

## Challenges Facing Texas Farmers and Ranchers

- Livestock and poultry producers are facing serious threats from pervasive and invasive animal diseases such as bird influenza, Rift Valley fever, West Nile virus, and tick-borne diseases.
- Changing global markets and the management of agricultural production and price risk have farmers and ranchers seeking ways to maximize production efficiency to maintain competitiveness.
- Issues regarding Texas' water supply and demand balance have brought about the need for more efficient use of this vital resource.
- Rising input costs and various production-related challenges, including droughts, invasive species and other pests have placed serious stress on farmers and ranchers across the state.

## AgriLife Extension's Response

In agriculture, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service delivers wide-ranging educational programs focused on research-based production and management practices, evaluation of technologies, improved decision making, water-use efficiency, and job training.

- Programs for crop producers cover variety testing, irrigation efficiency, disease and pest identification and control, commodity marketing, financial risk management, and Farm Bill education.
- Programs for livestock operations focus on improved reproduction strategies, animal health, feeds and nutrition, forage production, breeding stock replacement strategies, and livestock marketing.
- AgriLife Extension is at the forefront in responding to emerging issues such as drought, wildfires, and insect and disease outbreaks.

- Through 22,400 educational events, planning meetings, and workshops in 2015, AgriLife Extension achieved more than 3 million educational and other contacts.
- AgriLife Extension often collaborates with industry groups and with other government entities to deliver educational programs.

## Economic Impacts

Selected programs are highlighted below. Impacts were measured by the increase in net returns associated with adoption of certain management practices taught in 2015.

- Livestock and dairy production programs resulted in an estimated economic gain of \$29 million, and programs that focused on managing financial risk resulted in potential gains of \$32 million.
- Outreach related to crops, floriculture, and nursery production led to an estimated increase in annual net returns of \$51 million, and assisted cotton growers with variety selection valued at \$27.5 million.
- Extension plays a significant role in the boll weevil eradication program, which had estimated benefits of \$158 million in 2015, with cumulative benefits of \$3.3 billion since 1996.
- The impacts above supported an additional 2,114 jobs in agribusiness and retail-related sectors.
- 75,000 Texas farmers used the web-based decision aid developed by the Agricultural & Food Policy Center (AFPC), with an estimated impact of improved decision making valued at \$1.3 billion annually.
- Job training through continuing education related to pesticide safety, cotton ginning, and beef cattle handling supports 69,757 Texas jobs, with an annual wage base of \$948.7 million.