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A CONVERSATION ON AMERICA'S LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC LANDS: KAITLYNN GLOVER

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

In the ever-evolving landscape of agriculture and public lands management, Kaitlynn Glover is another voice carrying weight and expertise on behalf of the livestock industry and preservation of originally intended uses of our public lands.

As the Executive Director of the Public Lands Council and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association's Natural Resources division, Glover has been a steadfast advocate for sustainable land use and the interests of America's ranchers since joining the organizations in 2020.

Her journey to this pivotal role is marked by a deep-rooted passion for agriculture and a robust career that spans continents and disciplines. Before stepping into her current position, Glover served as a policy advisor to Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), where she honed her expertise in navigating the complex intersection of policy, land management, and agricultural production. Her work in the Senate provided her with a front-row seat to the legislative processes that shape the nation's natural resource policies, equipping her with the insights needed to drive impactful change.

Glover's expertise extends beyond the halls of Capitol Hill. Her international experience includes several years with Teagasc, Ireland's agriculture semi-state authority, where she immersed herself in innovative agricultural practices and research. During this time, she earned a Master's of Agriscience in Innovation Support from University College Dublin, further solidifying her commitment to advancing agricultural sustainability and resilience.

Hailing from Wyoming, Glover's connection to the land runs deep. Raised in a state where wide-open spaces and rugged landscapes define daily life, she developed a profound appreciation for the delicate balance between grazing, recreation, and conservation on public lands. Her diverse background in agriculture policy and hands-on production, combined with her strong ties to ranchers, recreationalists, and other stewards of public lands, positions her uniquely to lead with vision



Says Kaitlynn Glover, "I'm incredibly hopeful for the future. People want to know where their food comes from, and they want to feel secure that their wistful images of the West will be there when they come to visit."

and pragmatism. In her current role, Glover continues to champion policies that support the livelihoods of cattlemen and women while ensuring the long-term health of America's public lands.

Arizona Agriculture: How does your experience in the U.S. Senate and with Teagasc in Ireland inform your approach to managing and advocating for public lands grazing?

Glover: There are so many different ways to end up with a policy career in Washington, D.C. While I was working in Ireland, I was concurrently conducting social research on "knowledge transfer" – how people learn the things, the most efficient pathways to convey information, what people do with information once they have it, and whether certain information pathways are more likely to result in acting on that information. This process sounds complicated when we try to distill it into its individual parts, but it's a process we all go through in seconds every time we have a conversation. Whether we're trying to convince mom and dad to let us have an ice cream, urge a farmer to adopt an emerging technology, or secure a vote in Congress, knowing which buttons to push to get the desired outcome is part of our daily lives. My work with pig farmers while at Teagasc taught me how to develop strategies that would work for specific groups – groups that may not seem similar on the surface but had key attributes in common – and how to most successfully clinch their participation in a project. That experience translated directly to my work in the Senate where I was constantly developing partnerships to resolve legislative and policy conflicts. I've learned whether you're a farm advisor, policy analyst, or lobbyist, the biggest skill you

need to have is to understand what people care about and how to give them the information they need to be motivated to act, and succeed, in that space.

Arizona Agriculture: What are the key challenges facing the public lands grazing community today, and how is the council addressing them?

SEE AMERICA'S LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC LANDS PAGE 5

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COTTON FARMING IN ARIZONA: A GAME CHANGER

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Cotton has long been a cornerstone of Arizona's agricultural economy, contributing significantly to the state's economic vitality while demonstrating remarkable strides in environmental efficiency. A recent comprehensive study conducted by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension quantifies the economic contributions of Arizona cotton farming and ginning to Arizona's economy in 2022, based on the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture.

The study not only highlights the direct economic impacts of these activities but also accounts for indirect and induced multiplier effects, which capture economic activity in related industries and household spending. Additionally, the study examines trends in pesticide use and water efficiency, showcasing Arizona's leadership in sustainable cotton production.

The May 2025 Study, conducted by Claudia Montaña, George Frisvold, and Dari Duval, Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, confirms the impact of this storied crop in Arizona agriculture.

"Aside from the top line dollars and job numbers, things that stuck out to me were first the big drop in pesticide use," said George Frisvold, Professor & Extension Specialist in the Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics. "Arizona cotton used to be a high-pesticide use crop; now it is a low-pesticide use crop. Arizona's drop compared to the rest of the Cotton Belt is a testament to the state's Extension IPM programs. The improvement in water use efficiency is also impressive. Arizona cotton growers are getting a lot more "crop per drop" than they did 40 years ago."

Arizona Farm Bureau President John Boelts added, "Arizona's cotton farmers boosted our economy by over \$320 million in 2022, producing top-quality cotton fibers for essentials like bed sheets, medical gauze, durable paper currency, and iconic denim jeans."

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF COTTON FARMING AND GINNING

In 2022, Arizona's cotton industry—encompassing both farming and ginning—generated

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FILL YOUR PLATE SPRINGS TO LIFE WITH EXCITING NEW FEATURES

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Get ready to dig into Arizona’s vibrant agricultural scene like never before! In May, the Arizona Farm Bureau unveiled a dazzling upgrade to its *Fill Your Plate* website, transforming it into a lively hub that connects urban Arizonans with the heart and soul of local farming and Arizona agriculture in general. This revamped platform is bursting with new ways to explore, savor, and celebrate the state’s rich farm-to-table heritage.

Since its debut in 2007, *Fill Your Plate* has been a beloved resource for Arizonans eager to rediscover the roots of their food. With nearly three-quarters of the world’s population expected to live in cities by 2050, many of us are generations removed from farm life. The newly enhanced *Fill Your Plate* bridges that gap, offering a dynamic, user-friendly experience that brings Arizona’s farmers, ranchers, and their stories closer than ever.

