

ARKANSAS GROWN

• A GUIDE TO THE STATE'S FARMS, FOOD AND FORESTRY •



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Grape Expectations

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Bruce Oakley Inc. operates multiple divisions including trucking, barge, fertilizer and grain. These services allow us to offer the ag community a variety of options. When it comes to marketing your crops and purchasing fertilizer for your farming operation, we will be there to meet your needs. Oakley Grain operates five river grain elevators on the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers and one inland elevator in central Arkansas. Oakley Fertilizer offers a full line of fertilizer products that may be supplied in vessel, barge, truckload or by the bag.



From Bruce Oakley's humble beginning in El Paso, Arkansas, until today, we have always been committed to you, the customer. While we continue to broaden our geographical scope, our company's roots will always be deeply imbedded in the Natural State – remaining loyal to our values and customers.



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800-662-0875 | Fax 501-945-6970

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2013

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Lend a hand. Help your fellow farmer.

The Arkansas Delta is home to two of the three counties in the state that are classified as “food deserts”—areas where the population lives more than 10 miles from a large supermarket.

The Delta is one of the most fertile regions in the world yet has one of the highest rates of food insecurity and hunger in the nation. Heifer International works to connect Arkansas’ farmers and their rich agricultural heritage back to the Earth by equipping them with the knowledge and tools to feed themselves and their communities.

Empower your fellow farmer and help entire communities rise out of poverty. Donate to Heifer International. Visit www.heifer.org or call 888.5HUNGER (888.548.6437).



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With a history dating back to 1909, Arkansas State is firmly planted in Agriculture. Beginning as one of four state agricultural schools, today we are a comprehensive university offering 43 degree programs from the associate through the doctoral level in 151 fields of study.

Our College of Agriculture and Technology maintains a 296-acre farm complex that provides a living laboratory for faculty and students, including courses in soil and water conservation. At the Arkansas Biosciences Institute at ASU, we perform cutting-edge research into bio-fuels, plant biogenetics and biotechnology. This puts us at the interface of agriculture, science and the environment.

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Education

Technology

Environment

- First academic institution in Arkansas to join the National Council for Science and the Environment
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JOURNAL COMMUNICATIONS INC.

Content Director **JESSY YANCEY**
Proofreading Manager **RAVEN PETTY**
Content Coordinator **RACHEL BERTONE**
Contributing Writers **SONJA BJELLAND, BEVERLEY KREUL, KIM MADLON, JOHN MCBRYDE, JOANIE STIERS, JULIANN VACHON**
Senior Graphic Designers **STACEY ALLIS, LAURA GALLAGHER, JAKE SHORES, KRIS SEXTON, VIKKI WILLIAMS**
Graphic Designers **ERICA LAMPLEY, KARA LEIBY, KACEY PASSMORE**
Senior Photographers **JEFF ADKINS, BRIAN MCCORD**
Staff Photographers **MARTIN B. CHERRY, MICHAEL CONTI**
Integrated Media Manager **KATIE NEWBERN**
Color Imaging Technician **ALISON HUNTER**
Ad Production Manager **KATIE MIDDENDORF**
Ad Traffic Assistants **KRYSTIN LEMMON, PATRICIA MOISAN**

Chairman **GREG THURMAN**
President/Publisher **BOB SCHWARTZMAN**
Executive Vice President **RAY LANGEN**
Senior V.P./Operations **CASEY HESTER**
Senior V.P./Agribusiness Publishing **KIM NEWSOM HOLMBERG**
V.P./External Communications **TEREE CARUTHERS**
V.P./Agribusiness Sales **RHONDA GRAHAM**
V.P./Sales **HERB HARPER**
Controller **CHRIS DUDDLEY**
Accounts Receivable Coordinator **DIANA GUZMAN**
Sales Support Project Manager **SARA QUINT**
IT Director **DANIEL CANTRELL**
Web Creative Director **ALLISON DAVIS**
Photography Director **JEFFREY S. OTTO**
Creative Services Director **CHRISTINA CARDEN**
Creative Technology Analyst **BECCA ARY**
Distribution Director **GARY SMITH**



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ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT:

Secretary **BUTCH CALHOUN**
Deputy Secretary **CYNTHIA EDWARDS**
Director of Marketing **ZACHARY TAYLOR**

For more information about the Arkansas Agriculture Department, contact:

Cynthia Edwards, Deputy Secretary
1 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205
(501) 219-6362
or by email at cynthia.edwards@aad.ar.gov.

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GOVERNOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to ARKANSAS GROWN



FARMING IN ARKANSAS IS OLDER THAN ARKANSAS ITSELF. Agriculture remains the bedrock of our state's economy, employing more than a quarter of a million people, or supplying approximately one of every six jobs in our state. **Arkansas is in the top 25 states in the production of 24 agricultural commodities**, accounting for over \$16 billion of value added to the state as of 2010.

During my tenure as Governor, one of my top priorities has been accelerating our economic growth by expanding Arkansas-based exports, and agriculture is leading the way. **I am pleased to note that Arkansas is the largest producer and exporter of rice in the nation and the second-largest exporter of poultry products.** Nationally, we rank fourth in the export of cotton and eleventh in soybeans. Arkansas literally feeds and clothes the world.

Only our second Secretary of Agriculture, Butch Calhoun is focused on promoting all facets of Arkansas's agricultural commerce. This magazine, *Arkansas Grown*, is just one of his many efforts to showcase our producers and the industry.

Even in the ever-changing nature of farming, Arkansas remains constant in its unwavering commitment to agriculture, part of the economic backbone of our state.

I salute each of our farmers, ranchers, forest landowners and all those in agribusiness who make Arkansas agriculture second to none. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Governor Mike Beebe
State of Arkansas



Did you know...

The Arkansas Grown label can be used on any Arkansas agricultural product?



An Arkansas agriculture product is defined as consisting entirely of or made substantially from farm, forest and nursery products produced in Arkansas.

Promote your product and Arkansas agriculture by branding your product as Arkansas Grown. Contact the Arkansas Agriculture Department or go to www.arkansasgrown.org for more information.

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2013

ARKANSAS GROWN

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SECRETARY'S WELCOME

Welcome to ARKANSAS GROWN



I WANT TO WELCOME YOU TO *ARKANSAS GROWN*, THE NEW magazine that is a guide to the Arkansas agricultural, timber and Arkansas grown food industry.

In 2012, our state suffered from one of the worst droughts in our history. All segments of agriculture and forestry were hurt, with livestock production taking the hardest hit.

As the industry recovers from the challenges of 2012, **this publication will help tell the story of agriculture and the importance of our industry to the people of Arkansas and beyond.**

Arkansas has a rich agricultural history. Over 255,000 jobs in Arkansas are related to the agriculture and timber industry.

I hope this magazine will help you discover the connection we all have to the agriculture and forestry complex of this wonderful state.

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is proud to join with Journal Communications in sharing with you some of the challenges, changes and opportunities facing our state's largest industry.

Sincerely,

Butch Calhoun
Secretary of Agriculture
State of Arkansas

Arkansas Agriculture

An in-depth look at the state's varied industry

FROM NATIONALLY RANKED agricultural commodities to agritourism and farmers' markets, Arkansas's agriculture industry is more than meets the eye.

With more than 48,000 farms, the Natural State boasts 13.5 million acres of farmland and an average farm size of 280 acres. Those farms are responsible for producing some of the state's top agricultural commodities, which include broilers (chickens for meat), rice, soybeans, cattle and calves, and cotton. Out of the 13.5 million acres of farmland, Arkansas contains 7.36 million acres of harvested cropland, and 4.46 million acres of irrigated land. And although the number of farms has decreased in the past 50 years, the average size of those farms have increased by 100 acres. Those farms are managed by hardworking farmers, the majority of whom are over 65.

Rice is big business for Arkansas. The state ranks No. 1 in the nation in rice production, growing approximately 48 percent of all U.S. rice. The crop grows on close to 1.3 million acres of land each year and serves as the state's top agricultural

export. The state is home to Stuttgart, which has been proclaimed the rice capital of the world.

Soybeans are another top crop in Arkansas, and the state is the first to grow edamame commercially.

Along with rice and soybeans, Arkansas ranks in the top 10 nationally in other crops, including cotton, sweet potatoes, food-size catfish and sorghum for grain. And it supports one of the most diverse aquaculture industries in the country, representing catfish, grass carp, baitfish, goldfish, crawfish and more.

More than just agricultural commodities are growing in Arkansas. Since 2005, the state has gained more than 75 new farmers' markets, and the local food movement continues to thrive with marketing programs, such as Arkansas Grown, put in place to promote it.

The wine industry in Arkansas is blossoming too, adding \$21 million to the value of the state's agritourism industry in 2010. That same year, an estimated 306,000 people visited Arkansas's 13 wineries.

Arkansas's growing industry further encompasses agricultural education, exports and international trade.

THE AVERAGE
ARKANSAS FARM
IS 280 ACRES.

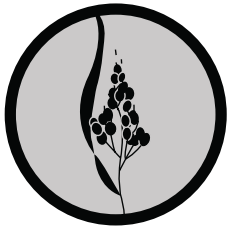
More than
42,000
Arkansans work directly
for the poultry industry.

Poultry is the
largest ag product
in Arkansas, based
on cash receipts
and provided
47 percent of the
total in 2010.

ARKANSAS
PRODUCES ABOUT
HALF
OF ALL RICE GROWN
IN THE UNITED STATES.

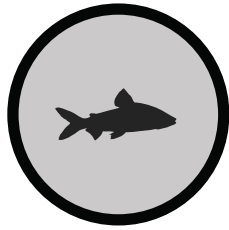
What's Online
Access more agriculture facts
at AR-agriculture.com.

Arkansas's National Rankings in Agriculture



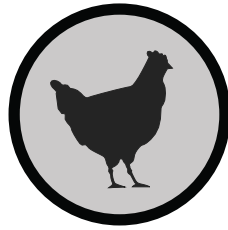
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RICE



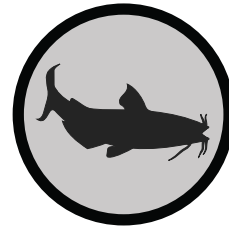
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BAITFISH



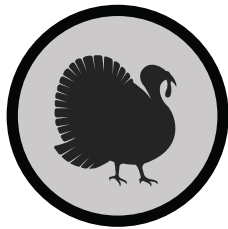
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BROILERS



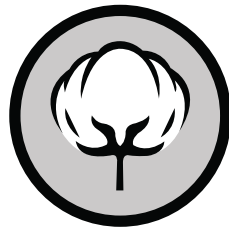
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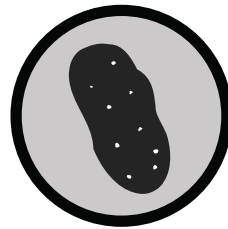
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TURKEYS



3rd

COTTON



5th

SWEET POTATOES



6th

GRAIN SORGHUM

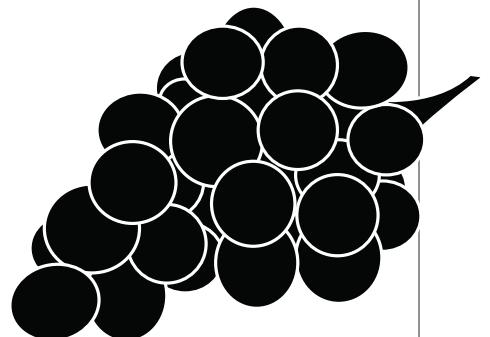
Soybeans are grown in more than **50** of the state's 75 counties, but are concentrated in **Eastern Arkansas**.

THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY CREATES MORE THAN **33,000** **JOB**S FOR ARKANSANS.

In 2010,
Arkansas produced
121,913

cases of wine,
from 40 grape growers.

600
acres of farmland were used
to grow grapes.



