

## AFBF seeks extension for comment period

The American Farm Bureau Federation has asked the USDA to extend the comment period for a recently proposed rule regarding the Packers and Stockyards Act (RIN 0580-AB07).

Federal authorities had allowed 60 days for comments on this rule, but AFBF has said that doesn't provide organizations and producers adequate time to fully analyze the rule.

"We respectfully request an extension of the comment period for this rule for an additional 120 days," AFBF President Bob Stallman told U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in a July 1 letter.

Stallman asked that the deadline be extended from Aug. 23 to Dec. 21.

Stallman said he also was concerned that comments on the proposal are due before the Aug. 27 Department of Justice/USDA workshop on competition in the livestock sector.

"We would like the opportunity to obtain additional information from this workshop before we finalize our comments," Stallman said in his letter to Vilsack.

A workshop like the one set for Aug. 27 was held May 21 in Huntsville and was attended by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and Vilsack.

The meetings are designed to explore competition issues affecting the poultry, dairy, livestock and grain industries and the appropriate role for anti-trust and regulatory enforcement.

Vilsack said the USDA could use regulatory power to complement the Justice Department's antitrust efforts.

The department is getting funds to hire more lawyers and investigators and formed a joint task force with the Justice Department to coordinate anti-trust enforcement.



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# Cultivator

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## County Presidents Conference



Motivational speaker Chad Hymas, right, challenges Federation leaders to give back to their families, friends and colleagues during the County Presidents Conference last weekend in Montgomery. Among those in attendance were Morgan County Federation President Ted Grantland and wife JoAnn, left, and Blount County Federation President Boyce Foust and wife Marlene, back. Hymas, a Utah elk rancher, was paralyzed from the shoulders down in a farming accident. He now travels the world encouraging others to make the most of their abilities. The Wall Street Journal has called Hymas one of the 10 most inspirational people in the world.

## Runoffs narrow the field for general election

Four out of six candidates endorsed by the Alabama Farmers Federation won election in Tuesday's primary runoff elections. The Federation's endorsed candidate for commissioner of agriculture and industries, Dorman Grace, narrowly lost to John McMillan in the Republican runoff. McMillan now faces Democrat Glen Zorn in the Nov. 2 general election.

In the Senate District 9 Republican runoff, Arab poultry farmer Clay Scofield, who was endorsed by the Federation, defeated Don Spurlin. Scofield will face Democrat Tim Mitchell this fall in the

general election. In the Senate District 28 Democratic runoff, Billy Beasley, who was endorsed by the Federation, defeated Johnny Ford. Beasley will face Republican Kim West in the general election.

In the House District 84 Democratic runoff, Federation-endorsed candidate Berry Forte defeated John McGowan. Forte will face Republican Joyce Perrin in November.

In the Republican runoff for the District 8 State Board of Education seat, Mary Scott Hunter, who was endorsed by the Federation, defeated Sue Helms. Hunter will

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## Social media helps young farmers tell story

There couldn't be a more critical time for young producers to put their social media skills to use to communicate the importance of agriculture. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and blogs are a great way to reach consumers.

Alabama Farmers Federation Young Farmers Director Brandon Moore said speaking out about agriculture and playing a leadership role in

Farm Bureau is as easy as connecting to the Internet. Anti-agriculture activists are successfully utilizing social media to get their messages out and farmers have to do a better job of sharing their story, he said.

The American Farm Bureau's Young Farmers & Ranchers Program helps young producers utilize communication tools such as social media to discuss agriculture with their peers in other professions. Opportunities such as leadership conferences, held annually



at the state and national levels, give agricultural leaders the tools to serve the industry, build skills and have fun, Moore said.

More than 700 young farmers and ranchers gather at the national conference every year to network and learn from the best of the best.

Three national winners this year will receive a Dodge Ram, courtesy of Ram Trucks, to showcase the top competitors in the Achievement Award, Discussion Meet and Excellence in Ag contests.

