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A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE GROCERY SUPPLY CHAIN: MARK MILLER

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director



Mark Miller started his career in the food industry while attending high school, working at Smitty's grocery store close to his home. Today he leads the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance.

Mark Miller is the 9th president of the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance (AFMA), founded in 1943.

Miller started his career in the food industry while attending high school, working at Smitty's grocery store close to his home. He worked after school and on weekends. He enjoyed a successful 36-year career at Hensley Beverage Company, the local distributor of Anheuser-Busch brands. He was the Senior Vice President of Sales and in 2008 helped to develop and lead Hensley's new non-alcoholic beverage division.

After his retirement from Hensley Beverage Company, he worked as a Regional Manager for three years with Talking Rain, a beverage company specializing in sparkling water with natural flavors.

In his volunteer work, he has served on the City of Hope Southwest Food Industry Board of Directors for over 25 years. Miller's ties to AFMA have always been strong. He was honored by AFMA in 1998 as the "Supplier of the Year." He was a member of Los Hespereros, a supplier group that helped

with the retail trade show. While he was President in 2000, the group was renamed the Arizona Food Council and switched its focus to raising money for the AFMA Scholarship Foundation.

Having interviewed his predecessor several years back, I thought it was time to reach out to this organization again with Miller at the helm and get an update from him on the grocery industry in Arizona, a critical link in the food supply chain.

Arizona Agriculture: At 30,000 feet, discuss the current situation with the food supply chain and our grocery niche. Discuss the importance of our competitive grocery store market to our Arizona families.

Miller: The supply chain issues have gotten better because most of the manufacturers have reduced the number of SKUs and have focused on supplying their more in-demand items.

Arizona is fortunate to have distribution centers for all the major grocery chains including Albertsons/Safeway, Bashas' and Fry's Food Stores. The Bashas' distribution center also supplies groceries to the Arizona IGA independent grocery stores as well as the Diné stores on reservation lands.

Arizona is one of the most competitive grocery markets in the country with just over 1,000 locations. The competitive climate has increased with Wal-Mart, Target and Amazon focusing on more food products.

Arizona Agriculture: What are some long-term impacts of some of the recent food supply chain challenges your industry has dealt with? What innovations have resulted from the challenges?

Miller: The challenges are not unique to Arizona with the number one issue being the ability to find labor resources to keep the store stocked. Transportation and fuel costs add additional costs to every step of the distribution ladder.

We are still feeling the fluctuation in inventories, which is reducing the amount of deep discounting on the shelf. Because inventories can't be guaranteed, grocery stores are reluctant to feature items because they don't want to disappoint their customers.

Nationally and in Arizona, consumers continue to utilize pick-up and delivery options. Even with COVID receding, these options have made grocery shopping more convenient.

Arizona Agriculture: From your association's perspective, what is the top food supply chain issue especially as it relates to the retail food sector?

Miller: Getting finished products from manufacturers to the shelves is still a constant concern for our retailers and a logistics nightmare. With constant weather challenges, the fresh food supply can be hard to predict and forecast.

Arizona Agriculture: Since the pandemic and the various food shortages, how is the industry preparing for the next crisis?

Miller: When possible, when code dates are not an issue, the warehouses and stores are working to keep days on hand at a higher level. Stores are also trying to make sure there is an adequate substitution when items are unavailable.

Arizona Agriculture: Highlight the economic contribution of the grocery industry.

Miller: Because of the long period of time that people did not go out to restaurants during COVID, food consumption at home increased. The fresh food options including salad and wing bars are back and being utilized by our customers. Even though dining out is more available now, the grocery industry has been able to hold on to some more home consumption.

The Arizona food industry employs approximately 125,000 people and is continuing to grow as the state's population increases.

Arizona Agriculture: Like I've asked in the past, our Arizona farmers and ranchers are certainly the beginning of the food supply chain, what advice do you have for our farm and ranch families about connecting with the consumer?

Miller: Associate your brand with a family name and a local approach. Consumers do look for products that are grown/raised/sourced at the local level.

Arizona Agriculture: Is there more that these two links in the food supply chain (agriculture and grocery store industries) could do?

Miller: Today's consumers are looking for businesses that work towards being more sustainable. Our partners are always looking for ways to save water and other natural resources including electricity. They are becoming more creative with reducing food waste by sharing with local food banks to assist those in need in our community.

Arizona Agriculture: What's your personal take on the farm and ranch sector?

Miller: The issue continues to be that most of the produce we grow in Arizona must be handpicked, which makes it labor-intensive. During the early months of the year, Yuma and the surrounding area supply most of the United States with green leafy vegetables.

To me, the farmers are doing their best to stretch their water use by being innovative with drip systems and overhead sprinklers.

Innovation needs to continue with new

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SENATOR SINEMA RECOGNIZED WITH FARM BUREAU'S HIGHEST HONOR

Arizona ag Leaders also meet with senator to share concerns and congratulate her.

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

In a special gathering at the Arizona Biltmore, A Waldorf Astoria Resort, the Arizona Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) last month presented Senator Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.) with AFBF's Golden Plow Award. The Golden Plow is the highest honor the organization gives to sitting members of Congress and is given only to one Senator and one member of the House of Representatives during any given year.

