



ARIZONA AGRICULTURE

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A Conversation with a Beginner Farmer: Janna Anderson

Farm Bureau member and certifying for USDA Organics, this up-and-coming farmer is also an advocate for biotechnology in agriculture. Find out why.

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau

A frequent shopper at area farmers' markets, third-generation Phoenix native Janna Anderson saw there was a large demand for urban farmers on a small scale even before the locally-grown movement became trendy. Because of this recognition, Pinnacle Farms was launched on a tiny plot behind the Scottsdale Community College in 2000. This all began to unfold at a time when Anderson was just a semester shy of obtaining her nursing degree. Instead, she dropped out of college, decided to follow her heart, and applied herself to filling this niche food market.

The small plot behind the college served Anderson well for a short time until she realized that the need for local produce was so great she had to look elsewhere to grow produce to supply the demand.

Never one to rest on her laurels or get comfortable with the current market, Anderson ventured into grains and with a leap of faith began growing an heirloom variety of wheat that hadn't been popular until recently, especially as the GMO debate raged on. The last few years, she's enjoyed fulfilling a niche for ancient grains and will continue to grow heritage varieties as the market evolves.

Self-financed, Anderson grows naturally at her West Valley farm and every stage in her farming operation is carefully planned out. Not yet USDA Certified Organic, she plans to apply for certification at her fruit orchard farm in Laveen. Paperwork required to get to that stage isn't her favorite, she admits.

She also grew sorghum for a dairy in Buckeye this summer. And, in fact, has moved away from growing produce for the farmers' markets. Supporting the farmers' market niche, she explains, is an extreme amount of work. She highlights how farmers are driving into town to set up all their produce as early as 3:00 a.m. on market day, which has been harvested, cleaned and prepared the day before and now must be out and on display for the 7:00 in the morning opening. Five to six hours later, they're tearing everything down and packing up in 110 degree weather during an Arizona summer (or

the freezing cold or rain and mud) just to begin all over again a few days later. Anderson describes customers practically knocking down the tents at 6:30 a.m. wanting to buy produce and "we would have to put up barricades just to get set up in time."



Beginner farmer Janna Anderson says she knows more about farm machinery than any real girl should.

And, in the thick of all this she's an advocate for biotechnology in agriculture. But why? *Arizona Agriculture* was very curious and we spent some time on her farm to get the skinny on this young farmer's philosophy. This organic farmer, whose maiden name is McDonald, sees the irony in all sorts of things, including farming.

Arizona Agriculture: In the 14 years you've been in farming, what changes have you seen?

Anderson: When I first started farming, organic certification had just been created and the consumer demand for that product was naively pursued by people who thought that they understood that the word organic meant no pesticides in their food. While in the background, commercial agriculture wanted in on the big money that organics seemed to demand, especially as it becomes more of a mainstream market.

Sadly, I have also seen the debate raging against GMOs [genetically modified organisms] and the fear mongering attacks from the organic side that leads people to believe that the conventional foods are not safe to raise their families on. It is disturbing the amount of misinformation that people absorb from these sources.

Arizona Agriculture: Why did you choose to go into agriculture?

Anderson: When I grew up, it was silly to think that a person would want to go into the agriculture field and I remember taking one of those aptitude tests designed to help a person figure out what careers to pursue. I laughed at one of the choices and remember saying "Farmer?! Who wants to grow up to be a farmer? That shouldn't even be an option. I'm going into nursing where I can make a real living."

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Let's Talk About This!

Outreach and engagement are transforming the public's understanding of Arizona agriculture.

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau

Talk is cheap, especially if it's just a one-way conversation. Arizona Farm Bureau's outreach and engagement strategies attempt to avoid such one-side results and instead keep the conversation going. But how?

With the 2013/2014 fiscal year just ended, we can now report on our outreach efforts to engage the public in Arizona agriculture's amazing story.

Always guided by Arizona Farm Bureau's three main objectives in public outreach, we 1) work to support efforts to improve agriculture markets for Arizona farmers and ranchers, 2) valiantly dispel the majority of misconceptions in agriculture, and 3) earnestly engage Arizona families in our exciting story of Arizona agriculture.

