me to grow personally and give back to my community. It's been great to see that benefit alive

today as I've traveled with current classes around the state."

As a public-private partnership between the non-profit Center and the University of Arizona Co-operative Extension participants and alumni are backed by organizations invested in and committed to rural Arizona.

As fewer Arizona families are growing food and fiber for our state's growing population, it's more important than ever to gain allies and build connections beyond agriculture. Your voice and perspective are key to making a well-rounded Project CENTRL class. Apply for **Class 35 by March 15**. All the details and application materials are found at www.centrl.org/apply

There are several opportunities to connect with the organization in person during events open to all to learn more from the people in the program now or some of the 750 graduates. Calendar and complimentary registration available at www.centrl.org/events.



ARIZONA CENTER FOR RURAL LEADERSHIP

DESERT TO GLASS: ARIZONA'S 2025 WINE GRAPE REPORT SPOTLIGHTS A RESILIENT, DIVERSE, AND ECONOMICALLY VITAL SECTOR

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

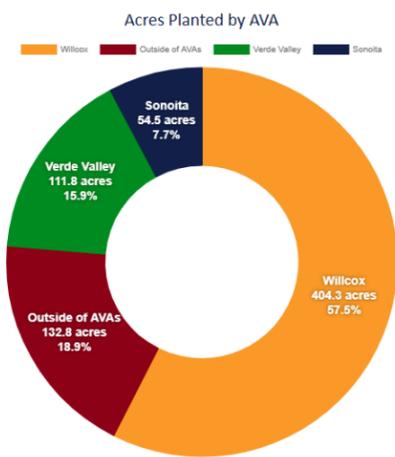
The 2025 Arizona Wine Grape Harvest Report, compiled by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, offers a comprehensive, data-driven snapshot of the state's commercial wine grape sector. Drawing from voluntary submissions by more than 90% of the growers, the report aggregates acreage, production, fruit utilization, and pricing information while maintaining anonymity to encourage participation. The report establishes a crucial baseline for tracking trends, informing industry planning, guiding research, and fostering a shared understanding of Arizona's evolving wine grape landscape.

"What struck me most was the support we received from the growers in conducting this study," explained Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Specialist Michael Pierce and co-owner with his parents of Bodega Pierce Winery. "We haven't had a comprehensive study of statewide acreage since 2011, so we knew the need was there, but the response exceeded my expectations. Having over 90% of the state's vineyards voluntarily share their data demonstrates a tremendous level of trust. It signals that the Arizona wine industry is ready to work together to define its identity and future."

producers kept over 92% of their crop for on-site winemaking, emphasizing estate-focused operations. In contrast, Cochise County growers supplied more than 80% of sold grapes, positioning the area as Arizona's primary source for inter-winery fruit movement and supporting broader industry growth.

SEE ARIZONA'S 2025 WINE GRAPE REPORT PAGE 6

ACREAGE AND PRODUCTION



In 2025, Arizona's wine grape industry encompassed approximately 703.5 total acres planted statewide across 67 reporting vineyard locations. Vineyard sizes varied widely, from just 0.59 acres to nearly 59 acres, reflecting a mix of boutique operations and larger-scale enterprises. Of the planted acreage, 532.2 acres were harvested, yielding about 1,187 tons of grapes in total. The remaining 171.3 acres went unharvested, often due to young vines not yet in full production, weather-related damage, or strategic management choices amid varying market demand.

The report underscores Arizona's varietal diversity and regional strengths. Red grape varieties dominated, comprising 71% of planted acres (around 500.3 acres) and producing

800.5 tons harvested. White varieties made up the remaining 29% (203.2 acres), yielding 339.1 tons. Growers reported an impressive 76 distinct varieties, with an average of seven per vineyard, some operations showcased as many as 28. This breadth highlights Arizona's experimental spirit in viticulture, adapting to its unique high-elevation, arid conditions that allow for bold, expressive wines.

WINE GRAPE GROWING CLUSTERED IN KEY AREAS

Geographically, production clusters in key areas. The Willcox region led with the largest share of planted acreage and harvested tonnage, benefiting from its expansive plains, elevations of 4,200 to 5,000 feet, and gravelly soils ideal for premium red varieties like Rhône-style blends and Cabernet. Verde Valley contributed a smaller but significant portion, known for vibrant whites and earthy reds amid its lush, river-carved high-desert oasis framed by the Mogollon Rim. Sonoita, Arizona's first AVA, added meaningful output with its Tuscany-like rolling grasslands and windswept hills. Notably, a substantial portion of acreage lies outside formal AVAs, with about 72% of non-AVA acres in Cochise County, home to Willcox, underscoring the region's dominance.

