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What Science Tells Us About Working in Arizona's Heat

As the push for regulation intensifies, it's important to understand what we know — and don't — about farm and ranch work in extreme heat.

By Joanna Allhands,
Arizona Farm Bureau Strategic
Communications Manager

Jesus Tovar buys all new employees the water jug of their choice before they ever set foot in his fields. One they're comfortable with, so they regularly use it.

"We have to protect our workers," said Tovar, a Yuma farmer and Arizona Farm Bureau member. "If they don't have water, ice and shade, they could get sick."

Farmers and ranchers have voluntarily provided these things for years, but the push is on to set enforceable statewide requirements.

As that debate solidifies, it's important to understand what science tells us about working in intensifying heat.

It can help ensure that Arizona's standards are as effective for workers as they are practical for employers.

How Does Heat Affect the Body?

The hypothalamus — your brain's internal thermostat — activates the body's cooling systems to regulate your core temperature.

Blood vessels widen to rush warm blood to the skin, where it can radiate heat.

Your sweat glands also kick in, pushing water to the skin's surface where it can evaporate and pull even more heat from the body.

This is tough work, even when bodies are at rest. The heart beats faster in extreme heat, and blood flow is diverted from the kidneys.

Hydration is crucial to keep this process going, and serious injury or death can occur when the body's cooling systems can't keep pace.

How Hot Is Too Hot to Safely Work?

Science hasn't fully worked this out — in part, because it's not just the temperature that impacts our ability to stay cool.

Humidity and direct sun exposure can hinder cooling by limiting sweat evaporation and further heating the skin, while wind can help in some circumstances by sweeping heat away.

Individual factors — including age, gender, sleep deprivation, alcohol use and underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes — can also impact a person's ability to process heat.

There is no set temperature where work is prohibited, but there are federal and state conversations about potentially setting a limit.

Is Heat Making More Workers Sick?

There is little evidence that more workers in Arizona are dying or being hospitalized due to heat exposure in recent years, even if cases have skyrocketed across the population.

Last year, the Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health investigated two heat-related fatalities on worksites, out of the hundreds that occurred statewide.

Neither involved farm or ranch workers.

It's less clear how milder cases of heat illness are impacting workers. These have long been underreported.

Meanwhile, researchers are only beginning to scratch the surface about how daily exposure to heat impacts outdoor workers' health.

There is evidence that prolonged heat exposure can pull resources away from organs, damaging them over time.

A recent study of sugarcane workers in Nicaragua found that regular rest, shade and hydration not only improved worker productivity but also reduced the severe kidney injuries that this population has suffered for years.

How Much Water and Shade Are Needed?

A wide body of research underlines the importance of rest, shade and proper hydration.



Jesus Tovar smiles on his Yuma farm, where he grows lettuce, cauliflower and wheat. Photo courtesy of Leslie Hawthorne Klingler/University of Arizona

But is it more effective to take a work break outdoors, under the shade of a tent or tree, or indoors in air conditioning?

How often should breaks be taken in these spaces, and for how long?

And what is best for workers to drink: Just cool water? Or a mix of water and electrolytes?

Science is still working through specifics.

"A lot of the guidance comes from humid places," said Jenni Vanos, an Arizona State University professor studying how extreme heat can impact our health.

"We're applying the same thresholds here, where it's dry, and finding that some don't work as well."

SEE Working in Arizona's Heat PAGE 5

Sine Die at Sunrise: Reaping Results from the 2026 Session

By Daniel Harris,
Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The Fifty-Seventh Legislature's Second Regular Session ended in the early hours of Saturday, June 13, 2026, when the House and Senate adjourned sine die (Latin for "without end") at 4:45 a.m. after 153 days of work.

The session's defining act was an \$18.3 billion budget agreement for fiscal year 2026–2027, reached between the Legislature and the Governor's Office after several weeks of minimal floor and committee activity. Arizona Farm Bureau was engaged from the opening gavel to the final vote, monitoring nearly 300 bills and advocating for policies that support agriculture, property rights, water security, and rural vitality.

That work produced tangible results: two Farm Bureau-supported property tax measures, a substantially reworked continuation of the State Land Department, a new food labeling transparency law, and budget provisions addressing animal health and rural veterinary shortages all cleared both chambers in the session's final days and have since been signed into law by the Governor.

State Budget Overview

The budget moved as a 16-bill slate, advanced by the Joint Appropriations Committee on June 10 and approved by both

chambers the following day. The general appropriations bill, SB 1847, served as the centerpiece: the Senate passed it 23-5-2 and the House followed 49-9 later that evening, sending the package to Governor Hobbs for her signature which she promptly affixed.

At \$18.3 billion, the package represents a 3.1 percent increase over the prior year, roughly \$540 million in additional spending, a figure that fell below the 3.9 percent combined change in state population and inflation. Its largest single feature is approximately \$1.4 billion in tax relief, achieved by conforming Arizona's tax code to the federal law known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (H.R. 1). Per the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, conformity reduces General Fund revenue by about \$441 million in FY 2026 and \$281 million in FY 2027.