Specifically for the 2013/2014 Fiscal year (highlights our major ones; but not all):

- Reach 4.4 million Arizonans (impressions) with our Arizona Agriculture message! We did, with the final number being **4,520,480**.
- *Tell Farm & Ranch Stories:* New article series begun in May 2014 garners 8,000 web views so far. Offers opportunity for people to post comments to our weekly blog.
- *Use new specialty crop videos next spring in vegetable kits & measure results:* Getting fair traction on YouTube; plan more exposure next school year.
- *Reach 60,000 students, parents and teachers by end of 2013/2014 school year.* Reached **69,943**.
- *Take Misconceptions, Biotech and Animal Welfare presentations to broader audiences:* Presented to attendees during Annual Meeting, Commodity Committee, Arizona Nursery Association and other venues for presenting.

See **LET'S TALK** Page 6



Began this last spring, we're weekly posting stories about Arizona Farm Bureau's agriculture members and using a 10-question format to tell it. To date, the new blog series in "The Voice" has drawn more than 8,000 views to azfb.org

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It Will Hurt Arizona!

Farm Equipment on Highways - Page 8
You're not exempt from the rules of the road!

Are Lobbyists All That Bad?

By Joe Sigg, Arizona Farm Bureau

I threatened to run for office one time and my daughter was unenthusiastic. She related it would be a losing effort because I had few friends and the neighbors did not much like me. Point taken. So I began lobbying and she said: "...now no one likes you."

As you know ... as you think ... lobbyists are ranked somewhat low on the list of ethical standards and honesty. Well, to be briefly honest for a change, I think we are dead last. I simply plead we are misunderstood. I still have childhood issues. I am better than you think ... which is easy to say when you are running dead last.

I had hoped that between stories about the NFL, movie stars' photo libraries being hacked and dark money, perhaps lobbyists might be seen in a different light, but the campaign commercials continue to cast us as just a little worse than evil, or on our best days, perhaps a dead heat. No, you are not going to forget or forgive us lightly.

It's probably a combination of things. For a while I thought I had a smart answer for our justice system. Just like all criminals deserve a defense ... all ideas deserve a hearing ... these agendas need an airing ... they need to be pressed forward, and that's what lobbyists do. But then I was reminded that while there is freedom of speech, and it is a right ... it does not mean that all of these ideas should be aired because lots of things are just dumb.

I am frequently asked if I would lobby for something in which I did not believe. Answer: not very well. It's really hard work trying to convince someone else, even if your side sounds pretty good. And there is that whole honesty thing preceding you into a meeting, so it's tough to be effective ... even on good days. Much of the time it's like being in sales and no one is buying, and I can't discount anything to make it better.

But it is like sales. A lobbyist is "selling words" ... selling ideas ... not trying to buy influence, because return on investment is tenuous at best.

We do have company. Those jackass daredevils, for example, but only sort-of. No one understands them either, but they do get a few nervous laughs. People just shuffle to the other side of the street and shun the lobbyists.

I am looking for some dark money though to produce some commercials that will cast us lobbyists in a good light and influence a change of opinion. The problem will be to find a self-respecting politician to appear in the commercial as a positive spokesperson for a lobbyist. Maybe one of those stars with hacked photos? In the interim, if you have to sharpen your edge on the whetstone of my reputation; go ahead but I will bill you. It seems only fair, as I have to get through the day as well. 🚗

EPA Carbon Plan Detrimental to Arizona

By Philip Bashaw, Government Relations and Grassroots Advocacy Director for Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association

Affordable and reliable energy is critical to Agriculture in the state of Arizona. Electricity provides us the means to irrigate crops, preserve perishable commodities and operate machinery that makes modern American Agriculture possible.

A recent proposal by the EPA to cut CO2 emissions from existing power plants is the latest in a series of threats to Arizona residents and to the agriculture industry. EPA's "Clean Power Plan" mandates Arizona's electricity providers reduce carbon emissions by 52% by 2030, the 2nd highest state carbon reduction target in the country. EPA also set an interim goal requiring Arizona utilities to close all coal fired power plants in the state and switch to natural gas to by 2020.

These mandate are not only burdensome, according to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, compliance is likely impossible for Arizona. According to Beth Hager, ADEQ public affairs director, "Even if we used all the natural gas capacity in the state to replace the coal, we would not have enough energy to provide air conditioning in the summer months."

