

# This Year's National Agriculture Week Is Slated For March 18-24

Where does your food come from? If you're like many Americans, the answer is the grocery store. And frankly, that's disturbing.

The grocery store isn't where food comes from — it's just from where it's distributed.

In reality, far too many people are unaware of the role of American agriculture in their daily lives... and what it really takes to have food on their dinner table.

Just a few generations ago, most people were a part of — and had friends or relatives involved with — agriculture.

Today, that's no longer the case. That's why Colorado County Ag Partners are providing this information.

Agriculture is responsible for providing the necessities of life... food, fiber, clothing, and shelter. And it's about time Americans recognize that contribution!

American farmers are working harder than ever, and it shows.

Today, each American farmer feeds more than 129 people. And the need for food produced in the United States is dramatic.

Agriculture is this nation's number one export and vitally important in sustaining a healthy economy.

And it's not just the farmer who makes our food possible. The entire agriculture industry, all the way to the grocery store, is vital links in a chain that brings food to every citizen — and millions of people abroad.

Frankly, it's easy to take agriculture for granted in America. Our food is readily accessible and safe. For this, we're unbelievably fortunate... but that doesn't mean we don't have an obligation to recognize how it's made possible.

This March 18 — 24 is National Ag Week, hosted by the Agriculture Council of America.

Ag Day is a good time to reflect — and be grateful for — American agriculture... and to share that message with others, especially

young people.

This year, Colorado County Ag Partners include the Colorado County Farm Bureau, Colorado Soil and Water Conservation District No. 333, Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, Texas Cooperative Extension Service — Colorado County, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board — Wharton Regional Office, USDA Farm Service Agency Colorado County, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service — Columbus Field Office. In a cooperative effort, they have organized National Ag Week activities for you, the residents of Colorado County so that you may see what Ag related services can be provided to you during the course of the year.

The Colorado County Farm Bureau promotes agriculture. On an average, American families spend approximately 10 percent of their income for food. Farm Bureau wants the people of Colorado County know where and how the agriculture industry produces their goods and how it is made available to them.

The Colorado SWCD No. 333 has been assisting landowners for 58 years. "Locally led conservation" is the basis of the organization with local landowners serving on the SWCD board guiding local conservation efforts in Colorado County.

The District partners with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board in Temple and the Regional Office in Wharton to protect the natural resources in this area.

Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau is a destination marketing organization whose primary role is to serve as an economic catalyst through developing and promoting tourism opportunities that bring overnight visitors from destinations that are 50 or more miles from the city of Columbus.

The CCVB takes a leadership role in marketing the city of Columbus as a tourist destination by building internal organizational excellence and external strategic partners.

Texas Cooperative Extension Office — Colorado County has been providing quality outreach and continuing education programs and service to Colorado County citizens for 50 plus years.

The Extension office is a member of the Texas A&M University System and operates in cooperative partnership with the USDA and our County Commissioner's Court, along with community based committees to address the relevant needs of our community.

Informative articles can be found in the newspaper, heard on the radio or you may attend an educational workshop.

Publications, may be ordered through the county office or educational tips received with just a phone call.

Texas Parks and Wildlife works to manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

USDA Farm Service Agency — Colorado County is a customer-driven agency with a diverse and multitiered work force, dedicated to achieving an economically and environmentally sound future for American agriculture.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service — Columbus Field Office has assisted landowners in Colorado County for 57 years to improve and protect their soil, water and other natural resources.

While farmers and ranchers remain the primary customers of NRCS, the agency also provides technical assistance to groups and units of state and local government.

Agriculture brings a large dollar amount to the County.

The Colorado County 2006 agriculture (approximate) production numbers include beef cattle — 8,000 cows were sold that generated \$7,200,000 while 53,550 calves were sold to generate \$29,880,900, rice — 30,903 acres of rice were planted, \$12,986,640 was generated, cotton — 3512 acres

were planted, \$1,861,300 were generated, soybean — 986 acres were planted to generate \$167,374, plus other areas of agriculture that generated thousands of dollars to the county included hay, nursery crops, wildlife, eggs, pecans, horse, turf and grain sorghum.

Ag Partners invite the residents of Colorado County to join them in celebrating National Ag

Week on Thursday, March 22 at the Colorado County Ag Building from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Education information booths will be set up and personnel will be available to visit with you about agriculture and programs that are available to you.

Come see what the County Ag Partners are up to!

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## No Confidence Vote Given On TYC Board

Austin-The Senate Criminal Justice Committee voted Tuesday abolish the current board of the Texas Youth Commission. At a meeting of a joint committee charged with fixing the TYC last week, House and Senate Members gave a unanimous vote of no confidence in the current board members, due to mismanagement of the agency.

Though that vote had no legal authority to remove the board members, the bill passed Tuesday, if passed by both houses with at least two-thirds vote, could remove the board in a short time.

Senator Chris Harris, who authored the measure, says this bill will remove a board that maintains they did nothing wrong in spite of all the contrary evidence. "Sen. Whitmire asked them [at the TYC committee meeting] no fewer than four times to tender their resignation, and they said they had done nothing wrong, and that they had properly managed the TYC," he said.

