



# Arizona Agriculture

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## A CONVERSATION WITH A GENERATIONAL BEEF PRODUCER, NOW A MARKETER: LAUREN MAEHLING

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

I've known and worked with Arizona Beef Council Executive Director Lauren Maehling as long as she's been with the Council and as long as I've been with Arizona Farm Bureau. Of course, most of this interaction relates to maximizing those opportunities when we can cross-pollinate our communications and marketing efforts or simply help each other stay informed in our respective areas. I lean heavily on Maehling when I want to report on beef nutrition and sustainability. And, she's always been a gracious guest on Talk to a Farmer/Rancher Friday. She is my favorite "beef foodie!"

Recognizing the Arizona Beef Council as my source for a video on beef industry conservation practices we produced a few years ago, that video on our YouTube channel has garnered more than 12,000 views. She and I have concluded that the public loves knowing how farmers and ranchers contribute to the environment. So our work continues.

The Arizona Beef Council and Arizona Farm Bureau also partner on the educational side as well which is explained in a bit more detail further in this article. Ultimately, as long as resources are available, no stone is left unturned as the saying goes.

While we may sometimes feel in the industry that consumers are not hearing our agriculture story, it's not for lack of trying or because we lack a plan. As you'll see from this article the strategy to inform and educate the consumer about the nutritional benefits of beef is quite sophisticated, tested and constantly measured. My personal opinion is that our biggest challenge is competing for the consumer's attention. Our resources do exist.

Maehling grew up on her family's beef cattle ranch in Los Alamos on the Central Coast of California. She received her Bachelor of Science Degree from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo with a degree in Animal Science, emphasis in Agricultural Business, and a minor in Rangeland Resource Management. As executive director of the Arizona Beef Council, Maehling enjoys serving Arizona's cattlemen and women in promoting beef to Arizona consumers. She's a mom of two toddlers, a foodie, and enjoys sending snail mail [Maehling is only telling part of the story: she creates beautiful calligraphy; she crafted her calligraphy in the signature pages of two bibles I gave away as gifts].

**Arizona Agriculture:** May is National Beef Month. As executive director for the Arizona Beef Council, you possess plenty of insights on this celebration. Give us a bit of history behind the designation.

**Maehling:** I'm not sure when Beef Month started because every month is Beef Month for us! It's a time when most of the country is breaking out their grills and celebrating the end of cold weather -- though it's always grilling season in Arizona allowing us to take advantage of the beautiful weather a lot earlier in the year. We certainly encourage the extra celebrating with beef all month. If anything, it puts an extra spotlight on beef's versatility from grilling to slow cooking, its beneficial nutrient package to fuel bodies all year long, and highlights the work that cattlemen and women put into raising

high-quality beef while caring for the land.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Talk about the Arizona Beef Council's outreach and marketing efforts on behalf of our Arizona beef industry.

**Maehling:** The Arizona Beef Council (ABC) is the grassroots entity that administers and implements the Beef Checkoff Program (the "Beef Checkoff") in Arizona. With oversight from the Cattlemen's Beef Board and the United States Department of Agriculture, the Beef Checkoff implements promotion, research, consumer information, industry information, foreign marketing, and producer communications.

The nature of the Beef Checkoff is that when there are fewer cattle, there are fewer dollars collected to promote beef. Arizona is a smaller cattle state to begin with, especially in comparison to our growing human population (the latest numbers say 970,000 head of cattle and nearing 7.5 million humans).

The ABC has built partnerships with state beef councils in high-cattle states, with more cattle than consumers, who want to allocate some of their budgets to extend beef promotion in high-population states. The Iowa Beef Industry Council, Nebraska, and Kansas Beef Councils have generously funded advertising campaigns, nutrition outreach, e-commerce retail campaigns, and Gate to Plate Tours in Arizona. It's thanks to these grants and others that we can implement impactful programs.

In the education realm, we focus on "training the trainer." ABC's Beef Gate to Plate Tours have become part of the curriculum for the state's registered dietician credentialing courses, hosting annual immersive tours for nutrition graduate students at Arizona State University, University of Arizona, Northern Arizona University and Maricopa County. We also host the Arizona Culinary Institute for a tour and beef experience. Each summer, ABC presents to culinary teachers at the Arizona Career and Technical Education Conference, providing lesson plan inspiration and tools that will reach their 150 students on average, each, annually. And, with Arizona Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom and our other ag groups, help coordinate the Arizona Agriculture Institutes for teachers.

