

Ag Matters



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ★ COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



February 2016

It's Rodeo Time in Texas!

One of my favorite times of year is upon us, friends! It's rodeo season in Texas — one of the best shows around and the greatest show on dirt! As you may know, rodeo is a sport that is near and dear to my heart. I've competed in rodeos all my life, and it's a fine showcase of the best of Texas agriculture and livestock. Plus, it's a Texas tradition and just good old-fashioned fun for the whole family.

Whether you're catching a tie-down roping competition, viewing livestock raised by young Texans or enjoying carnival rides and entertainment, rodeos are the place to be in 2016. I hope you'll check out a rodeo in your area, or maybe you'll head to one of the larger shows around the state. We'll have Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) booths at many of the shows, so if you see us there, be sure to stop by and say hi!

Here are some important rodeo dates for you to remember:

- Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo: Now through Feb. 6
- San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo: Feb. 11 through Feb. 28
- Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo: March 1 through March 20
- Rodeo Austin: March 12 through March 26

See you at the rodeo, friends!

Your servant,

Sid Miller

Pilot Program Launched to Expand Ag Inspections at Texas-Mexico Border



The timely inspection of imported goods is important to both the agriculture industry and consumers in Texas. That's why TDA is excited to announce a new partnership and grant award that will work to facilitate the efficient inspection of agricultural imports at ports of entry along the Texas-Mexico border.

More than \$650,000 has been awarded to the South Texas Assets Consortium (STAC) for the pilot project. The inspection of ag products at the border is critical to protecting domestic agriculture industries and consumers from foreign pests and diseases, as well as protecting legitimate border commerce for Texas agricultural producers.

Last week, Commissioner Miller joined State Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. and Rep. R.D. 'Bobby' Guerra, who authored and sponsored the legislation creating this grant in the 84th Legislative Session, as well as Rep. Sergio Muñoz Jr., members of STAC, the Texas International Produce Association (TIPA) and local leaders, at the Pharr International Bridge to announce the grant.

"Population growth and a surge in demand for fresh, healthy produce have put a serious strain on the inspection process at our ports of entry," Commissioner Miller said. "Imports help Texas farmers feed us here at home and our neighbors around the globe. Many of our farmers rely on imports, some of which come from their own lands south of the border, to help ensure we have access to fresh produce year round. Inspections are critical to protecting both the agriculture industry and Texas consumers, and this grant will help ensure the inspection process moves quickly and efficiently to bring these goods from the trucks to the market."

Texas' strategic location makes the state's land and sea ports the gateway for products entering the U.S. from around the world. According to TIPA, approximately 158,000 truckloads of fresh produce crossed into the state from Mexico in 2012, and that number is expected to grow to more than 360,000 by 2020.

[Learn more](#) about this new grant program and the many ways it will benefit the state of Texas and our farmers and ranchers.

Start Your Engines! GO TEXAN is Taking Over NASCAR



Get ready to watch GO TEXAN race around the track during the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series! TDA and GO TEXAN have partnered with AM Racing for the 2016 season. As a GO TEXAN member, AM Racing and NASCAR driver Austin Wayne Self will promote the GO TEXAN program and the best of Texas at the racetrack.

"We're so excited for our GO TEXAN program to partner with AM Racing to spread the word about Texas agriculture and the many wonderful products that are made right here in the Lone Star State," Commissioner Miller said. "GO TEXAN and AM Racing both have roots that run deep in Texas, so it was a natural fit for GO TEXAN to hop on board with AM Racing to promote the best of Texas and the many businesses that call our great state home. Texans have an incredible sense of pride for our state and our heritage, and I'm excited for NASCAR and AM Racing fans all across the country to discover why they should GO TEXAN."

Through GO TEXAN, TDA promotes the best of Texas-grown and Texas-made goods to consumers around the world. As a GO TEXAN member, AM Racing will display the GO TEXAN mark on its trucks and race gear. This partnership will allow GO TEXAN to reach loyal NASCAR fans who are looking for the best of Texas and to explore Texas agriculture.

AM Racing is a Texas-based company, owned by Texans and featuring a native-Texan driver. 2016 marks Self's rookie year in the NASCAR Camping World Series. Self will be driving a Toyota Tundra with the 2016 body style that looks just like the ones made right here in San Antonio.

"I'm excited and thankful to have the Texas Department of Agriculture's GO TEXAN campaign on board our No. 22 Toyota Tundra this season and know they'll be a valuable member of the AM Racing family," Self said. "I'm a big supporter of Texas-made products and believe strong teamwork drives success, and that's what GO TEXAN represents. I look forward to working with them in 2016."