Much of the costs borne by consumers will come in the form of stranded assets. It takes a significant investment to build electricity generating units, so in order to keep electricity prices affordable, the projects have to be capitalized over decades. Many power plants have a projected useable life of 50 to 60 years. By mandating the closure of these plants before the end of their useable life, utilities must continue to pay off the remaining debt while investing in new generation to serve the customers who will ultimately pay the costs.

"This proposal will mandate that we serve the same number of customers with twice if not three times the amount of debt." Said Ruben McBride, a member of the Graham County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. According to McBride, "The potential impact of these rules will hurt our ability to keep and attract business, industry and agriculture."

The rule also creates inequities between states. While Arizona's compliance target will mandate a fundamental shift in our energy portfolio at great cost to consumers, some states will have to do little to nothing to comply with their reduction targets. Some states like Vermont were excluded altogether, and carbon intensive states like Kentucky and West Virginia will only be required to reduce their coal generation by 1 percent.

The current rule proposal does not apply to the Navajo Generating Station as it is located on tribal land. The EPA plans to propose rules regarding NGS and other generating units on tribal land later this year. ADEQ hopes they will be able to work with the tribes to include these plants in the Arizona planning process.

It's time to take action! By now, you may be familiar with EPA comment periods as there is more than one issue to be concerned with when it comes to the EPA. For this issue, the comment period for these rules closes on **December 1**. Already more than 1 million rural Americans have voiced their opposition to these rules and you can join them by going to www.action.coop to send your comments to EPA! 🚗



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Andy Thelander

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Quite a few years later, I was one semester short of becoming a registered nurse when I saw a need in the community farmers' markets that I was able to fulfill and worked toward that goal until I realized this was something that could be a real career. It's a very funny story to me now when I look back and realize the aptitude test had it right all along. I sincerely enjoy learning to grow new things and it didn't hurt when I enjoyed a kind of rock star admiration from people who would buy my produce.

Arizona Agriculture: Will anyone in your family - younger generation - pursue farming?

Anderson: People always ask about the family aspect of my farming operation and for many in agriculture it is what they do because their family did it before them. People generally raise their eyebrows when I say my husband has a real job and I am the farmer. I am lucky that he has been as supportive in reaching my goals as if they were his own. I know he still wishes I was a nurse though, especially when I want to buy some really expensive piece of equipment.

Arizona Agriculture: Why have you so quickly changed your farm model, in fact, often?

Anderson: I have changed and adapted to the needs of my market base for years. I have always been willing to try new growing techniques and listen to how farmers of old do it too. As my farm grows, I am still a very small farm in terms of the typical farmer, but 46 acres requires a different type of technique than a farm of 5 or 5,000 acres will.

The needs of the consumer have changed too. When I first started growing for the [retail] market, the customers were mostly older women, looking for pesticide-free produce for their vegan lifestyle and the occasional conspiracy theorist. Now, the word organic has become a buzzword in what consumers are looking for, and markets are bustling with young women with babies and food connoisseurs searching for that farm-to-table connection.

Agriculture keeps me challenged and always learning too. I know more about farm machinery than any real girl should. I actually enjoy doing routine maintenance and working with tractors and implements and getting a little dirty. I figure if the Queen of England can repair trucks during the war, there's no reason I can't change my own oil and wrench a few nuts and bolts.

Additionally, while I always say I am not too creative, I think my business does require a little creativity. Thinking outside the box to be able to fulfill the demand and make money doing it is not always easy, and doing it on a small scale is challenging too. I enjoy listening and learning from other farmers who have done this the same way with excellent results for years and I take that information and learn how to apply it to my operation.

Arizona Agriculture: Why are you Pro-GMO?

Anderson: Because I do market to the organic customer, unfortunately they just don't have all the right information; they have bits and pieces of stuff. Often, they buy into the negative and don't have the positive to fall back on. Anyone who views food issues as black and white are decidedly seeing only one side of the story. Most of the

information out there has some truth to it, but it is in shades of gray. There are some serious caveats to either side of the GMO issue.

And, the reality is that there are several advantages to GMOs.

While I don't grow them myself, biotech crops hold a big advantage for larger farms. People who don't farm don't understand these advantages. They just hear the negative and repeat it without really studying the science. As a society, it's become easy for us to buy into the fear-mongering.