In the nutrition realm, we continue to work with the Arizona Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, which is the state association for nutrition professionals. Two new nutrition audiences are the Arizona Nurses Association and the School Nutrition Association of Arizona, to position the Beef Checkoff as the go-to for

factual beef information and resources.

**Arizona Agriculture:** You're originally from California, but have become fully integrated into Arizona and certainly our state's beef industry. What sets Arizona's beef industry apart from other states' beef industry? Any special differentiators?

**Maehling:** The ABC Board prioritizes data so that by better understanding our audience (Arizona consumers), we can build focused messaging and programs. For four years, we have participated in a survey

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"The Arizona Beef Council has built partnerships with state beef councils in high-cattle states, with more cattle than consumers, who want to allocate some of their budgets to extend beef promotion in high-population states," explains Arizona Beef Council Executive Director Lauren Maehling.

## A TOP PRIORITY FOR ARIZONA FARM BUREAU

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

The Geographic Distribution Ballot Initiative, driven by the Arizona Farm Bureau in collaboration with several organizations including the National Pork Council, is one of our top priorities. This November voters from across Arizona will likely face ballot fatigue due to the large number of measures anticipated to be on the ballot. The Geographic Distribution Initiative is the cure. More importantly, this measure gives all Arizonians a voice when it comes to ballot initiatives.

If passed, never leaving Maricopa County to collect signatures will be a thing of the past, forcing activists outside of the major metropolitan areas to collect signatures.

Currently, for a measure to get on the ballot through signature collection, you simply must get 10% of registered voters for any statewide initiative, 15% for constitutional changes, and 5% for any referendums. Signature collectors never have to leave the major metropolitan areas to meet these requirements, which disregards the rest of Arizona voters. We have seen this all too many times with various measures, measures that ultimately impact all of us.

### AN INITIATIVE THAT GIVES RURAL ARIZONA A VOICE

This initiative will level the playing field and provide rural Arizona with a voice when it comes to ballot measures. If passed in November it would require signatures from every legislative district. 10% of registered voters from each of Arizona's 30 state legislative districts (LD) for statewide initiatives, 15% from each LD for constitutional changes, and 5% for referendums. This would provide every district, and every county a voice in what initiatives make it on the ballot.

Making sure our rural voices are heard is a must and that is why this is one of our top priorities this year. After months of polling, preparation and analyzing the political landscape around this issue we know we have a lot of work ahead of us. Our polling shows that voters must be informed and educated on the initiative, and this will be even more important given the large number of measures that will be before them in November. That is why we are working to activate our grassroots advocates and engage you all in your local communities. We need all advocates on deck, helping us inform voters about the measure, what it does and how it will level the playing field.

Our ask of all our farm and ranch members is to engage in advocacy in your communities. Help us spread the word about the importance of this measure. To that, we have developed an incentive to reward our advocates across the state in every county. For every one that engages in an opportunity to inform, educate, and spread the word you can be entered into a drawing for one of three great prizes. For those who engage in at least 5 opportunities, you will receive a \$25 Visa

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return of a 1995 or newer JEEP. All offers expire 05.30.24.



# 8 REASONS TO ATTEND THIS YEAR’S SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

The Summer Leadership Conference is around the corner and will be held in Tucson once again! Sponsored by Arizona Farm Bureau’s Women’s Leadership Committee, which will be held at the JW Marriott Starr Pass in Tucson, on July 11 and 12. This year’s theme Navigating Agricultural Innovations, sets the stage for a full schedule. Why should you attend the conference this year? Here are 8 good reasons.

1. **Location, location & ...discount:** Cradled in the Tucson Mountain Park, the JW Marriott Starr Pass features magnificent Tucson views. The resort boasts the award-winning Hashani Spa, 27-hole Arnold Palmer Signature Golf Course, diverse dining options and 88,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space. Guests can explore Tucson Mountain Park with complimentary guided hikes and adventurous mountain biking or choose to relax with our exclusive Water activities.
2. **Activities for everyone in the Family:** From the lazy river with water slides to beautiful views and golf for everyone from kids to kids at heart!
3. **Free from Event Conflicts:** The July dates for this conference don’t conflict with FFA or any other agriculture organizations’ conference dates.
4. **Networking.** There is plenty of time to relax and network with your fellow Aggies. Plus, you can make new friends.
5. **Meet the Influencer: Keynote - Sarah Bohnenkamp** - From coaching leaders to commanding the stage in cowboy boots, Sarah J. Bohnenkamp is an energetic hope dealer with a cowgirl heart as big as her dreams. Since 2015, Sarah has led her own coaching and consulting firm based in Colorado, serving clients from global brands to national and state associations, as well as aspiring leaders and

entrepreneurs.