Arizona Farm Bureau nominated Senator Sinema for her past support of the farm bill, her negotiating skills on the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act, and her positive record on natural resources issues.

"Senator Sinema truly understands the importance of food security for all of us as individuals, in our communities, and as an entire nation," said Arizona Farm Bureau President and rancher Stefanie Smallhouse. "Her actions recognize the importance of keeping working lands in production and supporting those of us on the ground who manage soil and water day in and day out. She has consistently shown up for agriculture on matters that will not only determine our success in the near future but the success of the next generation on the

farm and ranch. We are grateful for her open door, common-sense legislating, issues awareness, and responsiveness to the concerns of those who grow our food and fiber."

"By working side by side with Arizona farmers, ranchers, and producers in every corner of our state, we've delivered real results to strengthen Arizona's water future, address workforce shortages, and create a healthy economy where Arizona family farmers can thrive. We'll keep working together to ensure Arizona farmers can feed families across the country – now and for generations to come," said Senator Sinema.

"Senator Sinema's commitment to bipartisanship has helped bring together both parties as she worked to improve roads and bridges, expand rural broadband, and stop tax proposals that would have devastated family farms," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall, also present at the presentation. "She's proven time and again that she is a strong advocate for America's farm and ranch families."

Award Presentation Also Turns into an Agriculture Roundtable with Farm Bureau Leaders:

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ARIZONA’S ESSENTIAL ALFALFA: DISCOVERING THE ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF THIS CROP

By Ayman M Mostafa, Ph.D., Area Programmatic Agent & Regional Specialist Cooperative Extension & Dept. of Entomology, The University of Arizona

The southwest U.S. continues to endure the conditions of “megadrought,” a term used to describe drought conditions lasting at least two decades. As a result, the public questions “why” we grow certain crops in the desert, specifically alfalfa.

The share of water going toward alfalfa hay production supports the dairy and live-stock industry, ultimately our local food supply chain. Still, some believe the amount of water used to irrigate alfalfa is a major contributing factor to the region’s shortage, and fail to recognize alfalfa’s economic efficiencies, environmental impacts, and agronomic benefits to our ecosystem.



One of many ecological benefits, alfalfa helps stabilize soils because it’s a perennial legume.

Alfalfa in the southwest ecosystem provides many environmental benefits:

- Besides its economic importance, alfalfa also may help reduce the impacts of climate change. Because it covers the soil for a longer time than any other crop, alfalfa is envisioned as a leading option for soil carbon sequestration, also known as “regenerative agriculture,” especially with the need to decrease carbon emissions and introduce the carbon credits initiative.
- Incorporating a perennial legume such as alfalfa can help to stabilize soils nutritionally depleted by row crop or specialty crop production, as has occurred in many agricultural areas in the western US. Alfalfa was introduced into crop rotation in Europe, and encouraged globally, as a measure of the Agri-Environmental Scheme (AES) to reduce the impacts of agriculture intensification on the environment.
- Switching from annual forage crop production for dairy animals and livestock feed to perennial alfalfa can minimize soil disturbance and erosion. This practice can help restore depleted soils, minimize inputs, and decrease the footprint of agricultural production.
- While suspected of higher total applied irrigation water than many other crops, alfalfa has greater water use efficiency. Additionally, the entire above-ground portion of the plant is harvested as many as twelve times per year in the Southwestern region. When compared to other crops harvested less frequently, alfalfa’s ratio of harvestable biomass/water applied shows it is far more water efficient. Furthermore, the majority of the irrigation water used in alfalfa is recycled back into the environment.
- Alfalfa is a rich habitat for wildlife allowing for a diversity of local niches and preserving many endangered species from different animal families.
- Alfalfa fields are important contributors to the biodiversity of agricultural systems by functioning as insectaries for beneficial insects, many of which are pollinators

RESPONDING TO FEDERAL REGULATORY DOCKETS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2023

By Ana Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The Arizona Farm Bureau Federation (AZFB) regularly prepares regulatory comments in response to federal and state agency proposed rules, requests for information, and other agency actions. In the first quarter of 2023, the majority of AFBF’s comment letters addressed proposals put forth by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Below is a summary of the regulatory dockets that AZFB has engaged in thus far in 2023.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) – Inclusive Competition and Market Integrity Under Packers and Stockyards Act – AZFB’s comments aligned with those prepared by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), which supported elements of the rule, as well as raised concerns with others. The provisions supported included clarifying AMS’s responsibilities to producers concerning undue prejudices or disadvantages, unjust discriminatory practices, and deceptive practices. The primary area of concern dealt with the definition of market vulnerable individuals, which focused on social factors as opposed to economic factors.

Environmental Protection Agency – Proposed Interim Decision for Rodenticides – AZFB’s comments responded to EPA’s proposal that included several restrictions and mitigation measures related to the use of several rodenticides used on farms and ranches. Our comments highlighted the negative impacts of classifying specific rodenticides as restricted-use pesticides, the impact of prohibitions on the use of certain rodenticides in croppd areas, and inadequate evaluation of the total economic impact of proposed mandatory carcass search provisions.