Other notable elements included a three-year moratorium on new sales tax exemptions for data centers, the retention of roughly 40,000 individuals on AHCCCS, and Medicaid and SNAP provisions written into statute. A 72-page floor amendment to SB 1847 made largely technical adjustments, reduced the count of unfunded vacant positions across state agencies by 1,056, and redirected \$2 million within the school safety program toward an interoperability program to help law enforcement respond to emergencies.

Impact on Arizona Agriculture

For agriculture, the budget is a mixed ledger, real reductions alongside targeted wins that showcase the advocacy leveraged by the industry.

On the funding side, several line items were discontinued or reduced. The funding that has historically supported the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension's Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center (NRULPC) was eliminated, with \$1.6 million removed in FY 2027. The exception is \$500,000 retained for the Center's water adjudication work, appropriated on a one-time, non-lapsing basis and directed toward assisting claimants in the general stream adjudication of water rights.

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Can Yuma Soften the Blow of Colorado River Cuts?

By Joanna Allhands,
Arizona Farm Bureau Strategic
Communications Manager

Arizona is facing deeper cuts to its Colorado River supply than ever before. The pressure is on statewide to leave even more water in Lake Mead.

At the same time, Phoenix and Tucson are creating a water-sharing network that would be open for anyone to buy, sell or trade supplies.

But how much water could on-river users put on the table for these efforts?

The Focus is on Voluntary Water Deals

Let's start with Yuma.

Five irrigation districts serve the area. They primarily serve farmers and rely on third-priority water, which is later in line for cuts than many users in central Arizona and Mohave County.

The separate Yuma County Water Users Association delivers water to farmers, cities and tribes that hold some of the most senior water rights in the state.

There has long been fear that powerful central Arizona interests would use political force to take this water.

But — at least for now — the focus is on finding mutually beneficial deals to keep taps flowing in central Arizona without decimating critical agriculture production in Yuma.

That is good news.

Here's where it gets tricky.

Return Flows Complicate the Picture

Because Yuma lies in a river delta, a significant portion of the water farmers use makes its way back into the Colorado River.

The federal government created complex formulas decades ago to quantify this return flow so others could use it downstream.

Central Arizona water users don't have to make these calculations because they are far removed from the Colorado River.

Whatever water they divert is what they consume.

So, if central Arizona cities agree to leave 100 acre-feet of water in the river, they receive credit — and compensation — for the full 100 acre-feet.

Not so in Yuma.

If its five irrigation districts do the same, they would only receive credit for a fraction of what they save — though the exact figures vary by district because some have higher return flows than others.

For some, that simply won't be economically feasible.

Yuma Has Other Potential Roadblocks

There are other potential issues:

Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation & Drainage District's return flows already play a key role in salinity control agreements and water deliveries to Mexico.

If Yuma Irrigation District or North Gila Valley Irrigation and Drainage District agree to save water, those savings must flow to Yuma Mesa Irrigation & Drainage District first.

It's part of the baggage that comes with the three districts sharing a single water entitlement.

Unlike its irrigation district neighbors, Yuma County Water Users Association doesn't hold the senior rights to the water it distributes — its shareholders and landowners do.

That means any conservation deal would likely have to be negotiated with multiple parties.

Not to mention that any unused water in the area has historically flowed to the next lower-priority user — the Central Arizona Project, which delivers water to cities and tribes in metro Phoenix and Tucson.

It's unclear how much latitude the federal government will give Yuma irrigation districts to deviate from these practices.

It's also unclear how much water Yuma can realistically cut and still supply winter greens and vegetables for the nation.

It can only tap groundwater in some areas, and not for much water.

"It's a delicate balance, given that the primary economic driver in Yuma is ag," said Meghan Scott, who represents a handful of Yuma irrigation districts.

"People sometime see Yuma as the naysayer, but we're not saying no to be difficult. Negotiations here are just a lot more complex."

Mohave County Wants More Flexibility

Three hours north in Mohave County, Colorado River users rely on fourth-priority water, same as the Central Arizona Project.

But unlike Central Arizona Project sub-contractors, farmers and cities in Mohave County have no other water source.

Tapping groundwater is off limits because the aquifer is shallow and hydrologically connected to the Colorado River.

Lake Havasu City and Bullhead City aren't using their full entitlements. But they also have no ability to store that water underground or in Lake Mead.

As cuts deepen, local water officials want more flexibility for the treated effluent they create.

"If we can use our effluent, we have more options," said Jamie Kelley, general counsel for the Mohave County Water Authority. "But if we can't use it to develop stored supplies, I don't know what happens to us."



Yuma provides the nation with leafy greens and vegetables in the winter.
Photo by AZFB

These are big, complicated challenges. But they are not insurmountable.