6. **Tailgate Conversations.** Join us at the tailgate for a friendly conversation and learn from a diverse panel on difficult topics. Panelists share their insights, experiences, challenges, and successes on topics that always seem to hit home.
7. **Anyone’s Welcome.** The educational conference encourages young and old, male and female and all segments of agriculture.
8. **It’s Inspirational and Encouraging:** One past conference attendee said, “This meeting is a breath of fresh air to my busy schedule. Rubbing shoulders with amazing leaders, listening and learning from amazing speakers and relaxing help motivate and inspire me in the best ways. This conference helps me be the agriculture leader this world needs!”

To register for the conference, go to [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org), then click on the events section. If you need more information, contact Elizabeth Rico at 480.635.3611 or [elizabethrico@azfb.org](mailto:elizabethrico@azfb.org). Reserve your hotel by June 11, 2024, to receive the special group rate. 🚗



## MENTOR PROTÉGÉ CAMP CLASS 3, PROFILE 4: MICHAEL MACAULEY, SIERRA FRYDENLUND AND SCOTT COURTRIGHT

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

The CAMP mentor/protégé 2024 series continues for Class 3 with rancher Michael Macauley and NRCS employee, Sierra Frydenlund. The Macauley/Frydenlund/Courtright team has met in person and Sierra and Scott are looking forward to learning more about Arizona ranching operations including managing obstacles, inventory processes, and more.

The Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP) in Arizona, in partnership with the Arizona Farm Bureau, has now been at it for three years. This program, unique in its regard, has a double dose of uniqueness as the Arizona NRCS team approached the Farm Bureau to partner with them in the effort.

The Macauley/Frydenlund/Courtright partnership, along with all the mentor protégé partnerships for Class 3, works to understand Arizona agriculture and conservation opportunities, joining forces to provide firsthand experience of the conservation practices and agricultural happenings.

### MENTOR: MICHAEL MACAULEY

**Talk about your first and subsequent meetings:** I have met and spoken with Sierra several times at the NRCS office here in Flagstaff. The conversations concerned current projects we have through NRCS for grassland restoration. This is important for her to learn and know about as it is the basis for the management of grazing livestock, and the benefits to wildlife. To complement those conversations Sierra has accompanied us on our seasonal monitoring. She has been exposed to learning about different grasses, the growing seasons of those grasses and learning about the importance of biodiversity.

**Share specifics about what you got out of it as the rancher:** Working with and through this program with the Protege is educational for both the Protege and the mentor. As a mentor, you relearn and rethink what you, as a producer, are working toward. You must “know” and understand the WHY you do what you do. Passing that knowledge on to another person helps you stay connected to the environment, the ecological side, and the importance of a healthy, biodiverse grassland.

**For the remaining time with the program, what do you also hope to help with?** Understanding the importance of working together makes us better at what we do. Regardless of our backgrounds, the importance of agriculture, food production, and our relationship with the environment is vital. But it goes far beyond what happens in the field. Helping others understand the process of producing, processing, and transporting, food doesn’t just come from the grocery store. The flip side is learning about what is under-

stood by individuals who haven’t been exposed to agriculture. It is, very much, a two-way street!

Yet to occur: why do we have pastures, See [Mentor Protege CAMP Class 3](#) Page 7



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NOW A MARKETER: LAUREN MAEHLING

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of Arizona consumers that compares our state’s consumer sentiment to national sentiment as it relates to beef consumption, knowledge of beef production, protein consideration factors, beef attributes, industry trust, and more. This has given us a better understanding of what factors might be unique to Arizona.

In most categories, Arizona is on par with what consumers think about beef nationally. However, it’s been interesting to see how Arizona’s changing demographic is reflected in this state survey, with more consumers over time claiming less knowledge about how cattle are raised compared to the national average. There are many factors to consider, but new residents from other states could be contributing (hard to admit as a 9<sup>th</sup>-generation Californian).

