

Wheeler County Ag Producers

Extension Connection

June 2020

Wheeler County producers' things are beginning to change and starting to look up. Business are starting to open back up and capacities of different facilities seem to be increasing by the week. We can only hope that this trend continues and that we will see and upward swing in our economy that will help us all as we traverse these trying times. You all will be happy to know that we are back in the office after a stint of working from home and the office will be open Monday-Thursday regular hours for the rest of the summer. If there is anything we here at Wheeler County Extension can do for you please let us know. This newsletter contains information on some up coming programs and AgriLife news. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thomas Meek
Wheeler County Extension Agent

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Hemphill Beef Conference Date Change

**September
1st & 2nd
Canadian, TX**

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Mon-Thurs
8:00 AM-5:00 PM

Friday
8:00 AM- Noon

Prominent research to lead Semi-Arid Agricultural Systems Institute

A regional native and nationally prominent researcher in plant breeding has been hired as the director of the Semi-Arid Agricultural Systems Institute at West Texas A&M University in Canyon. Craig Bednarz, Ph.D., an Idalou native, began May 1 in a joint appointment by West Texas A&M, Texas A&M AgriLife Research in Amarillo and the Texas A&M University Department of Soil and Crop Sciences. Bednarz will serve as an associate professor of plant, soil and environmental sciences at West Texas A&M. He will lead and expand the research, instruction and service programs of the institute, addressing issues facing semi-arid agriculture systems in the Texas Panhandle and surrounding area, said Lance Kieth, Ph.D., head of West Texas A&M's Department of Agricultural Sciences. The Semi-Arid Agricultural Systems Institute, formerly known as the Dryland Agriculture Institute, was led by Bob Stewart, Ph.D., until his retirement in 2017. Its mission is to assist researchers, educators, extension workers and administrators to develop practical and workable strategies for improving the sustainability of dryland agriculture systems worldwide. "We knew that replacing Dr. Stewart would be a difficult task, so having Dr. Bednarz fill the void left by Dr. Stewart's retirement has been a win-win for both WT and AgriLife Research," Kieth said. "Like Dr. Stewart, Dr. Bednarz is a leader, and we expect him not only to lead research efforts, but also to build and lead a team of researchers and educators to tackle agriculture's utilization of water resources in the Texas Panhandle and surrounding region." Here is the link for the rest of the article <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/06/02/prominent-researcher-to-lead-semi-arid-agricultural-systems-institute/>

Virtual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course set for August 3-5

The annual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course is going virtual this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. The annual Beef Cattle Short Course will be held virtually this year. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo) While it may be hard to 'virtually' eat the famous prime rib dinner associated with the event, the educational aspect will still be provided as it has been for the past 65 years to ranchers who need basic beef cattle production information and the latest on hot issues concerning their operations. The three-day online event is set for Aug. 3-5. Cost will be \$99 before July 1, \$129 after July 1 and \$149 after the conference is over. Registration is open now as well as the opportunity to join the mailing list for continual updates. "Participants can still learn from beef industry experts, only they will be in the comfort of their home, learning at their own pace and able to watch sessions over and over again if they want," said Jason Cleere, Ph.D., conference coordinator and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service beef cattle specialist in College Station. The short course is the largest beef cattle educational event in the country and typically attracts more than 2,000 beef cattle producers from Texas and abroad to College Station, Cleere said. It is hosted by AgriLife Extension and the Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M University. "We still plan to offer more than 20 sessions covering basic practices, new technologies and hot topics, along with a virtual trade show and live cattle demonstrations," he said. "Participants will be able to ask questions live during the sessions, and they'll have the option of receiving a paper copy of the proceedings." These sessions provide participants an opportunity to choose workshops based on their level of production experience and the needs of their ranch, Cleere said. "One positive of a virtual conference is that participants are not limited to the workshops they can attend due to time and space," he said. "The live concurrent sessions will be recorded, which will allow our participants the option to see all of the sessions on forage and beef cattle management, health, nutrition and reproduction, record-keeping, genetics, purebred cattle and much more." The demonstrations will be on cattle handling, chute-side calf working, brush management, fence building, tractor safety and beef carcass value determination. "The goal of the short course each year is to provide the most cutting-edge information needed by beef cattle producers, and that won't change this year even with the new format," Cleere said. Participants can earn nine or more Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide continuing education units if they are already licensed, he added. For more information, go to <https://beefcattleshortcourse.com/> or call 979-845-6931.