Despite the animosity that has divided the Colorado River basin, the conversation in Arizona now is about pitching in to keep each other afloat.

The better we understand the roadblocks to this effort, the better we can work around them — and find the creative solutions necessary to protect livelihoods on and off the Colorado River.

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New BLM Grazing Regulations Could Offer Much Needed Flexibility

By Joanna Allhands,
Arizona Farm Bureau Strategic
Communications Manager

Tim Petersen had grand plans to restore Palmerita Ranch, a 55,000-acre mix of private, state and federal land near Alamo Lake that began growing alfalfa and grazing cattle long before statehood.

The ranch fell into disrepair in the 1990s and is better known today for the many off-highway vehicles that tear through its publicly owned wilderness area.

The Yavapai County Farm Bureau vice president applied in 2017 to restore a lapsed federal grazing permit, the lynchpin to making Palmerita a working ranch again.

But wildlife groups balked. And 6½ years later, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a permit to only graze portions of the land for a few weeks after a major rain.

Now, Petersen is ready to walk away.

"I'm just worn out," he said.

Ranchers Need Flexibility

Petersen is not alone.

For years, ranchers across Arizona and the West have shared similar stories about long waits and inflexible, sometimes unworkable decisions.

Even the BLM acknowledges that its grazing regulations "have not kept pace with current needs."

The last time those rules saw a comprehensive update was in 1995. Grazing practices have changed markedly since then.

The agency began collecting input several years ago in hopes of streamlining reviews and offering more flexibility to adapt to changing forage conditions.

Arizona Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation recently submitted detailed public comments supporting the effort, with suggestions from members to further speed reviews and offer operational flexibility.

Environmental Reviews Can Take Years

Ranchers depend heavily on sprawling public parcels to feed and care for their herds, particularly when less than 20% of land in the state is privately owned.

BLM oversees the largest chunk of Arizona's

public land, issuing grazing permits to ranchers for 10 years at a time.

Those permits detail how much livestock can graze and for how long, on which allotments, using how much of its available forage, among other stipulations.

The agency must conduct a formal environmental impact review, complete with public comment, before permits can be issued or renewed.

It also must complete environmental assessments for applications to install water lines, upgrade fences or make other improvements.

consider the impact of other uses, such as wildlife or off-road vehicles.

As a result, allotments or carrying capacity — a key metric that determines how many cattle can graze the land — can be scaled back to compensate for damage that cattle didn't cause.

Petersen has experienced this firsthand.

He and other ranchers near the Big Sandy River contend that wild burros, elk and off-road vehicles are destroying habitat for endangered birds and snakes.

An expert concluded that grazing was unlikely to adversely affect their habitat.

But BLM still would not allow cattle in some areas.

"Side-by-sides can run up and down the river unchecked, but not cattle," Petersen said.

"The irony is I can run cattle year-round on the state land that is mixed in with BLM land. Same forage, same terrain and everything."

BLM Needs More Staff

The proposed revisions would require evaluations for all authorized uses, not just grazing.

If an allotment doesn't meet its goals, BLM would have to determine what specifically caused the degradation before taking corrective action. Officials would have 6 months to identify the cause and 2 years to act on it.

To further speed reviews, the agency would no longer evaluate allotments one by one, but rather on a broader "landscape scale."

While many ranchers like the revisions, there is one key aspect that regulations alone cannot address.

Arizona's BLM field offices are notoriously short-staffed, they say. Few people are willing to work in rural areas, particularly for the pay.

Those who fill jobs often don't stay long, compounding backlogs and leaving some ranchers' calls unreturned for months.

"BLM doesn't have the manpower now to do reviews," said Dan Rodriguez, who has grazed a 6,300-acre allotment northeast of Kingman for nearly three decades.

"That worries me, especially if we're putting in time constraints for answers. You still need people to get the work done."



Cattle graze on rangeland in Gila County. Photo courtesy of Cassie Lyman

These reviews rarely move quickly, making it difficult for ranchers to rebuild herds, control erosion and regenerate pasturelands.

"One rancher I know wanted to drill a well when a spring went dry," said Anita Waite, who co-manages a 70,000-acre ranch near Kingman. "That was 21 years ago, and they've still not been given a permit."

Waite herself has waited 5 years for permission to build a check dam in a canyon, so she can study how slowing storm drainage restores soil in riparian areas and percolates extra water into the aquifer.

Land Health Assessments Would Change

BLM must assess land health before issuing permits.

But it is not authorized under the current rules to

From Legislation to Market Edge: Free Communications that Strengthen Farms and Ranches

By Julie Murphree,
Arizona Farm Bureau Director of
Strategic Communications



The Ag & Farm Bureau News Newsletter is sent out at least twice monthly to 1,800 subscribers in the agriculture industry.