If you understand how conventional farmers have to farm, biotech crops become a big advantage to everyone including the consumer. GMOs can reduce airborne pesticides, water pollution from run-off, increase yields, and generate drought resistant plants for the future and so much more. Additionally, GMOs can be very cost effective way to go and can target very specific pests rather than killing everything it touches like an aerial spray. Additionally, some GMO corn products utilize genetic engineering to insert BT, which is actually a product that is allowed in Certified Organic growing techniques.

People think conventional farmers are just spraying like crazy to grow their crops. The uninformed don't realize it's too expensive and that farmers are always looking for ways to reduce our costs to improve our bottom line. Again, it's a common sense issue but with so much fear-mongering going on it's hard to imagine that our modern-day farmers approach their farming with a rational business mind.

People don't realize the word organic is something you have to pay for. Make no mistake, it too is big business.

Arizona Agriculture: Beginner farmers' main complaint is they can't obtain land to farm. How have you obtained it?

Anderson: It's true. There is huge demand in the farmers' market but land availability is beginner farmers' biggest constraint. I got very lucky in getting the particular parcel I farm on right now. None of the other farmers around here really wanted it because a.) It was too small – 40 acres is a small farm for most of the other larger farms around here, and b.) the neighborhood gets the primary water – irrigation – so if you're farming sorghum like I am right now we only get two or three days to water and sometimes it takes four or five to complete the irrigation. We get pushed off even though the neighbors may be simply flood irrigating their yards. The neighborhood has been here a lot longer and numbers count. I routinely get calls from neighbors who tell me what I need to do, including maintaining the ditches.

Arizona Agriculture: You appear to have a real sense for current market needs.

Anderson: I'm still deciding on the variety of ancient grains to grow next year. I will grow whichever varieties have the most popular appeal, and a guaranteed buyer for the end result. I am also venturing into heirloom beans and corn this year, growing out some very rare varieties for the dried market.

I'm lucky that our lifestyle does not depend on what I do. In a sense, I've got a lot more freedom to do what I want to do, so I try new things. I didn't really ask my husband, and he wasn't initially very excited about my venture into farming. He was looking forward to a nurse's income. But, he's always been supportive.

I always want to do a little better. I always find room for improvement. It keeps me always looking. Talking to the other growers I discover how lacking I am. I have so much more to learn and as a result I'm open to trying other things in farming. The veteran farmers can rattle off so many statistics because they've been doing it for so many years. When you talk to them, they know exactly what a certain crop is going to bring and what it takes to bring a new crop on.

Arizona Agriculture: You said, "...46 acres requires a different type of technique than a farm of 5 or 5,000 acres will." Expound on this point a bit more?

Anderson: For example, if I was a Farmers' market farmer, 40+plus acres is way too much. There's no way to push that much produce through there. With the size of acreage I'm leasing right now, it's one of the reasons I stopped doing the farmers' market segment. I need to make this particular parcel pay itself back and make a couple of bucks off of it in the end. We needed to grow something else.

Last year I had divided it into thirds. One third was produce for the farmers' markets and the rest for the ancient grains.

When you think about it, hmm 40 acres. Why am I working 12-hour days especially when I can get a pretty good return off of say sorghum? Why divide it into thirds and go to all that extra trouble, having to be the marketer, accountant, food safety consultant, and personnel babysitter, all in addition to grower. I can focus on growing a better product if I don't have to spend hours dealing with the other aspects of growing for direct market and streamline the business model and reduce paid labor.

Yes, the specialty grain market pays a lot better, especially when you break it down by unit cost versus profit. But, the yield is not as strong. And, if you know you can get

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Anderson *continued from page 4*

a specific yield off of a crop that others have done a billion times before, why not study that as an option. Talk to the leaders; people who are making money at farming. Plus, growing sorghum and ancient grains I don't have to work as hard as growing specialty crops for market which require hand harvesting twice a week-all year round.

It's all about learning a little bit more. It's about improving your bottom line and doing it easier.



Always reviewing her business model, Anderson grew sorghum for a dairy in Buckeye this summer.

Arizona Agriculture: How do we, Farm Bureau, market to this broader consumer base, certainly organics?

Anderson: It's a difficult situation because I think "Big Ag" got caught unaware and now they're behind the eight ball and no one realized that the GMO thing would become such a big deal. Fear sells and it sells fast; like wildfire.

