

The Agriculture Newsletter



December 2014

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Howdy!

Hard to believe that the end of the year is right around the corner but alas, here we are. I'm just coming off of the 26th Annual Texas Plant Protection Conference held in College Station every year and I really took away some good information. This year, the focus of many of the presentations was water; the availability, drought impacts, conservation methods, etc. We all know what a precious commodity water is and how important it is for us to be good stewards of this limited resource. Whether it be in the implementation of new technology and varieties in rice production that utilize water more efficiently, planting more heat and drought tolerant varieties in our pastures and home landscapes or even simply making changes in our lifestyles that decrease our water use.

I heard some one say this week that those involved in agriculture production were probably some of the best conservationists around and I think he had a good point. Who else knows better than you all the significance of our limited resources and how imperative it is that we utilize them correctly in order to sustain production.

A few things to keep in mind as the beginning of the year approaches is the upcoming Agriculture Finance Seminar which will be held on January 7th at the Winnie-Stowell Community Building which should run from roughly 9:00—12:00 with the Coastal Cattleman's Association meeting to follow. Please RSVP to the Chambers Co Office at 409-374-2123 if you are planning to attend.

It's been a great year for me here in Jefferson County and I want to thank all of you for the support, I look forward to being able to continue to serve you all in 2015.

And last but not least, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your families! Take Care,

Emilee Bean

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Emilee Bean

Expert: Consequences of Texas drought continue to linger

Texas Plant Protection Association attendees hear about future of water

Writer: Blair Fannin, 979-845-2259, b-fannin@tamu.edu

BRYAN – Texas agriculture industry experts discussed the future of water and its impact on crop production before 287 attendees at the 26th Texas Plant Protection Association Conference held recently at the Brazos Center in Bryan

Dr. Bill Dugas, acting vice chancellor for agriculture and life sciences and acting dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for The Texas A&M University System, opened the conference with welcoming remarks.

“Your efforts are to be commended in bringing together everyone in this setting to discuss these important issues,” Dugas said. “Though we’ve received rain, drought is still an issue in Texas and will continue to be an issue in Texas as 35 percent of the state is still in extreme or exceptional drought status.”

“Looking at a 50-year horizon, by 2060 there will be 80 percent more Texans living here in the state,” said Carlos Rubinstein, chairman of the Texas Water Development Board and one of the general session speakers. “That’s more than 57 million people needing water here in Texas.”



Carlos Rubinstein, chairman of the Texas Water Development Board and one of the general session speakers at the 2014 Texas Plant Protection Association Conference. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Blair Fannin)

Rubinstein said by 2060, Texas will be short 8.3 million acre feet of water if current water plan goals are not met.

“We all remember 2009 and how dry it was,” he said. “In 2011, Texas used 18 million acre feet of water. So, where is the water going to come from?”

Rubinstein said a state water plan, which serves as a model to others, aims to solve the challenges. He said about one-third of the water needed will be met by conservation and reuse.

“To me, that’s the cheapest water we can have because it’s water we already have,” he said.

Another third will come from proposed new water sources and infrastructure, such as incentivizing seawater and desalination.

Rubinstein said “there’s no magic bullet” to solving Texas’ future water needs, but the agency does have dedicated financing to fund local water projects, something that wasn’t available in the past. The funding is a result of Texas voters passing an amend-

ment last year authorizing \$2 billion from the Rainy Day Fund to create the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas or SWIFT.

SWIFT funds will be used to leverage loans to develop approved water projects. The water development board is currently accepting applications until Feb. 3. Loans are not made to for-profit entities.



Dr. Travis Miller, interim director for state operations for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, College Station, discussed the historical and economic implications of drought to Texas. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Blair Fannin)

Water districts will also play an important role, Rubinstein said.

Not less than 20 percent of the funds will be used for conservation and not less than 10 percent will be used for agriculture and rural water, he noted.

“That’s a floor, not a ceiling, and I hope we can go above that.”

Dr. Travis Miller, interim director for state operations for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, College Station, discussed the historical and economic implications of drought to Texas.

“It’s very important that you are here and part of this dialogue, as this is a very important issue,” Miller said. “We’re not talking about water, but the lack of water.”

Miller said during the Dustbowl of the 1930s, Texas and Oklahoma were hardest hit. More than 3.5 million people were displaced as result of the drought, relocating to California and other states, Miller said.

“The whole population was affected, not just agriculture,” he said.

During the 1950s drought, 25 percent of Texas’ rural population moved to urban areas.