In today's fast-paced agricultural landscape, staying informed about the latest industry trends, emerging legislation, regulatory changes, market shifts, and innovative practices is more critical than ever. No matter the size or type of your farm or ranch operation — whether you're raising livestock, growing crops, or selling directly to consumers — falling behind on these updates can expose your business to unnecessary risks, including compliance violations, unexpected costs, or missed opportunities.

The good news? Bridging that information gap is straightforward when you tap into the robust communication channels provided by your industry organization.

First, the latest state and national legislation and regulation that could positively or negatively impact your ag business is provided through Arizona Farm Bureau's "While You Were Working" Newsletter.

All business owners are familiar with the need to comply with state and federal regulations, especially in agriculture. However, the biggest problem for many farm and ranch entrepreneurs is the frequent changes to these rules.

To resolve this, subscribe to the weekly (during the legislative session) **While You Were Working**. To subscribe go to <https://www.azfb.org/Advocacy/Action-Center>. Then to the right of the page and where it says, "Sign Up for Alerts," enter your email and zip

code. This automatically sets you up to begin getting the newsletter through your email. Or use the nearby QR code.

Second, join our weekly Talk to a Farmer/Rancher Instagram Live Sessions to understand what other farmers and ranchers are dealing with and even the strategies they use to deal with challenges on the farm or ranch.

Our Talk to a Farmer and Rancher segments occur **every Friday at 10:00 a.m.** on our Instagram account, @AZfarmbureau. If you have the Instagram app on your smartphone, you just need to have it opened during the 10:00 a.m. hour on Friday and watch for us to go live. You can even post questions during the live sessions.

One rancher who regularly watches our weekly show said, "I pay attention to who you mention will be your guest for that week's show and if it's someone I know I can learn from I make a point to join when you go live on Instagram. It's just fun to hear from others."

We **save each show to video** and it's always on our @AZfarmbureau Instagram account. We also upload the sessions to YouTube and then to azfb.org (our website) if you are not on the social media channels. Additionally, we share the link to Facebook, so you can find the video there and watch it at your leisure if you can't make the "live" session.

Third, track government grants, loans, job openings and more by subscribing to Arizona Farm Bureau's bi-weekly Ag & FB News.

Simply log in to your membership account at www.azfb.org and in the "communication preferences" section select "Opt-In to Email Communication" and also "eNewsletter."

This newsletter is sent out on Thursday morning to 1,800 subscribers in the agriculture industry, members and non-members alike.

This newsletter caters to more general farm and ranch news, including information specific to the Farm Bureau, and highlights opportunities for farmers and ranchers to take advantage of an array of options related to their businesses. We sometimes

announce industry webinars that feature economic news or general industry reports.

Fourth, remember, as a farm or ranch member, you automatically receive our Arizona Agriculture, the largest general agricultural publication in the state.

This publication is published nine times a year and provides a variety of Arizona agriculture-specific news and information. Starting this issue, we'll feature a greater number of in-depth articles on our top priority issues that include water, labor, taxes, and more.

Testimonies from our farm and ranch members tell us these tools add value to their business bottom line. Join their chorus. And, of course, as a farm and ranch member, you are already getting our monthly publication, Arizona Agriculture. Maintain your annual membership to ensure you get the magazine without interruption.



Working in Arizona's Heat

continued from Page 1

Why Does Recovery Time Matter?

The human body adapts after a week or two of regular heat exposure, sweating faster in the elements to more efficiently remove heat.

But it also needs time out of the heat to recover. "There is evidence that if workers don't cool down, hydrate and rest overnight, it could hurt their ability to work the next day," Vanos said.

Studies suggest that at least 40% of employees arrive at work dehydrated, making it more difficult for them to properly hydrate while working in the heat.

Vanos and ASU researcher Gisela Guzmán Echavarría recently outfitted participants with weather sensors and smartwatches to better understand how people cope with heat in daily life.

The three-part study found that the same heat exposures can impact people differently, and that some experienced heat strain even when they said they felt comfortable.

It also revealed that while most people modify their routines to stay cool, those with the lowest incomes were least able to do so.

This is important context because there are many issues out of growers' control that can impact a worker's ability to stay safe in extreme heat.

It also suggests that solutions must encompass more than just employers.

What Works Best in Rural Arizona?

Arizona's rural population faces higher risks of heat-related illness — thanks in part to underlying health conditions, age or income limiting how often they use air conditioning.

But most research has focused on addressing heat risk in cities.

Ladd Keith, a University of Arizona professor who studies policies to address extreme heat, has recently begun fleshing out the unique challenges that rural areas face.

"Cities have advanced cooling centers, cool pavement and urban greening," he said. "But those might not be best strategies for rural farming communities" with little asphalt and wide distances to travel to the nearest cooling center.

In addition, many farm and ranch communities are growing more reliant on temporary foreign labor, a demographic that is poorly understood.

Kate Ellingson, a UA epidemiologist, found that the population is becoming less migratory and more seasonal — and growing rapidly, with crop workers in Yuma increasing nearly 60% over the last decade and a half.