National winners also will receive paid registration to the 2011 YF&R Leadership Conference in Orlando, Fla. Feb. 5-7.

National runners-up in the Achievement Award will receive a CASE IH Farmall 31 tractor courtesy of Case IH.

National finalists in the Discussion Meet and Excellence in Ag each will receive a \$6,000 savings bond and a Stihl Farm Boss, courtesy of Stihl.

## Meeting to gather internet access information

ConnectingALABAMA, a program to expand the availability of affordable high-speed internet service in the state, has reached a milestone with the release of its interactive mapping feature and its broadband awareness tool, which illustrates the importance of broadband access.

To encourage broadband infrastructure development, ConnectingALABAMA is working with leaders in 12 regional planning commission areas.

The first regional meeting includes Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery counties. It will be July 20 from 1-3 p.m. at the Capitol Auditorium in Montgomery.

"The participation of the public, along with business and government leaders, is essential," said Jessica Dent, who in April was named Executive Director of ConnectingALABAMA. "We will

rely on the input we receive from these public meetings, along with responses to the video feedback tool, to determine our priorities for improving broadband access in Alabama."

Dent said the mapping feature and awareness tool on the site are important steps in identifying and addressing the barriers to high-speed internet access, particularly in the rural areas of our state.

The mapping tool is available at [www.connectingalabama.gov](http://www.connectingalabama.gov) and provides information on high-speed Internet availability in Alabama. Users may enter a specific address and determine which, if any, broadband providers serve that location.

For those without Internet access, the public library service has free access to computers and is partnering with ConnectingALABAMA.

## Seminar explains opportunities for labor assistance

The Mobile County Farmers Federation Greenhouse, Nursery and Sod Committee will host a labor assistance meeting with Telamon Corp. July 26 at 8:30 a.m. at the John Archer Extension Service Building, 1070 Schillinger Rd. North, in Mobile.

Telamon Corp., a non-profit organization and national farm worker job program operation, has offices in Millbrook, Dothan, Foley, Oneonta, Opelika and Mobile.

This program assists seasonal and migrant farm workers with job placements, training and supportive services. Telamon Corp. helps the farmer to have a trained and stable workforce and offers financial reimbursements to farmers for technical or occupational training costs of eligible farm workers. Farm workers and their families may receive help for emergency situations such as rent, food, utility bills and transportation.

Employment placement, training, GED and learning English as a second language also are part of the program.

For more information contact County Committee Chairman Tommy Odom at [tommy.odom@mchsi.com](mailto:tommy.odom@mchsi.com) or (251) 866-7687. Video conferencing of the meeting is available upon advanced request.

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face Democrat Mary Ruth Yates in the general election.

In the House District 56 Democratic runoff, Claire Mitchell, who was endorsed by the Federation, was defeated by Lawrence McAdory. McAdory has no opposition in the general election.

The Federation's political action committee, FARM PAC, will meet July 21 to consider endorsements for the general election.

## Amendment introduced that would permanently reform estate tax law

**T**he American Farm Bureau Federation backs an amendment to the small business lending bill that would permanently reform the federal estate tax and has asked Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), to allow the Senate to consider the proposal.

In a letter to Reid and copied to other members of the Senate, AFBF President Bob Stallman said Farm Bureau supports an amendment to the Small Business Jobs and Credit Act of 2010 (H.R. 5297), proposed by Sens. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), to permanently set the estate tax rate at 35 percent, with a \$5 million exemption phased in over 10 years and indexed for inflation.

“Estate taxes can hit farm families harder than other small business owners because 84 percent of farm assets are real estate-based,” Stallman wrote. “When estate taxes are due, surviving family members without enough cash on hand may be forced to sell land, buildings or equipment they need to keep their operations going.”

If Congress does not act this year, the federal estate tax is scheduled to increase to 55 percent with only a \$1 million exemption at the beginning of 2011.

Permanent estate tax reform is a Farm Bureau priority.