This bill would also bar the Governor from appointing any current member back to the board after it has been dissolved. The Senate would also have final say on any new appointees, as the state Constitution empowers the Senate to confirm or deny all gubernatorial appointments.

The Criminal Justice Committee also considered Texas' own version of Jessica's Law, a measure to increase penalties against sex offenders who commit crimes against children.

Bill author Senator Bob Deuell of Greenville said that this bill represents a starting point for all the stakeholders to come together and craft a workable bill, but that all parties involved have the same result in mind. "Our goal is to stop sexual predators," he said. "I would rather not deal with victims

and criminals, I want a bill that stops it before it starts."

The bill would mandate a 25-year minimum sentence for any person who commits an aggravated sexual offense against a child under the age of 14.

These offenders would also be subject to 24-hour GPS monitoring when they get out of prison. It would make repeat offenders against children under 14 eligible for the death penalty.

The bill addressed before the committee Tuesday differs from the filed bill in some ways. One specific example is the removal of the statute of limitations for sexual assault against children.

Deuell says this bill sends a clear message. "If you commit these heinous acts against our children in Texas, justice will be severe," he said.

There have been concerns expressed about certain provisions in the bill by prosecutors and victims advocates. The two main issues are, first, would a second-time sex offender who knows he will get the death penalty be more likely to kill a child to remove a possible witness.

The second concern is that a law that permits the death penalty for a case not involving murder would be overturned by the Supreme Court.

Attorney General Greg Abbott testified before the committee relating to these issues. Abbott called the first scenario "ludicrous", saying these criminals do not consider the consequences of their crimes in this detail.

He added that a criminal who murdered a child would be more likely to get caught, convicted and executed than one who simply committed a sex crime, due to the vigor of the investigation and prosecution efforts. "What if you're wrong," asked committee

Chair John Whitmire. "What if there is a smart, manipulative sex offender, and he does decide to kill the evidence?" Abbott responded that this is a purely hypothetical situation, with no good evidence to support the outcome.

As to the constitutionality of the death penalty for non-murder crimes, Abbott said the U.S. Supreme Court has never considered a case with the criteria and thresholds set out in this bill.

He said that because of the confluence of facts and heinous nature of the crime, that the Court would be more likely to uphold a Texas law. Abbott added that he would personally go before the Court to argue this case if it ever faced a constitutional challenge.

## Cook Co-Authors Toll-Road Moratorium Bill

Representative Robby Cook announced that he would co-author HB 2772 with Rep. Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham).

The bill will put a two year moratorium on all private toll road projects in Texas.

This includes toll projects planned as part of the Trans-Texas Corridor.

"There has been much confusion and misinformation surrounding the Trans Texas Corridor and other private toll projects over the last several years," Cook said.

"Many constituents have con-

tacted my office with their concerns regarding the Trans Texas Corridor project.

"It is important that the people of Texas receive truthful and accurate information on matters of this magnitude; that is the way our Government was meant to work.

"House Bill 2772 will put an immediate stop to the privatization of our state's transportation system.

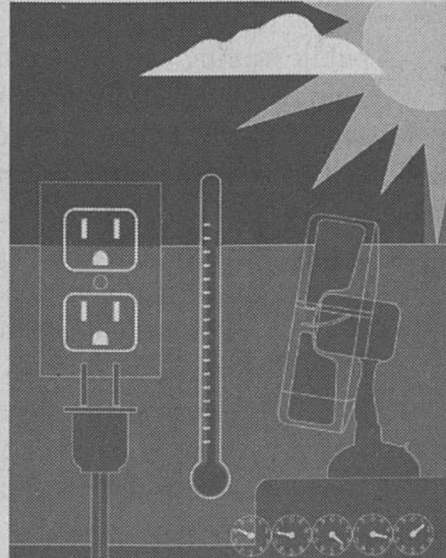
"This will give the Legislature and the general public time to review which direction we should go regarding our transportation needs in the state of Texas," Cook said.

## Connect to Energy Savings

AS THE ELECTRIC DELIVERY COMPANY that has been serving south and west Texas for over 90 years, AEP Texas knows a thing or two about energy conservation. While we no longer sell electricity or send out monthly electric bills, we recognize hot weather is just around the corner.

Since AEP Texas and its 1,700 employees are directly connected to the many communities we live in and serve, we'd like to share some low or no cost tips with you on how to keep cooler while saving energy and money.

- Set air-conditioning thermostats to the highest possible comfortable setting and dress accordingly.
- Turn off every appliance you are not using including lights, televisions and radios. Use the "sleep" feature on your computer equipment.
- Only cool rooms that you use. Close vents and doors in unused rooms. Be sure to close closet doors.
- Check your air-conditioning filter every month and replace as needed.
- Keep windows that let the sun in covered when the sun is shining on them.
- Weather strip and caulk around windows and doors to prevent drafts.
- Close your fireplace damper when the fireplace is not being used.
- Use fans to help circulate the air in your house.
- Air-dry dishes in the dishwasher.
- Lower the temperature on your hot water heater to warm during the summer, take short showers and wash only full loads of clothes in the laundry.



It's important to remember that if you're having trouble paying your electric bill, call your retail energy provider (REP) at the number listed on your current electric bill to avoid disconnection.

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