New Texas A&M AgriLife report provides details on Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University in College Station has released a new report providing details and insights into the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

“Overview of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, CFAP,” was produced by center co-directors Bart Fischer, Ph.D., and Joe Outlaw, Ph.D., along with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agricultural economists David Anderson, Ph.D., College Station, and Justin Benavidez, Ph.D., Amarillo.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released details on CFAP and announced that sign-up for the program will be from May 26 to Aug. 28. In providing direct support to farmers and ranchers, USDA is drawing on two separate funding authorities: \$9.5 billion from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security, or CARES Act, and \$6.5 billion from the Commodity Credit Corporation, or CCC.

“Given the scope of the challenges facing the agricultural industry, more assistance will undoubtedly be needed as the impact of the pandemic continues to unfold,” Fischer said. “This report is based on our review of available information, but eligibility for the new program will ultimately be determined by USDA.”

Fischer said the CFAP’s \$19 billion package contains two primary components:

- First, the USDA’s commitment to partner with regional and local distributors to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy and meat, beginning with the procurement of an estimated \$100 million per month in fresh fruits and vegetables, \$100 million per month in a variety of dairy products and \$100 million per month in meat products.

- Second, the USDA’s commitment to provide \$16 billion in direct support to agricultural producers where prices and market supply chains have been impacted and to assist producers with additional adjustment and marketing costs resulting from lost demand and short-term oversupply for the 2020 marketing year caused by COVID-19.

“This report provides an update on both components of CFAP,” Fischer said.

The CFAP provides much-needed aid for producers who have been significantly affected by COVID-19, Outlaw noted.

Despite the fact the coronavirus relief bill provided a \$14 billion replenishment for the CCC, the funding is not available until after June 2020. As a result, they are drawing on existing CCC funding to operate the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

According to the report, commodities eligible for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program include:

Livestock: cattle, hogs and sheep (lambs and yearlings only).

Dairy

Wool

Non-specialty crops: malting barley, canola, corn, upland cotton, millet, oats, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers, durum wheat and hard red spring wheat.

Specialty Crops — Fruits: apples, avocados, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapefruit, kiwifruit, lemons, oranges, papaya, peaches, pears, raspberries, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes and watermelons.

Specialty Crops — Vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, dry onions, green onions, peppers, potatoes, rhubarb, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes and taro.

Nuts: almonds, pecans and walnuts.

Other: beans and mushrooms.

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In relation to the \$16 billion in direct payments to agricultural producers, the report provides clarification on payment rates and eligible commodities, payment limits and income tests, and payment reductions. It also provides payment calculations and examples by commodity.

While CFAP provides a significant amount of aid, there are several losses not covered, Fischer said.

“As noted in another recent report by the Agricultural and Food Policy Center, losses to Texas agriculture alone could exceed \$8 billion,” he said. “As Congress continues to debate the next steps, there remain some ongoing items of concern for those involved in production agriculture.”

He identified some of those additional items of concern as:

2020 Row Crops: CFAP only provides assistance for crops held in inventory as of Jan. 15. In other words, it provides no assistance for the 2020 crop year.

Livestock: While livestock producers in general and cattle producers in particular are the biggest recipients of assistance from CFAP, the estimated support for cattle is still significantly less than half of the damages estimated by industry. While animals marketed between Jan. 15 and April 15 and held in inventory from April 16 to May 14 will be eligible for a CFAP payment, there likely will be calls for additional assistance. Also, those producing poultry on contract and paid by pounds produced may accrue significant additional losses.

Others in the Supply Chain: CFAP provides no direct benefits to anyone in the supply chain after leaving the farm gate. For example, ethanol producers are under tremendous strain. Also, the merchandising supply chain for cotton has incurred significant carrying charges, logistical costs and market disruptions not currently addressed by CFAP.

“We hope this information on CFAP will be of use to producers as they sign up for the program,” Fischer said.