“This is a game-changer for foodies and savvy shoppers across Arizona!” said Arizona Farm Bureau President John Boelts. “The updated *Fill Your Plate* is packed with Arizona originals—fresh produce, premium meats, and family recipes that showcase the best of our state.”

So, what’s new on this exciting digital plate? Here’s a taste:

- **Supercharged Search Tools:** Four powerful databases make it a breeze to find farmers’ markets, farm-fresh products, visitable farms, and treasured farm-family recipes. Your next local food adventure is just a click away!
- **Stories That Sizzle:** A revamped blog and new podcast dive deep into the lives of Arizona’s farmers and ranchers, featuring expert nutritionists from across the globe. Hear the stories behind your favorite Arizona wines, beef, and more!
- **Recipes and FAQs with Flair:** Explore a treasure trove of recipes crafted for Arizona’s unique bounty, paired with a lively FAQ section where farmers and ranchers answer your burning questions about agriculture. Expect regular updates as consumer curiosity grows!
- **Fun Facts and Food Insights:** The new “Farm Facts that Feed You” feature serves up fascinating tidbits about Arizona agriculture, alongside resources on food prices, nutrition, and the diversity of local crops and livestock.

“Arizona produces some of the safest, most abundant food in the world,” said Arizona Farm Bureau CEO Philip Bashaw. “With *Fill Your Plate*, we’re throwing open the barn doors to share our story and our products directly with you. The bold new look and rich content make it a feast for the senses!”

More than just a website, *Fill Your Plate* is a love letter to Arizona’s agricultural roots and a call to build community through food. “We’re thrilled to make it easier for Arizonans to connect with the farmers and ranchers who feed us,” said Communications Director Julie Murphree. “Every visit inspires you to explore the stories behind every delicious bite.”

The *Fill Your Plate* Now Podcast Serves as a Cornerstone to the Updated Website

The “Fill Your Plate NOW” podcast, hosted by Julie Murphree and Tammy Baker, is a vibrant and informative show dedicated to connecting listeners with the origins of their food, promoting Arizona farming practices, and offering practical tips for healthier, cost-effective eating. Supported by the Arizona Milk Producers and Arizona Farm Bureau, the podcast emphasizes the importance of supporting local farmers and understanding the journey from farm to table. It aims to enrich lives by fostering a deeper connection to food sources, encouraging wellness, and promoting financially savvy food-shopping habits.

The podcast will explore a variety of topics centered around Arizona agriculture, nutrition, and home cooking, with a focus on empowering



consumers to make informed food choices. Its core mission is to bridge the gap between consumers and the agricultural community, highlighting the benefits of fresh, locally sourced meals that are both delicious and budget friendly. The hosts, described as a “farm girl” (Julie Murphree) and a “nutrition Ninja” (Tammy Baker), bring their expertise to deliver engaging discussions that appeal to a broad audience, from home cooks to health-conscious individuals and those interested in sustainable living. Most importantly, the podcast will feature our Arizona farmers and ranchers and provide a forum for them to tell their farm and ranch stories in a comfortable and entertaining setting.

Ultimately, with fresh farmer profiles especially through the “Fill Your Plate Now” podcast added regularly, recipes, *Fill Your Plate* promises a new adventure every time you visit. Whether someone is a chef hunting for local ingredients, a family supporting nearby farms, or just curious about where their groceries come from, this platform is a gateway to Arizona’s agricultural pride.

Remember, the *Fill Your Plate* website is a powerful platform for Arizona farmers and ranchers to promote their products, share their stories, and connect directly with consumers. If you have product that you sell directly to the public and want to be on *Fill Your Plate*, contact Julie Murphree at juliemurphree@azfb.org.

Hop over to www.fillyourplate.org today and fill your plate with the flavors, stories, and spirit of Arizona! 🍴

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A TRIBUTE TO BILL HICKMAN: A LEGACY OF LOVE, FAMILY, AND EGGS

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Bill Hickman Sr., born November 7, 1928, in Columbus, Kansas, was a cornerstone of Arizona agriculture and a devoted family man whose vision and tenacity transformed a modest backyard flock into the thriving Hickman's Family Farms, the largest egg producer in the Southwest. As we reflect on what would have been his 97th birthday in 2025, we celebrate his remarkable life, his enduring partnership with his beloved wife, Gertie, and the extraordinary legacy they built together.

Bill's journey began in Glendale, Arizona, where his family settled in 1944 after moving from Kansas. His mother, Nell Hickman, started a small flock of 50 chickens, selling eggs from her back porch, a humble endeavor rooted in resourcefulness. Bill, a Glendale High School graduate and Army veteran, returned to Arizona in 1956 after serving in Alaska. It was then that he met Gertie Valenzuela, a spirited Arizona native raised behind her father's dry goods store cash register. Their love story, sparked by Bill's charm and a sleek 1956 Ford Victoria, culminated in marriage on August 19, 1957. This month, Bill and Gertie would have celebrated 68 years of marriage, a testament to their unwavering commitment to each other and their shared dreams.