Economic losses have been staggering to Texas agriculture, Miller said. The 2011 drought led to \$7.6 billion in agricultural losses, which were on top of \$3.6 billion in losses in 2009 and \$4.1 billion in 2006. In 1998, drought losses were estimated at \$2.4 billion.

Hardest hit has been Texas’ beef cattle industry, Miller said. Texas beef cow numbers were 5.35 million head in 2005. In 2014, that number was cut to 3.91 million head.

“Beef cattle are our most valuable, marketable commodity in Texas,” Miller said. “That decline was due to loss of forage base, the resources to stock and restock cattle, and prices became too high to restock. We’ve seen a 27 percent decrease in the number of mother cows and statewide. That’s been a huge loss of resource as far as cattle are concerned.”

As a result of fewer mother cows and calves to market, it’s also led to closures of packing plants. Miller noted the closure of San Angelo Packing Inc. in April 2013 and the Plainview Excel plant in February 2013, eliminating 2,000 jobs.

Cold Weather Tips for Livestock Owners

As I am currently writing this article it's sunny and 75...in the middle of December...none the less, we know at some point that cold weather is coming our way. Heck, we already had our first frost of the winter in early November. I thought I'd share a few tips for making sure our livestock and other four-legged friends are well protected in the chance of any prolonged cold temperatures. Some of these tips are taken from Dr. Rick Machen of the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Uvalde.

Old, newborn and thin livestock are the ones that we know are at the greatest risk during cold or otherwise harsh weather conditions and should be given primary consideration. If possible move the livestock to a pasture or area with at least some type of coverage from the North wind, even if it's just dense brush. Most livestock will do well with a winter coat; however a wet coat doesn't do much in the way of insulation, hence the need for some type of shelter from the wind. This is especially true for thin animals or newborns that don't have much fat insulation under the skin.

Adequate water is also essential. Be sure to break and remove any ice that may form in troughs and refill with warm water if possible. Cold temperatures and frigid water will reduce water consumption. Reduced water consumption translates into reduced feed intake.

Be sure to provide enough hay for cattle, sheep and goats to eat their fill at least once a day if forage is in short supply. Digestion of forages will generate heat, so if possible feed livestock late in the afternoon to take advantage of this internal "heat" during the lower night time temps.

Colic is also a big winter health concern for horse owners. Those that are allowed to graze versus those kept in a stall are less susceptible. Plenty of access to fresh drinking water plays a key role in helping to avoid colic and is essential for proper digestive function. If the horse is kept in a stall then exercise will be beneficial as well, even if just a 30 minute walk.

If you have livestock then chances are you have some additional animals running around your place like dogs or cats. These guys too need some extra consideration in frigid temps, too. Providing them with a form of shelter against the wind and precipitation is important, even if it is just a busted bale of hay and an old 55 gallon drum (hey, it works!) I'd say add a heat lamp if you are feeling really generous, but that might turn them into lazy dogs. Plenty of fresh drinking water and food is necessary as well, remember, well-nourished bodies are much more prepared to endure harsh conditions. Stay warm out there!

I thought this little cartoon pretty accurately described what we call "Texas Weather."

WEATHER IN THE UNITED STATES



WEATHER IN TEXAS



48TH ANNUAL

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

AGRICULTURE FINANCE SEMINAR

JANUARY 7, 2015 | 9:00 A.M. TO NOON

WINNIE-STOWELL COMMUNITY BUILDING | WINNIE, TEXAS

RSVP BY JANUARY 2ND @ 409-374-2123

LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED.

COASTAL CATTLEMAN'S ASSOCIATION MEETING AFTER MEAL.

AGENDA

MARKETING RICE ~ RICE MARKET UPDATE
BY MICHAEL CREED

FARM BILL / AG POLICY
BY DR. JOE OUTLAW

BEEF CATTLE MARKET UPDATE
BY DR. DAVID ANDERSON

2014 SPONSORS

TEXAS FARM CREDIT

ANAHUAC NATIONAL BANK

CAPITAL FARM CREDIT

COASTAL CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

TEXAS FIRST BANK

PROSPERITY BANK

SECURITY STATE BANK



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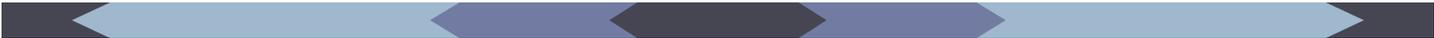
CORY LONG

LIBERTY COUNTY

936-334-3230

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services are requested to contact the Chambers County Extension office at 409-374-2123 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Educational programs of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.