Right as Grain

Arkansas leads nation
in rice production



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MCCORD

After harvest in the fall, farmers transport their rice to mills like this one owned by Producers Rice Mill in Stuttgart. During the milling stage, the rice moves through machines that separate the kernels from any debris, then shellers that remove the hull from each grain of rice.

WHETHER IT'S SERVED buttered as a side dish or flavored with curry, soy, or chile in multi-cultural dishes, rice is a staple across much of the world – and demand for it is on the rise.

That's good news for Arkansas, which produces 49 percent of the rice supply in the United States, ranking it first in the nation.

Arkansas's rice production is valued at nearly \$2 billion annually, and rice is the state's top export. The state's rice growers broke records in 2012, producing 7,340 pounds per acre, up 8 percent from 2011. Rice acreage also increased to 1.3 million acres in 2012 compared with 1.2 million acres in 2011.

FEEDING THE WORLD

The future looks even brighter, says Riceland Foods President and CEO Danny Kennedy, because the math is on the side of rice farmers.

"Today's world population of 6.8 billion people is expected to grow to 9.1 billion by the year 2050," he says.

"About half the earth's population consumes rice as a primary component of their diets. World rice consumption will continue to increase in order to feed the expanding population."

Approximately 60 percent of the rice grown in the United States is consumed here. Rice grown in the U.S. accounts for 12 percent of the global export market, making the U.S. the fourth-largest rice exporting country. Arkansas exports an estimated \$1 billion in rice annually to markets in Canada, Mexico, Central America, Haiti and Saudi Arabia.

Riceland Foods is a world leader with a local focus, says Bill Reed, Vice President of Corporate Communications for Riceland.

"We are the largest rice milling and marketing company in the world, but to be specific, Riceland is a cooperative of family farmers who work together to market their product," Reed says. "We market a lot of rice, but it's a lot of rice grown by a lot of Arkansas family farmers."

7,340

pounds of rice per acre were produced in Arkansas in 2012.

Rice is Arkansas's **No. 1 export.**

The state exports an estimated **\$1 billion** in rice annually to Canada, Mexico, Central America, Haiti and Saudi Arabia.



THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

Riceland marked 90 years as a farmer-owned co-op at the end of 2011. Reed says each year Riceland's members deliver more than 125 million bushels of grain to the cooperative's 30 grain facilities.

Rice is a water-intensive crop, and the clay soil base just below the silt loam of the Grand Prairie is ideal for holding water. Farmers typically plant rice crops in late March or early April and harvest in August and September by threshing their fields with combines and delivering the rice to be stored and milled throughout the year. After harvest, the fields are flooded to prevent erosion, protect soil nutrients and control weeds.

"You have to have excellent water resources to grow rice and the right topography," says Keith Glover, president/CEO of Producers Rice Mill in Stuttgart, which mills more



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Stuttgart rice farmer George Dunklin says the flat lands of eastern Arkansas allow for easy flooding, which is necessary for rice production.

than 50 million bushels of rice annually. “We get more than 40 inches of rain each year, and we have abundant surface reservoirs and rivers flowing through the state to help with irrigation.”

THE CROP'S ORIGIN

Glover says rice production got started in the south, mainly around the coasts of south Louisiana and Texas.

“Over time, the main production of rice migrated up to Arkansas where we have the water and land type that is conducive for growing rice, and some of the most competitive production costs in the country,” he says.

That movement north came when W.H. Fuller took a hunting trip in 1896 to Louisiana and saw rice fields.

He learned about growing rice and eventually chose the Grand Prairie in Arkansas to plant his first fields in 1904, harvesting 5,000 bushels that first year.

Rice farmer George Dunklin's grandfather, L.A. Black of Dewitt, planted his first fields in 1907. After college at Memphis State, Dunklin returned to Arkansas and began learning the rice farming business from the ground up.

“I fell in love with it,” he says. “Growing rice came easily in Arkansas. The prairies are flat which makes it easy to flood, and water is plentiful. Rice requires water in the paddies, which is the land between the levies. There's a natural topography to the land on the prairie that fits perfectly for rice.”

– Kim Madlom

Arkansas farm output of rice is estimated at nearly **\$2 billion** annually.

49%
OF THE U.S. RICE
SUPPLY IS PRODUCED
IN ARKANSAS.

Rice Rules in Stuttgart

City is home to major mills, research institutions

In a state that leads the country in rice production, the city of Stuttgart stands out.

A leader in global production of rice, Stuttgart is home to the world's largest ricemilling and marketing company, Riceland Foods, and another milling leader, Producers Rice Mill. Together the companies handle approximately 40 percent of the nation's rice crop and employ more than 1,500 people.

Stuttgart is also home to the Dale Bumpers National Rice Research Center, a state-of-the-art facility with labs, seed storage, greenhouses and offices. Nine United States Department of Agriculture scientists are headquartered there, and three more are slated to be added. Their role is do the basic research needed to keep the U.S. rice industry competitive in the global marketplace.

"We are very focused on genetics," says Anna McClung, geneticist and senior researcher with the Dale Bumpers Center. "Our mission is to explore natural genetic diversity that exists in rice."

In the United States, more than 18,000 rice cultivars are stored in the USDA gene bank, according to McClung. Dale Bumpers scientists evaluate those cultivars to identify traits that would be useful for breeders and to understand how to use those traits in creating improved rice varieties.

"This research is important to farmers in terms of improving yield and disease resistance, and to the milling industry in terms



of quality and appearance of the grain," McClung says. "Our work is important to consumers for the nutritional value, the taste and appearance of the rice."

An example of that work is the development of Charleston Gold, an aromatic rice, derived from Carolina Gold (an heirloom variety that was the basis for establishing the U.S. rice industry) combined with genetic material from the Philippines and India. It has excellent yields, disease resistance and good cooking quality. This cultivar may lend itself to production under organic conditions, and will be used in the historically authentic cuisine of the Carolinas. McClung was involved in the development of Charleston Gold.

McClung says Arkansas, and particularly Stuttgart, plays a major role in producing rice for the international market.

"When you consider that citizens in some countries get 70 percent of their calories from rice, it's clear that Arkansas rice production is important in the global food market."

The Dale Bumpers Center, adjacent to the University of Arkansas Rice Research and Extension Center, has approximately 15 scientists and researchers working focused on the improvement of production efficiency for rice farmers in Arkansas and emphasizing natural resource conservation.

– Kim Madlom

Call of the Wild

Flooded rice fields protect soil quality, create foraging habitat for migratory ducks

Rice and ducks have a natural relationship in Arkansas, and in the city of Stuttgart the two combine to create a robust economy. While rice is the major employer, ducks are the major attraction, generating an estimated \$1 million for the Stuttgart economy during the 60-day hunting season.

When harvest finishes in the autumn, rice farmers close the drainage outlets in their fields to hold water on the land during the winter months. The water prevents erosion, controls weeds and protects soil nutrients for the next year's rice crop. The flooded fields and the area's natural wetlands also provide the perfect resting and foraging habitat for North America's migrating ducks.

Starting at the age of 8, George Dunklin made some of his favorite memories duck hunting in the flooded rice fields with his father.

"Dad took the time to teach me about importance of stewardship and conservation," says Dunklin, who is a lifelong conservationist and now the President of Ducks Unlimited. Dunklin still farms rice on land his family first began planting in 1907. "We're in the rice farming and the hunting business and both are conservation businesses," he says.

Dunklin has tied creation of waterfowl habitats and water conservation into his rice farming business.

"This area where we are, Stuttgart, is the largest area in the world for wintering mallards,"

Dunklin says. Stuttgart's location in the Mississippi Flyway is used by ducks to migrate from Canada south for the winter, and the leftover rice from the harvest provides plentiful food for the birds.

Dunklin says the conservation efforts of rice farmers have played a key role in protecting the waterfowl population.

"As we've drained a high percentage of wetlands over the past 100 years for development, rice fields have been a replacement for that lost habitat," he says. "Rice fields have a very positive influence on the population of waterfowl in the fact that the ducks return to the breeding ground in much better condition."

– Kim Madlom



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HOFFMAN, DUCKS UNLIMITED

Putting Out *Fires*

Arkansas Forestry Commission
protects forests from wildfires, other dangers



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MCCORD

AS A COUNTY FORESTER in Arkansas for nearly 15 years, Bryan Aday has experienced the ins and outs of just about every kind of fire imaginable.

There have been the out-of-control wildfires and the very in-control fires from prescribed burning. He has seen plenty of fires started by accident and a few by arson, and in 2012 he saw an uncommonly high number ignited by lightning strikes.

But Aday's job is about more than just smoke and embers.

"Fires are our main objective, but we do a lot more than that," says Aday, forester for Cleburne and White counties within District 7 of the Arkansas Forestry Commission. "In fact, if you figured it up by time, we don't spend as much time on fires as people think we do."

The Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) was established in 1931 with a primary mission to work with agencies, organizations and residents to prevent and suppress wildfires. But the AFC also monitors forest insects and disease, grows and distributes trees, and maintains an assortment of information for the growth, use and renewal of forests.

The prevention of wildfires is priority for Aday and other county foresters throughout the eight-district AFC, and they accomplish this through several methods. One is with education, whether it's using Smokey Bear and other fire-safety programs in schools or leading sessions that show private landowners and industries how best to protect their properties from wildfires.

Arkansas county foresters, like Bryan Aday (pictured at right) are responsible for controlling forest fires, either by stopping wildfires or by conducting careful prescribed burnings.



AFC provides forest seedlings at a low cost to ensure availability of species for reforestation projects. Since 1935, more than **1.23 billion trees** have been grown and distributed.



IN AN AVERAGE YEAR, **2%** OF FOREST FIRES ARE CAUSED BY LIGHTNING STRIKES. IN 2012, LIGHTNING CAUSED **42%** OF THE FOREST FIRES, DUE TO DROUGHT.

APPROXIMATELY
35,000
PEOPLE ARE DIRECTLY
EMPLOYED IN THE
FORESTRY INDUSTRY.

Since 1935, AFC crews have suppressed more than
225,000
wildfires. In addition to wildfires, the AFC responds to all other natural disasters including tornadoes, ice storms and floods.



SCAN FOR VIDEO

Growing produce
LOCALLY,
and *appetites*
EVERYWHERE



● Rice Field in the Delta



● Little Rock Farmers Market

● Peach Orchard, Clarksville

Take a tour around The Natural State to visit the farms and farmers that put delicious food on your plate – from the rice fields of the Delta to the peach trees of the Ozarks, and more in between.

Visit Arkansas.com for more information and order a FREE Vacation Planning Kit today.



Arkansas.
THE NATURAL STATE

LIKE FOLLOW PIN



For example, the Arkansas FireWise program provides land developers, homeowners and industries with information to make their properties safe from wildfires.

“This has proved to be very successful,” says Joe Fox, the AFC’s State Forester since 2012. “We have more FireWise communities in Arkansas than any other state. We’re very proud of that program.”

The AFC helps private landowners become better stewards of their forests, through the Forest Stewardship program. It also works with residents in urban areas to manage trees on their property, and sells forest tree seedlings to a variety of places from its Baucum Nursery in North Little Rock.

While fires may be the leading threat to Arkansas forests, the AFC also monitors for invasive species, forest pests and other threats to the general health of trees.

To specifically prevent wildfires, county foresters and rangers will do a good bit of prescribed burning and the building of fire lanes.

“Prescribed fires are a great tool to help reduce hazardous fuel loads (such as underbrush) on public and private property,” Fox says.

Wildfire danger in Arkansas is highest in late winter and late summer, Aday says. When a fire breaks out, he and a bulldozer operator go to get it under control.

But he says the real fighters are the volunteer firemen.

“They help us out big-time. They’re the first responders, and they’re able to suppress a lot of fires that we don’t even go on.”

With the drought of 2012, foresters, rangers and volunteers throughout the state had a particularly busy year fighting wildfires. Lightning strikes, which usually make up about 2 percent of fires each year, accounted for 42 percent of Arkansas fires in 2012.