Now all of the sudden if Jane Doe consumer doesn't get all of her babies certified organic baby food and she feeds her kids gluten she's just a terrible mother.

I think a softer tone might help from the agriculture sector. It's the most important part of your job, and Farm Bureau's, otherwise the nonsense will overtake the conversation and in many instances already has drowned out rational conversations.

On the flip side, consumers need to be aware that certified organic does allow

pesticides. Most believe if it's organic they won't be exposed to pesticides. The difference between pesticides that a conventional farmer uses and pesticides that an organic farmer uses are labeled differently but in reality they're pretty much the same thing.

Organic farmers' primary pesticide is pyrethrum and it kills everything in the field. It doesn't selectively choose one pest over another. Whereas, some of the non-organic pesticides can be specifically targeted and a farmer knows exactly what he's using it for and can maintain a balance.

Personally, I prefer not to use pesticides at all on my crops. For example, if you want a type of ecosystem in your farming that includes ladybugs, they'll leave if you don't have any aphids. To maintain that balance when you're farming – and this goes back to farming the five acres versus the 50 – let's say you farm 100 acres of Kale, you can't afford to let an infestation of aphids have your whole crop. But as a smaller, organic farmer, every year I'll let the aphids have my 2 rows of Kale so that the other produce is relatively free of bugs. When the bugs are done with the Kale I'm usually done with the other products in the field. It's a balance.

It's a huge difference when you scale. 🐞

Waterworld

By Joe Sigg, Arizona Farm Bureau

Remember "Waterworld?" This 1995 American post-apocalyptic science fiction action film was a really bad movie starring Kevin Costner and since most developments as to water are bad (though the Forbearance agreement below is a very encouraging note), perhaps we should title all future reports as such.



Like a scene from a bad movie, our water issues keep overflowing while the water table seems to keep going down.

To that point we are going to have so much stuff on water perhaps it needs its own corner of the website, but I leave that to more create minds.

In the interim, we have a short brief for *Arizona Agriculture*, with more details following on azfb.org. The first of these briefs concerns:

Irrigation Districts Create a Forbearance Agreement with the CAP

- Maricopa Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage District, Central Arizona Irrigation & Drainage District and New Magma Irrigation & Drainage District have agreed to forbear or take less water from the CAP.
- In exchange they will receive reduction in pumping charges.
- The forbearance water will stay in Lake Mead.
- Water forbearance amounts to the lesser of 75% of the irrigation districts' allocation of Ag Pool water or 20,000 acre feet per irrigation district.
- CAP intends to offer this to any other irrigation district holding an allocation of Excess Water from the pool of non-Indian agricultural water.
- This agreement runs to the end of 2016, but can be cancelled earlier if there is a call on the river.
- The water staying in Lake Mead may well make the difference of forestalling a call on the river, so the agreement is a good measure for the public and for agriculture. Or put another way ... *forbearance could forestall!*

Yuma and Mesa Striving for a Win-Win

This is the first year of a three-year-agreement between Yuma, Mesa Irrigation and Drainage District and the CAP. Farmers are being paid \$750 per acre for fallowing on 1,420 acres of alfalfa and old citrus acreage.

The water previously used for agriculture will remain behind in Lake Meade but there will be detailed accounting of water savings and analysis of a working model and experiment.

Will the water savings and the farm economics match up in three years - only time will tell? For now, for the farmers, the fallowing is simply an alternative three year crop.

Specific questions about our water policy can be addressed by reaching out to either myself at joesigg@azfb.org or Ana Kennedy at anakennedy@azfb.org. 🐞

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Let's Talk continued from page 1

Beyond Output to Outcomes

But beyond our output, we need to know that we have solid outcomes in public outreach. In other words, does our output generate outcomes that make a difference, especially in people's attitudes about Arizona agriculture?

We believe that we have four areas where our output is unveiling clear outcomes, specifically in delivering great attitude transformations: 1) Ag in the classroom, 2) Fenceline (speakers' bureau), 3) Special events, and 4) Social media.

Ag in the Classroom

Personally, I have always suggested that one of our best tools of engagement with the public about our Arizona agriculture story happens in the classroom with parents, teachers and students. The evidence is clear.

This positive engagement is validated by our research on the issue that students learning math, science, social studies and language arts using agriculture have better test scores because hands-on ag-related education helps them retain information better.