Fruit utilization revealed distinct regional roles in the supply chain. Statewide, growers retained 722.2 tons for their own wine production, sold 417.4 tons to other winemakers, and left a small amount unutilized. In the Verde Valley,

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FARM BILL DROPS: WHAT'S NEXT?

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

On February 13, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA-15) released the [full text of the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026](#). This legislation serves as the 2026 Farm Bill, aiming to modernize and update essential elements of farm bill programs that have remained largely unchanged since the 2018 Farm Bill.

Said House Committee on Agriculture Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson, "A new farm bill is long overdue, and the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 is an important step forward in providing certainty to our farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. We made historic agricultural investments last summer in the Working Families Tax Cuts (H.R. 1), but there are many key policy components that remain to be addressed."

"Farmers appreciate Chairman G.T. Thompson and the House Agriculture Committee for their work in drafting a new, modernized farm bill," said American Farm Bureau (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall. "The legislation is needed more than ever as America's farmers and ranchers struggle through the worst economic storm in generations."

Of note, while the One Big Beautiful Bill Act made significant updates to the farm safety net, reform of the nutrition title, and invested into several conservation, research, and trade programs, policy updates couldn't be included due to reconciliation limits.

American and Arizona Farm Bureau began reviewing the new Farm Bill in February. "We're still reviewing the text of the bill, but it includes important updates to credit, conservation, research, and rural development programs, and calls for expansion of specialty crop programs," added Duvall. "The bill also preserves interstate commerce to enable farmers to remain competitive in the evolving marketplace."

This 2026 Farm Bill, or "farm bill 2.0" as many are calling it, makes policy updates to important programs across all 12 titles. Markup of this bill in the House Agriculture Committee began February 23, 2026.

A SUMMARY OVERVIEW FROM THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE OF EACH TITLE

Title I: Commodities. Agricultural producers face significant income volatility from unpredictable commodity prices, weather disasters, and market disruptions. Title I provides a safety net through programs that stabilize farm revenue when prices fall or disasters strike, including price and revenue support for major crops (ARC/PLC), marketing loans, and specialized programs for sugar, dairy, and disaster assistance. These programs are critical to helping producers manage risk and maintain operations through economic downturns. The commodity title of the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 builds on wins already included in last summer's Working Families Tax Cuts (H.R. 1): higher reference prices, additional base acres, and flexibility for producers in structuring their businesses.

- Expands and strengthens TAP to support American producers of trees, vines, and shrubs.
- Directs the Secretary to establish a standing framework for providing support for specialty crop producers in times of economic peril.
- Directs reporting on dairy production expenses to ensure that producer costs are accurately reflected in the data.
- Creates a standing block grant authority for future disaster payments.
- Includes propane that is primarily used for agricultural production in the storage facility loan program.
- Ensures producers can repay their marketing loans during a shutdown.

Title II: Conservation. Provides farmers, ranchers, and growers with financial and technical assistance to address a variety of natural resource concerns such as soil health and erosion, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat. The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 continues to support our proven system of voluntary, incentive-based, and locally led conservation through various improvements.

Protects and enhances working lands conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) while promoting precision agriculture.

- Streamlines and improves program administration for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), the Technical Service Provider Program (TSP), and P.L. 566.
- Reauthorizes the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). 2
- Includes common-sense easement reforms and protects working forest lands through the newly authorized Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP).
- Continues support for the Feral Swine Eradication Program.
- Emphasizes science, technology, and innovation, including within the conservation practice standards establishment and review processes

Title III: Trade. Agriculture is the backbone to most global economies, and robust promotion programs create market access while also protecting our agricultural interests and acting as a catalyst for innovation and economic growth. Reinvesting funds from H.R. 1 will broaden the reach and impact of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) trade expansion and promotion programs. The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 will also mitigate global food insecurity by transferring the authorities of the Food for Peace Act to USDA, providing U.S. producers with stable markets and streamlining programs that have long been overrun with bureaucratic bloat.

- Transfers the authorities of the Food for Peace Act to USDA and prioritizes U.S. commodities over unlimited market-based assistance.
- Directly increases funding for MAP, FMD, EMP, TASC, and PTF.



- Reduces bureaucracy associated with programs meant to respond to immediate crises.

- Addresses trade barriers and infrastructure deficiencies.

- Fosters education partnerships to ensure developing countries can benefit from our nation's advanced research and developing technologies.

Title IV: Nutrition. Building off of the historic reforms included in H.R. 1, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 prioritizes taxpayers, farmers, and our neighbors in need by advancing policies that expand the reach of critical feeding programs, improve nutrition, and hold states accountable, all without increasing federal spending.

- Prioritizes innovation and improves access to nutrition programs that support our farmers and neighbors in need.

- Creates a stronger, more sustainable connection between health and federal nutrition programs, an important step towards Making America Healthy Again.