“Usually with lightning, rain will follow,” Aday says. “But these were the kind that didn’t always have rain, which was very unusual.”

Arkansas forests play a significant role in the state’s economy, with some 35,000 people directly employed in the timber industry, according to Fox. Arkansas is known as one of the largest paper-producing states in the country, and there are many other uses from timber grown here.

– John McBryde





Snacking *on* Soy

Arkansas becomes first state
to grow edamame commercially



WITH THE EXCEPTION OF JUST A FEW FIRST-YEAR GROWING pains, Arkansas farmer Mike Schluterman was pleased with his endeavor in edamame.

“I think it’s an opportunity for a lot of farmers to maybe go in and branch out a little bit,” says Schluterman, one of a dozen farmers in the state to grow the soybean-related product in 2012 through a partnership with the JYC International food company in Houston. “I made money with edamame (in 2012), and I plan to increase my acreage. There is going to be potential.”

Much of the potential has already been realized. Arkansas became the first state to grow edamame commercially, and a processing plant was opened in Mulberry to handle production and shipment of the crop. American Vegetable Soybean and Edamame, Inc. (AVS), a subsidiary of JYC International, directly works with 12 farms in Arkansas to grow 900 acres of edamame.

“It was a good year,” says Michael Chaney, field manager for AVS who served as liaison between JYC International and the edamame growers. “The farmers we worked with in the first year are wanting to increase acreage, and we’re also seeing some trends where some of their neighbors are becoming interested as well.”



Chicks dig soybeans

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Edamame, one of the fastest-growing specialty foods in the country, is a soybean that can be eaten as a snack, a vegetable dish or processed into sweets. Its nutritional benefits have been touted for years.

JYC International, founded in the mid-1990s, specializes in frozen food products such as edamame, spring rolls and other Asian appetizer products. The company had heretofore imported edamame from China.

JYC considered Arkansas an optimal state for commercial edamame production, in part due to the extensive research being done at the University of Arkansas and funded in part by the Arkansas Soybean Checkoff program.

Arkansas farmers planted a Chinese variety of edamame as well as one developed by Dr. Pengyin Chen, a soybean breeder from the university's System Division of Agriculture. Chen called his variety "UA Kirksey," named in honor of longtime soybean industry leader Joe Kirksey of Mulberry.

Though edamame is a soybean, farmers found it took a little more maintenance to grow than its "cousin." Research is being done to work out the growing kinks,

particularly in weed control. Few herbicides have been approved for edamame, but a weed scientist from the university is optimistic for a solution in 2013.

As growers were tending their crops, JYC International completed its 32,000-square-foot processing plant in Mulberry in summer 2012. It added around 40 employees to the area, a number expected to increase to around 60 in the next couple of years.

"We'll now be able to have edamame here in the states," Chaney says. "We'll have a place where we'll have employees in sorting, packaging and shipping edamame from Mulberry. It's helping our economy, to have a place to have jobs and an opportunity to increase production and add even more jobs."

Schluterman, who has a 3,000-acre farm on the Arkansas River in Paris, is one farmer who is sold on edamame. He grew about 40 acres of it in 2012 and plans to grow 10 times that amount in 2013.

"Everything worked out for us," he says. "They (AVS) harvested the beans for us and handled the shipping. We got about a \$1,000 an acre for it. We're going to try to increase to about 400 acres next year." — John McBryde



Soybeans are harvested for research on the University of Arkansas campus.



Brothers and farming partners Michael and Kenneth Schluterman grew 40 acres of edamame on their Paris, Ark., operation in 2012. This year, they intend to plant about 400 acres.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MCCORD

Out of Their Shell

Peanut production gains popularity among Arkansas farmers

Arkansas's peanut industry is beginning to prosper after several decades of low interest among state farmers.

The state saw peanut plantings increase from about 600 acres in 2009 to 18,000 acres in 2012, says Travis Faske, assistant professor and extension plant pathologist with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Peanut processing companies began eyeing Arkansas after drought caused peanut acreage to drop in traditional growing areas including Texas, Faske says.

"I think a lot of people had been looking at Arkansas for a number of years," Faske says. "But there wasn't a push until some of the acreage started dropping in Texas because of water issues. Arkansas has water, and the land is suitable for peanut growth."

The Clint Williams Co., a peanut-shelling group based in

Madill, Okla., began approaching farmers and testing the potential of peanut production in Arkansas in 2010, says Kyle Baltz, who owns Baltz Feed Co. with his brother in Pocahontas, Ark.

Baltz entered into an agreement with the Clint Williams Co. in early 2012 to open a peanut buying point in Pocahontas that operates under the name Ag Headquarters. The site was completed in September 2012 and can process about 8,000 acres – or 17,000 tons – of peanuts annually, Baltz says.

Ag Headquarters delivers drying trailers to farmers, who then send their crops back to the facility. There, the peanuts are dried, graded and stored or shipped directly back to the Clint Williams Co., says Baltz, who grew about 335 acres of peanuts himself in 2012.

Birdsong Peanuts, a world leader in the peanut industry with presence in 10 states, also recently

located a new buying point in Arkansas. The new facility in Lawrence County creates an Arkansas-based station for farmers who had previously been taking their yield across the state line to Mississippi to be processed and shelled. The new facility will service more than 15,000 acres of peanuts and create local jobs for the region.

Birdsong supplies peanuts to national companies like Hershey, Kraft, ConAgra, MARS, Nestle and others. The company reports that the United States requires a minimum of 150,000 tons of peanuts per month to meet demand.

Economics remains the main driver for renewed interest in growing and processing peanuts, Baltz says. Many farmers were getting \$1,000 a ton for peanuts in 2011. In 2012, "folks who got \$750 (per ton) are doing pretty well," he says.

"In general, peanuts are more profitable than some of our other products," he says. "The revenue stream is much better than a soybean."

Peanuts thrive in sandy, dry soils that allow the crop to be pulled easily from the ground. Farmers benefit by rotating peanuts with other crops such as soybeans, Baltz says.

"I believe our goal in Arkansas is probably not to have peanut farmers, as such, but farmers with peanuts in their rotation," he says. "For the folks who have the sandy ground, it just provides them with a diversity of options."

– Juliann Vachon



PHOTO BY JEFF S. OTTO



Herrick Norcross,
Ag Council President

Cal McCastlain,
Ag Council Treasurer
and Past President



Stewart Weaver,
Ag Council Vice President

William "Bill" Weaver
Ag Council Board Member
and Past President

A History of Advocacy and Legacy of Action

Surviving the Great Depression

The Great Depression brought about many challenges to agriculture in the United States. Those farmers who were fortunate enough to survive the floods of the 1920s, droughts of the 1930s, and the steep price declines and other challenges associated with the Great Depression, most likely did so through risk sharing and pooled resources.

That was certainly the case in Arkansas with several dozen East Arkansas cotton farmers who joined forces and formed the Agricultural Council of Arkansas in the fall of 1939. This group of forward-thinking farmers organized a coalition to provide a unified voice to advocate on their behalf.

The group's focus would be on government policies that impacted their businesses and the American cotton industry as a whole.

Such an organization proved critical as government involvement in all industries was rapidly increasing due to the effects of the depression and the efforts to restore prosperity. The founding members of what is now simply known as the "Ag Council" were wise to establish a broad mission with clear purposes that would serve them well into the future.

The Ag Council set out to promote and encourage improvements in agricultural practices, further interests and opportunities for all involved in

agriculture, and collect and disseminate information to members. Membership was made available to any individual or business interested in supporting row crop farmers and the agriculture industry.

As more and more Arkansans learned of this organization, its membership base and focus quickly grew beyond cotton to cover all row crops including rice, soybeans, corn and wheat. By 1941, the Ag Council had members in 24 Arkansas counties and four surrounding states.

The Ag Council saw continued growth in the post-depression era that saw World War II and post war prosperity. In 1967, the group formally incorporated in West



When asked of the Agricultural Council's founding in the 1950s, the first President, MR. C.N. HOUCK, of Marianna stated the following:

"The Ag Council was formed under an emergency group gathering that required a concerted action against legislation in Congress that would have cost producers many thousands of dollars. A meeting of representative cotton producers was called, a collection taken up, a competent representative secured, and a delegation was sent to Washington. As a result of this initial successful effort, it was decided to form a permanent organization."



Memphis as a nonprofit trade association under the leadership of 50 board members from throughout Arkansas. Today, the organization remains the preeminent voice for row crop agriculture in Arkansas.

Approaching 75 Years

The Agricultural Council of Arkansas is now headquartered in the shadows of the Arkansas State Capitol in Little Rock. In 2014, it will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding in 1939. While much of the focus of the Ag Council is on farm policy, the organization also works on other agriculture related policies such as economic development, transportation and flood control infrastructure, trade, tax policies, environmental and energy policies, and property rights. The organization's advocacy efforts extend from Little Rock to Washington, D.C.

As the Ag Council readies to celebrate its 75th anniversary, its members have a

great deal of achievements to look back on. Since its inception, the Ag Council demonstrated influence on more than a dozen farm bills, thousands of regulations, the ever changing tax code, transportation policies, trade negotiations, agriculture research and extension development, check-off programs and promotion boards, and the founding of the Arkansas Agriculture Department.

Throughout its history the Ag Council demonstrated itself as a premier agricultural organization with a trusted and respected voice. The Ag Council remains a unique agricultural trade organization as it is row crop specific, not directly tied to any one national organization, of little bureaucracy, adaptive and forward thinking when it comes to policy.

The members of the Ag Council plan on celebrating their 75th year with its members and others involved in agriculture in Arkansas. Andrew

Grobmyer, the Executive Vice President and designated lobbyist for the organization, says he plans on hosting a barbecue modeled after the organization's first barbecue in 1940 in Marianna, which drew a crowd of nearly 600 patrons including members, community leaders and other dignitaries. "We hope to replicate the inaugural barbecue to honor the rich history of this organization," Grobmyer says. "We want to celebrate the accomplishments of the Ag Council, recognize the sweat equity produced by its members, and recommit ourselves to the bright future we seek."

Reaping Benefits

While the primary benefit to joining the Ag Council remains policy





Andrew Grobmyer, Executive Vice President of the Ag Council

development and representation among government officials, members receive a multitude of additional benefits. Upon joining the Ag Council, members receive eligibility to access affordable high value insurance policies for workers' compensation, accidental death and dismemberment, and health care.

The Ag-Comp workers' compensation insurance program is probably the most popular insurance benefit. This program offers reasonable premiums, loss control services and superior claims management for members. This program is extraordinarily valuable to farms and agribusiness in Arkansas, saving employers from unknown liability risks that can come from injuries to agricultural employees at work.

In addition to the advocacy and insurance benefits, the Ag Council provides members with real time information related to farm policy and market conditions. Membership also offers opportunities to serve in leadership

roles on certain state and federal advisory boards and positions with the National Cotton Council, state commodity promotion boards, and other agriculture boards. Some members simply enjoy the ability to share information and network with other successful farmers and agriculture businesses in Arkansas.

All of the benefits associated with a "Primary" membership of the Ag Council enhance the profitability of Arkansas family farms and grow rural economies. Improving farmers' bottom lines is the Ag Council's top priority.

Grobmyer states that he intends to continue to add benefits to members. "One of my top priorities is to continue increasing the number of non-farming business members that depend chiefly upon agriculture and encourage them to offer discounts to our members. We see that as a no-brainer for our members and the businesses that depend on farmers as customers."

The Ag Council offers such businesses

"Sustaining" memberships, which equate to a sponsoring member. These members receive benefits beyond those extended to Primary members. The Ag Council recognizes these members at all of its meetings, they offer free advertising on their website and newsletters, and they allow them to present products and services before its membership. Sustaining members may also receive supplemental advocacy among policy makers on matters of mutual concern.