In 1957, Bill gifted Gertie 500 baby chicks, launching her as a 50-50 partner with Nell in the egg business. From these humble



Bill and Gertie Hickman

collaboration with the Arizona SEE TRIBUTE TO BILL HICKMAN PAGE 6

beginnings, Hickman's Family Farms grew exponentially, driven by Bill and Gertie's entrepreneurial spirit and innovative practices. Gertie sold eggs from the backseat of Bill's Ford coupe to local cafés and grocers, while Bill managed labor, drove trucks, and tended to the growing flock. By 1959, the flock reached 3,500 hens, and Bill left his gas station job to focus on the farm full-time. Over the decades, their operation expanded from 500 chickens to 13 million hens across Arizona, Colorado, and California, producing 2 billion eggs annually in Arizona alone.

The success of Hickman's Family Farms stemmed from a blend of innovation, sustainability, and family involvement. Early on, Bill's father, Guy, built individual cages and coops to improve egg production, a pioneering move. The family prioritized efficiency, adopting robots and conveyor systems to handle eggs without human touch until they reached consumers' kitchens. They embraced eco-friendly practices, such as recycling wash water, converting manure into fertilizer, and introducing 100% post-consumer recycled PET plastic cartons in 2016—the first of their kind in the egg industry. Responding to consumer demand, they expanded cage-free and grass-fed egg production, ensuring hens roamed in climate-controlled barns with privacy curtains for laying. Strategic partnerships, like the 20-year

ARIZONA FARM BUREAU LEADERSHIP TAKES TO CAPITOL HILL

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

In June, the Arizona Farm Bureau headed to Washington, D.C. for a week-long advocacy fly-in. Led by President John Boelts and several members of the State Board, the delegation participated in the American Farm Bureau Federation's Advocacy Fly-In, engaging directly with many of Arizona's Congressional leaders.

The trip began with a detailed policy briefing hosted by American Farm Bureau Federation staff, joined by Nebraska Congressman Adrian Smith. Members received critical updates on top national priorities including trade, taxes and reconciliation, farm labor, and the Make America Healthy Again initiative.

Our first meeting was with Kris Polly, President and CEO of Water Strategies, and his team. Water Strategies is a government relations firm specializing in water, power, and agricultural issues across the Western United States. The firm works closely with Arizona's irrigation districts and advocates for federal policies that support the future of agriculture. They

also publish Irrigation Leader, a publication that highlights innovation and leadership in water management across the states they serve.

Throughout the week, we met with nearly all of Arizona's Congressional delegation and also visited the Canadian Embassy. There, we discussed trade relations and strengthened ties with one of Arizona's top international partners. With the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) under review, the timing of this conversation was particularly important, focusing on mutual benefits and long-term trade stability.

Unfortunately, our scheduled meeting with Secretary Rollins and her team at USDA was disrupted by the Army's 250th birthday parade, which affected operations across Capitol Hill, including access to federal offices. Despite the change in plans, we were grateful for the extended opportunity to meet with the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Advocacy. What was initially set as a one-hour meeting turned into nearly two hours of meaningful discussion

SEE LEADERSHIP TAKE TO CAPITOL HILL PAGE 5

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LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC LANDS *continued from Page 1*

Glover: Public lands grazing is such a unique subset of the behemoth that is American agriculture. Everyone loves thinking about a guy in a cowboy hat trailing cows across a vast landscape. They love thinking about the open, wild, free American West. The public also love the idea that these lands are theirs and that they have ownership in the last wild parts of this great nation.

Often, those two strongly held values simply don't square with one another. Many public lands in the West weren't created intentionally, they were just the lands left unsettled because they were too harsh or too far from water, but over time they have become public treasures. Public lands grazing permittees are ranchers who settled places nearby and have taken care of these landscapes for generations, far before the advent of fat bikes or long-distance trail running.

These lands are intended to serve the public, and public lands ranchers take care of them accordingly, but the public understanding about what it takes to manage these landscapes to ensure they remain healthy, open, and available for all uses hasn't always kept pace with the demand for access and use. We face an ever-evolving educational challenge to answer questions about why cattle and sheep are crucial to Western land management in order to ensure policies around public land management are durable.

Arizona Agriculture: How does the council balance the needs of the livestock industry with the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity on public lands?

Glover: Grazing and conservation are synonymous terms. By definition, public lands are managed for "multiple use and sustained yield," so livestock grazing is managed with the intent to achieve specific outcomes this year with an eye toward long-term sustainability and predictability for the years to come. Often, public perception and political development attempt to pit livestock grazing's use of forage against some standard of conservation objectives, when that perspective is based in a complete lack of understanding of what it takes to manage an ecosystem for long-term productivity. The Public Lands Council supports ongoing research in riparian management, targeted grazing, watershed management for forage objectives, as well as our engagement on policy that recognizes the need for long-term, science-based monitoring of these vast landscapes.

Arizona Agriculture: What are your thoughts on the Bureau of Land Management's recent conservation rule, and how do you see it impacting the livestock industry on public lands?

Glover: The Biden Administration proposed the "Conservation and Landscape Health" rule, which by any standard sounded like an ambitious undertaking that would guarantee land and wildlife health. PLC led a coalition of public lands interests in suing the BLM to overturn the rule and have worked with the Trump Administration to rescind the rule as soon as possible. In truth, the rule overstepped BLM's legal authority to manage public lands by adding a new "use" of the landscape and elevating this use above all other uses of the land.

This was a problem because when Congress passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), they were very specific about which uses were authorized, and how those uses needed to be balanced against one another. The law does not require BLM to ensure all uses can exist everywhere, but FLPMA is clear that no one use can take undue priority over any other. The Conservation Rule also gave BLM an "easy button" to bypass stakeholders like ranchers and rural communities, as well as the American public, in closing down access and use of lands.

Arizona Agriculture: What encourages you about the future and how well do our ranchers manage public lands?