- Holds USDA and states accountable to the generosity of the American taxpayer.

Title V: Credit. Our nation's producers often borrow more in a single growing season than most Americans will over a lifetime. Over the last five years, interest rates have risen sharply, driving up borrowing costs. This is especially hard on younger and beginning producers who are still working to establish their operations. USDA credit programs play a critical role in ensuring producers can access the capital they need to get started, remain competitive, and maintain long-term financial independence.

- Enhances financing options for producers who are unable to obtain credit from a commercial lender.

- Provides resources to new, young, beginning, and veteran farmers in their transition to farming and ranching.

- Protects and enhances the ability of commercial lenders to provide rural America with a reliable source of credit and capital.

Title VI: Rural Development. Programs offered by USDA's Rural Development play a vital role in enhancing rural life and fostering economic growth. The Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 continues the long history of bipartisan support for rural development initiatives and implements important improvements to ensure a robust rural economy.

- Strengthens broadband connectivity to rural communities.

- Improves precision agriculture practices and increases the accessibility of precision agriculture services.

- Protects access to health care in rural America.

- Enhances efforts to meet the childcare demands of rural areas.

- Addresses existing workforce challenges within rural communities to effectively meet their needs.

- Encourages private capital investments in rural communities through existing rural development business and cooperative programs.

- Invests in and strengthens rural water infrastructure.

- Streamlines the permitting process for Rural Development projects.

Title VII: Research, Extension, and Related Matters. Keeps American agriculture at the forefront of innovation and productivity through cutting-edge research while supporting the nation's land-grant and non-land-grant colleges of agriculture.

- Supports research and development for the specialty crop industry and allocates funding specifically for research for mechanization and automation technologies.

- Provides continued support for 1890 institutions.

- Supports competitive and capacity funding for research, extension, and education activities.

- Promotes interagency coordination to further agricultural research at other federal agencies.

Title VIII: Forestry. Promotes active forest management through incentivizing public/private partnerships, creating new market opportunities, and revitalizing rural communities while reducing wildfire risk and improving forest health to ensure healthy and productive federal, state, tribal, and private forests.

- Incentivizes active forest management through public-private partnerships by expanding existing authorities like the Good Neighbor Authority and Stewardship End Result Contracting.

- Creates new and enhances existing market opportunities for forest products, including existing and new data sources and tools, investing in innovative wood products, and expanding the use of biochar.

- Revitalizes rural communities and forest health through cross-boundary authorities.

- Simplifies environmental process requirements, while ensuring environmental protection by building upon the success of categorical exclusions and other streamlined authorities.

Title IX: Energy. Increases access to energy system and efficiency updates for farmers, ranchers, producers, and rural/small businesses while encouraging growth and innovation for biofuels, bioproducts, and related feedstocks.

- Allow for critical cost and energy savings by increasing access to the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

PORK, NUTRITION, AND THE MODERN CONSUMER

responsibly amplify their findings through professional education, scientific conferences, informing nutrition and food guidance, and healthcare-focused communications. Our goal is not marketing, it's ensuring that accurate, peer-reviewed science informs nutrition guidance and consumer decision-making.

Arizona Agriculture: Pork 101: In your own words, how do you explain the nutritional value of pork?

Hicks-Roof: I often start by addressing common questions: Is pork red meat? Is it a **high-quality protein**? Is it safe to eat? Are there lean options? The answer to all of those is yes—with nuance.

Pork is classified by the USDA as a [red meat based on myoglobin content](#), but nutritionally, pork has a lighter color and a nutrient profile that often [differs from other red meats](#). Fresh pork is a high-quality protein, meaning it contains all nine essential amino acids in proportions that support muscle maintenance, growth, and overall health, according to several clinical research documents. There are over [20 grams of protein per 3oz serving of fresh pork](#).

Pork also provides important nutrients like [B vitamins along with selenium, zinc, and choline](#). There are [eight USDA-designated lean cuts of pork, three of which are certified by the American Heart Association](#). Pork can absolutely be part of a heart-healthy, balanced diet when prepared appropriately.

Arizona Agriculture: Pork is a high-quality protein—but what makes it special among protein choices?

Hicks-Roof: What makes pork special is its combination of **nutrient density, affordability, and culinary versatility**. A 3-ounce serving of fresh pork delivers over **20 grams of high-quality protein**, often at a [lower caloric cost than many people realize](#).

Pork shines when we talk about **pork + plants**. For example, a 3-ounce serving of roasted pork tenderloin provides nearly three times the protein of half a cup of [cooked black beans at roughly the same calorie level](#). Pork provides the protein and key micronutrients, while plants contribute fiber and phytochemicals—together creating a balanced, satisfying meal. We love emphasizing pork+plants as we showcase pork can be the flavor driver to getting Americans to consume more produce and key nutrients in the diet— and this is all science-backed!

