



June 2017

Summer is Here!

Summer is one of my favorite times of the year. The kids are out of school, and the sun is out. It's also a time when many of my favorite fruits and vegetables are in-season and at their peak of flavor. From peaches to squash, tomatoes to blueberries, there is no shortage of great Texas-grown produce this time of year. Look for Texas-grown items when you're at your local grocery — particularly ones with the GO TEXAN mark in the iconic shape of Texas. You can plan a trip to a local pick-your-own farm or even a nearby farmers market to experience the best Texas has to offer.

Enjoy your time with friends and family this summer, and be sure to sneak in a little Texas agriculture along the way.

Remember friends, *Texas Agriculture Matters!*

Your servant,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Sid Miller'.

Sid Miller

Summer Meals Available to Texas Children

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is excited to announce that Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sites are now serving healthy meals at no cost to any child age 18 or younger. We all know hunger never takes a break, not even over summer break. That's why it's important for children to have access to meals when school is out for the summer. Nonprofit organizations and schools partner with TDA to serve summer meals through the federally funded SFSP.



From now through Aug. 30, you can find good nutrition at locations across Texas using three easy methods.

- Call 2-1-1 to speak to a live operator
- Visit SummerFood.org for an interactive site locator map
- Text FOODTX to 877-877

Many meal sites also offer enriching activities — along with the free meals — to help children stay active and healthy during the summer vacation. Some sites also provide various combinations of meals including breakfast, lunch, snacks and even supper (dates and times may vary).

Everyone can help children in need stay on the path to a healthy future by telling families how to find a summer meal site using one of the three tools (listed above) from TDA and our partners. Plus, by having a healthy summer, kids will return to school in the fall ready to learn.

Click [here](#) to find a summer food site near you.

TDA Launches *Texas Agriculture Matters* Radio Show in West Texas

We are excited to announce that TDA has partnered with KRFE AM 580 in Lubbock for a new weekly radio show, *Texas Agriculture Matters*. This show will air throughout the week — on Tuesdays and Fridays — on KRFE and will feature the latest news about what's happening at TDA and in our ag industry. The show will also help listeners learn more about TDA in our *Did You Know* and *GO TEXAN* segments. Each week, you'll hear from a special guest who will sit down with our host, Rick Rhodes. Rhodes is a longtime member of TDA's team and currently serves as TDA's administrator for the Office of Rural Affairs.

Be sure to tune into KRFE AM 580 in Lubbock to hear each episode of *Texas Agriculture Matters*. The show will air at 1:25 p.m. on Tuesdays and just after 6 p.m. on Fridays.

Click [here](#) to listen to the first episode!

TDA Wins in Fitness Challenge

Congratulations to all TDA staff members who participated in the 2017 Everything's Fitter in Texas Challenge. Employees from all state agencies were encouraged to participate in the challenge, which ran from Feb. 6 – April 16, 2017. Participants had to log at least 150 minutes of exercise per week. TDA took home the trophy in the mid-size agency category. Mid-size agencies have 501-1,000 full-time employees. TDA employees logged 297,444 minutes of exercise during the challenge — over 124,000 more minutes than second place.

Congratulations to all TDA participants, and special thanks to Michael Franklin, TDA's risk manager, for his work in helping put the competition together.

STAR Fund Deadline Approaching For Those Impacted by Panhandle Wildfires

Mark your calendars: The deadline for victims of the wildfires that spread across the Panhandle in March to apply for assistance through the State of Texas Agriculture Relief (STAR) Fund is July 18, 2017. TDA has extended the deadline until July to give our neighbors in need a chance to apply for assistance in rebuilding fences and restoring operations.

The STAR Fund was created so that when disaster strikes, TDA is able to help farmers and ranchers in need. This is a cost-share program that's aimed at helping ag producers rebuild their operations. If you were impacted by the Panhandle wildfires, click [here](#) to learn how you can benefit from and apply for assistance through the STAR Fund.