Glover: I have the best job in Washington. I get to come to work every day and repeat my mantra: Grazing is Good. I get to tell the stories about producers who have been on the landscape for 5 generations and those who just secured a permit for the first time. I am able to weave together the complexities of international trade, tourism, recreation, and ecology to advocate for policy that will create a stronger future for Western communities who rely on public lands. While not every day is filled with policy victories, the resolve and persistence of the people I represent makes me so hopeful for the future. The best (and sometimes, worst) part of my job is that nothing is really ever done. Because I work with ecosystems, everything is cyclical which means that we've addressed this problem before and we can try a different, better way to solve it this time around. Learning from the past and making the future better is a privilege.

Arizona Agriculture: How does the council support young or beginning ranchers in accessing public lands, and what programs or initiatives are in

place for them?

Glover: Public Lands Grazing is always looking to the future. We work with states to integrate public lands briefing sessions in young producer sessions so the next generation can apply their knowledge close to home. PLC also hosts 6 interns and 2 scholarship recipients in our Washington, D.C. office every year.

Interns participate in every part of the policy process for an entire semester, and our Legislative Conference scholarship recipients jump right into legislative and regulatory advocacy through intensive lobbying sessions during our spring conference. Each of our policy committees has a Past President as policy mentor for the Chair and Vice Chair to consult. Every year at our Annual Meeting, we invite a strong contingent of local students to participate in discussions about the future of public lands. As we look ahead, it's not going to be only ranchers advocating for public lands grazing, it's going to be the young fishermen, hunters, hikers, bikers, and folks from town who see the value of what we do and help us to step up to defend this way of life.

Arizona Agriculture: Our ranchers feel that wildfire management of public lands has been poorly managed over the decades and part of the reason we have so many catastrophic fires. What is the council doing to address this and can we be hopeful that improvement is on the way?

Glover: Fire is a monumental challenge for public lands ranchers and the country as a whole. Over the last 30 years, "active management" of our Western landscapes has been eroded by well-meaning policies, litigation, and the desire to preserve special places. This desire is misplaced, because our Western forests and rangelands don't exist in a terrarium – they need to be managed in order to remain healthy and special for the future. PLC engages in a wide variety of fire policy: we are working with the Forest Service and states to expand the use of targeted grazing in forest environments to address understory density that exacerbates dangerous crown fires; PLC secured draft Farm Bill language and 2 separate bills to increase the use of targeted grazing specifically in ecosystems that need fire breaks or immediate fine fuels removal; as part of the BLM's grazing regulations revisions and the updates to the USFS rangeland handbooks and directives, PLC has advocated for expanded use of temporary non-renewable grazing permits specifically for fire reduction; PLC is also engaged in the discussions about budgetary allocations because while fire suppression gets most of the attention, there is a significant need to be able to thin trees, use prescribed fire, use targeted grazing, and do meaningful timely post-fire remediation. It's a complex problem, and PLC is in the middle of it because our ranchers are on the front lines of all of these fires.

Arizona Agriculture: What is the Council's vision for the future of public lands grazing in the context of evolving land use policies and the public's impact on use? Again, are you hopeful?

Glover: I'm incredibly hopeful for the future. People want to know where their food comes from, and they want to feel secure that their wistful images of the West will be there when they come to visit. Each day, my team and I work to build durable policy to ensure that ranchers utilizing grazing permits can stay in business and be profitable, support policy that supports rural communities, and build advocates so that those who want the best for these areas can actually be part of policies that support the future. This isn't without its challenges, but when I look at my members and our partners, their passion for the future makes me not just hopeful, but confident.

Arizona Agriculture: Based on your experience, you get the multi-use feature of our public lands and that all of it is doable. But what is often the biggest hindrance to the success of public lands use, and how do you and your leadership feel it can be resolved or fixed?

Glover: Often, policy and budgets are the biggest obstacle to meaningful public land management. Budgets for federal agencies are massive, but the budgets for federal land management programs are anemic. That's not to say that throwing more money at a problem is going to resolve all the issues, but there are specific areas where a lack of funds and people to do the job are the only roadblocks. In other areas, every single piece of red tape is costly, both in time and finances. PLC is laser-focused on regulatory right-sizing: returning the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and more to their intended purpose so that speculative, expensive, lengthy analyses don't get in the way of crucial work on the ground. This is the core of the work PLC does on a daily basis: how do we make sure the law, the people, and the money are aligned in a way that supports livestock grazing as a tool to manage hundreds of millions of acres across the West that are truly the heartbeat of this country. 🐾

LEADERSHIP TAKES TO CAPITOL HILL *continued from Page 4*

on key issues affecting Arizona agriculture and small business.

Around the table with attorneys and ombudsmen, our members raised critical concerns including the Mexican Gray Wolf, air quality regulations, and Department of the Interior rules. SBA representatives were not only attentive but eager to understand the unique challenges our industry faces. They emphasized that the current regulatory window offers a rare chance to influence meaningful change—and they're moving swiftly. Following our meeting, the SBA Office of Advocacy submitted a 15-page comment letter to Secretary Burgum at the Department of the Interior, advocating for regulatory reforms that align with Arizona agriculture's interests, including support for the delisting of the Mexican Wolf.

Trips like this to Capitol Hill are instrumental in driving real change for Arizona agriculture. By engaging directly with lawmakers, federal agen-



cies, and advocacy groups, our members ensure that the voices of Arizona farmers and ranchers are not only heard but actively considered in the policymaking process. These fly-ins help build critical relationships, open doors for future collaboration, and directly influence regulations and legislation that shape our industry. The investment in time and resources is justified by the tangible outcomes, like SBA's formal support on regulatory issues, that protect and promote Arizona agriculture. For our members, these trips are a powerful reminder that when we show up, speak up, and stay engaged, we make a difference.