In a food landscape where Americans are encouraged to eat more nutrient-dense foods without exceeding calorie needs, pork offers an efficient and enjoyable solution.

Arizona Agriculture: Can you break down the nutritional profile of lean pork and how it compares to other proteins like chicken?

Hicks-Roof: One of the biggest myths I hear is that pork is always high in fat. In reality, **pork tenderloin is just as lean as skinless chicken breast**. Lean ground pork also compares very favorably across the meat case.

For example, a 3-ounce serving of **96% lean ground pork** provides 26 grams of protein and is lower in calories, total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol than many comparable ground proteins, including ground [chicken, turkey, beef](#), and [lamb](#). Pork also stands out for key [micronutrients like selenium and B vitamins](#). We have an awesome comparison chart of both whole muscle cut proteins and well

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as a resource on comparing ground protein options, [both showcasing how pork delivers on nutrition for the consumer](#)! Of course, all meat proteins are excellent, nutrient dense proteins that Americans should be eating, we simply cite the specifics here and that pork must be considered in the mix.

Another often-overlooked fact is that the most abundant fat in pork is **mono-unsaturated fat**—the same type of fat emphasized in dietary patterns like the DASH and Mediterranean diets.

Arizona Agriculture: Give us tips on cooking temperature with pork.

Hicks-Roof: A lot of consumers still overcook pork because they're working off outdated information.

The USDA updated its guidance years ago: [whole muscle cuts of pork are safe to eat at 145°F with a three-minute rest](#).

Not only is this safe, but it also results in a more tender, juicy, and flavorful product—often with a slight pink center. Recent sensory science even shows that pork tenderloin cooked in an air fryer delivers [exceptional juiciness and flavor](#). Helping consumers understand proper cooking temperatures can dramatically improve their experience with pork.

Arizona Agriculture: Bacon and ribs dominate the conversation—how can providers promote healthier pork choices?

Hicks-Roof: Bacon and ribs are popular because of flavor, and instead of fighting that, we should learn from it. Bacon has famously helped introduce vegetables like Brussels sprouts to restaurant menus—it's a [flavor vehicle](#).

Rather than "remove and replace," I encourage an **"add to" approach**. Pork can help people eat more vegetables, according to a clinical study called "Consumption Patterns and the Nutritional Contribution of Total, Processed, Fresh, and Fresh-Lean Pork in the U.S. Diet." At the same time, healthcare providers should be aware that pork offers many lean options beyond bacon and ribs, including pork chops, tenderloin, ground pork, and roasts.

Education matters here. Many [clinicians aren't aware that pork has eight lean cuts and multiple heart-healthy options](#). Increasing awareness can help patients enjoy variety without sacrificing nutrition.

Arizona Agriculture: How does flavor influence nutritious food choices—and what makes pork's flavor unique?

Hicks-Roof: Flavor is the gateway to nutrition. If food doesn't taste good, people won't eat it, no matter how healthy it is. Pork is uniquely positioned here. Research shows pork has **over 110 distinct flavor nuances**, making it one of the most versatile proteins available.

That flavor adaptability is why pork pairs so well with fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, and global cuisines. Pork doesn't overpower; it complements. That makes it easier for people to build meals that are both nutritious and enjoyable.

Arizona Agriculture: Talk about the national campaign the National Pork Board is advancing.

Hicks-Roof: The National Pork Board's current national campaign, Taste What Pork Can Do®, focuses on reinforcing pork's relevance in today's food culture—highlighting flavor, versatility, and real-life meal occasions.

At its core, the campaign is about reminding consumers that pork fits naturally into the meals they already love, while also aligning with modern priorities around health, value, and enjoyment.

Behind the campaign is a commitment to science, transparency, and respect for consumer choice. It reflects the progress producers have made and the confidence we have in pork's role on the plate.

Arizona Agriculture: What are your favorite pork meals to cook?

Hicks-Roof: I love pork because it works for both busy weeknights and special occasions. Lemon pepper pork tenderloin on the smoker paired with roasted vegetables is a go-to in my kitchen—it's fresh, lean, and incredibly flavorful. I also love using ground pork in stir-fries or tacos because it absorbs flavor so well and pairs beautifully with vegetables.

At the end of the day, pork is approachable. It brings people to the table, supports nutrition goals, and delivers the flavor that keeps meals memorable.

Editor's Note: This article features an extensive list of research-backed documents that if a reader is curious can contact us to see all the information. The research will be hyperlinked on the digital version of this article.

ENHANCING SAFETY FOR ANIMALS ACT

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only individual ranch operations but also the economic sustainability of rural communities that depend on agriculture.