She is using this data to predict which workers face the most heat risk.

"What we've found so far is that risk is not episodic or sporadic — it's really predictable," Ellingson said.

"This can help us better understand where and when to direct resources, so we can mitigate that risk."

NEED MORE HELP WITH HEAT?

Arizona Farm Bureau has developed a tool kit to help farmers and ranchers.



Create a heat illness prevention plan



Navigate state inspections



Institute heat safety best practices



Find the tool kit and information about the state's latest heat guidelines at azfb.org/advocacy
Click on "heat stress resources"

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From Farm Gate to Your Plate: Podcast Enlightening Arizonans

By Julie Murphree,
Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

The podcast airs every Thursday morning at 7:00 a.m. on all podcast channels.

Imagine a world where you know exactly where your food comes from, support Arizona's farmers and ranchers, and savor meals that are fresh, delicious, and budget-friendly. That's the heart of the podcast "Fill Your Plate Now"—a show dedicated to bridging the gap between consumers and the true source of their food, helping reshape how people approach eating every day.

"Fill Your Plate Now" goes far beyond basic nutrition or recipes; it's about enriching lives through informed choices. Hosted by the engaging team of Julie Murphree—a lifelong farm girl with deep roots in Arizona agriculture—and Tammy Baker, the "Nutrition Ninja," the podcast delivers a powerful mix of education, inspiration, and actionable tips. Each episode explores sustainable and cutting-edge farming practices, showing how they promote better health, affordability, and access to safe, high-quality food.

Listeners gain practical nutritional home-cooking hacks to whip up healthy, economical meals with ease. The show also dives into the newest advancements in food and farm technology, highlighting innovations that make better eating more attainable for everyone.

Now in its second season, "Fill Your Plate Now" continues to build momentum and deliver value week after week. New episodes drop every Thursday morning at 7:00 AM on all major podcast platforms, welcoming

everyone to join this growing community. It's more than just discussions about food, it's a pathway to wellness, financial smarts, and a deeper appreciation for Arizona agriculture. With every episode, listeners move closer to the farm gate and incorporate smarter, healthier habits on the plate.

While Fill Your Plate Now is on all major podcast channels including Spotify, Apple, and Audible, you can tune in easily via www.azfb.org, www.fillyourplate.org, and <https://arizonamilk.org/>. By listening, you don't just become a more knowledgeable shopper, you help strengthen a community that prioritizes health, happiness, and wise food decisions.

Whether you're a passionate foodie, focused on wellness, or eager to champion our farm and ranch economies, "Fill Your Plate Now" serves as your weekly companion to a more connected, fulfilling way of living through food.

Special Note: Farm and ranch members, consider this as another tool in your toolbox to share with your network, family and friends, for them to learn more about Arizona agriculture and nutrition. This weekly podcast is sponsored by the Arizona Milk Producers and Arizona Farm Bureau. The podcast can be found on all major podcast channels, including Spotify, Apple and Audible. It's also easy to access on www.azfb.org, www.fillyourplate.org and <https://arizonamilk.org/>.



Sine Die at Sunrise *continued from Page 1*

The Arizona Department of Agriculture’s General Fund appropriation declined slightly, from about \$16.2 million in FY 2026 to roughly \$15.9 million in FY 2027, with a one-time \$381,100 equipment appropriation not continued. The department’s Other Fund spending also fell, from about \$4.0 million to \$2.5 million, reflecting in part the discontinuation of a \$2.0 million one-time deposit to the Water and Innovation Fund.

Several other agriculture-related items were not continued, as intended, since they were allocated as one-time funds in previous sessions, including \$2.0 million for the University of Arizona’s On-Farm Irrigation program, \$1.35 million for the University’s Yuma Center for Excellence for Desert Agriculture, and \$250,000 for the Game and Fish Department’s Livestock Loss Board, which addresses wolf depredation.

Animal Health and Biosecurity

In a provision both timely and relevant to producers, the budget addresses the threat of New World screwworm and other foreign animal diseases and pests largely by redirecting and reauthorizing existing resources rather than through new General Fund appropriations. The Department of Agriculture is authorized to redirect existing avian influenza monies to support a screwworm investigator position, and a modified footnote allows the department to use up to \$250,000 from the Commercial Feed Trust Fund in FY 2027 for two positions: one dedicated to screwworm response if the border is open for live cattle imports, overseen by the State Veterinarian, and one for foreign animal disease or pest, USDA program disease, zoonotic disease, or other emerging animal disease responses.

Rural Communities, Water, and Tax Relief

Several other provisions touch agriculture and rural communities directly. The Veterinary Loan Assistance Program’s maximum award was doubled, from \$100,000 to \$200,000, to help address rural veterinary shortages, and the Department of Transportation’s livestock-control line was expanded to include wildlife crossings, with \$700,000 provided. On the tax side, conformity to H.R. 1 includes 100 percent first-year expensing for qualified production property, which the law specifies extends to agricultural production for tax year 2025, a meaningful investment incentive for producers. For Pinal County growers, the budget extends through December 31, 2030 both the moratorium on the groundwater withdrawal fee for water-banking purposes and the \$2.50-per-acre-foot cap on the fee that supports groundwater and irrigation-efficiency projects in the Pinal Active Management Area.