Assistance Available to Reduce Cost of Organic Certification

TDA has been awarded funds through the National Organic Cost Share Program to provide financial assistance to organic producers and handlers in Texas. These grants can help reduce the cost of organic certification. Producers and handlers who incur expenses for obtaining or renewing their organic certification between Oct. 1, 2016 and Sept. 30, 2017 are eligible for reimbursement.

Payments are limited to 75 percent of an individual producer's certification costs, up to a maximum of \$750 per certificate or scope of certification (crops, livestock, handling, wild crops). The goal of the cost-share program is to help offset costs like application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

The deadline to submit an application to TDA is Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2017 by 5 p.m. To learn more and download an application, click [here](#). For questions on TDA's application process, contact TDA's [Grants Office](#) at (512) 463-4406.

It is important to note that both TDA and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Office in Texas will operate the National Organic Cost Share Program. Eligible producers and handlers can apply either through TDA or their local FSA office but not both.

Catch GO TEXAN in NASCAR Race This Friday

Got plans for Friday night? Tune in to the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series race at Texas Motor Speedway, and catch Austin Wayne Self — driver of the No. 22 AM Racing Toyota Tundra — as he races for the win on Fox Sports 1. Be sure to look for the [GO TEXAN](#) logo on Self's truck, and remember to look for the GO TEXAN logo when you're shopping for the best in Texas.



Final GROW Award of Year Honors South Grand Prairie High School Student

Commissioner Miller was pleased to honor Daniel “D.J.” Kurtenbach, a junior from South Grand Prairie High School in Grand Prairie, Texas, as the winner of the TDA’s monthly GROW award in May — the final GROW award of the 2016-2017 school year.

D.J. was chosen from hundreds of Texas students for demonstrating leadership and academic success in his school activities, as well as his commitment to community service. He is active in school through his extracurricular activities, and he also has a passion for 4-H. D.J.’s leadership is evident both in and out of the classroom, and he has been recognized with numerous awards and honors, including the Texas Prudential Spirit of Community Award Bronze Medal, National 4-H Youth in Action Finalist-Citizenship, and Rotarian Paul Harris Fellow and Scholarship Winner 4-H-Achievement.

[Read](#) more about D.J.’s selection as TDA’s May 2017 GROW award winner.



Hurricane Season Underway

June 1 marked the start of hurricane season, which runs through Nov. 30, and that means it’s the season to stay safe and be alert. Mother Nature can be hard to predict, and even if you don’t live along the coast, the effects of a hurricane can be felt far inland with flash flooding and tornadoes possible. You just never know, and that’s why you should make sure you and your family are ready in case of an emergency. [Check out](#) these great tips from the National Hurricane Center to help you prepare.

Peaches: a Lone Star Treat

Usually peaches are associated with the state of Georgia; however, in Texas we have approximately one million peach trees. More impressively, only half of those are planted in commercial orchards of one acre or larger. The demand for locally-grown peaches is always strong, and the market is even stronger for this delightful fruit.

Peaches are grown in many areas, and some towns even lay claim to their famous peaches. Weatherford was declared the official “Peach Capital of Texas” back in 1991. Peaches are so well-regarded that they are celebrated each year at the [Parker County Peach Festival](#). The festival is Weatherford’s largest one-day event and takes place on July 8. Another popular destination for Texas peaches is the Texas Hill Country. From Johnson City to Fredericksburg, you can find a great variety of peaches, and there’s nothing better than a fresh Texas peach.



There are many different ways to include peaches in your daily food regimen that can make any recipe absolute perfection. Whether it’s in a pie, cobbler, ice cream or fresh off the tree, you can enjoy fresh Texas peaches just about anywhere in the Lone Star State.

Want some fun and fresh ways to incorporate peaches into your diet? Try [this](#) amazing GO TEXAN recipe and find more like it at gotexan.org.