To stay engaged and informed on key issues please sign up for our While You Were Working weekly email where we strive to keep our members updated and informed on all things agriculture policy. Members may sign up at [Arizona Farm Bureau](https://www.arizona-farm-bureau.org) or by emailing advocacy@azfb.org 🐾

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COTTON FARMING *continued from Page 1*

substantial economic activity across the state. The study estimates the total economic contribution at \$322 million in sales, including multiplier effects. This figure breaks down as follows: \$176 million in direct sales from cotton and cottonseed and approximately \$9.6 million from cotton ginning. Beyond direct sales, the industry supported \$59 million in labor income and contributed \$132 million to Arizona’s Gross State Product (GSP), which measures the value added to the economy. Additionally, the cotton sector sustained 1,446 jobs, with 862 jobs directly in cotton farming, 188 jobs in cotton ginning, and 396 jobs in other Arizona industries supported through multiplier effects.

The economic impact of cotton extends beyond the fields and gins. Indirect multiplier effects capture the economic activity generated in non-agricultural industries that supply goods and services to cotton production, such as equipment, fertilizers, and transportation. Induced multiplier effects reflect spending by households employed in the cotton industry, supporting consumer-facing industries like retail, healthcare, and food services. Together, these direct, indirect, and induced effects illustrate the cotton industry’s far-reaching influence on Arizona’s economy.

ARIZONA’S STANDING IN NATIONAL COTTON PRODUCTION

Arizona ranks among the top three producers of Pima cotton in the United States, a high-quality, extra-long-staple variety prized for its strength and softness. This distinction underscores the state’s competitive edge in the global cotton market. At the county level, Pinal County stands out, ranking in the top 1% of U.S. counties for cotton and cottonseed sales. Graham County is in the top 10%, while Yuma and Maricopa Counties fall within the top quarter, and Pima County ranks in the top third nationally. These rankings highlight the geographic concentration of cotton production in Arizona and its significance to local economies.

ADVANCES IN PESTICIDE USE AND WATER EFFICIENCY

In a 2017 Phoenix Magazine article, “A Cotton Tale,” addressing our state’s water issues Arizona cotton farmer Ron Rayner spoke on the cotton crop’s pest challenges. “The 1990s [were] horrific. It was just about to put us out of business,” explained Rayner. Reflecting on the past, he confirmed the advances the cotton industry has made with pesticides and water efficiency.

Arizona’s cotton industry has made remarkable progress in reducing its environmental footprint, particularly in pesticide use and water efficiency. From the mid-1990s to 2023, Arizona cotton growers reduced pesticide applications from **9 per acre** to just **0.58 per acre**, a dramatic decline. This reduction lowered pesticide application costs from **\$244 per acre** to **\$17.51 per acre**, enhancing the economic viability of cotton farming. Notably, Arizona’s 0.58 pesticide applications per acre in 2023 were the **lowest among cotton-producing states** and less than one-fifth of the U.S. national average of **3.2 applications**. These achievements reflect the adoption of advanced pest management practices, including integrated pest management (IPM) and precision agriculture technologies.

From that same 2017 article, Adam Hatley, Scottsdale cotton farmer on pest management improvements, said, “Before Bt cotton (that became available in 1996) we were probably spraying eight to 12 times a year just for pink bollworm, and then you had whiteflies and other issues. This year [2017] we haven’t sprayed for pests at all. So, for pests, you’ve gone from 14 sprays to zero.”

Water efficiency has also improved significantly. In 1984, Arizona cotton growers applied an average of **4.9 acre-feet (AF)** of irrigation water per acre, yielding **242 pounds of cotton lint per acre foot**. By 2023, water use had decreased to **4.2-acre feet per acre**, while yields increased to **299 pounds of cotton lint per acre foot**. This represents a **32% increase** in cotton produced per unit of water, demonstrating the industry’s commitment to sustainable water management in a water-scarce region. Innovations such as drip irrigation, improved crop varieties, and data-driven irrigation scheduling have driven these gains, ensuring that Arizona’s cotton industry remains both productive and environmentally responsible.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ARIZONA’S ECONOMY AND BEYOND

The findings of this study underscore the cotton industry’s dual role as an economic driver and a leader in sustainable agriculture. The 2022 \$322 million in total sales and 1,446 jobs supported by cotton farming and ginning highlight its importance to Arizona’s rural communities and broader economy. Counties like Pinal, Graham, Yuma, Maricopa, and Pima benefit disproportionately, with cotton serving as a key source of revenue and employment. The industry’s multiplier effects further amplify its impact, supporting jobs and businesses in sectors ranging from equipment manufacturing to retail.

Moreover, Arizona’s cotton growers have set a national standard for environmental stewardship. The drastic reduction in pesticide use and improved water efficiency demonstrate that economic growth and sustainability can go hand in hand. These advancements not only lower production costs but also position Arizona’s cotton industry to meet growing

TRIBUTE TO BILL HICKMAN *continued from Page 4*

Department of Corrections for inmate labor, and a symbiotic relationship with the Ak-Chin Indian Community for feed and fertilizer, further fueled growth.

Bill and Gertie’s five children—Matt, Glenn, Billy, Clint, and Sharman—grew up immersed in the business, with four joining as third-generation leaders. Their grandchildren, including Grant, Branden, and Brett, represent the fourth generation, ensuring the family legacy endures. Bill, who semi-retired to pursue his passion for golf, lived to see his sons Glenn and Billy take the helm in the 1980s, expanding the farm into a top 20 U.S. egg producer.