Major Legislative Victories for Agriculture

Beyond the budget, five measures Farm Bureau followed through the session cleared both chambers in the final days and have now been signed into law by Governor Hobbs.

Agricultural Property Tax Reform

Two Farm Bureau-supported property tax measures deliver practical protections for owners who keep their land in qualifying agricultural use. HB 2104 (agricultural property; classification; inspection) amends A.R.S. § 42-12155 so that when an owner pre-

vails in an appeal of an agricultural classification under chapter 16, article 5, the county assessor may not reclassify the property or conduct an on-site inspection for three years after the year the decision is rendered, unless the owner files a change-in-use notice, the property is split, ownership or the lease changes, or a taxable improvement is made. The assessor retains the ability to tax a previously unreported taxable improvement classified as agricultural during that period for the current and any prior year the improvement existed.

HB 2105 (agricultural property; inspections; notice) amends A.R.S. §§ 42-11053 and 42-12158 to require the Department of Revenue and county assessors to notify the owner or possessor before an inspection and provide the date, and to furnish a copy of the inspection report. It also bars on-site inspections of qualifying agricultural property in consecutive years unless one of those same triggers occurs and authorizes assessors to develop a standardized inspection report form. Together, the two bills tighten notice requirements and limit repeat inspections and reclassification, ending a cycle of repetitive challenges to qualifying agricultural operations.

State Trust Land Department Continuation

SB 1336 (state land department; continuation; oversight) continues the Arizona State Land Department, which had been under sunset review, while substantially reworking how the department manages trust lands. As signed, the bill carries a new termination date of July 1, 2030, keeping the department subject to regular legislative review.

For ranchers holding grazing leases, the bill preserves the requirement that permittees compensate the surface owner and lessee for damage to grasses, forage, crops, and improvements; continues the Commissioner’s authority to require surety bonds; and retains the surface owner’s first right of refusal on exploration permits over reserved minerals.

Importantly, it restricts lease and permit holdovers to no more than ninety days, requires fair-market-value reimbursement for customary lessee improvements, and requires at least six months’ notice before a lease renewal or special land use permit expires, including any proposed rent increase and the department’s intent to renew or terminate.

On planning, the bill moves authority to create and approve conceptual land use plans to the department, directs a five-year disposition plan for all state trust land in each county, adds promoting rural economic growth as a priority, brings in the Arizona Geological Survey for consultation, and expands recognized land uses to include mining, forestry, agricultural, energy, and grazing.

It also adds a temporary Joint Legislative Ad Hoc Committee on State Land Over-

sight, brings the department under the Administrative Procedure Act with licensing time frames and due-process protections, and establishes a Biosolids Study Committee to review the use of biosolids in agriculture, including on state trust lands.

Industry Continuation Measures: SB 1198

SB 1198 (beef council; veterinary board; continuation) continues both the Arizona Beef Council and the Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board, each with a termination date of July 1, 2034. The Beef Council is continued as a self-financed program to market and expand state, national, and foreign markets for Arizona beef and beef products, and the veterinary board is continued to oversee the safe and professional practice of veterinary medicine. Both extensions apply retroactively to July 1, 2026.

Food Labeling Transparency: HB 2762, the Andy Groseta Act

Governor Hobbs also signed HB 2762, the Andy Groseta Act, sponsored by Representative Quang Nguyen. The new law requires products derived from cultivated animal cells to be clearly labeled as “cell-cultivated” or “cell-cultured.” Consumers deserve transparency, and this law helps ensure Arizonans know how their food is produced while supporting a fair marketplace for farmers and ranchers.

Looking Ahead

With Governor Hobbs’ signature now affixed to HB 2104, HB 2105, HB 2762, SB 1336, and SB 1198, measures without emergency provisions will take effect on the general effective date of September 12, 2026.

This session’s outcomes, the wins secured and the funding fights still ahead, are a reminder that policy is made by those who show up, and the November general election will shape the Legislature that takes up these issues next. Moving forward Arizona Farm Bureau continues our efforts in engaging candidates, tracking the issues that matter to agriculture, and carrying the priorities of Arizona’s farm and ranch families into the next Legislature. 🚜

With the dust settled at the Capitol and the July 21 primary now behind us, all attention turns to the November 3 general election. Be sure to visit the Arizona Farm Bureau Election Resources page on our website, your one-stop source for the key dates, information, and tools you need to vote informed this fall.