Arizona Farm Bureau remains committed to advocating for practical, science-based wildlife management policies that recognize both conservation efforts and the importance of protecting livestock producers' ability to operate safely and sustainably. As federal discussions continue, Arizona Farm Bureau is working closely with lawmakers to ensure Arizona agriculture has a strong voice at the table.

Members are encouraged to stay informed, share their on-the-ground experiences, and remain engaged in the policy process. Continued grassroots involvement is essential to ensuring federal decisions reflect the realities facing Arizona producers and support the long-term stewardship of our state's land, livestock, and rural way of life.



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ARIZONA'S 2025 WINE GRAPE REPORT *continued from Page 2*

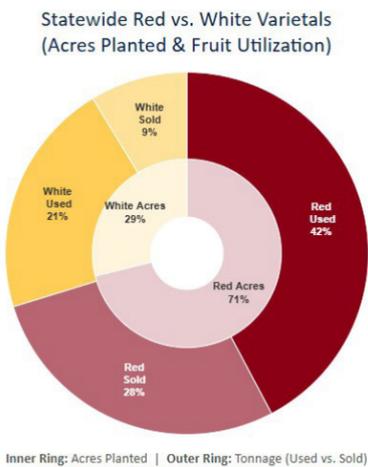
"We were able to distinguish the unique character of our AVAs by identifying regional differences in the varieties grown," added Pierce. "We identified 76 unique wine grape varieties in commercial production across the state. When viewed at the regional level, we can see how growers have matched the geography of the AVAs with appropriate cultivars. For example, the Willcox AVA has a greater proportion of Rhône varieties, while the Verde Valley AVA has a higher proportion of Italian varieties. This study helps tell the story that Arizona wine is not one thing but has many different facets. Each growing area of the state has something unique to offer."

WINE GRAPE PRICING OVERVIEW

Pricing for sold grapes averaged \$2,404.54 per ton (weighted), with a range from \$900 to \$3,920 depending on variety, quality, and region. These figures reflect strong market value for Arizona fruit, particularly premium reds from established areas.

THE WINE INDUSTRY'S BROADER VALUE

Beyond raw production numbers, the report illuminates the broader value of Arizona's wine industry, a dynamic sector blending agriculture, tourism, and economic vitality. While the harvest data focuses on grapes, the industry's ripple effects extend far wider. Recent studies, including Wine America's 2025 National Economic Impact Study, estimate the Arizona wine industry generates close to \$5.68 billion in total economic activity statewide. This encompasses direct contributions from grape growing, winemaking, wholesale, retail, and induced effects across hospitality, transportation, and related services.



Tourism stands out as a powerhouse driver. Arizona's wine regions draw visitors to tasting rooms, festivals, and scenic trails, with explosive growth since 2011: wine experience-driven visitor spending surged 677%, and wine-related employment rose 500% (per a 2023 Arizona Office of Tourism study by Northern Arizona University's Economic Policy Institute). The state now hosts around 156 wine producers, a 200% increase from 2011, and supports thousands of jobs in vineyards, wineries, hospitality, and ancillary businesses. Wine tourism boosts rural economies, particularly in areas like Willcox, Verde Valley, and Sonoita, where visitors explore not just wines but local attractions, lodging, dining, and culture.



A recent harvest of wine grapes in Cochise County.

The industry also fosters resilience and innovation. Growers' willingness to experiment with diverse varieties suits Arizona's challenging climate, high desert elevations provide cool nights for acidity retention, while intense sunlight and low humidity aid disease resistance. This results in distinctive wines that earn national acclaim, from bold reds to crisp whites. The report's methodology, voluntary, standardized submissions cross-referenced with Arizona Wine Growers Association lists, extension contacts, and farm winery licenses, ensures reliability, with outreach via industry events building trust and participation.

The report's collaborators extended their gratitude to contributing growers, the Arizona Wine Growers Association, and the Verde Valley Wine Consortium for their collaboration. The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension's role in data management, research, education, and technical assistance positions it as a key partner in

sustaining growth.

As Arizona's wine sector matures, this harvest report marks a milestone. Annual updates will enable year-over-year comparisons, revealing trends in acreage expansion, yield improvements, pricing stability, and regional shifts. Continued grower participation will enhance data completeness, supporting better-informed decisions on planting, marketing, and sustainability.

Ultimately, the 2025 Arizona Wine Grape Harvest Report showcases more than statistics, it highlights an industry that transforms challenging terrain into world-class wines while delivering substantial economic benefits. From supporting rural jobs and tourism dollars to generating billions in statewide activity, Arizona's wine sector exemplifies value-added agriculture at its finest: resilient, diverse, and increasingly influential in both local communities and the broader American wine landscape.