So, I do think our evolving demographic in Arizona offers opportunities to continue to highlight beef’s important role in the diet AND boost general knowledge of how cattle are raised and the people involved in the industry.

Using that data and with the help of other beef councils for funding, we’ve built large campaigns to implement new technologies in advertising to reach not only Arizona residents but also our many winter and spring visitors. For the second year in a row, from February to June, beef ads and commercials have been placed on YouTube videos, Google searches, audio streaming, connected TV (CTV), articles on popular websites, and billboards across Phoenix. Last year’s campaign garnered more than 8.3 million impressions during Spring Training. This year’s billboards, both digital and traditional, were placed in high-traffic areas north and south of State Farm Stadium, downtown Phoenix, Tempe, and along the I-10 in Eloy, all during Spring Training, spring breaks, and while Phoenix hosted the NCAA Men’s Final Four.

New this year are beef commercials on CTV (devices that are connected to the internet and allow viewers to stream shows, videos, music and browse the web), shown in targeted intervals to Arizona consumers during popular events, including the Waste Management Open. During the popular golf tournament in Scottsdale, Beef. It’s What’s for Dinner. commercials were placed across CTV channels that carried the event, delivering over 5,800 video views. Additional targeting took place during March Madness NCAA basketball. Meanwhile, commercials are airing across a wide variety of popular and premium CTV channels and services, including the Big Ten Network, Bloomberg Media, CBS, Disney, Disney+, Hallmark, Pluto, Tubi, AMC Network, A&E, Discovery+, Warner Bros, Fox News/Fox Business, Pluto TV and Paramount +, FuboTV and Sling.

So, long story long, there is plentiful opportunity for promotion in Arizona, and we’re looking at all the ways we can be most impactful while efficiently stewarding our limited budget.

**Arizona Agriculture:** How is the Beef Council communicating with the consumer when it comes to the inflationary era we’re in the thick of today?

**Maehling:** Convenience and versatility are two of beef’s top attributes that the Beef Checkoff will continue to highlight. Consistently, consumer market research confirms that taste and value (both nutritionally and for the price) are the top considerations in choosing a protein, followed closely by versatility for many types of meals. Beef lends itself well to being center-of-plate or an ingredient in many dishes. As consumers look for ways to stretch their food dollars, we have recipe categories for everything from Beef on a Budget and Steak Swaps to Cook Once, Dine Twice and Meals with Leftover Beef. There truly is a beef option for everyone!

Last summer, with funding support from the Iowa Beef Industry Council, ABC extended national e-commerce campaigns with two major retailers, featuring digital ads

on the stores’ websites and apps, as well as popular consumer lifestyle sites, that drove traffic to the retailers’ fresh beef pages where shoppers could add beef to their carts. The summer grilling campaign directly contributed to a 10.9% lift in beef sales, equaling an incremental return on investment of \$65 for every \$1 spent on ad placement. The other retailer’s back-to-school campaign reported an attributable return on investment of \$206.75 for every \$1 spent on ad placement. Between both campaigns, 14 and 16 percent of shoppers who bought beef had not purchased beef in the prior 12 months.

It’s campaigns like these, made possible by strong state-to-state and state-national partnerships, that keep beef top-of-mind during key times when shoppers make meal-time decisions, especially when there is so much competition for consumers’ dollars.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Talk about the industry’s sustainability efforts in the last few decades and the goals for the future.

**Maehling:** Sustainability takes on so many forms, and we often think of it in three areas: environmental, social and economic. Some under-appreciated components of those, I think, are in the stories of beef quality and community impact.

**Beef quality:** this isn’t our grandparents’ beef. Cattlemen and women have made incredible strides in responding to consumer demand for high-quality and consistent beef, raising cattle that meet that expectation. When I was in college, I remember the national average of cattle grading prime was 2 percent. Now, 11 to 12 percent is the norm. The industry, as a whole, has improved cattle genetics, beef quality, feeding practices, and trimming to produce more consistent beef that consumers love. Still, if consumers are looking for lean and tender – that’s an option. AND, while we are experiencing smaller national cattle herds, more beef is being raised per animal – 60 percent more since 1961, while reducing emissions per pound of beef by more than 40 percent.