Environmental Protection Agency – Appendix to ESA Workplan Update: Nontarget Species Mitigation for Registration Review See **FEDERAL REGULATORY DOCKETS** Page 7

or natural enemies that play important roles in the low desert agroecosystem. Beneficial insects move from alfalfa fields into other crops, where they play crucial roles in pollination and biological control. These roles reduce our reliance on synthetic insecticides, which if used incorrectly could have negative impacts on human, animal, and environmental health.

- Western alfalfa production is quite different from production in other areas where non-dormant, irrigated varieties provide year-round habitat for insects. This fact allows alfalfa to play an important role in insecticide resistance. management by acting as a refuge, especially for aphids and whiteflies.
- Alfalfa improves soil characteristics with its deep roots; as a legume, it fixes atmospheric nitrogen through bacteria in the root nodules.
- Because of its nature as a perennial plant that stays in the field for 3 to 5 years, alfalfa helps trap sediments and takes up nitrate pollutants; mitigates water and air pollution.
- Incorporating a perennial legume such as alfalfa can help to stabilize soils nutritionally depleted by row crop or specialty crop production, as has occurred in many agricultural areas in the western US. Alfalfa was introduced into crop rotation in Europe, and encouraged globally, as a measure of the Agri-Environmental Scheme (AES) to reduce the impacts of agriculture intensification on the environment.

In summary, if alfalfa fields are eliminated or significantly reduced, it is highly likely most of the original acreage will be converted to residential and commercial uses. This situation will likely decrease farmland and increase the population in those areas. As a result, the region may experience shortages of certain food products thereby relying on food from non-local sources, including those imported from abroad. This will likely increase food prices and extend the supply chain. With the increase in population comes all known environmental impacts, alteration of ecosystems, and pollution of air, water and soil all of which impact our carbon footprint.

Editor’s Note: For ongoing Arizona’s Essential Alfalfa campaign, we’ll periodically share various benefits about this crop.

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GROCERY SUPPLY CHAIN continued from Page 1

Arizona Agriculture: What are the board’s current goals for AFMA?
Miller: In 2022 we established a new vision statement that helps guide us. CLEAR. We want to strengthen our ties to the Community by being involved in charitable organizations that are important to our members. We will continue to work with the state Legislature to protect our members’ ability to do business in Arizona. Education will remain a top priority as we want to continue to educate our member employees and allow them to promote from within. We do our best to form a strong Alliance with a unified approach to major issues with our Retailer and Supplier partners. The Regulation part of our acronym includes working with state government offices like Agriculture, WIC, SNAP and Weight & Measures.

Arizona Agriculture: What’s the biggest threat to your industry and how are you working toward resolving it?
Miller: A big takeaway from the COVID pandemic is that grocery stores are an essential part of every community. We need to make sure that our industry is seen as a viable employment option with numerous facets of opportunity for a long-term career.

Arizona Agriculture: What’s next for your industry? What does the future hold?
Miller: More focus on healthier consumption. We hope to be part of the communication with the younger generation about making healthy home-cooked meals and making better overall food choices. Our association needs to continue to support the sustainability efforts of all our members.

Arizona Agriculture: Are you encouraged by the industry’s future opportunities and why or why not?
Miller: A recent visit to Las Vegas and the National Grocers Association annual convention gave us the opportunity to watch several college teams compete in presenting solutions to market to and retain Gen-X employees. The presentations gave us confidence that the next generation of food industry leaders are ready to meet the challenges with creativity and passion.

Arizona Agriculture: Compare the Farmers’ Market environment and the grocery

store environment. What are the pros and cons of both?
Miller: From our perspective, we highlight the pros and cons of both markets for food items.

- A. Farmers Market
 - i. Pro
 1. You get to talk to the grower/farmer about their growing methods and processes. What pesticides are they using? Are they Organic?
 2. Supporting local businesses is important to many consumers.
 - ii. Con
 1. Variety may be more limited. You will only have what is in season available.
 2. Quality control is not as regulated as you find in a retail setting.
- B. Grocery
 - i. Pro
 1. Can bring in produce from across the globe.
 2. You can meet customer demands with fresh and frozen offerings.
 3. Pricing is consistent across all stores in the chain.
 - ii. Con
 1. You can lose one-on-one contact with the grower. Farm-to-table is less likely.
 2. Transportation requirements can affect flavor and freshness.

The market creates opportunities for Arizona consumers to maximize their food purchases.

Editor’s Note: Arizona Agriculture will continue to reach out to leaders in related organizations for an ongoing understanding of our critical food supply chain.