Be sure to look for the GO TEXAN mark at the track and during televised coverage of the 2016 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series on FOX Sports 1. To learn more about GO TEXAN and find Texas-made goods near you, visit gotexan.org. To learn more about AM Racing and Self, visit www.AWSRacing.com.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Applications Due March 10

Are you a producer of Texas specialty crops? If so, TDA wants to hear from you. We are currently accepting applications for the latest round of grants for the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). If you are a producer, industry or community-based organization involved with, or that promotes specialty crops, you are encouraged to apply. The deadline to submit an application is **March 10, 2016**.

To learn more about specialty crop grants and download an application, [click here](#). For questions, send an [email](#) to TDA's Grants Office.

Kaufman Renews Status as Certified Retirement Community

January marked the start of another five years as a Certified Retirement Community (CRC) for the city Kaufman, which is located just 37 miles southeast of downtown Dallas. Kaufman was first certified as a CRC member in 2010. The city offers easy access to fine dining, museums, concerts and professional sporting events. Kaufman is often praised for having the perfect blend of progress and tradition, and a small town atmosphere with big city conveniences.

"It's exciting to announce that Kaufman has renewed its status as a GO TEXAN

Certified Retirement Community for another five years," Commissioner Miller said. "Communities that receive this designation are important drivers in their regional economies and provide tremendous value to the lives of their residents and retirees. Kaufman is a great place to call home with plenty of things to do, and I'm excited for folks to discover this great community."

The CRC program encourages retirement in Texas. On average, migrant retirees contribute \$732 million annually to the Texas economy. The GO TEXAN stamp of approval ensures each certified community has demonstrated that it can meet the living, employment/volunteer, health, entertainment, education and safety needs of its citizens and visitors — all things that make Texas a great place to retire.

"The city of Kaufman is very pleased to be recertified as a GO TEXAN Certified Retirement Community for another five years," Kaufman Mayor Jeff Jordan said. "Through this program, more retirees have been encouraged to make their homes here in Kaufman."

Next time you're in the area, be sure to check out Kaufman and its many offerings. To learn more about Kaufman and the GO TEXAN CRC program, visit www.RetireInTexas.org.



Dockside Tours Give a Glimpse at the Life of a Shrimper



Ever wondered what life is like as a shrimper? Curious about how Gulf shrimp is harvested from our healthy waters? Check out a Dockside Tour next time you visit the Gulf Coast and you'll be treated to a firsthand look at the shrimp industry. You'll learn how a captain and the crew locate, catch, prep and safely store shrimp on their vessels. You can even learn how to properly cook and store Gulf shrimp. It's a fun time for the whole family.

Dockside tours typically run through March, so you have plenty of time to check out one of these special tours. The Lone Star State is fortunate to have a bountiful shrimp industry — one that provides jobs for our neighbors and delicious, fresh food for us to eat. To learn more about Texas Gulf shrimp, [click here](#).

Be sure to check out [Texas Gulf Trawling](#) and their dockside tours located in the Brownsville Shrimp Basin.

GO TEXAN on Game Day



Let's face it ... aside from cheering for your favorite team, one of the most important things about game day is the food! If you're looking for dishes that are sure to impress everyone at your game watching party, GO TEXAN is here to help. Several GO TEXAN members have shared their favorite recipes to help you wow your friends and family this Sunday and at get-togethers year round.

Check out our [GO TEXAN website](#) to find the perfect recipe for your game day celebration. From [Apple Enchiladas](#) to [Corn Pepper Salsa Dip](#), [Grilled Bacon Wrapped Shrimp with Jalapeños](#) to [Scorpion Gourmet Wings](#), we have your game day meal covered.

New Dietary Guidelines Released

In January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released updated nutritional guidelines in the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The latest recommendations encourage Americans to improve how they eat to help reduce obesity and prevent chronic diseases. Some of the recommendations include limiting calories from added sugars, shifting to healthier food and beverage choices and eating a variety of nutrient-dense foods. Read more about the recommendations [here](#).

“Having ready access to a variety of fresh, delicious, homegrown fruits, vegetables and meats is critical to encouraging healthy eating habits, and the Texas agriculture industry plays a key role in providing the food and fiber that sustains our state, our nation and the world,” Commissioner Miller said.

New Agriculture Connection Focus of Summer Food Service Program Conference

Every year, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors from across the Lone Star State gather in Austin for TDA’s SFSP Training and Conference. This year marks the third time TDA has held the conference, and we’re excited to offer new training sessions focused on how sponsors can connect with local farms and ranches to incorporate more Texas agricultural products into summer meals. Just as Farm to School connects schools with local producers, gardening activities and classroom lessons, the Farm to Summer Site initiative offers similar opportunities to SFSP sponsors for their summer meal sites. It’s all about connecting meal providers with Texas farmers and ranchers, so that Texas kids can enjoy locally grown foods.

The conference and training will be held Feb. 17-19. It will help ensure sponsors have everything they need to be successful in serving meals to children in need this summer through the federally funded SFSP. You can learn more about [Farm to Summer Site](#) and the [SFSP Conference](#) on [SquareMeals.org](#).