A Future of Growth

The list of activities and accomplishments achieved by the Ag Council over the last 73 years is long and substantial. With much success, this organization worked on countless legislative and regulatory matters over many decades at both the state and federal levels, and it continues to do so today.

It remains the mission of the Ag Council to support initiatives to increase

"Every farmer cannot give their talent, but there is no excuse for not investing money to protect your interests. You never know just when the help from an organization like this will be needed and needed badly. Experience has taught us that you can't wait until war is declared to form and train an army."

HARVEY R. ADAMS, Executive Vice President of the Agricultural Council of Arkansas in 1943

"My family joined the Ag Council in 1963. Our membership allows us to have a voice on important issues. Others should join the Ag Council for the same reason, so their voice can be heard."

STEWART WEAVER, Ag Council Second Vice President – producer Edmondson, Ark.

"The Ag Council is the common thread that connects farmers and agribusinesses with similar interests through face-to-face meetings and more recently digital means."

RICK BRANSFORD, Ag Council First Vice President – producer Lonoke, Ark.



agricultural productivity, reduce production costs, provide safety nets, and create environments for profits and economic growth. Those who buy into the Ag Council get far more than their dollars' investment in return. The Ag Council has achieved success from the leadership of its officers, directors and committee members.

The Ag Council is well positioned to do an even better job in the future. This organization has the confidence and respect of state and federal legislators and other elected officials, government agencies, and agricultural organizations.

Going forward, it is the desire of the Ag Council to represent as many farmers, agribusinesses and other allied interests as possible. This organization welcomes their thinking and support. Under the leadership of its Executive Vice President, Andrew Grobmyer, and the Board of Directors, the Agricultural Council is committed to do even more for the Arkansas farmer and the agricultural industry.

Andrew Grobmyer emphasizes this commitment by stating, "the Agricultural Council is here to serve as our members' eyes, ears and mouth, and we take that responsibility seriously and literally. As we visit with legislators and regulators, we remind them of the importance of agriculture to our state and all Arkansans." He continues, "we promote the good work of Arkansas

farmers and seek to encourage policies that help farming operations and fight policies that don't. We want to find new solutions to challenges that Arkansas farmers face each day."

In looking to the future, Grobmyer's outlook remains positive. "We know that agriculture is essential to feed and clothe this nation and the world, and Arkansas will play a key role in providing this security for a growing population," Grobmyer says. "Arkansans have a great deal to take pride in when it comes to agriculture, and we intend to instill a commitment to Arkansas agriculture in everyone."

How to Join

To join this organization and its efforts, simply visit www.agcouncil.net or contact the Agricultural Council at (501) 376-0455. The Agricultural Council welcomes your support and input. Your support goes a long way in helping this organization be effective.

Agricultural Council of Arkansas

1020 West 3rd Street
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 376-0455 *tel*
(501) 376-0081 *fax*

www.agcouncil.net

[@AgCouncilofAr](https://twitter.com/AgCouncilofAr)

WORD of Mouth

"The Ag Council is foremost in information, policy, and direction in Arkansas agriculture and rural communities. Lots of value here."

LARRY MCCLENDON

Past Ag Council President – producer and ginner, Marianna, Ark.

"The Ag Council provides great networking opportunities. In addition, the workers' compensation insurance program has saved our operation many thousands of dollars. A membership in the Ag Council is absolutely one of the best values I have ever seen."

HAL HYNEMAN

Past Ag Council President – producer and businessman, Trumann, Ark.

"I have been involved with the Ag Council for 30 years. I initially tried all the various Ag associations in Arkansas but focused on the Ag Council because of the leadership that the council offered. The council has always focused on row crops and our business was that."

THAD FREELAND

Past Ag Council President – producer and ginner, Tillar, Ark.

"Many Ag Council members serve on statewide promotion boards and in various commodity organizations, so the information we share with each other is critical to our businesses. I also like that the Ag Council provides the opportunity to help shape policies that impact my business."

CAL MCCAUSTLAIN

Past Ag Council President and current Ag Council Treasurer – producer, Monroe County, Ark.

"We are the only organization in the state that strictly represents the row crop industry, and we serve an important role for our members and their businesses. This organization gives us a strong and united voice among policy makers at the State Capitol and in Washington."

HERRICK NORCROSS

Ag Council President – producer, Tyronza, Ark.

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For more information, contact:

Agricultural Council of Arkansas • 1020 West 3rd Street • Little Rock, AR 72201
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Beef Up the Industry

Arkansas's cattlemen rebuild the business after drought

Aubrey Blackmon shares a passion with his father, who homesteaded in Arkansas and ran cattle on open government rangeland many years ago.

Now, Blackmon himself has 200 head in a cow-calf operation on nearly 1,000 acres of land just outside Little Rock. Blackmon's operation and many smaller producers like his have made cattle the No. 2 animal commodity in the state.

"Nothing does more for me than getting out in the morning to see the calves bouncing around, seeing a newborn calf and being a part of Mother Nature," Blackmon says. "You've got to love being part of Mother Nature to be productive."

Blackmon bought land in 1968, and loves telling the story of how

he got started with just one cow and one calf in his possession. Things didn't start out well, as the cow died and the family decided to slaughter the calf. But Blackmon rebuilt his operation by improving the land and the genetics of the cattle he bought, all while raising five sons.

"You just have to start over and restock and reseed your ground," he says. "You learn to improve and get better cattle that are easier to maintain."

After the recent drought, many Arkansas cattle producers are doing the same. Blackmon had to reduce his herd by 20 percent, and many of his colleagues liquidated. He says this will make those who survive better managers.

Arkansas Cattlemen's Association Executive Vice President Adam

McClung says the state is down 15 to 17 percent. People saw the immediate effects watching the cattle be taken to town but ranchers who are still in the business are now figuring out the real costs, he says.

Those costs include burned, unsalvageable grass that will require an expensive amount of seed and fertilizer to rebuild the pasturelands. He estimates it will take two to four years for the industry to fully recover. It's also tough to gauge the long-term effect, he says, because it's unclear if older ranchers who liquidated will buy back into the business.

"We're going to be playing recovery for the next few years," he says.

-Sonja Bjelland



Aubrey Blackmon operates a cow-calf beef cattle farm just outside Little Rock.

Arkansas farms
are home to
1.6 million cattle.

Top five beef counties:

1. Washington
2. Benton
3. Carroll
4. Madison
5. Boone

TOP *of the* Pecking Order

Broilers top the list of Arkansas's
agricultural commodities

The NUMBERS:

34

Number of chickens processed
every second in Arkansas.

116,950

Number of jobs the
poultry industry creates.

47%

of the total cash receipts in Arkansas
for agriculture products in 2010
were provided by poultry.



The Poultry Federation



- Arkansas is ranked 2nd in the nation for broiler (chicken) production, raising more than 1 billion chickens per year, producing more than 5.8 billion pounds with a production value of more than \$2.7 billion.*
- Arkansas is ranked 3rd in the nation for turkey production raising more than 30 million turkeys per year, producing more than 603 million pounds with a production value of more than \$411 million.*
- Arkansas is ranked 10th in the nation for egg production, producing nearly 3 billion eggs per year with a production value of more than \$406 million.*
- Poultry is the largest agricultural product in Arkansas, in terms of cash receipts, providing 47% of the total in 2010.*
- Poultry contributed \$3.6 billion to Arkansas' economy in 2010.*

*www.thepoultryfederation.com/industry/poultry-and-egg-industry-facts



About us ...

The Poultry Federation (TPF) is a tri-state trade association (Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma) representing the poultry and egg industry. TPF promotes and protects the interests of the industry and represents a unified voice in state governments.

TPF membership consists of every segment of the poultry and egg industry including, but not limited to, feed milling, live production, hatchery, processing, further processing, packaging, commercial egg, marketing, and all service and support activities. Established in Little Rock in 1954, The Arkansas Poultry Federation consolidated with Missouri and Oklahoma in 1998, to become The Poultry Federation.



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www.ThePoultryFederation.com



ON AVERAGE, 34 CHICKENS are processed every second in Arkansas.

The 21 to 25 million chickens processed weekly across the state make poultry Arkansas's top agriculture commodity.

"Most people say we're No. 1 in the nation in rice production or talk about corn, but if you look at just cash receipts, you'd have to add together cotton, rice, wheat, corn and milo all to equal the cash receipts for poultry," says Marvin Childers, president of the Poultry Federation, an organization that represents poultry companies in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

A range of reasons has led to the state's ability to provide the world with chicken nuggets, fingers and wings.

More than a century ago, the mountainous region of northwest Arkansas began the nation's poultry industry. The topography didn't work well for row crops, but chicken coops fit.

Tyson Foods was born after founder John Tyson began driving truckloads of chickens to Kansas City and Chicago. As Tyson Foods developed and evolved, it was among the first companies to introduce

vertical integration, meaning Tyson owns the chickens, delivers them to farms to be raised and then picks them up for processing.

This way of organizing the business changed the state.

Worth Sparkman, public relations manager for Tyson, says the method has been important for quality control in the industry.

"If a company in any industry is to do well, it must make quality products that satisfy demand," he says. "We contract with family farmers to raise our chicks with the feed we provide, so we know about the breed of the birds and the quality of food they eat, and this helps us eventually produce high-quality products."

Farmer Jeff Marley strives to keep the 246,000 chickens he raises weekly for Tyson happy. That means proper lighting and temperature, which proved difficult with recent weather patterns. But a new type of chicken house has made a difference.

He installed tunnel houses that allow him to electronically monitor the exact temperature of the house and keep it ventilated at a rate that keeps his chickens the most comfortable. That leads to chickens that are less likely to become sick and more likely

to put on the weight needed.

Marley and his fellow growers compete weekly to see which ranch's chickens put on the most weight with the lowest mortality.

"If you keep everything ideal in your chicken house so they grow the most every day, then you get an actual cost per pound," Marley says.

"Ideal" includes cooling the chickens with water misters and making sure they have the correct space and lighting for their size and age.

"For the people I know, the welfare of the chicken is a top priority," he says. "If you don't take care of that chicken, then that chicken won't take care of you."

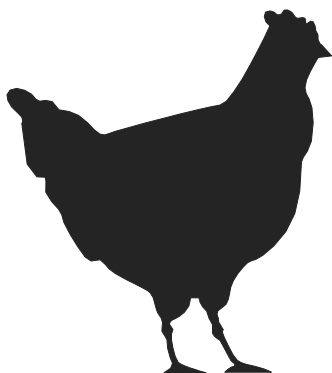
In this way of operating, Marley and other farmers provide the buildings, electricity, poultry knowledge and more needed to raise the chickens. To save energy and help farmers with their costs, the state provides rebates for chicken farmers who switched to LED bulbs.

The technology, from lighting to temperature control, keeps evolving.

"This is one case when they will constantly make a better mousetrap," Marley says.

— Sonja Bjelland

5,855,600 lbs.
OF ARKANSAS POULTRY WERE PRODUCED IN 2011.



The **21 to 25 million** chickens processed weekly across the state make poultry Arkansas's top agricultural commodity.

Arkansas ranks
2nd
in the nation in broiler
production, raising more than
one billion
chickens per year.

Swimming to Success

Diverse aquaculture industry
boosts Arkansas's economy



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN MCCORD

Keo Fish Farms is the largest fish hatchery for hybrid striped bass in the country. They sell young fish, called fingerlings, to food fish growers around the country.

FROM CARP TO CATFISH, aquaculture has caught on in Arkansas – and the state is reeling in the benefits.

Arkansas exports more than 6 billion baitfish nationwide annually, making the small live fish bought by anglers for recreational and sport fishing a leader in the state's diverse \$167 million aquaculture industry.

The state ranks second among aquaculture-producing states and leads the nation in baitfish production, raising more than 80 percent of all U.S. baitfish, says Ted McNulty, director of aquaculture at the Arkansas Agriculture Department.

Arkansas also surpasses all other states in production of largemouth bass for stocker fish, hybrid striped bass fry and Chinese carp, according to the Arkansas Agriculture Department.