10 REASONS TO ATTEND THE SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

By Christy Davis, Arizona Farm Bureau, Outreach Manager, Program Excellence

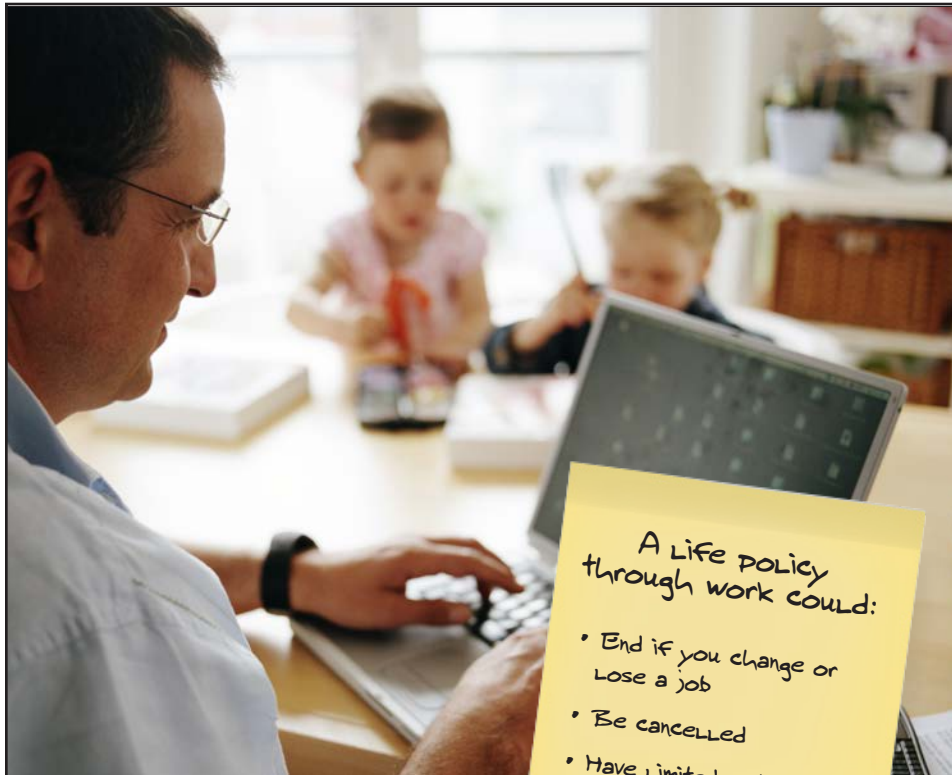
It’s time to register for the **Summer Leadership Conference** aka, the Women in Ag Conference hosted by the Arizona Women’s Leadership Committee that will be held at the JW Marriott Starr Pass in Tucson, on July 13 and 14. This year’s theme is **Power of the Past- Force of the Future**.

Why should you attend the conference this year? Here are 10 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 Collection.
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. **Patio Time with fun and games:** Thursday night the Women’s Leadership committee invites you to gather on the patio to enjoy music, games, and the company of your fellow ag friends! While it isn’t on our favorite ranch or farm porch, it is a very close second with your new and old ag pals!
5. **Networking.** There is plenty of time to relax and network with your fellow Aggies. Plus, you can make new friends.
6. **Meet the Influencer:** Keynote - Lisa Smartt - Lisa Smartt is a very funny motivational speaker. She’s a 57-year-old woman who loves to laugh. Born in a small town in West Kentucky, she now writes a weekly newspaper column from her home outside Dresden, Tennessee. Public speaking has been Lisa’s passion for twenty years. She has spoken to groups around the country on subjects like “Finding Contentment in a Discontent World” and “We’re All in the Same Boat, So Grab a Lifeline.” Her future aspirations include organizing her purse, eating more green leafy vegetables, and cleaning out the hall closet. She believes laughter is a gift and LOVES to share with others her personal weaknesses, struggles, and the sheer JOY of daily living!
7. **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.
8. **Anyone’s Welcome.** The educational conference encourages young and old, male and female and all segments of agriculture.
9. **A Farmer’s Market Experience.** Join us as we continue our trip through Arizona’s Farmer’s Market. Learn from Arizona’s grower, producer, business owner about new and interesting agriculture that is produced right here in Arizona.
10. **It’s Inspirational and Encouraging:** One 2022 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, then click on the **Power of the Past- Force of the Future** theme photo. If you need more information, contact Christy Davis at 480.635.3615 or christyDavis@azfb.org. Reserve your hotel by **June 15, 2023** receive the special group rate.



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MENTOR PROTÉGÉ CAMP CLASS 2, PROFILE 5: MARVIN JOHN AND GILBERT ORDAZ

By NRCS Civil Engineer Gilbert Ordaz and Maricopa County farmer Marvin John

The CAMP mentor/protégé series continues with this fifth profile for Class 2 with NRCS Civil Engineer Gilbert Ordaz and Maricopa County farmer Marvin John. They have already met, and both have exchanged insights and appreciation for the experiences.

With the launch of the Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP) in Arizona, in partnership with Arizona Farm Bureau, The NRCS team has been front and center in enthusiastically driving this unique partnership.

While several other states have the CAMP program, Arizona is unique in its partnership effort with Arizona Farm Bureau.

The John Ordaz partnership, along with all the mentor protégé partnerships, works to understand Arizona agriculture and conservation opportunities, joining forces to provide firsthand experience of the conservation practices and agricultural happenings.

From the Mentor: Marvin John

Our first meeting on the farm was insightful. I took Gilbert on a tour of our location and the agriculture here. He is new to the area and the lead engineer for NRCA in this area.

I worked on setting up a meeting with my two sons, Jordan in the Ag Chemical Business and Joel in the drip and sprinkler business. As of this date, no connections have yet been made. Everyone is busy on both ends.