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PROTECTING HEARING FOR THE LONG HAUL: HOW START HEARING SUPPORTS ARIZONA FARM BUREAU MEMBERS

By Staff Reports

In Arizona agriculture, noise is part of the job.

From the steady hum of irrigation pumps on the farm to the roar of tractors and the clang of metal in ranch shops across the state, producers work in environments where sound levels can quietly chip away at long-term hearing. Over time, that loss does more than muffle conversation. It affects safety, teamwork, and day-to-day productivity.

For Arizona Farm Bureau members, protecting hearing is not a luxury. It is a practical step toward protecting a livelihood. Through the Farm Bureau member benefits program, Start Hearing offers access to hearing care services designed to help producers stay sharp, aware, and connected in the field and beyond.

Start Hearing believes wellness begins with hearing and that everyone deserves to experience life to the fullest. As a division of Starkey Hearing Technologies, the only American-owned and operated hearing aid manufacturer, Start Hearing focuses on making high-quality hearing care accessible and affordable for individuals and families. Whether members have insurance or not, the goal is to help them find the right hearing solution for their lifestyle, needs and budget.

Hearing loss often develops gradually, making it easy to overlook until it begins to interfere with daily life. Difficulty hearing conversations, missing important cues or constantly turning up the volume can all be early signs. Start Hearing offers a full range of advanced hearing aids designed to improve clarity, reduce background noise and support better communication in real world environments. These devices are built for people who lead active lives and need reliable performance throughout long days.

Many of today's hearing aids offer rechargeable options with extended battery life, eliminating the need for frequent battery changes. Some models provide up to 51 hours of use on a single charge, making them ideal for busy schedules. Other options include features designed to help manage tinnitus, improving speech understanding in noisy environments and deliver a comfortable, discreet fit that blends easily into daily routines. With expert providers nationwide, Start Hearing helps ensure members receive professional care and ongoing support.

In addition to hearing aids, hearing protection is essential to long-term hearing health, especially for those regularly exposed to loud or unpredictable noise. Continuous exposure to high noise levels can cause permanent hearing damage. Protecting hearing early and consistently can help preserve it for the future, while still allowing individuals to stay aware of what is happening around them.

HEARING PROTECTION SOLUTIONS DESIGNED TO REDUCE HARMFUL NOISE

Start Hearing offers hearing protection solutions designed to reduce harmful

noise without completely cutting users off from their surroundings. One of those solutions is SoundGear.

Developed by Starkey, SoundGear is a line of advanced hearing protection built for people who need both protection and awareness. Farmers, ranchers, hunters, shooters and industrial workers often rely on their ability to hear clearly while working in loud conditions. SoundGear is designed to meet those demands.

Unlike traditional ear protection that blocks all sound, SoundGear uses active digital technology to suppress sudden or harmful noise, such as gunshots or heavy machinery, while enhancing safer ambient sounds. This allows users to hear conversations, equipment cues and environmental signals clearly, helping improve safety and communication on the job.

SoundGear is available in both custom molded electronic devices and ready to wear models. Custom options provide a personalized fit designed for comfort during extended wear, while instant fit models are lightweight, discreet and easy to use across a variety of settings. Select SoundGear Phantom models also include Bluetooth connectivity, allowing users to stream audio or take phone calls without removing the device.

Built for long days, the SoundGear Phantom offers up to 23 hours of battery life on a single charge, delivering dependable protection from morning through evening. The focus is simple: protect hearing without compromising performance or situational awareness.

Through its complimentary program, Start Hearing offers Arizona Farm Bureau members and their families benefits designed to make hearing care simple and stress free. Members can save up to 60% on advanced hearing aids, including tinnitus options, and take advantage of a 60 day risk free trial. Additional benefits include one year of free office visits, access to more than 3,000 trusted providers nationwide and flexible device options to meet a range of needs.

Every device includes a free warranty covering repairs, loss and damage, along with financing options designed to fit a variety of budgets. The result is a hearing care experience that supports both immediate needs and long-term wellness.

Protecting your hearing today helps ensure you can keep doing what you love tomorrow. With hearing aids, hearing protection and expert care, Start Hearing helps Arizona Farm Bureau members stay connected, safe and confident in every season of life.

To take advantage of the discount, go to our website, azfb.org to select the "membership tab" and take advantage of Start Hearing. 

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: ADVANCING ARIZONA AGRICULTURE IN THE 2026 SESSION

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The 2026 Arizona Legislative Session is in full swing, and it's one of the most active in recent memory. With thousands of bills introduced across both chambers, the Arizona Farm Bureau has remained focused on protecting our producers from unnecessary regulations, securing fair tax treatment, ensuring access to water, and investing in the research and infrastructure that keep Arizona farms and ranches competitive. From property tax classification reforms to groundwater flexibility and critical university funding, we're seeing real momentum on priority issues. Below is a roundup of some of the measures we're tracking.