THE STATE RANKS **SECOND** AMONG AQUACULTURE-PRODUCING STATES AND LEADS THE NATION IN BAITFISH PRODUCTION, RAISING MORE THAN **80 PERCENT** OF ALL U.S. BAITFISH.

Arkansas also **surpasses all other states** in production of largemouth bass for stocker fish, hybrid striped bass fry and Chinese carp.

Baitfish farmers lose about

10%

of their crop every month to predators including snakes, frogs and water fowl.



Serving up recipes, tips and food for thought



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\$1.5 billion annual state economic impact

More than 1,900 in-state growers

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32 Arkansas locations

Arkansas grown since 1935.



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the Curve.
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RISING COSTS FOR CATFISH

Not all segments of the aquaculture industry are thriving, McNulty says.

In the last two years, many catfish farmers have either significantly reduced or completely stopped raising the fish, primarily because the cost of feed has risen dramatically. Catfish acreage in the state decreased from about 40,000 five years ago to approximately 10,000 in 2012, he says.

“Back then, farmers were paying \$250 a ton for fish feed, and now they’re paying close to \$600 a ton,” he says. “You can see how much the cost has gone up per acre. It’s just astronomical.”

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff’s Aquaculture/Fisheries Center hopes to help farmers find a solution to the high feed costs, says Carole Engle, chair and director of the center.

The center has long conducted research to help farmers lower the cost of production and develop new marketing strategies, she says. It recently added a doctoral degree program in aquaculture/fisheries to its existing undergraduate and graduate programs.

It also worked with the state and the industry to create a voluntary certification program for bait and ornamental fish that includes disease inspection, biosecurity and aquatic nuisance species provisions.

Given the increasingly high price of grains like corn and soybeans – which are often used to make fish pellets – the center recently has focused efforts on helping find lower-cost feed ingredients, Engle says.

“We try to come up with answers that are really going to work,” she says. “We have a very dedicated faculty here, and they’re very committed to trying to solve the problems of the fish farmers in the state.”

BENEFITS OF BAITFISH

The baitfish category also includes small fish that are sold to aquarium markets, says Eric Park, a fish pathologist and owner of Aquatec Fish Farms, Inc., in Cabot, Ark.

Park, who also serves as the president of the Arkansas Bait

and Ornamental Fish Growers Association, raises small pink minnows known as rosy reds that he sells to aquarium stores across the country. Park farms about 200 acres and raises about 15 million fish per year.

To begin the baitfish farming cycle, farmers line earthen ponds with a mat on which adult brood fish will lay eggs, typically in April or May. The mats are then collected and brought to an indoor hatchery where the eggs incubate in closely controlled water. After the eggs hatch, the newborn fish need about two to three days to mature before they are taken to a prepared outdoor pond.

“If you just threw them into regular pond water, there are so

many things that will eat and kill them,” Park says.

It takes about eight to 12 weeks before the smallest fish are ready to sell.

Fish are then typically transported by truck in tanks that feed oxygen into the water, McNulty says.

Park says that baitfish farmers lose about 10 percent of their crop every month to predators, including snakes, frogs and water fowl.

“We try our hardest to chase the predators away,” he says. “But most of what we try to do is create an environment they don’t like – keeping grass and vegetation really short.”

– Juliann Vachon



GRAPE Expectations

Wine industry encourages Arkansas agritourism

Winemaking has been part of the culture of Arkansas for nearly 140 years, but the growing interest in agritourism has illustrated the important role the industry plays in the economy – now and in the future.

The Arkansas grape, wine and related industries generated \$173 million for the state, based on 2010 figures, with \$21 million of that figure attributed to tourism, according to a study commissioned by Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus and funded by the Arkansas Agriculture Department.

More than 300,000 people visit Arkansas's 13 wineries annually, according to the study. Those tourists spend dollars on wine purchases, lodging, dining and more.

"Some Arkansans may not realize the positive effect grapes and wine have on our state," says Dr. Ken Warden, chief business and community outreach officer for Arkansas Tech-Ozark. "This study is a testament to the value the industry has to our state and provides evidence for anyone looking to invest in the process."

TASTING TOURISM

The opportunity for investment is plentiful. Arkansas ranks 21st in the country in total wine production, yet the retail value of Arkansas wine sold is estimated at \$20.3 million, with sales generated by the wineries totaling \$11.4 million.

Tourism and the success of wineries are closely linked.

**\$173
million**

was generated by the
Arkansas grape and wine
industries in 2010.

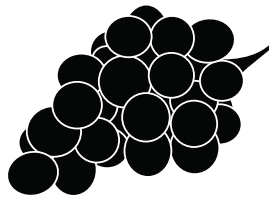
**\$21
million**

of that total was generated
through tourism.

Joseph Post is the sixth generation to operate Post Familie Vineyards & Winery in Altus, Ark., the largest winery in the state.



More than
300,000
people visit Arkansas's
13
wineries annually.



In 2010,
the Arkansas
wine industry
provided **1,668**
full-time jobs.

"Ninety-nine percent of the wineries in the country sell the bulk of their product at their wineries," says Joseph Post, a member of the sixth-generation operating Post Familie Vineyards, one of the state's oldest, largest and most successful wineries. Producing the best-selling wines in Arkansas, Post Familie now relies primarily on regional and national distribution, but the 50,000 annual visitors to the Altus winery remain important guests.

"Our visitors are vital to our business," Post says. "That's the way we make our first impression, gain customers and build loyalty."



The number of wineries who grow their own grapes and bottle their own wines is steadily increasing in Arkansas.

FINE VINES

For Post, wine is an agricultural endeavor, as evidenced by the 200 acres of grapes in production.

“We are farmers,” he says. “A lot of good winemakers don’t involve themselves in farming, but for us that’s what works. We think about growing a bottle of wine. That’s in our fabric.”

Arkansas, particularly in the Altus region, is ideal for growing grapes, Post says. “There’s a lot to be said for the right kind of soil,” he says. “Grapes don’t like wet feet. Grapes need well-drained soil, frost protection and micro-climates, and that’s what we have here.”

Doug Hausler, who owns Keels Creek Winery, also finds the soil good for growing grapes. A former research chemist, he and his wife chose Eureka Springs for their retirement and planted a one-acre vineyard as a hobby.

“It didn’t seem to be that difficult, so we subsequently planted 5,000 vines on eight acres,” Hausler says. “Then we had to figure out what to do with all those grapes.”

Keels Creek, a boutique winery, produces 3,000 to 4,000 gallons of wine annually.

“We’re a mom-and-pop organization,” he says. “We distribute our time between retail space, winery and vineyard. We keep our vineyard small, but we keep our hand in it.”

Keels Creek relies on visitors to sell its wines.

“One of the biggest pulls for a winery is to get people to come into your door,” Hausler says. “If you are small like us, you need to sell your wine on site.”

That means the wines have to be good, and Hausler says some visitors are surprised at the quality of wines being grown in Arkansas.

“If people are willing to experiment and try wines other than Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir, they will find very good wines in various places,” he says. “As people research for their travel, they look for wineries to explore, so we expect to see a continued increase in tourists, which is a great thing for us and for Arkansas.”

— Kim Madlom



PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN MCCORD

Many Arkansas wineries, like Post, welcome visitors to visit their vineyards and sample their unique wines.

Grown *at Home*

Marketing program brings farmers
and consumers closer together



PHOTO BY JEFFREY S. OTTO

JUST ASK THE FOURTH- AND fifth-generation farmers of the Matthews family, and they will tell you: The best sweet potatoes grow in Arkansas.

So, using the Arkansas Grown logo on all the sweet potato boxes that leave Matthews Ridgeview Farms seems as natural as the Arkansas soil. The state-generated symbol brands their potatoes along with their farm's fifth-generation label. And the mark helps distinguish their sweet potatoes for the taste and quality consumers recognize from Arkansas.

Any agricultural product grown or made in the state can bear the trademarked image with the Arkansas Agriculture Department's approval.

"The potential is unlimited," says Kim Matthews, who owns the northeast Arkansas farm with her husband Terris. "The state is giving us the tools, and it's up to us to use them. It can push us to separate from other states and other growers. And it can be a great, great tool. It all still falls back on us where we use that marketing strategy."

The Arkansas Grown program launched in 2006 as a marketing effort of the Arkansas Agriculture Department. Farmers, packers and agricultural processors may apply to use the black-and-green or black-and-white versions of the Arkansas Grown branding label. Many choose to simply note their business on the Arkansas Grown website, arkansasgrown.org, a way to connect buyers with producers. Others, like the Matthews family, choose both.

About 380 farms and small businesses posted their information on the website as of late 2012. And the listings prove diverse. Buyers and consumers use the site to locate locally grown fruits, vegetables, nuts, beef, pork and poultry. They also can find U-pick farms, farmers' markets, wineries and restaurants serving locally grown cuisine.

Farmers' markets routinely use the program and its branding logo, says Zach Taylor, Director of Marketing for the department. The state plans to launch a marketing campaign in 2013 to encourage more

food processors, wholesale farmers and others to adopt the brand.

Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Butch Calhoun shares enthusiasm about the program's potential.

"I am pleased with what the Arkansas Grown program has accomplished, and I am excited about our prospects for expanding the program," Calhoun says. "I feel the Arkansas Grown program benefits consumers as well as producers."

The logo greatly benefits the Matthews family's ability to differentiate their product from other states and growers, particularly at Wal-Mart and Sam's Club, Matthews says. Matthews Ridgeview Farms, the self-claimed largest grower/packer/shipper in Arkansas, sells to wholesalers and chain retailers all over the United States. They also send weekly shipments to Canada. The farm

grew more than 1 million bushels of sweet potatoes in 2012.

"It lets people, especially in our state, be able to relate to that product and know that it's grown in that state," Matthews says.

Also under the umbrella of Arkansas Grown, the department works with a farm-to-school program, which connects local farmers and schools with the objective of including local food in school meals, Taylor says. And eventually, Arkansas would like to follow successful branding efforts in other states, he says. Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee, for example, operate healthy and large-scale programs.

"I think it's a very good program," Matthews says. "The Arkansas Agriculture Department is doing their part. We just have to do our part to implement it."

— Joanie Stiers



Consumers can use the Arkansas Grown website (ArkansasGrown.org) to locate locally grown fruits, veggies, nuts, beef, pork and poultry as well as U-pick farms, farmers markets, wineries and restaurants serving locally grown cuisine.



Buy Fresh, Buy Local

Farmers' markets grow with consumer interest

Farmers' markets in Arkansas have grown nearly threefold in less than a decade, driven by increasingly health- and community-conscious consumers.

Even the oldest farmers' markets can attest to the surge in consumer interest. The four-decades-strong Fayetteville farmers' market attracts an average 5,000 customers a week during the peak summer season at just its Saturday market, says Lori Boatright, the market's coordinator. Altogether, 250,000 people annually shop the three-day-a-week downtown Fayetteville market and an additional Sunday market at the Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks.

The demand drives the market's desire to expand; a winter market, evening hours and additional locations are under consideration.

"People changed from shopping the market as a novelty to serious shoppers that are making all their food choices based on what's available at the market," Boatright says. "In recent years, we see more young families and young business professionals shopping the market. They're very educated about their

food choices and making healthy choices for their families and their lifestyles."

In 2004, 31 farmers' markets existed in Arkansas, according to the Arkansas Agriculture Department. The state recorded 85 in 2012. Beyond the social experience, the forces driving the demand follow the nationwide trend: Buy fresh, nutritious food and buy it local.

"We have seen continuous growth throughout the years and a significant increase in the last five years as people become more educated about local food," Boatright says. "They are making the market their primary grocery shopping location, which has increased vendor sales and the diversity of products at the market."

The Fayetteville Farmers' Market started in 1974 with 12 producers. In 2012, the market membership list included 120 farm and craft vendors from four counties in Northwest Arkansas, who sold fruits, vegetables, plants, meat, eggs, baked goods, jams, fine arts and crafts.