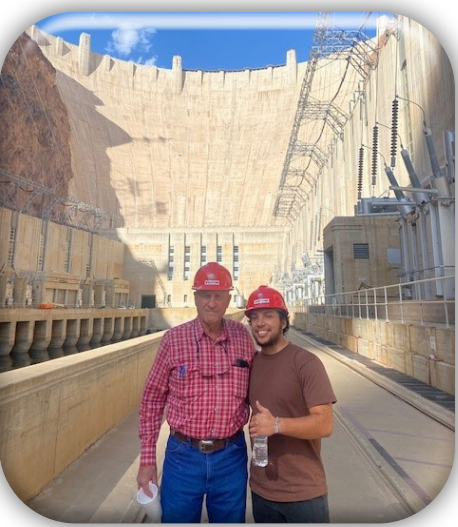
For the Protégé: Gilbert Ordaz

What’s been the biggest takeaway from your first gathering? The biggest takeaway I would say after my first meeting with Marvin and touring his operation were his and his family’s core values. I realized the amazing opportunity I had to learn from them

not just as farmers but as good people who just want to give back to the community. Seeing how he and his two sons are willing to take the time out of their day to meet with me and give me an inside look at what it is like to be a farmer is very inspirational. It gave me a whole new perspective as to why they say farmers are the most down-to-earth people you will ever meet.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful? This program helped me take the first steps towards building a relationship with our producers more than just work-related. It can be intimidating for someone like me with no prior farming background to reach out to a producer and ask to spend a day with them.

What more do you hope to learn? I hope to learn what day-to-day looks like for Marvin, Joel, and Jordan and gain further appreciation for what it is that they do and pick up on their core values and incorporate them into my day-to-day life.



Having met previously on Marvin John’s farm, CAMP protégé, Gilbert Ordaz, was also able to join his mentor for last month’s tour of Hoover Dam. The two went away thoroughly appreciative of a very educational tour.

ALFALFA IS ONLY ONE LINK UP AHEAD OF US ON THE LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director



During a series of “Talk to a Farmer” Fridays, Julie Murphree met with Pinal County farmers including Noah Hiscox (pictured here) to learn more about alfalfa production.

a thirsty crop, like alfalfa, in the desert.” To quote ag consultant Nich Kenny from Maricopa County, “Because we do it really well.”

For about eight weeks, the Arizona Farm Bureau staff has been responding to a “heads up” from our leader, President Stefanie Smallhouse, who said, “they’re coming after our alfalfa.” And indeed, a few politicians are helping ignite the controversy.

What’s garnered the most attention was when newly elected Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes promised to stop what she called a sweetheart deal that allows Saudi farmers to use Arizona water to grow alfalfa in our state. The story first broken by the Arizona Republic has sparked outrage far and wide.

In the meantime, the “sparked outrage” seems to have gone beyond Saudi farmers farming alfalfa to simply “why would we grow

Arizona Farm Bureau does not have a formal position on foreign-owned ag lands in Arizona or policy related to the State Land Department granting foreign-owned companies the ability to acquire farmland in the state and the water implications of such actions. Perhaps we will after November’s Annual Meeting this year.

An uninformed public equates Arizona agriculture’s market-driven ability to successfully export our hay to domestic and international markets to exporting our water. This overly simplifies a complex issue and ignores the success of our state’s agriculture, especially our farm and ranch exports. Export markets have always been a key part of the agricultural economy and certainly in Arizona agriculture due to our 300-plus days of sunshine and why the majority of America and Canada’s vegetables are coming from Yuma, Arizona in the winter (we’re growing things during seasonal times when others cannot). Export our wonderful products; import dollars to robustly feed Arizona’s economy.

Arizona’s agriculture fortunes rest on the state’s remarkable soil and sun to grow crops with higher efficiency, quality and yields than other parts of the world. For an alfalfa example, the Midwest gets an average of three to four tons of alfalfa annually per acre. In Arizona it’s eight to nine and even as much as 12 tons per acre, per year.

See LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN Page 8



New name. Same commitment to cash patronage

Farm Credit West is now AgWest Farm Credit. And we’re still committed to sharing profits with our customers.

Patronage continues to be a unique benefit of our cooperative structure, providing earnings from our association back to our customer-members. This year, patronage dividends total \$366.5 million to eligible customers throughout the West. It pays to be an AgWest customer.

Grounded by tradition. Inspired by possibility.

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ARIZONA AG LEADER PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

By Staff Reports



Arizona's Amber Cheatham Owens, second row and second from the left, was one of 15 graduates of AFBF's Spring 2023 Communication Boot Camp class. Arizona Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Chair Shawn Wood (far right, second row), Communication Boot Camp alum, assisted this year's class.

Arizona Farm Bureau's Amber Cheatham Owens from Maricopa County joined fourteen other farm and ranch women leaders to participate and graduate from the spring session of Women's Communications Boot Camp hosted by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

The intensive four-day course completed by the agricultural leaders featured hands-on sessions related to public speaking, working with the media and messaging. Graduates will use their training in a variety of ways such as participating in local media opportunities to strategically support Farm Bureau's policy work, sharing information with elected officials and joining social media campaigns that spotlight modern agriculture. "The Farm Bureau Communication Boot Camp was the most thorough training," said Cheatham Owens. "It was truly all things communications with real-life experiences and applications." Cheatham Owens farms with her husband in the Phoenix West Valley and is also on the Arizona Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee, representing Maricopa County Farm Bureau. Additionally, Cheatham Owens is current president of the Arizona Farm and Ranch Experience, home to the Arizona Farming and Ranching Hall of Fame.