Pasture Management – Just the Facts

Larry Redmon

Photosynthesis is the process by which plants combine solar energy, atmospheric CO₂, and water, within green leaf tissue (chlorophyll) to produce carbohydrates. Plants use these carbohydrates as a source of energy to carry on basic metabolic processes. In short, while overly simplistic, plants can create their own food using the simple ingredients of sunlight, water, and CO₂. Plants do require, however, adequate green leaf (photosynthetic tissue) in order to carry out photosynthesis. Without these four main ingredients plants cannot survive. As managers there is not a lot we can do regarding CO₂; there is adequate quantities in the atmosphere. We can, however, have an impact on water, sunlight, and the amount of green leaf involved in the photosynthesis process. Let's take a look at what impacts we can have on the important aspect of plant production.

Some might argue we have little control over the amount of sunlight plants receive. The truth is we have a substantial influence on the amount of sunlight reaching the plant leaves. If we do not control weeds or if we do not appropriately manage winter pasture as warm-season grasses are breaking dormancy, a canopy (think umbrella) of weeds or winter annuals results and intercepts/uses most of the sunlight with very little reaching the forage plant below. Since sunlight is a crucial component of photosynthesis, the forage below the canopy suffers. Without adequate sunlight, photosynthesis is reduced, root growth and development is decreased, and overall vigor and production of the forage plant declines. As managers we have direct control over the amount of sunlight reaching the desired forage by either removing weeds with the appropriate herbicide at the appropriate time or by removing winter annuals prior to the time warm-season grasses begin to make active growth. When night time temperatures consistently reach 60°F, warm-season grasses begin making active growth and cool-season annuals should be removed prior to this time.

The same argument could be made regarding precipitation; obviously, managers have no control over the amount of precipitation occurring during the year. Managers do, however, can control how much of the precipitation remains on their property. When pastures are routinely grazed short, overland flow of runoff during precipitation events is increased and more water runs off the pasture rather than into the soil (infiltration). Consider making your property a “sponge” to capture and keep as much moisture as possible. This concept of slowing down runoff velocity and increasing infiltration

also protects the soil from loss (erosion), keeps expensive fertilizer nutrients, pesticides, and bacteria in the pasture, and protects soil organic matter from being lost as a result of soil erosion. Water + topsoil + nutrients + organic matter = a much healthier pasture environment and will pay dividends for years to come. Conversely, loss of water, topsoil, organic matter, etc., results in a pasture system that is low in productivity.

Finally, as managers we have a direct control over how much green leaf remains in the pasture. Research data indicates up to 50% of the forage leaf may be removed without deleterious effects on the root system. Once >50% of the leaf is removed root growth and development is reduced significantly. As root growth and development is reduced there is a negative feedback to the top-growth; this further exacerbates an already bad situation. As managers we primarily control the amount of green leaf taken by using the appropriate stocking rate and possibly some type of grazing method. However, other “grazers” such as grasshoppers, fall armyworms, and the new bermudagrass stem maggot can also remove large amounts of green leaf, thus depriving the plant of the ability to produce roots. The ability for good root growth and development is always important, but critically so during drought.

The bottom line? Maintain an adequate amount of forage residue in the pasture at all times. Different species have different thresholds. Bermudagrass and bahiagrass, for example, may be grazed repeatedly to a height of 4” with little detrimental effect. Kleingrass, Old World bluestems, intermediate native species should not be grazed below 6”-8”. Our native tallgrasses such as little bluestem, big bluestem, indiagrass and others should not be grazed below 12”-14”. Keeping some of these thresholds in mind, scouting the field to check on the key species and for potential weed and insect problems, and sometimes making the hard decisions regarding stocking rate will help maintain plant vigor and production by allowing optimum photosynthesis to take place. These same actions will also enhance animal performance, protect the environment, and increase profit potential for your operation.





United States Department of Agriculture

News Release

USDA REAP PROGRAM ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY & ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS

TEMPLE, TEXAS, December 1, 2014 - As many U.S. farmers are discovering, renewable energy is the new cash crop of the 21st century. Renewable energy and energy efficiency systems provide a significant opportunity to increase local revenue and the economic yield of land while bolstering the local job market. Energy efficiency improvements are a useful tool for increasing farm or business productivity while reducing costs. By investing in energy efficient equipment, agricultural producers and rural small businesses can enjoy savings and increased reliability for years to come.