**Community impact:** Sustainability research and conversations often focus on environmental sustainability, but there are many factors to a “sustainable” beef industry. A current Beef Checkoff-funded project is evaluating the social and economic factors of raising beef in the region and nation, especially in light of changes in our national cow herd, where cattle are located, factors that affect ranching, raising cattle in certain areas, and more. Interviews were recently conducted in Arizona. I’m looking forward to the published report. 🐮

**Editor’s Note:** We’ll have to connect with Maehling once the report is out and ask her for an overview.

PUBLIC NOTICE BY THE ARIZONA PORK COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL PORK BOARD

The election of pork producer delegate candidates for the 2025 National Pork Producers (Pork Act) Delegate Body will take place at Yosemite Foods, 61 W Center Street, Snowflake, AZ 85937 on June 7th, 2024, in conjunction with a Board of Directors meeting of the Arizona Pork Council.

All pork producers are invited to attend. Any producer, age 18 or older, who is a resident of the state and has paid all assessments due may be considered as a delegate candidate and/or participate in the election. All eligible producers are encouraged to bring with them a sales receipt proving that hogs were sold in their name and the checkoff deducted. For more information, contact Arizona Pork Council, 325 S. Higley Rd., Suite 210, Gilbert, AZ 85296 (480) 635-3619.

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# TOP PRIORITY continued from Page 1

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Arizona Farm Bureau has many resources at your disposal to help you engage in your communities. Please join us in spreading the word and informing voters on this important initiative. As a grassroots advocate of Arizona Farm Bureau, we need your help at passing this common-sense ballot reform.



To learn more, visit our website at <https://www.azfb.org/Advocacy/Issues/Geographic-Distribution-Ballot-Initiative>

If you would like to join us in our advocacy efforts and engage in your communities to be entered into the drawing please log your activity at the link below or scan the QR code nearby. <https://form.jotform.com/240446008606047>

### UPDATES ON OTHER FEDERAL ISSUES

**EPA Mandates Electric Vehicles:** In a rulemaking not widely publicized in the agriculture community, the EPA finalized its rule mandating electric vehicles and hybrids. In a move to cut carbon emissions, the Biden administration has announced new automobile emissions standards for model years 2027 and beyond for both light-duty and medium-duty vehicles. Under the new rule auto manufacturers will be required to meet ambitious goals of electric vehicle production. In an 1100-plus page final rule, it will require more than half of all cars and 30% of heavy-duty trucks sold by 2032 to be electric. To learn more visit the EPA website and search for the electric vehicle mandate.

**PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation:** On April 10<sup>th</sup> the EPA announced its highly anticipated rule on the National Primary Drinking Water Regulation which sets the limits on six PFAS chemicals, including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS). The standards were set 25 times higher than what

the World Health Organization recommended. This was specific to drinking water while the PFAS on farms issue is separate a rule under CERCLA and is anticipated to be released in late April. Stay informed through While You Were Working as we will update members on the final CERCLA rule.

**TAX RELIEF FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES & WORKERS ACT H. R. 7024:** In late January the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 7024 the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act by a bipartisan vote of 357-70. The bill is currently on the Senate calendar and now we are calling on the Senate to pass the measure.

Certain changes made to the tax code in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 have either expired or started to phase out, including changes to 100% bonus depreciation, the deduction of business interest, and amortization of research and development costs for businesses. The Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act extends 100% bonus depreciation, retroactive to 2023, through the end of 2025. It also reinstates the immediate expensing of R&D costs for businesses, reinstates the previous deduction for business interest, and raises the cap on Section 179 expensing.

Here is how our delegation voted in the House:

Biggs	NAY
Ciscomani	YEA
Crane	NAY
Gallego	YEA
Gosar	NAY
Grijalva	YEA
Lesko	NAY
Schweikert	YEA
Stanton	YEA 🗳️

## ARIZONA'S 2024 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: A CRUCIAL TURNING POINT

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

Arizona's 2024 legislative elections are shaping up to be a pivotal event in the state's political landscape, with critical races across several key districts potentially determining the balance of power. This election cycle features a mix of seasoned incumbents and eager new challengers across the state, highlighting the dynamic nature of Arizona politics.

### The Battlegrounds

While all 30 Legislative Districts in Arizona are up for grabs this election cycle these few districts are where many eyes turn to see which way the legislature will lean come election day 2024, with the Republican margins in the House and Senate already razor thin, these legislative districts will likely determine party control in Arizona's Legislature in 2025.