Along with Arizona's Amber Cheatham Owens, the other Boot Camp graduates are Leslie Bauer, Maryland; Maggie Blankenship, West Virginia; Kelsey DeCloux, New York; Nancy Harris, Utah; Tiffany McConkie, Utah; Melanie Hendrix, Georgia; Jodi Morgan, Georgia; Lindie Huffman, Kentucky; Rachel Hyde, Indiana; Renee Keith, Mississippi; Ashley Kuhler, Virginia; Tara Luckie, Washington; Linda Pryor, North Carolina; and Brittany Scott, Arkansas.

"Farm and ranch women are tremendous advocates for agriculture, always striving

to find new and creative ways to share their stories in a broad range of settings," said Isabella Chism, an Indiana row crop farmer and chair of the AFBF Women's Leadership Committee. "I'm excited to see how the women leaders who completed this training will use their skills to benefit their communities and Farm Bureau on the local, state and national level."

This is the 18th Boot Camp. The program has 269 graduates and is open to all women involved in Farm Bureau. Of the 18 Boot Camps, Arizona has participated in half of them.

"AFBF is proud to offer this training twice each year, which affords women farmers and ranchers the opportunity to develop their agriculture advocacy skills," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "I applaud our graduates as they strive to increase their engagement with both consumers and elected officials while also exploring new leadership roles."

"Participating in Women's Communications Boot Camp has been extremely helpful," said Huffman, a 7th-generation farmer who raises beef cattle and grows hay in Kentucky. "This training will help me accomplish my personal mission to keep farmers farming and keep families fed."

The American Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee, in partnership with AFBF staff, hosts and provides training for Women's Communications Boot Camp. A fall session of Boot Camp will be held Oct. 16-19, 2023, with applications opening in June. 📞

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SENATOR SINEMA RECOGNIZED continued from Page 1



Surrounded by Arizona Farm Bureau leaders, Senator Sinema Receives the AFBF's Golden Plow Award, designed to recognize members of Congress who exemplify agricultural leadership. From left to right: Sarah King, Paul Brierley, AFBF President Zippy Duvall, Senator Sinema, Nancy Caywood (in the foreground), AZFB President Stefanie Smallhouse, Mark Schnepf and Ben Menges.

Here's What They Said

In addition to the Golden Plow presentation, the Senator's office and Arizona Farm Bureau took the opportunity to gather Arizona farmers and ranchers around the table to discuss some of the ongoing and pressing issues in farm and ranch country.

"Booker T. Washington wrote, 'The human race cannot prosper until it knows that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem,'" quoted Southern Arizona rancher Ben Menges and President of Graham County Farm Bureau. He added, "You [Senator Sinema] recognize the vitality of Arizona agriculture, and I know I speak for us all when I say we look forward to continuing to work with you, and congratulations on receiving the Golden Plow award. It's well deserved." He is the owner/operator of Menges Ranch in southeastern Arizona.

Menges spoke on the Mexican wolf issue: "We appreciate your support in ensuring that ranchers are compensated fairly by losses suffered at the paws of the federally protected Mexican wolf. You have been supportive of ranches in the wolf zone staying in business and you continue to fight for Arizona agriculture at the federal level. Your efforts to ensure the existence of agriculture have proven to be beneficial to the industry as well as our rural Arizona economies."

Menges went on to highlight how ranchers who ranch amongst the wolves' territory have not received fair compensation in the entirety of the wolf program when cattle loss occurs because of wolf depredations. "This has been a quarter-century problem; the expectation was that a reimbursement program would be present by now, but as Nietzsche wrote, 'He almost starved on his expectations.' We are thankful that Senator Sinema recognizes the need for a reimbursement program and for the staff that you have hired to work on issues such as this."

Paul Brierley, Yuma County Farm Bureau's Vice President was also present at the roundtable. "Senator Sinema has been a stalwart in protecting Arizona agriculture, especially in her efforts to secure drought mitigation funding. She has worked hard to understand our industry and maintained a very personal conversation with us. I'm happy that Farm Bureau recognized her efforts with the Golden Plow award and look forward to continuing the conversation – and continuing to see results!"

Brierley is also Executive Director for the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture.

From Maricopa County Farm Bureau, Mark Schnepf of Schnepf Farms was also present to visit with the Senator. "Senator Sinema truly deserves the Golden Plow Award! She helped every family-owned farm and ranch in the U.S. by opposing the proposed Biden tax increases. Those proposed tax increases included: eliminating the 1031 exchanges, raising the capital gains rate, raising estate taxes, eliminating the stepped-up basis, and raising income tax rates. Every one of these tax increases would have hurt family farms, ranches, and all family-owned businesses. The Senator showed great courage and backbone in the face of incredible pressure."