The downtown Fayetteville market celebrates its 40th season in 2013 with as much enthusiasm as ever. More broadly, the interest in locally grown food symbolizes the importance of small-scale agriculture in Arkansas, Boatright says. The state long has been known for its successful rice crop and poultry production. Small-scale agriculture shows it can be a leader, too.

— Joanie Stiers

Prized Processors

While fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of the Arkansas Agriculture Department's Arkansas Grown program, food processors and value-added producers throughout the state also deserve significant recognition.

These value-added producers and processors range from large corporations to family-run businesses. They range from well-known brands like Little Debbie®, processed by McKee Foods, to homemade delicacies like McClard's BBQ sauce, Honeysuckle Lane Cheese, Diamond Bear Brewing Co., and Fischer Honey. The Arkansas Grown program is open to any Arkansas agricultural product defined as consisting entirely of or made substantially from farm, forest and nursery products produced in Arkansas. Currently, the majority of the members produce fresh fruits, vegetables and

specialty crops, however the program does include some processors like natural soap producers and wineries.

Zachary Taylor, Director of Marketing for the Arkansas Agriculture Department says they are looking to push for more value-added producers to become members of the program in 2013. "We want to make processors more aware of the branding program and its benefits not only to them, but also to Arkansas agriculture," Taylor adds.

The program is essential in branding and marketing strategies for the companies, helping consumers know that these processed foods were made in state. With the popular local food movement, most consumers are more likely to buy a product when it has been grown or processed locally.

RICELAND®

A Co-op of Family Farmers



It takes four things to grow rice – hard work, clean water, lots of sunshine and good land. Ninety years ago, Arkansas farmers found a land so perfect for growing rice, they named their rice after it – Riceland Rice.

BEGINNINGS OF THE RICE INDUSTRY

Rice first became a promising crop in Arkansas during the early 1900s. Demand for the grain and prices were on the rise through World War I. During the 1920 growing season, rice was valued at \$3.00 per bushel. However, the bottom fell out



of the rice market following the war. When harvest came, buyers were willing to pay only 11 cents to 35 cents per bushel for rice. Farmers were devastated.

A handful of farmers decided they needed to work together to market their rice more effectively. They talked about forming a cooperative in Stuttgart that would differ from other businesses. It would be farmer-owned and operated for the benefit of its farmer-members. More farmers joined the effort, and in 1921, they created a cooperative that would become known as Riceland Foods with its headquarters at Stuttgart.

THE CO-OP TODAY

Today, Riceland is still a cooperative of family farmers that provides marketing services for rice, as well as the soybeans, wheat and corn grown by its 6,000 farmer-members in Arkansas and the boot heel of Missouri.

The co-op has grown to account for a fourth of the U.S. rice crop and revenue of more than \$1 billion for each of the last five years. It's one of Arkansas's leading home-grown businesses.

Farmers deliver most of their grain straight from the field to Riceland's 30 grain receiving facilities scattered throughout the rice-producing region. Riceland has 112 million bushels of grain storage to accommodate its farmer-members' grain making it one of the top U.S. grain storage companies. Riceland personnel dry grain to maintain its quality and store it until it is transported to one of four processing centers in eastern Arkansas and the Missouri boot heel.



Riceland farmers track their grain deliveries on Web cams, check prices, see weather forecasts and read farm news on the Farmer Info website –

www.riceland.coop. They can do all of this and more on their home computer, smartphone or tablet.

VALUE-ADDED MARKETING

Riceland has become the world's largest miller and marketer of rice with seven rice mills at four processing centers located in Stuttgart, Jonesboro and Waldenburg, Arkansas, and in New Madrid, Missouri.

Five mills produce white rice commonly seen on supermarket shelves. State-of-the-art processing equipment assures pearly white rice of consistent quality. Two rice parboiling plants produce rice kernels that consistently cook fluffy and separate every time. Parboiled rice maintains its quality for up to two hours on a steam table and is often served by food-service establishments.



Multiple rice milling facilities in the nation's heartland allow Riceland to serve big and small customers on a timely basis anywhere across the United States and around the world.

A rice flour mill located at Jonesboro produces an array of flours desired for their nutritional benefits and appropriate for a number of food applications.



RICELAND PRODUCTS

Riceland produces milled rice, brown rice, parboiled rice, flavored rice mixes, rice flour, and rice bran. Oil is extracted from rice bran to produce cooking oils with exceptional qualities for use in specialty products such as the new Riceland Fish Fry Oil. Additional specialty oils currently are in development.

Riceland markets Riceland Rice to consumers in an array of retail packages and sizes ranging from one-pound to 20-pound poly bags. Riceland Rice 'n Easy Flavored Mixes are especially convenient for busy consumers who wish to serve home-cooked meals. With an emphasis on whole grains, the popularity of Riceland's Natural Brown Rice has grown dramatically in recent years.

Some of the cooperative's most dramatic growth has been in the food-service segment. White table cloth restaurants, fast-food chains, schools and hospitals have contributed to Riceland's increased sales to food-service establishments. Major food service suppliers as well as club stores offer Riceland Rice products in 25, 50 and 100-pound packages.

Food manufacturers use Riceland rice products as ingredients for prepared foods and mixes, breakfast cereals, confections and a host of other products. There has been tremendous growth in rice used as an ingredient in pet foods due to the nutritional benefits it provides to canines.

About one-third of Riceland's rice is exported to 75 foreign destinations through port facilities at Pendleton on the Arkansas River and New Madrid on the Mississippi River. Riceland is a direct exporter with decades of experience in marketing and transporting Arkansas's homegrown rice around the world.

Even the hulls that cover rice kernels from the field are utilized in Riceland's co-generation plants to produce steam and electricity that operate its processing equipment. Some rice hulls are used as a soil amendment in greenhouses and for bedding plants.

Soybeans are processed by Riceland in Stuttgart to make high-protein soybean meal consumed by the region's poultry and aquaculture industries. An edible oil refinery converts crude oils from soybeans and rice bran into an extensive line of food oil products. Riceland's capacity also allows it to refine and market corn, peanut, canola and



It's all about the smokepoint! Riceland's Fish Fry Oil has a high smokepoint, allowing it to get hotter without smoking. Hotter oil produces crispy, light, tasty fish. This oil is also great for giving fries, hush puppies and even chicken an authentic Southern taste.



Riceland's Jonesboro Division is the world's largest rice mill.



cottonseed oils in precise blends for food-service establishments, bakeries and food manufacturers.

Because Riceland members grow soft red wheat and corn, Riceland provides marketing services for these crops as grain storage space allows. Wheat generally is sold into the export market, and corn is merchandised primarily to the region's pet food manufacturers and poultry growers.

Riceland is one of the region's major businesses with 1,500 employees in eastern Arkansas and the



Missouri boot heel. These dedicated employees receive, condition, store, transport, process, package, and market grain and products throughout the August-July marketing year from more than 100 million bushels of grain.

A state-of-the-art research and technical center provides Riceland a facility in which to create new value-added products, improve existing products and develop new processing techniques. A fully equipped food-service kitchen allows exact duplication of conditions for the testing of food-service products for fast food, fine food and quick-stop establishments. Customer support is available from Riceland's food scientists and technicians.

Riceland's Training and Education Center provides employees with continuing education needed for jobs that are becoming increasingly technical. Its employees are trained and ready to utilize the latest technology to provide maximum returns for the co-op's farmer-members.

Riceland is the leader of the rice industry, marketing rice into all product segments every day. With the expansion of markets and the development of new products, Riceland will continue to serve its customers and the crop marketing needs of its farm families today and in the future.



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For more information, contact:

Riceland Foods Inc.

2120 Park Ave. • P.O. Box 927 • Stuttgart, AR 72160

Phone: (870) 673-5500 • Fax: (870) 673-5667

Email: riceland@riceland.com

www.riceland.com

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Harvest for the Hungry

Gleaning project addresses Arkansas food insecurity

So many Arkansans struggle to access food that the state ties for the most “food insecure” in the nation. This accentuates the magnitude of the Arkansas Gleaning Project, which collects leftover fruits and vegetables from harvested fields to put produce on the plates of hungry Arkansans.

The project generated a record 1.2 million pounds of donated turnips, strawberries, squash, pecans and more for the state’s hungry in 2012. Nine hundred volunteers including prison inmates, hand-gathered unmarketable produce from nearly 400 acres on seven farms.

The project promises to narrow the gap between need and declining food donations, providing highly nutritious food to boot. A startling one in six Arkansans feel uncertain of where they will eat their next meal, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance reports. By percentage, more residents in Arkansas and Mississippi than in any other states struggle to access enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle, according to a

food security report released by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2012.

“We have to be creative to find different sources of food,” says Michelle Shope, Director of Food Sourcing and Logistics for the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. “With Arkansas being an agriculture state, we thought it was a great place for the project. We are actually serving as a mentor in gleaning to other food banks in the Feeding America network.”

In 2008, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance partnered with the Society of St. Andrew to found the Arkansas Gleaning Project. Gleaning is the Biblical practice of hand-gathering crops left after harvest. The Alliance distributes the produce to one of six regional food banks or directly to feeding agencies, such as local pantries and shelters.

Amazingly, the project’s cost in 2012 was calculated at only 2.8 cents per pound. Shope credits the accomplishment to volunteers and generous donors. A \$30,000 grant from the Arkansas Agriculture Department helped cover annual

expenses that reached about \$33,000 in 2012, she says.

The project shows potential to grow exponentially. Inmates from the Arkansas Department of Corrections joined the project in 2010 and increased the results nearly three-fold in just a year. The project works with just seven farms, but an important goal is to continue increasing the number of farms that participate. Shope hopes to grow that number significantly in the years to come.

“We want to get to the point in this program that our food banks and our partner agencies are saturated with the fresh produce,” Shope says. “We want to look towards minimally processing and freezing the excess produce so that we can offer it throughout the year.”

— Joanie Stiers

Get Involved

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance invites farmers and volunteers to join the Gleaning Project. To learn more, contact Michelle Shope at (501) 399-9999 or visit www.arhungeralliance.org.



Arkansas Department of Correction inmates serve as volunteers during an Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance gleaning event.

Growing an EDUCATION

Agriculture-based programs
prepare students for successful
careers in the field



Arkansas State University welcomes visitors of all ages to its Bill and Alice Nix Petting Zoo.

THE DAYS OF SITTING IN ROWS of desks listening to a teacher drone on are past. Education today is progressively moving forward to become more hands-on and project-oriented. While some may believe this new path is a bit too radical, agricultural education programs have been on this track for more than half a century.

Agricultural education works to prepare students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources system, according to the Agricultural Education mission. This is achieved by blending classroom education with leadership opportunities and hands-on learning projects. While agricultural education is most often associated with the National FFA Organization, Arkansas hosts many agricultural education opportunities.



Through agricultural education, students get real-life, hands-on experience in the industry of agriculture, from interviewing a farmer for a college course to learning swine production and management in a high school setting. Beyond technical skills, these students gain life experiences that will benefit them in any career.