In Legislative District 2, candidates Ari Daniel Bradshaw, incumbent Justin Wilmeth, Neil DeSanti, Stephanie Simacek, and Tom Simes are vying for positions, making it one of the more closely watched races due to its competitive nature.

District 4 sees incumbents Matt Gress and challengers Karen Gresham, Kelli Butler, and Pamela Carter, emphasizing the diverse political interests and the importance of local issues such as water rights and agricultural sustainability.

In District 9, Democratic incumbents Lorena Austin and Seth Blattman face strong competition from Republicans Kylie Barber, Mary Ann Mendoza, and Michael A. "Michael" Eaton, reflecting the district's highly contested status.

Legislative District 13 has incumbents Julie Willoughby and challengers Brandy Reese, Nicholas Gonzales, and Shante Saulsberry, focusing on both rural and urban priorities, from economic development to infrastructure improvements.

In Districts 16 and 17, the races are also intense. District 16 features incumbents Keith Seaman and Teresa Martinez against challengers Chris Lopez, Gabriela "Gabby" Saucedo Mercer, and Rob Hudelson. Meanwhile, District 17 sees incumbents Cory McGarr and Rachel Jones challenged by Anna Orth and Kevin Volk.

District 23 rounds out the battlegrounds with incumbents Mariana Sandoval and Michele Pena facing challenges from James "Jimmy" Holmes and Matias Rosales. This



district is particularly significant due to its mixed urban-rural composition, affecting both policy priorities and campaign strategies.

### Implications for Agriculture and Water Management

Given the significant role agriculture plays in Arizona's economy, the electoral outcomes in these districts are crucial. Candidates are making concerted efforts to address sustainable water management, an issue that resonates deeply

across party lines but is particularly critical in rural areas dependent on agriculture.

As the campaigns heat up, the 2024 Arizona legislative elections stand as a critical juncture for the state. With a mix of tightly contested races and clear partisan strongholds, the outcomes will not only shape the immediate future of Arizona's governance but will also have lasting impacts on how the state addresses its most pressing challenges. Voters' engagement in this democratic process is essential, as their choices will profoundly influence policy directions and quality of life in Arizona for years to come. For a full list of candidates and continued coverage of the 2024 election cycle, visit our website at [www.azfb.org](http://www.azfb.org) 🗳️

## TEACHERS CAN LEARN ABOUT AGRICULTURE ON THE FARM AND RANCH

By Staff Reports

Are you a teacher who would like to bring agriculture into your classroom? Do you know a teacher who would like a hands-on opportunity to learn about their food and fiber, where it is coming from, and who is producing it?

### IT'S BACK! AAI10

#### LEARN ABOUT THE ORIGINAL STEM CAREER: AGRICULTURE

June 12 - 15, 2023  
Maricopa County

- Farm tours**  
Join us for one virtual day and an exciting 5-day immersion experience in Maricopa County: travel in-person to interact with Arizona farmers, ranchers, researchers, and food processors to understand agriculture and our food system.
- Professional Development hours & resources**  
Earn your Professional Development hours while on tour and gain access to valuable resources you can bring into your classroom.
- Networking opportunities**  
Meet other Arizona teachers, educators, and industry specialists for lifelong connections.

**Apply today!**  
Registration ends April 23rd

CONTACT US: 602-827-8249  
[extension@arizona.edu](mailto:extension@arizona.edu)  
[www.arizonaagricultureinstitute.org](http://www.arizonaagricultureinstitute.org)

AFAL  
Arizona Agricultural Literacy Program

Well, do we have an opportunity for you! The Arizona Agriculture Institute (AAI), formally known as Summer Ag Institute, will occur June 12-15, 2023. This 3-day immersion program will allow teachers to see first-hand how their food and fiber are being produced and allow them to ask questions of those producing it.

Be sure to visit <https://extension.arizona.edu/arizona-agricultural-institute> for more information and an application. Only 30 teachers will be accepted into the program! There are also opportunities to participate in virtual lessons and gain access to a plethora of resources and materials for the classroom.

Apply today! 🗳️

## Unleash Microbe Power!

By Paul Schneider Jr., AG-USA

We believe that soil life plays a key role in everything a farmer does! Microbes are the chemists of the soil!

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MENTOR PROTÉGÉ CAMP CLASS 3

continued from Page 4

how do we conserve water, what is rotational grazing? Then there is Spring Works and Fall Shipping.