"Senator Sinema is truly deserving of the Golden Plow Award," added Nancy Caywood of Caywood Farms in Pinal County and another panel member meeting with the Senator. "I have had the good fortune to meet with Senator Sinema on three different occasions (Thank You Arizona Farm Bureau) and find that her vast knowledge and positive energy contagiously invite comfortable and engaging conversation as she listens and absorbs the challenges Arizona farmers and ranchers face. She turns knowledge into action and for Pinal County farmers, securing Federal funding for drought mitiga-

FEDERAL REGULATORY DOCKETS continued from Page 2

and Other FIFRA Actions - EPA's Workplan Update describes their strategies to reduce pesticide exposure to nontarget organisms, including threatened and endangered species, during the registration review process. AZFB's comments urged EPA to recognize the complexity of agriculture and use a tailored approach to ensure that differences in geography and farming methods are taken into account as they consider adding new requirements and mitigation measures to address the Endangered Species Act (ESA) obligations. Our comments also supported the more technical comments prepared by the Arizona Pest Management Center (APMC), which addressed the use of Bulletins Live! Two proposed interim ecological mitigation measures that would be required when deemed necessary to reduce pesticide exposure to non-target species.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule and Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Request Requirements – AZFB's comments opposed DHS's proposal to increase the fees of H-2A petitions. DHS's proposal included raising the H-2A petition fee from \$460 to \$630, as well as adding another \$600 per petition, described as an Asylum Program Fee.

Environmental Protection Agency – Pesticide Registration Review: Proposed Interim Decisions for Several Pesticides – Dicloran – Dicloran is a product primarily used in Arizona celery production. AZFB's comments supported the technical comments prepared by APMC, which described how several of EPA's proposals, including prohibiting aerial applications and increasing the reentry interval to 58 days, would significantly impact its continued use in Arizona celery production.

Environmental Protection Agency – Sulfoxafloz; Pesticide Product Registration: Notice of Receipt and Request for Comment – To comply with a court order, EPA is issuing a new notice of receipt and request for comments for sulfoxafloz. This pesticide is a critical tool for controlling pests in several of Arizona's crops, including cotton, mel-

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tion is invaluable. Congratulations on this well-deserved award."

"Congratulations to Senator Sinema on receiving the Golden Plow Award," added Southern Arizona rancher and Pima County Farm Bureau President Sarah King. "She has advocated for Arizona agriculture through her work on the Infrastructure and Jobs law, which provided funding for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program and investments in the Burned Area Rehabilitation Programs, which are critical when wildfires strike. We appreciate all her hard work looking out for Arizona agriculture."

All of the farm and ranch panelists that day had an opportunity to highlight their most pressing concerns in areas where they are applying their leadership efforts to make a difference. The Senator expressed her appreciation for all the ongoing efforts the farmer and rancher leaders around the table made to advance the cause of Arizona agriculture.

"I'm proud to be a friend of the Farm Bureau, and I'm honored to earn the Golden Plow Award. I'll continue working side by side with Arizona farmers, producers, and ranchers to deliver lasting results for Arizona and Arizona's agriculture community," said Senator Sinema.

AFBF's Golden Plow Award recognizes members of Congress who exemplify agricultural leadership. Recipients are chosen for having a philosophy or record that demonstrates a commitment to sound agricultural policies supported by the Farm Bureau, the private enterprise system, fiscal conservatism and reduced federal regulation of businesses and individuals. 📞

on, potatoes, pecan, citrus, and various seed crops. AZFB's comments incorporated by reference to previous comments submitted to EPA that highlighted the importance of sulfoxafloz and urged EPA to retain all the new uses and label amendments the agency included in their July 2019 Decision of Memorandum for sulfoxafloz.

Environmental Protection Agency – Reconsideration of National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter – AZFB's comments urged the EPA to retain the PM10 standards approved in 2020, as well as the primary and secondary 24-hour PM2.5 standard and the secondary annual PM2.5 standard. Our comments also noted and explained our strong opposition to EPA's proposal to revise the primary annual PM2.5 to anything less than the current standard of 12.0 mg/m3. The stricter standard would create additional compliance costs that would impact agricultural producers, and it is unclear if the revised standard would in fact lead to lower health risks.

For more information about a specific comment letter, contact Ana Kennedy Otto at advocacy@azfb.org. 📞

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FOR THE SECOND TIME, A JUDGE GRANTS A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION HALTING THE NEW 2023 WOTUS RULE

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The latest page in the WOTUS saga is unfolding. Keeping informed on the latest developments in the ongoing Waters of the United States (WOTUS) issue is imperative to ensuring its negative impacts aren't felt for years to come.

On April 12th, 2023, U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland granted a preliminary injunction halting the new 2023 WOTUS rule, pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed by a 24-state coalition in the U.S. District Court in North Dakota. This decision stops the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from implementing or enforcing the newly revised definition of the Waters of the United States in North Dakota and 23 other states, unfortunately, the list does not include Arizona, but it significantly undermines the legitimacy of the WOTUS rule nationwide.

This ruling comes after a federal judge in Texas issued an injunction in March stopping the WOTUS rule from going into effect there and in Idaho. However, for the rest of the nation, the latest iteration of WOTUS became the law of the land on March 20th, which has been criticized for its burdensome regulations.