Fenceline, Arizona Farm Bureau's Speakers' Bureau

Launched by Marketing Manager Peggy Jo Goodfellow through her Project CENTRL project, Fenceline just completed its third year and our outreach in this area tripled to an audience number of 1,208. Fenceline coordinates speaking engagements between civic and other organizations needing farm and ranch professionals to tell the Arizona agriculture story.

While the main evidence of positive outcomes here is anecdotal, they are numerous. The biggest sign of its impact is repeat requests from the various groups to come back and talk. Additionally, the most common reaction to our presentation (that is also given by Farm Bureau staff) is that the audience "never realized how much agriculture production takes place in this state."

And, we're everywhere. One of our latest Fenceline schedules took us to Grand Canyon University in Phoenix to speak to a class of business students.

A Variety of Special Events

If one were to average it out, Arizona Farm Bureau could claim participation in a special event per week. During the fall months, Arizona Farm Bureau staff joke that we're doubling up on the events around the state.

Two of the biggest ones Arizona Farm Bureau participates in involve the Earth Day and Boo at the Zoo events at the Phoenix Zoo and the Young Farmer and Ranchers' participation in the spring Game and Fish Expo. These three events draw thousands of participants.

We have found that when we align with an established event that has already built an audience, we gain traction by participating and engaging those that attend.

From these events we've drawn new advocates that often extend the relationship on our social media channels, including helping us build a reservoir of questions and answers that we can turn into stories about agriculture.

New this year, the Goodwill BBQ Tours are in partnership with Farm Bureau Fi-

ancial Services that take us to events all over Arizona to serve up delicious food while promoting Farm Bureau. To date, we estimate that more than 3,000 people have been fed.

Social Media: Farm Bureau's Boldest Frontier

The experts tell us for social media (YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter) to be legitimate it must engage. We'll we are engaging!

In Arizona Farm Bureau's various social media channels, we're keeping the conversation going. We've continued the "Ask a Farmer" series on Facebook where we ask moms to pose questions for our farmers and ranchers to answer. These continue to be popular and allow us to have a conversation around what our moms are thinking and asking about food and agriculture.

Our other very popular series we plan to continue on Facebook is the "Faces of Arizona Agriculture." We've now featured more than 48 farm and ranch leaders. They average anywhere from 500 to 1,200 views on Facebook each time a poster is featured on Facebook.

New this year, we've begun a series on our "The Voice" blog on azfb.org called "Meet Arizona Agriculture's [FAMILY NAME] Family." More than 20 families have been profiled so far in a 10-question format. We then share the stories on all of our social media channels. Views to these stories explode in views. People love to read about other people.

Where has all of this led us? An ongoing dialogue with one of our key demographics, moms. One Arizona mom posted on Facebook, "Thanks so much for answering my question! I feel like I can now connect to our state's farmers and ranchers!"

Plus, the "comments" and "shares" gleaned from various information we're posting in our social media channels is letting us know our audiences are engaging.

Yes, Arizona agriculture has a long way to go to get to where we need to be with public outreach and telling your Arizona farm and ranch story.

Ultimately, though, you are the best one to tell your story. This joint effort means we all must be engaged; marketing the story of your life and times farming and ranching. Let's join together in this new fiscal year and get it done. 🍴



Also new this year, the Goodwill BBQ Tours are in partnership with Farm Bureau Financial Services that take us to events all over Arizona to serve up delicious food while promoting Farm Bureau. To date, we estimate that more than 3,000 people have been fed.

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- Hall of Fame Honorees - *Senator Steve Pierce; Jacque Accomazzo; David & Sue Kimmerle; Farm Credit Services Southwest*
- 2014-2015 Arizona National Scholarship Recipients
- Featured Artist - *Kathy McCraine*

Gala Tickets \$40, available online at www.anls.org
Supporting the YF&R Food Drive

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- Tickets available online or at the ANLS Office

INFORMATION@ANLS.ORG
602-258-8568

*For more information
and a full schedule of events, visit*
www.anls.org

See you in Phoenix!

Surprising Facts about Arizona Agriculture; 2014 Update

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau

A few years ago, I published an article, "Surprising Facts About Arizona Agriculture." But, now that the USDA has released its 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture numbers this year (just now published in 2014), it's time for an update.