PROTÉGÉ: SIERRA FRYDENLUND

**What's been the biggest takeaway from your first gathering? Subsequent ones if they occurred?** One significant component of my first meeting with Mike is that he is multifaceted. He has stories of ranching, but also as a sheriff, and a bus driver.

**How do you see this helping a broader set of NRCS employees? What's key for you?** His life experience made me understand that being involved in agriculture never stops; people evolve, but that knowledge never goes away. It is truly ingrained in oneself.

**Why have you felt this program has been helpful?** This program has helped me understand that working in agriculture is a full-time job – ultimately a life's work. I have learned a lot, but I have much more to attain in terms of knowledge and expertise.

**What more do you hope to learn?** I hope to learn more about ranching operations in Arizona as a whole: obstacles, inventory processes, collaborative partnerships, etc. My workload primarily consists of cropland, so I don't get to have an insider look into rangeland systems.

PROTÉGÉ: SCOTT COURTRIGHT

**What's been the biggest takeaway from your first gathering? Subsequent ones**



**if they occurred?** The biggest takeaway for me was simply seeing what goes into the quarterly range monitoring and how it has been done for such a long period. It reinforced the fact that Mike is required to closely monitor the conditions on his ranch regularly and that it is one part of the larger conservation plan he is implementing.

**How do you see this helping a broader set of NRCS employees? What's key for you?** We are often focused on our day-to-day activities and this opportunity has allowed me to see the bigger picture of conservation that is being done and better understand how NRCS and other partner agencies collaborate with Mike to implement the numerous conservation measures on the ranch.

**Why have you felt this program has been helpful?** I find it extremely rewarding to spend time with Mike to learn about Mike and his ranch. I also have enjoyed the range monitoring and learning about

the key plant species that are tracked and how that information is used. It is really interesting to me how closely things are monitored and how the historical data is used. I also appreciate what ranchers do considering all the challenges they face, including the use of ranch lands by the public and how that is managed.

**What more do you hope to learn?** I just hope to learn more about ranching and to experience more of what ranching involves. There is so much about ranching and agriculture that I do not know about or have not been exposed to, and I look forward to learning more. 🚜

AG INNOVATOR

continued from Page 2

shine and expand entrepreneurial activities,” says Arizona Farm Bureau President and southern Arizona rancher Stefanie Smallhouse. “Strong communities depend on small businesses and the entrepreneurial spirit. We have already seen some great innovation in Arizona agriculture, and I would encourage others to take on this challenge.”

The overall winner of the competition will receive \$100,000 in startup funds, the runner-up will be awarded \$25,000 and two additional business owners who advance to the final four round will receive \$10,000.

“Imagine what \$100,000 could do for your business,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “We’ve doubled the prize and doubled the impact.”

American Farm Bureau is offering a total of \$145,000 in startup funds throughout the course of the competition. After the application period closes, 10 semi-finalist teams will be selected and announced on Sept. 3. Next, the 10 semi-finalist



The final four teams will be awarded \$10,000 each and participate in a live pitch competition in front of Farm Bureau members, investors and industry representatives at the AFBF Convention in January 2025 in San Antonio, Texas. (photo credit: AFBF Photo, Michael LoBiond)

teams will pitch virtually to compete for a spot in the final four round of the contest.

The final four teams will be awarded \$10,000 each and participate in a live pitch competition in front of Farm Bureau members, investors and industry representatives at the AFBF Convention in January 2025 in San Antonio, Texas, to win:

Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Winner, \$90,000 (total of \$100,000)

Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge Runner-up, \$15,000 (total of \$25,000)

Entrepreneurs must be members of a county or parish Farm Bureau within their state of residence to qualify as top 10 semi-finalists. Applicants who are not Farm Bureau members can visit <https://www.fb.org/about/get-involved#join> to learn about becoming a member. 🚜

**Editor's Note:** Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on June 15.



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# SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS AND THE AG WORLD

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Since 2009, Arizona Farm Bureau engaged the social media channels and continues to seek out ways to maximize this marketing tool in an oversaturated and overstimulated social environment. Similar to evaluating the latest agricultural technology, the marketing and communications arena of Farm Bureau seeks to figure out what is the latest in social media.

Several organizations study trends and for some time we’ve landed on viewing what Sproutsocial, a metrics platform, is saying.

Just what are Sproutsocial and other social media experts saying about trends in 2024? Well, here is Sproutsocial’s list.