The WOTUS issue stems from the federal Clean Water Act of 1972, which has led to multiple cases rising to the Supreme Court level. The most recent case, Sackett vs. EPA, is awaiting a Supreme Court ruling. The Biden administration has faced criticism for not waiting until a ruling in Sackett before enforcing its own definition of WOTUS.

Arizona farmers and ranchers have long been concerned about the impact of WOTUS on our operations. The expanded WOTUS rule would have imposed higher costs

on critical industries, including agriculture, energy, and construction, leading to greater inflation throughout our economy. The overreach of federal control over our state's sovereign land and water resources would have significantly impacted Arizona's farmers and ranchers.

As North Dakota's Congressional delegation noted, the injunction is a welcome relief from the ever-growing and burdensome regulations being pushed by the Biden administration. We remain hopeful that the Sackett decision will resolve the uncertainty created by this federal overreach.

The Arizona Farm Bureau will continue to monitor this situation and keep our members informed. We believe that it is essential to protect our state's land and water resources while also allowing our farmers and ranchers to operate without unnecessary regulations. We will continue to work with our elected officials and other agricultural organizations to ensure that our voices are heard on this important issue.

We're pleased to share this update on the WOTUS issue with our members. We remain committed to protecting Arizona's farmers and ranchers from unnecessary and burdensome regulations that would have a significant impact on our operations. We urge our members to stay informed about this issue and to contact their elected officials to voice their concerns. Together, we can ensure that Arizona's agricultural industry remains strong and prosperous for years to come. 🚜

MCNATT JOINS THE FARM BUREAU FAMILY

By Staff Reports

We are beyond excited to introduce the newest member of our Education Team, Sandy McNatt. McNatt was hired on May 1st to take on the role of Education Manager focusing on elementary programming. McNatt comes to the Farm Bureau with 12 years of classroom experience as an elementary teacher and several years of volunteer coordination and management.

"We are thrilled to have Sandy join our Farm Bureau Team! Her creativity in lesson development, enthusiasm for teaching, and passion for agriculture make her a perfect fit," says Director of Education Katie Aikins. "As schools wind down, we are excited to have the summer for McNatt to learn the ropes and be ready to hit the ground running in classrooms in July!" 🚜

CENTURY FARM AND RANCH FAMILIES: IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE AGAIN

By Staff Reports

As the sun daily rises on your 2023, you look over at the horizon sipping that cup of coffee (or tea) and you might be reflecting on all the years your generational farm or ranch family has been in business. Arizona Farm Bureau wants to recognize you and your farm and ranch legacy. We're looking for those Arizona Farms and Ranches that have reached the 100-year mark or will by the end of this year!

Arizona Farm Bureau has now celebrated eight families since the program started in 2021. The recognition occurs during its Annual Meeting in November earning those recognized the Century Farm and Ranch designation.

An ongoing program of the Arizona Farm Bureau (AZFB), The Century Farm and Ranch Program is committed to recognizing Arizona's farm and ranch families in business for a least 100 years. If your family's farm or ranch is eligible this year (2023), go to <https://www.azfb.org/News/Century-Farms-Ranches> to download and fill out the application listed online.

Application Details

The application deadline is the first Monday in July (July 3, 2023) and must be received by Arizona Farm Bureau by that date (this is not a postmark deadline). Qualified applications received after July 3 will be considered for the 2024 Century Farm and Ranch Program, as the effort will be ongoing.

Because Arizona Farm Bureau and participating Farm Bureau counties are underwriting the effort, those farm and ranch families must be current members of Arizona Farm Bureau.

If Selected, What Happens Next?

- Once applications are received by the **July 3, 2023**, deadline and reviewed, AZFB will notify qualified applicants. In addition, a variety of recognitions will take place.
1. You'll receive a certificate from your county Farm Bureau leadership.
 2. During Arizona Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting in November, you'll be recognized before your peers during an awards dinner.
 3. Additionally, Arizona Farm Bureau will send you home with a sign recognizing your farm or ranch as a *Century Farm/Ranch*.

The history of Arizona's farms and ranches is rich, and the family's lengthy tenure in agriculture signifies a heritage of determination, innovation, and resiliency. In that spirit, AZFB will continue the Century Farm and Ranch Program to recognize and honor our Arizona family farms and ranches that have thrived for more than a century. 🚜

Editor's note: Please return the completed application to **Arizona Farm Bureau Century Farm Program** to attention Julie Murphree to 325 South Higley Road, Gilbert, AZ 85296. Or email your application to outreach@azfb.org.

LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN *continued from Page 5*

But it is also important to note that while a percentage of our alfalfa is delivered beyond our state's borders (some estimate that we export 15% to 20% of our Arizona alfalfa), most of the crop grown in Arizona remains in Arizona to support our local dairy and livestock industries. Meanwhile, water continues to be Arizona Farm Bureau's number one priority policy focus and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Ultimately, our alfalfa production in Arizona ties directly to our local food supply chain.

As this "Arizona's Essential Alfalfa" campaign continues to unfold, I've begun to tell stakeholders (certainly those dozens of media calls I can get in just one week), alfalfa is only one link up ahead of us on the local food supply chain: Dairy cows eat alfalfa, we eat dairy products; beef cattle eat alfalfa, we eat beef. 🚜



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