August holds special significance for the Hickmans, marking not only Bill and Gertie’s wedding anniversary but also Gertie’s birthday. These milestones mark a family legacy, shared with their 14 grandchildren and a community that embraced their farm-fresh eggs. Bill, who passed on January 3, 2025, left behind a legacy of hard work, innovation, and community impact. From Nell’s backyard to a three-state enterprise, Hickman’s Family Farms stands as a monument to Bill’s vision and the love he shared with Gertie—a love that, like their eggs, enriched countless lives.

Rest in peace, Bill Hickman Sr. Your legacy opens new possibilities for generations to come.

consumer demand for sustainably produced goods.

Ultimately, Arizona’s cotton industry remains a vital component of the state’s economy, contributing \$322 million in sales, \$59 million in labor income, \$132 million to Gross State Product (value added), and 1,446 jobs in 2022.

Its national prominence in Pima cotton production and top-ranking counties underscore its competitive strength. Simultaneously, the industry’s environmental achievements—reducing pesticide applications to the lowest in the nation and increasing water efficiency by 32%, set a benchmark for sustainable agriculture. As Arizona continues to balance economic growth with resource conservation, the cotton industry stands as a model of innovation and resilience, ensuring its enduring importance to the state’s economic and environmental landscape.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR ARIZONA COTTON FARMERS

When you visit with our Arizona cotton farmers, you sense an abiding passion for growing this crop.

Said DeAnna Diwan, Pinal County cotton farmer, in one of our Arizona Farm Bureau articles on their farming, “Like his father before him, dad knows the soil in and out. The farming now is me and my father, and cotton is our favorite crop. Cotton harvest is like Christmas to me.”

Diwan added, “Arizona farmers are really good at growing crops including a wonderful climate here in Arizona. We are still very passionate about agriculture from generation to generation.”

Paco Ollerton, Pinal County cotton farmer and former President of the Arizona Cotton Growers said in a profile article in Arizona Farm Bureau’s “The Voice” blog said, “If it wasn’t for agriculture none of us would be here. The early farmers settling Arizona developed the current reservoir and distribution system residential and industrial customers use today.” He added, “growing cotton is in our DNA.”

Gathered around the worn kitchen table at the Murphree home, though we’ve left the fields behind, our hearts can’t help but drift back to our farming days. Cotton sparks the liveliest discussions, as we marvel at the sweeping changes that have transformed the industry over decades, right up to the vibrant present. This University of Arizona report, now in our hands, sets it in stone: cotton reigns supreme, a true monarch of the fields, its legacy as enduring as our passion for it.

Editor’s Note: The study employed the **IMPLAN input-output model**, a widely used tool for estimating the economic contributions of specific industries. IMPLAN accounts for direct, indirect, and induced effects, providing a comprehensive picture of how cotton farming and ginning ripple through Arizona’s economy. To ensure accuracy, the researchers modified the IMPLAN model using data from multiple sources, including the **2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), USDA Economic Research Service**, and IMPLAN itself. This approach was necessary because cash receipt data for cotton farming and ginning in Arizona are often unavailable due to confidentiality restrictions. By cross-referencing these sources, the study achieved a robust estimate of the industry’s economic contributions.



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BUMPER CROP OF BILLS: ARIZONA’S 2025 AG LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The 2025 legislative session, Arizona’s 57th Legislature’s First Regular Session, stretched to a grueling 166 days before adjourning sine die on June 27, delivering meaningful advancements for our state’s agricultural community.

Amid budget discussions that required compromise after two prior spending plans were vetoed by Governor Katie Hobbs, a bipartisan agreement emerged, closely resembling a Senate proposal, and was swiftly signed into law to avert a government shutdown. Ultimately, the \$17.6 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2026 provides critical investments in water security, wildfire management, and tax relief.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN WATER AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Central to our efforts was Senate Bill 1520, a pivotal groundwater measure authorizing the designation of Basin Management Areas in the Gila Bend, Hualapai Valley, or Willcox Groundwater Basins through voter petitions or determinations by the Arizona Department of Water Resources Director based on specific conditions. It establishes procedures for approval, including public meetings, hydrological studies, and economic assessments, along with formulas for calculating groundwater rights, flexibility accounts, regulations for agricultural rights and conversions to municipal or industrial use, and the creation of BMA councils to manage conservation and rights. Through extensive negotiations and stakeholder input, this bill highlighted the agricultural sector’s proactive role in shaping solutions that balance conservation with productivity. As we’ve seen in similar initiatives, progress like this brings us ever closer to modernizing groundwater policies in ways that empower growers and protect our aquifers for future generations.

Our involvement extended to a range of water-related advancements, including House Bills 2572 and 2202, sponsored by Representative Gail Griffin. These bills introduced valuable flexibility for Irrigation Grandfathered Rights in subsequent Active Management Areas, allowing landowners to add or substitute acres provided the land has not been retired from irrigation, enabling transfers or combinations within the same basin or subbasin while limiting use to original allocations.

A notable success was the passage of Senate Bill 1611, sponsored by Sen. Shope, which creates a physical availability exemption credit allowing landowners in Active Management Areas to permanently relinquish Irrigation Grandfathered Rights in exchange for a groundwater withdrawal allowance, with specified credit volumes, replenishment obligations, and exemptions from assured water supply requirements under certain criteria. Signed into law by Governor Hobbs after refinement over multiple sessions, this measure offers a structured, equitable approach that respects farming traditions while accommodating growth. Along with other signed bills (save for those with emergency provisions), it will take effect on the general effective date of September 26, 2025.