HB 2104 - AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY; CLASSIFICATION; INSPECTION

Sponsor: Rep. Neal Carter

This bill provides much-needed stability for agricultural producers. It prohibits a county assessor from reclassifying agricultural property or conducting an on-site inspection for four years after a property owner successfully appeals an agricultural classification decision. The only exceptions are when the owner files a change-in-use notice, the property is split, or ownership/lease changes. After years of dealing with repeated and sometimes arbitrary inspections, this common-sense protection will give farmers and ranchers the predictability they need to plan and invest in their operations.

HB 2105 - AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY; INSPECTIONS; NOTICE

Sponsor: Rep. Neal Carter

Building on the same theme, this legislation requires the Arizona Department of Revenue and county assessors to notify property owners before any inspection related to valuation, provide the date of the inspection, and deliver a copy of the report afterward. It also bars county assessors from conducting on-site inspections of qualifying agricultural property for three years after the most recent inspection, unless there's a change in use, split, or ownership change.

HB 2152 - TPT; EXEMPTION; FENCING; WATERING MATERIALS

Sponsor: Rep. Chris Lopez

This bill expands the transaction privilege and use-tax exemptions to include sales of fencing materials and livestock watering materials when purchased for use in farming, ranching, livestock or poultry production, or even noncommercial boarding. These are essential tools of the trade, and removing the tax will help producers stretch every dollar while maintaining and improving critical infrastructure on their operations. The exemption takes effect for tax periods beginning the first month after the general effective date.

HB 2197 - UNLAWFUL CAMPING; STOCK; WILDLIFE; ACCESS

Sponsor: Rep. Selina Bliss

This straightforward clarification to unlawful camping statutes protects both domestic livestock and wildlife. It prohibits camping within 300 yards of a natural water hole or man-made watering facility if the camping denies access to wildlife or domestic stock. The previous language required proving it was "the only reasonably available water," which created enforcement gaps. This change will help keep water sources open for the livestock, and wildlife that depend on them.

HB 2261 - PROPERTY TAX; AGRICULTURAL REAL PROPERTY

Sponsor: Rep. Gail Griffin

Changes the designation of agricultural property classified as class two property for property tax purposes to "agricultural real property" instead of "property used for agricultural purposes." Property classified as agricultural real property,

instead of land that is used for agricultural purposes, is valued using only the income approach to value.

SB 1197 - SUBSEQUENT AMAS; GROUNDWATER PORTABILITY

Sponsor: Sen. Tim Dunn

This bill allows owners of irrigation grandfathered rights in subsequent active management areas to use, sell, transfer, or lease the right and associated water duty within the same AMA. Importantly, producers can retire some acres and move the water duty anywhere within the same AMA, with notice to the Arizona Department of Water Resources. ADWR will also adopt implementing rules.

SB 1336 - STATE LAND DEPARTMENT; CONTINUATION; OVERSIGHT

Sponsor: Sen. Tim Dunn

The State Land Department is continued until July 1, 2030 (retroactive to July 1, 2026). The bill also creates a temporary State Land Department Oversight Committee to review rules and policies, especially around biosolids, compliance timelines, and land-use planning. The committee will work directly with the department to set goals and deliver recommendations by June 1, 2027.

SB 1559 - RURAL GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT; WORK GROUPS

Sponsor: Sen. Tim Dunn

Establishes a rural groundwater management work group in each groundwater basin, requires districts within a basin to appoint members representing affected parties and local experts, including agricultural producers, and requires proportional representation when multiple districts overlap a basin. Expands the powers of natural resource conservation districts and soil and water conservation districts to include conducting groundwater health research and assisting rural groundwater management work groups. Requires the Arizona Department of Water Resources to provide administrative support to the work groups and to consolidate and submit annual reports with findings and recommendations on rural groundwater management to the Governor and the Legislature.

SB 1761 - APPROPRIATIONS; UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA; AGRICULTURE

Sponsor: Sen. Tim Dunn

Investment in the future of Arizona agriculture. This bill delivers critical funding to the University of Arizona:

- \$1.6 million in FY2026-27 for the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture
- \$2.7 million (FY26-27), \$5.4 million (FY27-28), and \$8.1 million (FY28-29) for Cooperative Extension
- \$18.3 million (FY26-27), \$4.6 million (FY27-28), and \$7 million (FY28-29) for the Arizona Experiment Station

These resources will drive research, extension education, and on-the-ground solutions that help Arizona producers stay competitive in a challenging environment.

The Arizona Farm Bureau will continue to engage in these efforts as well as a myriad of others relating to our industry and our grassroots policy. If you have questions, want to get involved, or need help contacting your legislators, feel free to contact your Arizona Farm Bureau's Government Relations team. Together, we're keeping Arizona agriculture strong. 