## USDA offers grants to help catfish and shrimp producers

**T**he U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has announced it has certified a petition for catfish and shrimp under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Farmers Program. Producers nationwide have 90 days to apply for training and benefits as of June 25.

The TAA for Farmers Program provides technical training and cash benefits to eligible U.S. producers and fishermen of raw agricultural commodities whose crops or catch have been adversely

## A.L.F.A. Leaders Tour



*The Agricultural Leadership For Alabama (A.L.F.A) Class 2 toured northeast Alabama farms earlier this week. From left, are class member Jeremy Redden of Russell County, Will Ainsworth of Dream Ranch in Guntersville and Jon Hegeman of Calhoun County.*

## Census reports increase in net farm income

In 2008, national net farm income was \$87.3 billion, up from \$50.7 billion in 2000, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report. Net farm income for Alabama in 2008 was \$1.486 billion, up from 2007 when net farm income was \$1.169. The 2008 net farm income for Alabama was lower than 2005 when net farm income totaled \$2.170.

Government payments to U.S. farmers in 2007 totaled \$11.9 billion, down 105 percent from 2005, according to the Census Bureau. The majority (59.8 percent) of American farms sold less than \$10,000 worth of agricultural goods in 2007; only 16.2 percent sold more than \$100,000, the report says.

affected by imports of similar or directly competitive commodities.

Individual catfish producers nationwide who are interested in applying for technical training and cash benefits must complete and submit a written application to their local Farm Service Agency.

Program benefits include cash payments and free technical training designed to help producers develop and implement business adjustment plans.

A similar program is available for shrimp producers in several southern states, including Ala-

bama. That program includes wild shrimp harvesters and farmers.

Federal officials determined that increased imports of shrimp in 2008 caused production declines of domestic shrimp by at least 15 percent.

General information about both programs can be found online at [www.fas.usda.gov/itp/taa](http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/taa) or by contacting the TAA for Farmers Program staff in the Office of Trade Programs at (202) 720-0638, (202) 690-0633 or by e-mail at [tradeadjustment@fas.usda.gov](mailto:tradeadjustment@fas.usda.gov).

## Master goat producers program set for Aug. 9-11 in Tuskegee

**T**uskegee University will host a Master Goat Producers Certification Program Aug. 9-11 at the university's Caprine Research and Education Unit. Registration for the event is \$100 and includes breakfast and lunch for the event.

The program consists of training and classes on herd health, marketing, nutrition and pasture management, bio-security, bio-terrorism awareness, quality assurance, reproductive management and other topics.

The program will include hands-on training in hoof trimming, assessing body condition scores, artificial insemination, judging livestock, pasture management and more. The program includes three levels of certification.

For more information contact Olga Bolden-Tiller at (334) 727-8403 or email [obtiller@tuskegee.edu](mailto:obtiller@tuskegee.edu).



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## 38th Annual Commodity Producers Conference, Aug. 5-7 Columbus, Ga.

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### AFBF applauds committee's passage of Cuba trade bill

The House Agriculture Committee's recent approval of the Cuba trade bill will help increase agriculture exports to that island nation and help make U.S. agricultural goods the products of choice in the Cuban marketplace, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The bill eliminates many restrictions on exports of U.S. agricultural commodities to Cuba, as well as modifies other U.S. policies that hinder U.S. exports to the island nation, said AFBF President Bob Stallman. The bill clarifies the definition of "cash payment in advance" and would allow Cuba to directly wire payments to U.S. banks. The legislation also removes all travel restrictions to Cuba, which would impact additional agricultural sales by boosting food demand in the country.

Increased travel will also bring much needed funds to purchase U.S. commodities, Stallman said.

### New Market in Sylacauga



*The Talladega County Farmers Federation was instrumental in starting the Sylacauga Farmers Market which opened earlier this year. The county Federation donated five tents, five eight-foot tables and several banners used at the market. From left are State Farmers Market Authority Director Don Wambles, Talladega County farmer John Wesson and Sylacauga City Council President Jim Heigl.*