KEY DATES FOR THE 2026 GENERAL ELECTION

- ✓ **Monday, October 5:** Voter Registration
- ✓ **Wednesday, October 7:** Early Voting Begins / Ballots Mailed (AEVL)
- ✓ **Friday, October 23:** Sample ballots mailed; last day to request an early ballot
- ✓ **Friday, October 30:** Last day to vote early in person
- ✓ **Tuesday, November 3:** General Election Day



One stop source, visit us at
azfb.org/advocacy
Under Resources and Links
➔ Election Resources

Arizona Contributes 13,175 Cotton Acres to U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol for 2026 Crop Year

By Staff Reports

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol recently announced that 2.34 million planted acres nationwide now provide field-level data through the program for the 2026 crop year—representing nearly one in four of the 9.85 million total U.S. cotton acres planted this season. In Arizona, growers have stepped up with 13,175 planted acres enrolled, accounting for approximately 16% of the state’s 85,000 planted cotton acres, according to USDA data.

This strong Arizona participation underscores the commitment of the state’s cotton producers to responsible and transparent farming practices amid a challenging economic environment. Arizona growers continue to face fluctuating input costs, extreme weather variability in the desert Southwest, and shifting market conditions—yet they are voluntarily providing detailed sustainability data to strengthen the U.S. cotton, including Arizona-grown fiber, in global markets.

By joining the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol, Arizona growers gain access to actionable, data-driven insights that help them better understand their environmental footprint, refine irrigation and farming practices suited to arid conditions, and improve overall operational efficiency.

“The growers enrolled in the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol—including those across Arizona—are the foundation of a more transparent and responsible U.S. cotton supply chain,” said Marjory Walker, Co-Di-

rector of the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol. “Their dedication, especially given the unique challenges facing cotton production in the Southwest this season, enables brands and retailers worldwide to source independently verified, traceable U.S. Cotton and show real progress on sustainability commitments.”

The Trust Protocol supports both growers and downstream partners. For brands and retailers, the program delivers robust traceability, allowing them to track U.S. Cotton, Protocol Cotton, and now U.S. Regenerative Cotton from field to finished product.

The Trust Protocol’s Field Partner Program formally recognizes and verifies regenerative agriculture practices at the field level. As it scales, the program is delivering verified, traceable regenerative cotton at meaningful volumes—helping brands meet sourcing and reporting goals while addressing rising consumer demand for responsibly produced fiber.

“What is most encouraging about where the program is today is that through the Field Partner Program, we are not just recognizing responsible production through the field-level data provided by our growers, we are building a scalable, credible pathway for regenerative cotton,” Walker added. “The Field Partner Program brings the science-based verification and market connectivity that allow this work to be recognized, rewarded, and acted on by brands.”

The U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol currently includes more than 2,800 mill and manufacturer members across 56 countries, along with more than 55 global companies and brands such as Ralph Lauren, PVH Corp., Walmart, adidas, Under Armour, Levi’s, Carhartt, and Gymshark. Arizona’s contribution of 13,175 acres demonstrates the state’s important role in advancing a more sustainable and transparent domestic cotton supply chain. 🚜



Growing Home: Arizona Documentary Brings Water Challenges to Life

By Julie Murphree,
Arizona Farm Bureau Director of
Strategic Communications

Arizona Farm Bureau has released a new documentary that puts a human face on the water pressures Arizona farmers and ranchers live with every day. Titled *Growing Home: Arizona*, the film follows three families whose stories show why water is not just a policy issue but the foundation of family operations, rural communities, and the food supply that reaches every table in the state.

Arizona agriculture uses more than 70 percent of the state's water. That reality hits hard when prolonged drought, shrinking Colorado River supplies, and groundwater use combine with federal shortage declarations. In recent years, cuts to Arizona's Colorado River allocation have fallen most heavily on agriculture. In central Arizona, particularly Pinal County, some producers saw surface water allotments drop by as much as 87 percent from previous levels. Many have responded by fallowing ground, shifting crops, or pumping more groundwater to keep operations going. These are not abstract numbers—they are decisions made around kitchen tables and in equipment sheds across the state.

Growing Home: Arizona moves past statistics by following the real experiences of three families. The Bales family farms in Buckeye, where they manage the day-to-day realities of irrigation and production. The Caywood family operates in Pinal County and has faced the sharpest surface-water reductions. The Lopez family lives in a metro Phoenix subdivision and offers the urban perspective on the same resource. By weaving their personal stories together, the film shows how water scarcity affects planting decisions, family finances, and long-term plans for the next generation—whether on the farm or in town.

Arizona Farm Bureau President John Boelts said the documentary is designed to connect with viewers on a personal level. "*Growing Home: Arizona* is more than a documentary — it's an invitation for Arizonans to see themselves in the stories of our farm and urban families," Boelts explained. "By sharing the real-life

challenges, hopes, and resilience of these families, we hope viewers will feel empowered to speak up for Arizona agriculture when water issues arise in their communities, at the dinner table, or in the voting booth."