FARM BILL DROPS *continued from Page 4*

- Streamlines program delivery and enhances program integrity for biobased market programs and biofuels and bioproducts development programs like the BioPreferred Program and the Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Product Manufacturing Assistance Program.
- Provides the Secretary with the authority to establish uniform labeling standards for bioproducts.
- Protects investments in higher blends infrastructure.
- Requires the Administration to study the impacts of solar installations on prime, unique, or statewide or locally important farmland.

Title X: Horticulture, Marketing, and Regulatory Reform. Makes critical investments to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops and protect plant health. It also delivers commonsense regulatory reforms necessary to relieve American farmers and ranchers from overregulation.

- Supports specialty crop producers by directing Specialty Crop Block Grant program administrators to consult with producers when setting priorities for the program.
- Maintains funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program and improves program delivery through simplified applications.
- Continues support for organic production through the National Organic Program, Organic Production and Market Data Initiative, and National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program.
- Takes several steps to deliver commonsense regulatory reform and restore transparency and science to the federal government.

Title XI: Crop Insurance. Agricultural producers are greatly affected by numerous factors outside of their control, ranging from extreme weather to geopolitical instability. Crop insurance — a vital risk management tool — is available to help producers manage the unique risks of farming and is delivered through an effective public-private partnership in which the federal government shares in the cost of the premiums, which would otherwise be unaffordable for most farmers.

- Directs research and development of new policies to create a strong foundation in creating policies for those crops who currently do not have access to crop insurance.
- Establishes an advisory committee for more robust engagement with specialty crop producers.
- Bolsters the private sector delivery system by studying ways to modernize risk management.

Title XII: Miscellaneous. Brings together provisions related to livestock health and management, foreign animal disease preparedness, young and beginning farmers, and other key areas.

- Provides guidance documents and other resources for small and very small meat and poultry processing facilities.
- Allows livestock auction owners to invest in packing facilities, subject to capacity limitations.
- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to work in consultation with the U.S. Trade Representative to negotiate animal disease regionalization agreements with our trading partners.
- Enhances protections for dogs covered under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).
- Clarifies that states and local governments cannot impose a condition or standard on the production of covered livestock unless the livestock is physically located within such state or local government.
- Requires the Secretary to conduct regular assessments to identify risks and security vulnerabilities to the food and agriculture

critical infrastructure sector.

- Reforms certain reporting requirements under the Agriculture and Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) to ensure accuracy and transparency of data on farmland owned by foreign persons or entities.

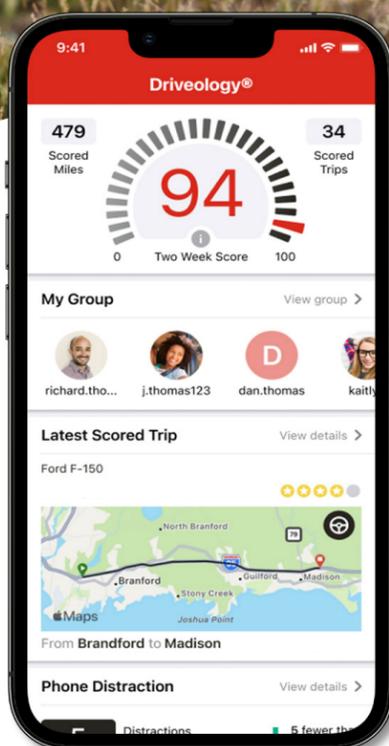
Late last year, Arizona Farm Bureau President John Boelts said, "We need a healthy and well-functioning agriculture sector in the United States. It is essential for our national food security. By passing an updated farm bill, we ensure that happens."

Duvall urges bipartisan support. "We urge the House Agriculture Committee to work in a bipartisan manner to find consensus and move the bill forward. Additionally, in light of the ongoing economic conditions plaguing rural America, Farm Bureau will continue to work with congressional leaders on our top priorities including additional funding for bridge assistance payments, year-round E15 and a solution to our agricultural labor crisis."

The release of the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 marks a critical milestone in addressing the long-overdue renewal of America's farm bill framework. As Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA-15) emphasized, this comprehensive legislation delivers modern policies tailored to today's challenges, offering much-needed certainty and support to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities amid ongoing economic pressures. The bill sets the stage for bipartisan negotiations to finalize updates across key areas—from commodity programs and conservation to rural development and national security priorities, ensuring U.S. agriculture remains resilient and competitive for years to come. 🌾

Editor's Note: By the publication of this article, markups will have taken place, but Arizona Farm Bureau will continue to keep you posted through our weekly While You Were Working, this publication and our bi-weekly Ag & FB News.

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