Thanks to more than a century of counting American agriculture, the U.S. Census of Agriculture conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has given all of agriculture some fascinating facts about farming, certainly Arizona Agriculture. Today, census results are published every five years.

Ag Census information gathered provides the most comprehensive picture of the state of American agriculture. All farms that have at least \$1,000 in real or potential livestock or crop sales are counted in the census. In addition to collecting data about farming and ranching operations, the census gathers detailed farm operator characteristics to help paint a picture about the types of people involved with agriculture and their business structure. Additionally, detailed economic data is collected to monitor the huge economic contribution made by agriculture. All of the information is gathered at the national, state and county level. For the 2012 census (the most recent census numbers available), it took almost two years to collect and analyze responses from more than 2 million producers in the United States.

For Arizona agriculture, we also gather information from our state universities in order to track the industry's economic impact on a regular basis. As a result, we can share surprising and exciting things about Arizona Agriculture.

Arizona Agriculture's amazing facts

To highlight some of these exciting and surprising facts about Arizona Agriculture check out this sample below:

- Arizona ranks second in the U.S. in head lettuce, leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, spinach and cantaloupe production.
- Arizona has more than 20,000 farms and ranches across the state.
- Cattle and calves are Arizona's leading agricultural product followed by dairy production.
- Arizona produces enough beef annually to feed over 4.6 million Americans.
- 215 pairs of jeans can be produced from 1 bale of cotton grown in Arizona.



Beef and dairy are Arizona agriculture's leading agriculture commodities. Here, one of Arizona's leading feedlots feeds Holstein steers for the beef market.

- Yuma, Arizona is the winter lettuce capital of the world.
- Nationally, Arizona ranks second in the production of lemons, third in tangerine production.
- Apple growers in 2012 harvested 8 million pounds.
- In 2012, there was an average of 188,000 milk cows in Arizona with a yearly milk production of 23,978 pounds per cow.
- Arizona has a \$16 billion agricultural industry and growing.
- Livestock production in Maricopa County, particularly cattle and dairy production, has taken the lead accounting for 55 percent of the county's total agricultural product sales.
- Most farms in Maricopa County are less than 10 acres (Surprising, I know).
- Less than 6% of all Maricopa County farms are larger than 500 acres. However, these relatively small number of larger farms account for the majority of agricultural sales in the county.
- Statewide, this trend of "Big" farms comprising most ag sales prevails with nearly 5% of the largest farms accounting for nearly 95% of all agricultural sales.
- The average age of an Arizona farm operator in 2007 (the previous Census of Agriculture) was 58.5 years old. In 2012, the average producer was 58.2 years old. This is the first time in decades that the average age of farmers has declined, although minimally.
- Arizona weather plays an important role in allowing Arizona to supply the nation with winter vegetables otherwise unavailable in most areas of the country.

In fact, in Arizona farmers can be planting and/or harvesting every month of the year! So, if you're ever stumped as to what to say about Arizona agriculture, the above statistics are a great start. 🐄

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Spotlight on Safety

Farm Equipment: Safety First On Highways

By Joe Sigg Arizona Farm Bureau

With a recent spate of incidents, it's a good idea to remember some of the rules of the road. Also, don't assume that just because you're driving on the roads with farm equipment you're automatically exempt from a certain degree of accountability. Farm equipment must abide by certain rules too.

When pulling instruments of husbandry:

- Employ slow moving signage and lights – and remember, when going over 35 mph you no longer qualify as a slow moving vehicle. We can help you with these supplies. Go to azfb.org and select the Programs tab and then Safety.
- Consider a “chase” vehicle with lights and warnings – traffic from the rear is not out looking for farm equipment and can quickly overrun you.
- On two lanes, for oncoming traffic, if your load is wider than the lane, pull over so your load clears the median strip.
- Do you have alternatives: side or frontage roads; trailering?

Remember: farm plates and qualifications as instruments of husbandry do not exempt you from traffic laws if you are deemed to be creating a hazard. Safety trumps a little more expenditure of time and money to help prevent accidents. 🚧

Arizona minimum wage will rise \$.15 to \$8.05, effective January 1st (federal minimum wage is \$7.05). This will place Arizona's minimum wage somewhere in the mid-range of western states.

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