USDA Rural Development provides financial assistance in the form of grants and guaranteed loans to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements through the Agency's Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP). REAP offers funds for farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy-efficiency improvements.

Many projects have been funded throughout Texas under the REAP program. This funding was used for projects ranging from installation of solar and wind renewable energy sources, improving irrigation systems, upgrades to air conditioning and refrigeration units, and retrofitting poultry houses with more energy efficient equipment.

Grants can fund up to 25% of a project's total eligible costs, and are limited to \$500,000 for renewable energy projects or \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements. Grants as low as \$2,500 for renewable energy projects and \$1,500 for energy efficiency projects, will be considered. Guaranteed loans can fund up to 75% of a project's total eligible costs, with a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$25 million.

All agricultural producers, including farmers and ranchers, who derive 50% or more of their gross income from agricultural operations are eligible. Businesses in a rural area which meets the Small Business Administration size standards can also apply. A private entity, a rural utility, and rural electric cooperatives are typically eligible, however non-profit and public bodies are not eligible.

The first round of REAP applications will be due in February 2015. For more information on the program and to apply for funding, details are available on the USDA Rural Development website, http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/TX_Energy.html. Applications should be submitted to the USDA Renewable Energy Coordinator, Billy Curb, at billy.curb@tx.usda.gov, or call 254-742-9775 for more information.

***A good local contact for more information on this grant opportunity is Sabrina Glenn, our Assistant Area Director out of Lufkin. You can reach her by phone at (936)634-9900 or by email at sabrina.glenn@tx.usda.gov. I'd give her a call first if you are interested in learning more about this grant opportunity.**

THE URBAN FRUIT TREE

»»»»»»»»»»»»»»»» WORKSHOP ««««««««««««««««

GROWING FRUIT ON THE GULF
COAST



■ **JANUARY 24, 2015** ■

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION OFFICE - JEFFERSON COUNTY

1225 PEARL ST. SUITE 200

BEAUMONT, TEXAS 77701

(409) 835-8461

REGISTRATION BEGINS
AT 9:00 A.M.
PROGRAM FROM 9:30-4:30
LUNCH INCLUDED



SPEAKERS:
*TOM LEROY, HORTICULTURE CEA
MONTGOMERY CO
*LOCAL CITRUS EXPERT PANEL

PRE-REGISTER BY JAN 16TH

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services are requested to contact Cary Erickson, Jefferson County Human Resources Director at (409) 839-2391 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

From Beaumont Enterprise:

SE Texas rice farmers optimistic about end to Cuba embargo

By Manuella Libardi
Beaumont Enterprise
Published 9:28 am, Thursday, December 18, 2014

An elderly woman working at a Havana market ran up to [Nick Lampson](#), hugged him and offered her thanks for the then-congressman's effort to bring back the high-quality, cheap rice that she once had on her table.

Lampson said he traveled to Cuba in 1999 with Southeast Texas rice farmers to meet with then-President [Fidel Castro](#) and his government in an attempt to call for renewed agricultural trade between the United States and Cuba. Before a 1960s trade embargo, Cuba imported virtually all of its rice from the U.S., Lampson said.

Americans and Cubans alike have longed for five decades to repair the divide, Lampson said on Wednesday, hours after President [Barack Obama](#) announced the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

[Louis Broussard](#), president of Beaumont Rice Mills and one of the farmers who accompanied Lampson to Cuba, said re-establishing economic relations with Cuba is what the rice industry has been waiting for, adding it would change the dynamics of the entire industry.



Louis Broussard owner of Beaumont Rice Mills Inc. discusses recent trends in international rice sales. Guiseppe Barranco/The Enterprise Photo: Guiseppe Barranco



Before the embargo, Southeast Texas numbered around 300 rice farmers, Lampson said. The number is now about 30 or 40, he said.

Lifting the embargo could encourage farmers to get back in the game, Lampson speculated.

Mike Doguet discusses the pros and cons of the new Farm Bill being debated in Congress on Friday June 15, 2012, and how likely it will not benefit rice farmers, because in the past it hasn't. Corn, soybeans and wheat growers usually fare much better. Dave Ryan/The Enterprise Photo: Dave Ryan

UPCOMING EVENTS

SOUTHEAST TEXAS RICE SYMPOSIUM

January 22nd

Winnie-Stowell Community
Building

Topics will include: IPM strategies for rice production, rice market update, update on new rice varieties and other timely information.

CEU's will be offered



Please call the Jefferson or Chambers County
Office for more information
409-835-8461 or 409-374-2123

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