Texas A&M AgriLife decision aid assists producers in uncertain times

What a difference a few months have made for Texas High Plains agricultural producers under the financial and other strains brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has definitely had a negative impact on agriculture,” said DeDe Jones, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service risk management program specialist, Amarillo. “While speaking at producer meetings in January, there was much optimism over the China trade deal and hopes for a good marketing year. By April producers were wondering if their commodities would even bring enough to cover operating expenses. It’s a tough situation.” Amid these tough financial times, Jones highly encourages producers to take advantage of AgriLife Extension’s Financial and Risk Management decision aid or FARM Assistance program. “Developing a good set of long-term financial plans and simulating the most profitable scenario will go a long way when farmers and ranchers meet with their bankers this year,” Jones said. She just published “Analyzing the Impact of COVID-19 on Texas High Plains Agriculture” written in conjunction with AgriLife Extension risk management economists Steven Klose, Ph.D., College Station; Will Keeling, Lubbock; and Greg Kaase, Ph.D., College Station. The publication utilizes the latest information from the Agricultural and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M to see how COVID-19 could impact Texas High Plains producers.

To read the rest of the article covering scenarios in the high plains and Analysis results please go to the following link <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/05/27/texas-am-agrilife-decision-aid-assists-producers-in-uncertain-times/>

International relations through Coffee

In the not-too-distant past, coffee was prized merely for its caffeine. Enjoyed as a fuel to kickstart our mornings or sustain us through afternoons, taste was secondary. In the 1980s, a so-called “second wave” in the rise of coffee was brought on by the popularity of the quick-serve giant Starbucks. Over the last several decades, a third wave has arrived, bringing with it a culture of more discriminating coffee drinkers. Third-wave coffee consumers are still after the caffeine, but they’re also attuned to features such as region of origin, roasting processes and specifications, and brewing variations. To see how far coffee culture has come, look no further than the kaleidoscopic “Coffee Taster’s Flavor Wheel,” created in the lab of Texas A&M University’s sensory scientist Rhonda Miller, Ph.D., which helps aficionados find the right language to describe or order the perfect brew. Clearly, coffee has become more than just fuel.

An Opportunity Brewing

As coffee tastes became more sophisticated, third-year Aggie Horticultural Sciences doctoral student Sarah Brinkley identified an opportunity. “The rise in appreciation of coffee has made people more curious about where it comes from,” Brinkley said. “And global connectivity enables us to learn more about the farmers, how the coffee is grown, and what makes each coffee distinct. We can know the story behind what we’re consuming.” Brinkley conducts research on how soil health-promoting practices—such as traditional vs organic growing methods—affect yield and taste. Beyond her research, in 2018 Brinkley co-led a service-learning study abroad trip to Guatemala to teach undergraduate students about cultivation, processing, culture and history of coffee in Guatemala. Her passion for improving the welfare of farmers while promoting sustainable and responsible agriculture has made her a powerful advocate and landed her positions as a student researcher at Texas A&M’s Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center and the Center for Coffee Research and Education, part of the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture. As a graduate student at Texas A&M and as a student researcher in these various centers and institutes, Brinkley has worked alongside some of the world’s preeminent scholars in her field.

“I’ve been fortunate to get to work with mentors like Dr. Leonardo Lombardini, my co-chair in the horticulture department and founding director of the Coffee Center; Dr. Elsa Murano, director of the Borlaug Institute; Dr. Rhonda Miller and Dr. Andrew Margenot, horticulture department graduate faculty. They have helped me grow as a researcher and deepened my interest in the complex relationship between coffee growers and coffee drinkers.” Ultimately, Brinkley credits these relationships and her research experiences with helping her win the Boren Fellowship, which provides federally funded awards to support students in language and cultural immersion, as well as research that could bolster national security. That’s right. Consumer choices surrounding coffee have national security and international relations implications—and more. Coffee is also intertwined with broader issues such as international development, sustainability and climate change. “The way we think about coffee in the larger context of all these interconnected issues is to start by focusing on producers and consumers,” Brinkley explains. “The history of the relationship between consuming and producing countries has been imperial and exploitative. While some entities have profited, relations between countries with this kind of history is strained.”

While there have been considerable improvements for farmers, Brinkley said there are still producers working in conflict zones and cases of forced labor. Moreover, even where oppressive conditions are no longer prevalent, there are some scars left over. Brinkley said the key to healing these scars while making further progress for farmers and supporting sustainable growing practices is to change how we perceive coffee. “Coffee is still sold as a commodity, like sugar, oil or grain,” she explains. “If we can get even more consumers to embrace it as a luxury product like wine, a fairer share of profits would end up back in the hands of the coffee growers.”

To read the rest of the article about please follow this link <https://agrifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/05/28/international-relations-through-coffee/>