The film deliberately places rural and urban lives side by side. Viewers see the Bales and Caywood operations dealing with reduced deliveries and the need to adapt cropping plans, while the Lopez family considers how their household choices connect to the larger water picture. The result is a clear picture of shared stakes: Arizona's water future depends on a strong agricultural sector that continues to produce food, support rural economies, and maintain the open

spaces and communities that define so much of the state.

Brian Lopez, speaking for the urban side of the story, put it plainly: "Every drop matters and every action counts. Water is one of our most precious resources, and this documentary reminds us that conservation is not optional, it's essential for the health of our communities, our economy, and our future."

Boelts added that the film highlights values that cross zip codes. "Wherever our place of residence, we have shared values and this documentary demon-

strates this so clearly," he said. "This film also shows the heart behind our agricultural stewardship and why protecting our water resources for farming is vital for every Arizonan — today and for generations to come."

For farmers and ranchers who have spent years adjusting to tighter supplies, the documentary offers recognition of the difficult choices already being made in fields and feedlots. It also shows why those choices matter beyond the farm gate. Agriculture does not just grow crops and raise livestock; it anchors rural economies, provides jobs, and keeps land in production that might otherwise be lost. The film makes that connection visible through the families it follows.

Growing Home: Arizona was produced with striking visuals and honest moments that let the families speak for themselves. It does not claim easy answers, but it does make the complex water story easier to understand and discuss. Whether you are deciding which fields to plant next season, talking with neighbors about groundwater management, or simply wanting a clear way to explain your operation to people outside agriculture, the film gives you stories you can point to.

The documentary is now available to watch free on the Arizona Farm Bureau YouTube channel and on the organization's website at azfb.org. Producers, ranchers, and community groups can also request screenings. For more details, visit <https://www.azfb.org/News/Growing-Home-Arizona-Water-Documentary>.

Water challenges are not going away. *Growing Home: Arizona* gives Arizona's farm and ranch families a tool to make sure their voices and their lived experience stay at the center of the conversation. Watch it, share it with your neighbors, and use the stories to keep the discussion grounded in the realities of producing food in a desert state.

Editor's Note: The movie can be viewed on the Arizona Farm Bureau YouTube channel.
Long version: <https://youtu.be/V8hiql-Znz4>
Short version: <https://youtu.be/59Vm5s-ssLU>



Trevor Bales is featured in the documentary along with his family to tell Arizona's water story.



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Make Your Voice Heard: Attend Your County Annual Meeting

By Staff Reports
Influence Policy, Elect Leaders, and Have a Great Time

As the rhythm of the agricultural year shifts from planting and harvest to planning for the next season, one event stands out as a cornerstone for Arizona's farmers and ranchers: your local County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting. This gathering is more than a meeting—it is your opportunity to connect, lead, and shape the future of agriculture in our state. In a time when farmers face mounting challenges — from water scarcity and labor shortages to regulatory pressures and market volatility — your active participation has never been more vital.

This year, all 14 active Arizona Farm Bureau counties will host in-person Annual Meetings, providing members a chance to reconnect face-to-face with neighbors who understand the realities of life on the land. You'll share stories, swap best practices, and hear from engaging speakers who bring fresh perspectives on issues affecting our industry. Whether you run a family operation in the Verde Valley, manage a large-scale dairy in Pinal County, or raise cattle in Coconino County, these meetings create a space where practical solutions emerge through genuine conversation.

Beyond fellowship, the real power lies in policy development. At your County Annual Meeting, members review, debate, and vote on resolutions that address everything from property rights and trade policies to environmental stewardship and rural infrastructure. When a proposed solution earns approval from your fellow members during November's state Annual meeting, it becomes official Farm Bureau policy. Suddenly, you are no longer one voice speaking from the field. You gain the collective strength of the state's largest and most respected agricultural organization behind you — a formidable force that carries your priorities to lawmakers, regulators, and industry leaders at both state and national levels.

"Farm Bureau is the Voice of Agriculture because we speak for our members," says John Boelts, President of the Arizona Farm Bureau. "I encourage all ag members to have their voices heard by attending their county's Annual Meeting. This is where policy starts, where leaders are chosen, and where our unified message gains momentum."

The meetings also serve as the foundation for leadership and representation. Members elect county officers who guide local efforts throughout the year and select delegates to represent Arizona at the state annual meeting this November. Those delegates carry your county's priorities forward, ensuring decisions made at the grassroots level influence state-wide advocacy and programming.

Each county tailors its event to reflect local needs and opportunities while maintaining the shared mission of strengthening agriculture across Arizona. Whether your county meeting features a barbecue, a guest expert on new technologies, or the latest on the New World Screwworm issue, the value comes from your presence and input.

Mark your calendar, make plans to attend, and consider bringing a neighbor or family member who might be new to Farm Bureau.

November 16–17, 2026

WESTIN LA PALOMA IN TUCSON, AZ



KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
ZIPPY DUVALL

President, American Farm Bureau Federation



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