1. **Video is king...but with a long-form twist:** We’re excited to discover this one since Arizona Farm Bureau’s “Talk to a Farmer/Rancher” Friday events all end up being long-form video events. It starts as a “live” on our Instagram account, @AZfarmbureau, but is saved to the account for viewing later. Since we’ve garnered a following, we now upload the videos to YouTube and post them on azfb.org in the videos section of the website.
2. **Playful content is the new “brand personality:”** Says, Sproutsocial, “The “edgy” brand voice is taking a back seat to a new brand trend: experimenting with playful content. Brands have consistently found creative ways to tap into meme culture and the voice of the Internet in a way that fits their voice. And we’ve seen more brands experimenting with their voice and visual content to do so.” Arizona Farm Bureau’s @AZFB-aitc certainly does this with some of their posts working to solicit engagement. You’ll also see this with the @AZfarmbureau reels on occasion.
3. **The expansion of social commerce remains a trend to watch—and use:** The hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt certainly is trending and fess up, you’ve bought something after seeing it on TikTok or another social platform. But this is more than a fleeting trend, according to Sproutsocial and others —social commerce is a continuing trend to watch. While Arizona Farm Bureau doesn’t try to sell products via our social media channels, we do use our social media channels to get our members and other stakeholders to sign up for an event and more.
4. **SEO is important for social channels too—not just your site: Sproutsocial’s brand takeaway:** “Just as you would optimize an article on your blog or a page on your site for SEO, take an optimized approach to your social content. Optimize your posts and profile for maximum discoverability by using the right keywords in your caption, the right hashtags and relevant keywords within your alt text, too.” As a result, the Arizona Farm Bureau constantly tests hashtags and keywords.
5. **Behind-the-scenes content and reimagined transparency:** Sproutsocial talked to Paula Perez, Social Engagement & Community Growth Specialist at Oatly, about current social trends, “Consumers are more interested than ever in labor practices, diversity, investor relations, supply chain, company leadership, and environmental responsibility.” Because of our advocacy and outreach, the Arizona Farm Bureau is constantly sharing our values and farm and ranch leadership policy priorities.
6. **Authentic content resonates across platforms:** “Authentic, non-promotional content is the number one thing consumers say they don’t see enough of from brands on social, according to The Sprout Social Index™ says Sproutsocial. “We’ve seen the way creator culture has skyrocketed in popularity—and brands featuring authentic voices, from creators to employees, shine against those that don’t. And brands must recognize that this trend is here to stay—it’s the new era of social media. Sproutsocial talked to Flywire Social Media Manager Sam Mackowitz, who believes AI is only driving this desire for more authenticity.” For Arizona Farm Bureau, one key way we achieve this is to ask permission and then share content that is actually from our farmers and ranchers, especially our Monday/Tuesday Rancher/Farmer posts on Facebook and Instagram. You can’t get more authentic than that.
7. **The boom of the creator and influencer economy:** “Today, it’s the creator and influencer’s world—we’re just posting in it,” explains Sproutsocial. “In the era of authenticity, creators and influencers lend an authentic, human voice and experience to the social scroll. And their place on brand accounts is only going

to become more important in connecting with audiences. In fact, in a Q3 Sprout Pulse Survey of 307 US-based marketers, 8 in 10 social marketers describe influencer marketing as essential to their social strategies.” First, the Arizona Farm Bureau engages influencers when it makes sense to especially if related to a campaign. Additionally, we celebrate and promote our farmer influencers like @Thefarmerjon and @baleshay (Trevor Bales) and will continue to do so.

For full disclosure, Arizona Farm Bureau uses Sproutsocial to help us track our social media data and assess our content and its popularity. It’s served as a key support for us to get this medium right.

In the meantime, Arizona Farm Bureau registers several benefits to its outreach beyond the “current trends” thanks to social media.

### Connecting with Large and Diverse Audiences

One of the main benefits of social media for the Arizona Farm Bureau is the ability to connect with a large and diverse audience. Social media platforms have a vast reach, and by having a presence on these platforms, the Arizona Farm Bureau can connect with people from all over the state and beyond. This allows the organization to share information about the latest agricultural developments and updates about the organization’s events and activities. As a result, we’ve connected with people and organizations we otherwise would be unable to do. These diverse audiences have helped us provide varied content based on their interests and questions about Arizona agriculture.

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