Technological and recreational enhancements also shone through. Senate Bill 1320, now law, amends the definition of implements of husbandry to include autonomous and automated vehicles used exclusively for agricultural purposes, whether operated manually or with automated systems, granting them key exemptions to streamline modern farming operations. Similarly, Senate Bill 1517 expands eligibility for temporary general use registration to nonresidents with off-highway vehicles titled in another state that meet safety standards, allowing multiple registrations within a year, and extends the Off-Highway Vehicle Study Committee to May 31, 2027, a crucial aspect in our efforts to help mitigate some of the damages

and safety hazards posed to our agricultural lands and those who steward them.

The confirmation of Director Brierley at the Arizona Department of Agriculture, with strong Senate support via a 22-6 vote, further solidifies leadership committed to innovation and rural prosperity.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

With a dynamic political environment, the session’s bipartisan \$17.6 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2026 stands as a cornerstone achievement, investing in agriculture’s future through targeted supports in water and wildfire management. Water is the lifeblood of Arizona’s agriculture, and the budget allocates \$15 million to bolster access and efficiency, including \$3 million to the Colorado River litigation fund to protect Arizona’s vital water share, \$2 million in the Agriculture and Water Innovation Fund to promote efficient water use, and \$2 million for on-farm irrigation projects to help farmers optimize management. It also provides \$1.35 million for the Yuma Center for Excellence in Desert Agriculture to advance desert-specific research and \$1 million for the newly minted Natural Resource Conservation Board to enhance conservation efforts.

To address wildfire risks that threaten agricultural lands, the budget delivers \$41.2 million, with \$30 million to the Wildland Fire Suppression Fund for prevention and combat in rangelands and forests, and \$11.2 million to support rural communities in wildfire response. A 15% pay raise for state firefighters further strengthens this capacity, ensuring proactive protection for farms and ranches.

Tax relief measures offer additional relief, increasing the business personal property tax exemption from \$270,000 to \$500,000, which may reduce costs for small agricultural businesses and veteran farmers, enabling reinvestment in operations.

The upcoming elections and ballot measures present opportunities to build on this momentum, emphasizing collaborative governance that prioritizes agricultural needs amid broader issues.

Commitment to Advocacy and Sustainable Solutions This session underscores the agricultural community’s integral role in Arizona’s progress. Through bills like SB1520 and others, we’ve demonstrated extraordinary collaboration, laying a strong foundation for science-driven policies that sustain our resources and economies. Arizona Farm Bureau remains steadfast in advocating for farm and ranch families, inspired by leaders like Sen. Shope, Rep. Griffin, and others who champion practical, innovative approaches. While the State Legislature has concluded its in-session business, we are still hard at work building and maintaining relationships with state officials who rely on us as a resource to hear directly from constituents and the statewide agricultural community.

Looking Ahead As we advance, our priority is fostering governance that uplifts all Arizonans, especially in agriculture. The insights from this session will inform continued efforts to innovate and thrive, ensuring Arizona’s farms remain a pillar of strength. With the 2025 session behind us, we remain active in promoting and protecting agriculture in the arena of public policy.

In conclusion, the 2025 legislative session celebrated the resilience and forward momentum of Arizona agriculture. With notable advancements and shared vision, we’re poised for even greater success. The Arizona Farm Bureau will continue to champion our community’s voice, keeping their contributions at the forefront. 🚜

FUNDRAISER RAISES THE BACON FOR AG EDUCATION

By Katie Aikins, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Education

The 8th Annual Racin’ for the Bacon Derby Dinner is happening on Friday, September 19th! This year’s event, presented by the Arizona Pork Council, supports the Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company. Our Education Foundation works to support programs that educate youth and others about agriculture in the state of Arizona. Nearly 162,000 students, teachers, and community members have received the FREE resources, programs, and materials provided through the Foundation’s support this past year alone.

With the average consumer being three to four generations removed from the farm and ranch, there is a major gap in consumers’ food story. Help us close that gap by attending this year’s event. We want to be sure that the food story comes from those that are producing it.

Join us at this year’s Racin’ for the Bacon Derby Dinner on Friday, September 19th from 5:00pm -8:30pm. We promise delicious Arizona Grown appetizers and desserts, a BBQ dinner from the BBQ Master Bruce Cain, and Live and Silent Auctions full of can’t miss items.

Oh, and we can’t forget the pig races and derby hat competition. So, pull on your boots (or your most comfortable shoes) and your favorite hat and join us to support ag education in Arizona!

Your attendance alone ensures that we can teach 5 Arizona classrooms about their food and fiber this year. Tickets can be purchased by calling Katie Booth at 480-635-3605 or online at <https://www.azfb.org/Article/Racin-for-the-Bacon-Derby-Dinner-2025> 🚜



MY ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH AND HOW YOU CAN EXPLOIT THIS TOOL

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Social media trends continue to evolve rapidly, offering Arizona farmers and ranchers unique opportunities to enhance their outreach and engagement with consumers, fellow agriculturalists, and industry stakeholders. Leveraging these trends can help bridge the gap between rural producers and urban audiences, boost brand awareness, and drive direct sales.

Below, I’ll outline the latest social media trends, how Arizona farmers and ranchers can exploit them, and which channels are rising based on current insights.