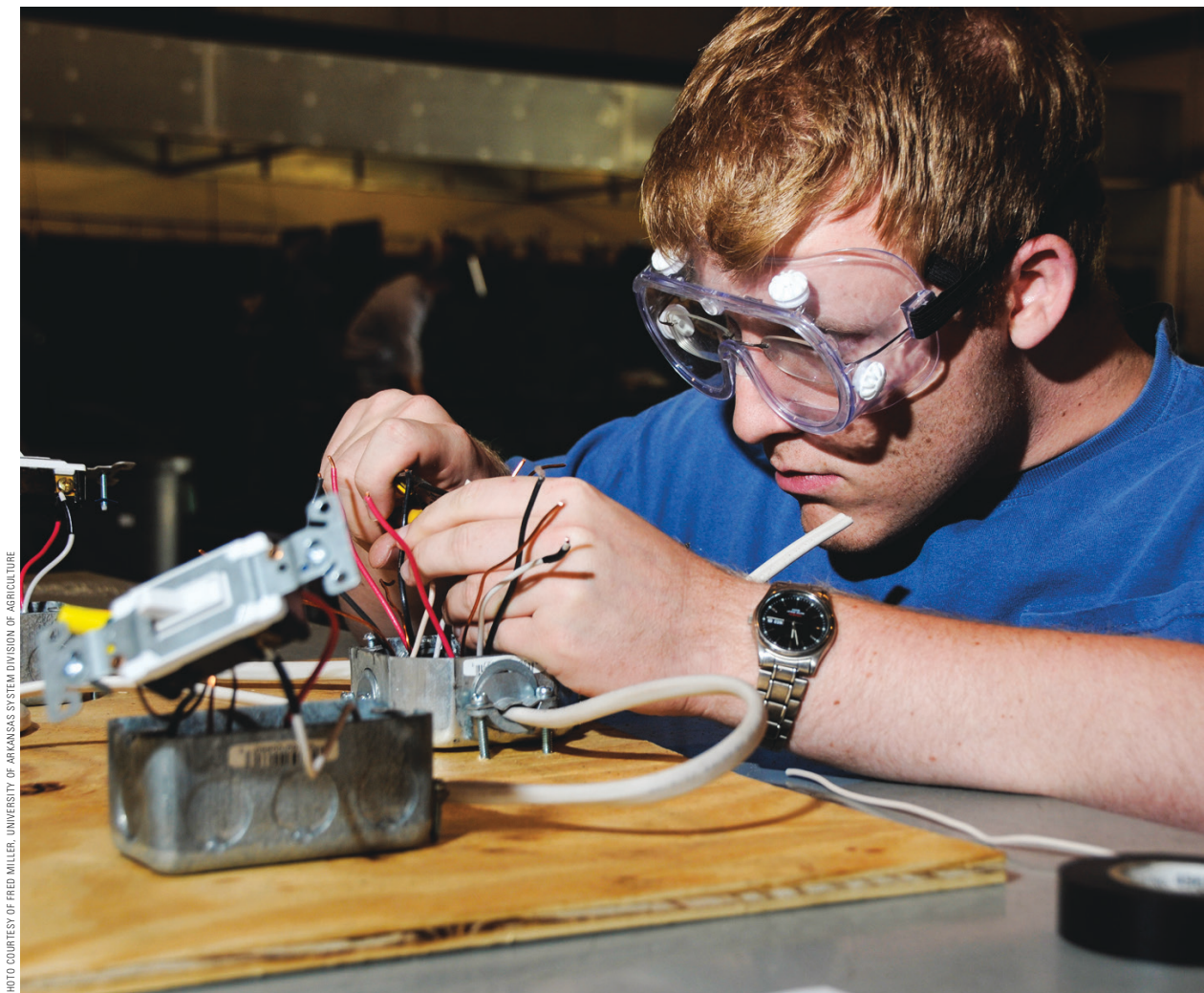


PHOTO COURTESY OF FRED MILLER, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SYSTEM DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

A University of Arkansas student builds an electrical circuit during one of his college courses.



PHOTO BY BRIAN MCCORD

Paris High School agricultural education students put the finishing touches on a woodworking project that will benefit their local community.

Two strong programs for Arkansas youth are the Arkansas 4-H program and the Arkansas FFA Association. The University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Services maintains the state's 4-H program. This program allows youth to learn leadership, citizenship and everyday skills as well as receiving mentoring from community members.

"Youth need to see a visual of what life will be like later in life. It makes it more realistic to have a person who just experienced what they are going through to be there for guidance," Jenne Richardson, a VISTA associate with the Arkansas 4-H after-school program, writes in the annual Arkansas 4-H newsletter. "I intend to continue working with the youth to help them build positive relationships, and life skills. It is an

honor to be able to give back to my community."

Another educational option for youth is the Arkansas FFA Association. This organization works to promote premiere leadership, personal growth and career success in its members. Students can take on leadership roles through serving on an officer team and advocating for agriculture to community members, younger students and their peers. Arkansas FFA members can also develop the ability to think critically, communicate clearly and perform effectively in the competitive job market through experiences in career development events. The skills students gain through this organization better prepare them for future careers in agriculture.

Beyond elementary, middle school and high school, agricultural



PHOTO BY BRIAN MCCORD

An FFA member learns welding in the Paris High School shop.

education opportunities are available at most post-secondary schools throughout the state. Not only do colleges and universities throughout Arkansas prepare future agricultural educators for their goals, these programs also show great support for youth-oriented agricultural education programs.

“One of the first things our students are exposed to here at Arkansas State University is our annual leadership conference,” says Dr. Donald Kennedy, interim dean of the College of Agriculture and Technology at Arkansas State University. “We want our students to become better leaders and better communicators. If you ask future employers what they might want, the first two or three things they say is ‘we want people who can

communicate.’ We want our students to know the technical material that will be required of them in the job field, but we also want them to have those ‘soft skills,’ such as leadership and communication, that are transferrable to any job they may take.”

Agricultural education programs, similar to the ones at Arkansas State University, are working dutifully to prepare youth for future careers in agriculture. The combination of Arkansas 4-H, the Arkansas FFA Association and agricultural education programs through higher education is providing Arkansas youth a bright future and setting students up with a solid foundation in agriculture.

– Beverley Kreul

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Preserving the Past

Arkansas century farms have deep roots in history

IF THE BARN WALLS OF THE West Farm in Prairie Grove could speak, they would surely hold your attention, telling a rich story dating back more than 150 years.

In 1862, Union soldiers used the home as a makeshift hospital following the Battle of Prairie Grove. During the first half of the 20th century, the farm witnessed the construction, and abandonment, of a rural railroad. Today, it views a trend toward urban sprawl and agritourism.

Generation after generation, this 455-acre farm has experienced various types of weather, evolving forms of policy and procedure, and advancements in technology. The one consistency, though, is family.

The West family has passed down the farm through four generations of agriculture and history lovers. Cheryl West and her husband, Randy, hope to continue this tradition.

“Our twin girls, Natalie and Lindsay, were the fifth generation to grow up on the farm,” West says. “They both have agricultural-based college degrees, and their careers have been heavily focused on agriculture. They have grown up with a love for land just as we have. Now we have a grandson who is the sixth generation to be involved in the farm. He may only be two years old, but he loves everything about the farm. We would love to think that he, or any other grandchildren we may have, would have an interest in running the farm in the future.”

If her hopes come true, future generations will have plenty to work with. The farm is still very much a productive operation, producing between 50,000 and 70,000 square bales of Bermuda grass hay annually. The family also raises broilers for Tyson Foods.

STEEPED IN HISTORY

For Stanley Hill of Witherspoon, upholding the legacy of his historic family farm is key to preserving the land. The small farm, just under 200 acres, was purchased in 1890 by his great-grandfather, Watson Hill, who was sold into slavery at the age of four. “After he was a free man, he ended up in Arkansas and pursued his desire to be a landowner,” Hill says.

Despite his past as a slave, Watson’s records indicated that his father was white and his mother was black.

“We think this fact could be why he was more accepted and was able to purchase the land easily,” Hill says.

Surviving everything from the Depression to recent recessions, the farm made its way through four generations and is currently owned by Hill’s mother (his father passed in

2002). Hill works as the farm manager.

“My father had three brothers and three sisters, and as a kid, I always struggled with why he chose to take over the farm because it meant I had to do chores while my cousins got to play basketball,” Hill says. “But as an adult, I realized that it was a good thing. The farm was my father’s passion.”

In his father’s lifetime, the land was used early on as pasture for cattle grazing, and later for row crops like cotton, soybeans and winter wheat. In fact, Hill’s father won the wheat challenge for the most productive harvest in the county one year. Currently, the Hill family leases the land, which is being mainly used for row crops.

The farm is a certified Arkansas Century Farm, a designation of the Arkansas Agriculture Department honoring families who have owned and farmed the same land for at least 100 years.

As for the future of the farm, Hill can’t say for sure whether any of his children, nieces or nephews will actively be involved with the farm, but they know it’s important to the family.

The **Arkansas Century Farm Program** recognizes the state’s rich agricultural heritage and honors families who have owned and farmed the same land for **at least 100 years**. To learn more about the qualifications and apply for the program, visit the Arkansas Agriculture Department’s website, **aad.arkansas.gov** or call (501) 225-1598.



Cheryl and Randy West represent the fourth generation to own their family farm in Prairie Grove, Ark.

“We intend to continue ownership in the family in the future,” he says.

FARMING FOR THE FUTURE

Back in Prairie Grove, Cheryl West says her children have pursued career paths that will better prepare them to take over the family farm one day.

“We know that [our daughters’] generation will have different challenges in maintaining the farm,” West says. “Land prices continue to soar, and more and more people in this area sell their farmland for real estate development. We believe their background and education in agriculture will help the girls and their families to make the best decisions they can regarding the farm in the future.”

While many producers today know the importance of looking ahead in order to have a productive operation, the Wests encourage others to discover the history of the farm.

“Randy spent a lot of time about 20 years ago researching his family tree,” West says. “He looked at microfilm in libraries, and collected and preserved as many family documents as he could find that told the story of the farm.”


The West family was able to get the walls of the family farm to talk. And the story it tells is of a history of progress and the promise of a dynamic future.

“We are grateful to have the West Farm recognized as an Arkansas Century Farm,” West says. “We are proud of our family’s farming heritage in this great state.”

— Beverly Kreul



Stanley Hill (center) and his family own and operate a farm that’s been in their lineage since 1890.



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The Natural State

Arkansas lives up to state nickname with environment and conservation efforts

The job titles of “farmer” and “conservationist” may not often be associated with one another, but in most cases, they should be considered one and the same.

Arkansas farmers participate in a number of programs that aid in environmentally friendly practices and conservation efforts. While these programs vary depending on funding sources, specific goals or missions and rules and regulations, the one uniformity is producer participation.

Row crop farmer David Feilke of Stuttgart says that water conservation is the most important aspect of his operation.

“We started in 1996 with our first tail-water recovery and have since built three reservoirs on our farm,” he says. “We’re able to pick up 100 percent of water that runs off the farm.”

Storing water through the winter is an issue for Feilke, and he believes that building reservoirs was the right thing to do. Deep wells can be much more expensive than surface water, and reservoirs go farther, with up to 3,000 gallons of water being able to be used at one time.

Feilke says that water is a huge concern in Arkansas, even though they are fortunate to have a steady stream of water that flows through the state from major rivers.

“We only capture about 3 percent of that river water, and the rest empties into the gulf,” he says.

DISCOVERY FARMS

Arkansas contains an extremely diverse landscape including



PHOTO COURTESY OF USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

hardwood forests, native prairies and boggy wetlands. This diversity creates a need for a variety of conservation programs to be established for each of the state’s ecosystems.

The Arkansas Discovery Farms program monitors and evaluates water quality from runoff from various agricultural production systems. Five operations throughout the state set up water quality sampling stations to monitor water attributes.

With the ultimate goal being to establish the best management practices and reduce nutrient and sediment loss, the program is operated through the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research and Extension.

RURAL ENERGY

The Rural Energy for American Program (REAP) provides financial assistance for agricultural producers to pursue renewable energy goals. This encompasses using renewable technologies to

reduce energy consumption, making energy efficiency improvements in non-residential buildings and facilities, buying renewable energy systems or participating in energy audits and studies.

RESERVE PROGRAMS

Through the Natural Resources Conservation Services, Arkansas provides conservation program assistance through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This program works to allow farmers to convert eroding cropland or other sensitive land into vegetative cover. The transition lessens soil erosion and the impact on other environmental issues such as water and air quality.

Additionally, the Wetland Reserve Program is popular among Arkansas producers. These voluntary programs provide farmers with annual rental payments for the land they have protected.