LATEST SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS (2025)

- Short-Form Video Dominance with a Shift to Storytelling**
Short-form videos (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts) remain a powerhouse due to their ability to capture attention quickly. However, in 2025, the focus is shifting toward high-impact, narrative-driven content that hooks viewers within the first few seconds. Consumers crave authenticity and relatable stories over polished ads.
 - Opportunity for Arizona Farmers and Ranchers:** Share quick, engaging stories about daily farm life—planting crops in our desert climate,

tending to livestock, or sharing your concerns about the cost to farm. For example, a 15-second clip of a rancher checking cattle at sunrise or a farmer explaining an irrigation technique resonates deeply. A recent example is Pinal County cotton farmer Dean Wells showing his cotton planting season through short video clips.

2. Authenticity and Behind-the-Scenes Content

Audiences are drawn to unfiltered, transparent content that reveals the “real” side of businesses. Behind-the-scenes looks and authentic voices (e.g., farmers themselves, not just polished marketing teams) build trust and connection.

- Opportunity:** Post raw footage of farm operations—like harvesting Arizona alfalfa or rounding up cattle—paired with your personal commentary. This humanizes the operation and counters misconceptions about agriculture, a key concern given that many consumers know little about farming practices despite all the efforts we’ve made so far on social media.

3. Social Commerce Expansion

Platforms like

SEE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE 8

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA continued from Page 7

Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest are deepening their shopping integrations (e.g., Instagram Shop, TikTok Shop), enabling seamless in-app purchases. Social commerce is booming as consumers increasingly buy directly from posts or videos.

- **Opportunity:** Arizona producers can sell specialty goods—think grass-fed beef, organic pecans, or artisanal cheeses—directly via these platforms. A live demo of a product (e.g., cooking with farm-fresh ingredients) can transition into an instant purchase link.
- A. Regular commentary about your value-added product resonates with current and potential customers (e.g., Tim Petersen with his Arizona Grass Raised Beef Company in Yavapai County).

4. Hyperlocal and Community-Driven Engagement

- Local marketing is gaining traction, with platforms using geo-targeting and location-based features to connect users with nearby businesses. Community-building tools like Instagram Broadcast Channels or Facebook Groups foster loyal, niche audiences.
- **Opportunity:** Target Arizona-specific audiences with content about local farmers’ markets (e.g., Gilbert or Mesa markets) or regional food preferences. Create a Facebook Group for Arizona ag enthusiasts to discuss farming tips, share recipes, or buy direct from local producers.
 - A. When Arizona Farm Bureau posts a Facebook video, we geo-target to all the urban centers in Arizona: Flagstaff, Tucson and Phoenix.

5. AI and Data-Driven Personalization

- AI tools are enhancing content creation (e.g., auto-generated captions, trend predictions) and enabling personalized audience targeting. Social listening—monitoring conversations for insights—is also a top priority for brands.
- **Opportunity:** Use AI analytics to identify what Arizona consumers care about (e.g., drought-resistant crops, public lands ranching) and tailor content accordingly. Engage in social listening on X or Instagram to join conversations about Arizona agriculture, offering expertise or solutions.

6. Influencer and Creator Collaborations

- Micro-influencers and niche creators (including farmer influencers) are increasingly vital for authentic outreach. Consumers trust recommendations from relatable figures over traditional ads.
- **Opportunity:** Partner with Arizona-based influencers (e.g., food bloggers, sustainability advocates) or spotlight your own farmers as influencers. A rancher with a modest following sharing their story can amplify reach organically.
 - A. Arizona Farm Bureau for several years engaged a foodie influencer to reach the urban foodie. Others are seeing this opportunity as well. In addition, two of our own Aggie influencers, Trevor Bales and Jonathan Dinsmore, continue to make a big impact on the average consumer in telling their agriculture story.

HOW ARIZONA FARMERS AND RANCHERS CAN EXPLOIT THESE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Tell Your Story:** Arizona’s unique agricultural landscape—desert farming, monsoon impacts, and diverse livestock—offers compelling narratives. Use short-form videos or live streams (e.g., Instagram Live farm tours) to educate and engage, emphasizing authenticity over perfection. Regarding Live streams on Instagram, raise your hand if you’d like to be a guest on “Talk to a Farmer/Rancher” Friday, and we’ll do the rest.
- **Sell Direct:** Set up shops on Instagram or TikTok to bypass middlemen, offering seasonal goods like Arizona-grown dates or beef jerky. Promote with interactive content like live Q&As or product demos.
- **Build Community:** Host virtual events

Social Media



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(e.g., “Talk to an Arizona Rancher” Fridays) or create hyperlocal campaigns tied to events like the Arizona State Fair. Engage followers by asking for input (e.g., “What’s your favorite Arizona crop?”).

- **Leverage Data:** Use platform analytics to post at peak times for Arizona audiences (e.g., evenings when urban consumers browse) and track which content (videos versus photos) drives engagement.

- **Go Niche:** Focus on Arizona-specific hashtags (#AZAgriculture, #DesertFarming) or join trending conversations on X about local food systems to boost visibility.

RIISING CHANNELS

- **Rising Channels:**
 - **Instagram:** With Reels, Shops, and Broadcast Channels, Instagram remains a versatile platform for visuals and direct sales, ideal for showcasing Arizona’s vibrant farm scenes.
 - **YouTube Shorts:** Gaining traction for quick, educational content, this is perfect for “how-to” farming tips or farm-life snippets that appeal to a broad audience.
 - **TikTok:** Its explosive growth continues, especially for short-form video storytelling and social commerce. Arizona farmers can tap into its younger demographic to inspire the next generation of agriculturalists.

By embracing these trends, Arizona farmers and ranchers can not only amplify their outreach but also foster a deeper connection with consumers, turning social media into a powerful tool for education, advocacy, and profit in 2025 and beyond. 📺



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