– Beverley Kreul



Going Global

Arkansas company's success story
illustrates importance of ag exports

BRUCE OAKLEY STARTED SELLING BULK fertilizer from his small cattle farm in El Paso, Ark., after getting frustrated that he could only buy it in 50-pound bags.

The company he started in 1968 now serves as an example of Arkansas's international export industry – an important factor in the state's economy. The dry bulk commodity and sales company uses a mix of barges, trucks and trains to move a variety of products such as fertilizer and grain overseas.

Over the past decade, Bruce Oakley Inc. started looking at South America for expansion, says David Choate, vice president of grains and barges.

"It's still a fairly small portion of the business, but we're continuing to grow that. It's slow but steady growth," he says. "At this point it's only fertilizer, but I do see expanding to grain sales."

EXPORTS EXPAND BUSINESS

In the past few years, the state's exports of paper and paperboard have increased, says Zach Taylor, director of marketing for the Arkansas Agriculture Department. These products, combined with aircraft parts, poultry, cotton, steel and heavy construction equipment, account for half of the state's export value. The top agricultural exports include rice, soybeans, poultry, cotton and wheat.

Top Arkansas Agricultural Exports:



RICE

\$918 MILLION



SOYBEANS

\$807 MILLION



POULTRY

\$509 MILLION



COTTON

\$473 MILLION



WHEAT

\$276 MILLION

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

IN 2011, ARKANSAS'S EXPORT VALUE WAS

\$5.6 billion.

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2012,
THE STATE WAS ALREADY UP TO

\$5.53 billion

IN EXPORTS FOR THE YEAR.

Paper and paperboard, combined with aircraft parts, poultry, cotton, steel and heavy construction equipment, **account for half** of the state's export value.

The state is on track to surpass the 2011 export value of more than \$5.5 billion.

The growth in exports has helped the state weather the economic downturn, Taylor says.

“It has also taken up the slack in the domestic market for Arkansas goods created by the recession,” he says.

His point is reflected in the growth of Bruce Oakley Inc. Now run by Oakley’s son, Dennis, the

company continues to expand its grain-handling capacity. It employs about 500 people and an additional 540 contractors, including truck drivers and tugboat captains. The majority of the employees live in Arkansas, but some also work at locations in Louisiana, Mississippi and Missouri.

“We’re going against the trend,” Choate says. “We’ve been in a hiring mode since 1968.”

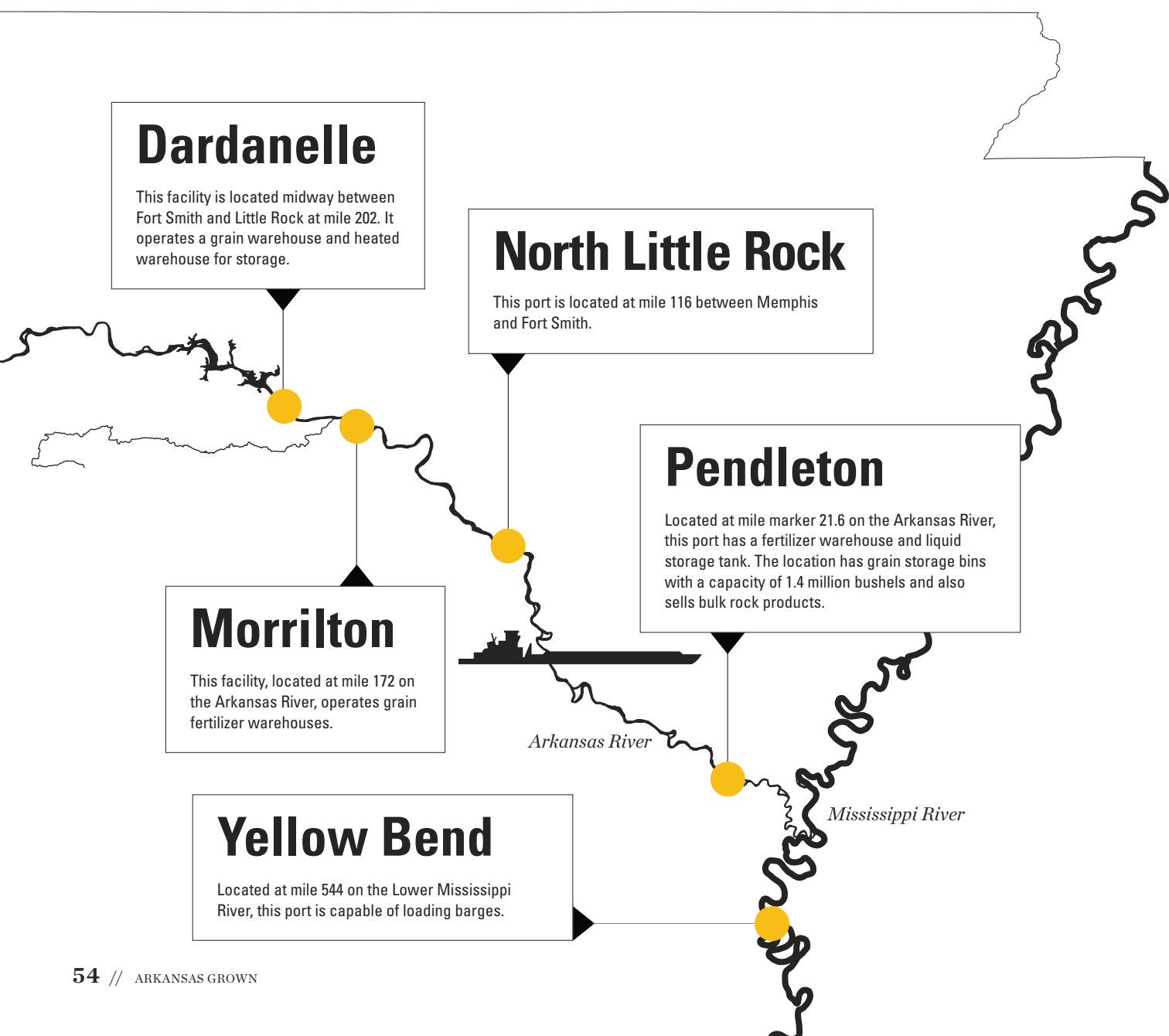
Location and personnel have

allowed the company to grow to what it is today, he says.

As Bruce Oakley gained more business, he moved the company closer to railroad tracks and then to the Arkansas River when it became navigable. Now headquartered in North Little Rock, the company has access to ship grains and fertilizer by boat, train or truck from the same location.

Oakley Trucking, another side of the company, operates more than

Bruce Oakley Inc. Ports in Arkansas:



260 end dumps and more than 180 pneumatic tanks.

The trucking segment connects with ports located on the Arkansas River at Morrilton, Dardanelle, Pendleton and North Little Rock, in addition to ports in Aruthersville, Mo., on the Mississippi River and Shreveport, La., on the Red River.

The Port of Morrilton shows how the company blends transportation routes. Accessible from Interstate 40, the site can store 500,000 bushels of grain purchased from local farmers that is then put on a barge for New Orleans.

"We try to tie it all together," Choate says.

But location hasn't been the only factor driving success. Choate says the employees work to make that happen while keeping the principles and ideas of Bruce Oakley himself alive within the company, even after his passing in 2006.

"The whole key to our success goes back to our founder and the vision and regard he had for his employees along with the things he taught us about business, honesty and hard work," Choate says. "It's kind of cliché, but the truth is he was a remarkable man."

— Sonja Bjelland



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CONTI

Arkansas-grown rice is the state's top agricultural export.

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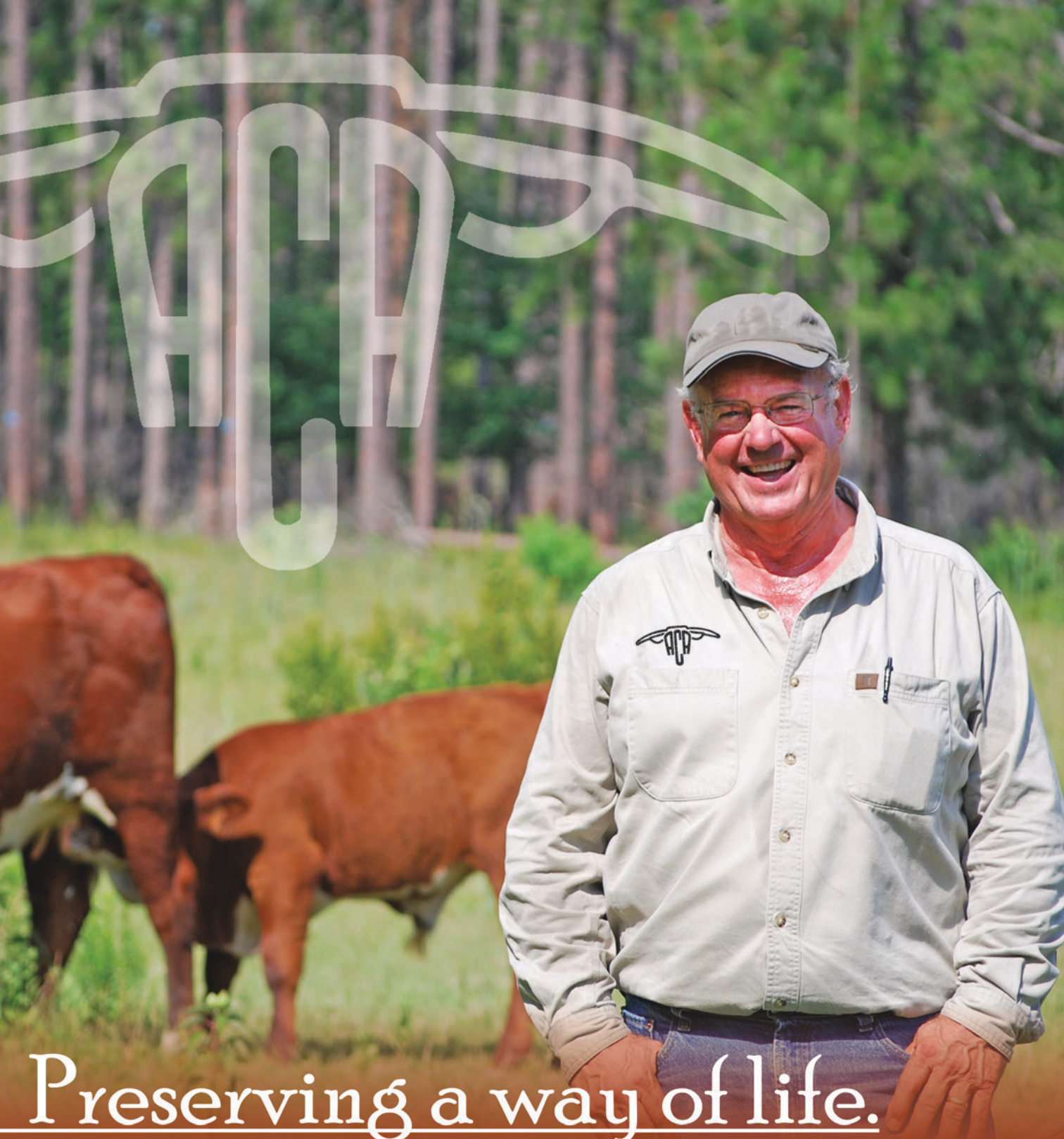
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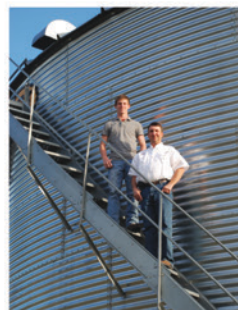
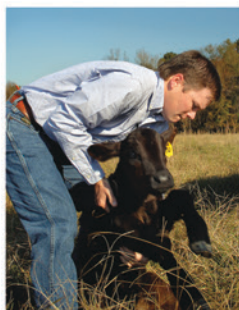
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