

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

YEAR IN REVIEW



2023





Executive Summary

In true Texas hospitality, **Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller** welcomes 2024 with the tip of his hat. With 2023 in its rearview mirror, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) continuously saw great success throughout the past year and plans to carry that advantageous momentum into 2024.

TDA is a diversified state agency that continues its mission to preserve a leading role in our nation's agriculture industry, support our state's farmers and ranchers, empower rural communities, cultivate healthy food supplies for schools and communities, and promote Texas-made products and businesses.

"None of this success would have been possible without the hardworking employees at TDA," *Commissioner Miller said.* **"During my tenure at TDA, my agency has been named one of the best run agencies in the State of Texas by the Texas Legislature and the Sunset Commission. That is a true testament to our commitment to Texas agriculture and something I am really proud of."**



COMMISSIONER MILLER'S THIRD TERM

On **January 3, 2023**, Texas Agriculture **Commissioner Sid Miller** kicked off the year in the Historic Fort Worth Stockyards at his official Oath of Office Ceremony, where he was sworn into office for a third term by the **Honorable Justice Brian Walker**. Commissioner Miller vowed to serve the state of Texas, share the voice and concerns of rural Texans with state and national legislatures, and spread the word that Texas agriculture truly does matter. TDA's year in review speaks volumes for Commissioner Miller's work for the State of Texas.



GLOBAL MARKETING



From growing Texas agricultural businesses to moving Texas products worldwide, TDA works to promote the bounty of the Lone Star State at home and abroad.

- In the past year, TDA's international trade team traveled to *Australia, Europe, Dubai, South Korea, Thailand, Japan, Uzbekistan, Canada, Mexico, and Vietnam* on outbound trade missions to open new markets for Texas exporters. This resulted in millions of dollars in revenue to Texas farmers, ranchers, and businesses.
- Through partnerships with organizations such as the **U.S. Livestock and Genetics Export, Inc.** and **Southern U.S. Trade Association**, TDA supported **more than 64** small to mid-size agriculture businesses as they explored opportunities to export their products in **16** countries worldwide.
- Successful trade missions to **Ho Chi Minh City** and **Hanoi, Vietnam** paved the way for the reintroduction of **sweet red grapefruit** after years of an export ban to Vietnam.
- The Japanese market is also opening for Texas spirits, including one Texas-distilled product that earned a permanent presence in the market and another that negotiated a container load of product for distribution.
- **Commissioner Miller** continues to promote Texas' strong performance in the global marketplace by encouraging the export of everything from airplanes to barbecue.



DOMESTIC MARKETING



In addition to TDA's outbound trade missions, the agency diligently worked to promote Texas products within the United States.

- TDA received a grant of more than **\$2 million** to promote Texas Gulf seafood. This industry generates more than **\$850 million** in sales annually and accounts for **14,000+** jobs for Texans.
- Another growing industry in Texas is the wine industry. TDA held the **2023 Vintners Cup**, where **nearly 250** Texas wines were submitted and over 70 Texas wineries were judged. The top 12 Texas wine award winners were showcased in various publications.
- To continue to see the wine industry flourish, **Commissioner Miller** appointed members to the new **Texas Wine Advisory Committee** and held the first meeting at the TDA headquarters in Austin.
- TDA also hosted **21 companies** for an inbound trade mission in Houston, Texas, where buyers from Mexico conducted one-on-one sessions with participating companies. These buyers estimated that the event generated a **potential \$10 million** in sales opportunities over the upcoming 12 months.





GO TEXAN



For twenty-five years, TDA's GO TEXAN program has been dedicated to showcasing products and businesses made right here in the Lone Star State, and 2023 was no exception.

- In February, TDA's marketing team launched the first GO TEXAN Pop-Up Market at the **2023 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo**, resulting in over **\$130,000** in sales for GO TEXAN partners.
- They hosted their second biannual EXPO in June at Dallas Market Center's Home and Gift Show. This EXPO resulted in multiple wholesale orders and retail connections for GO TEXAN Partners.
- Throughout the year, GO TEXAN hosted numerous buyer meetings with **Kroger** in Dallas.
- GO TEXAN worked closely with major grocery chain partners like **H-E-B** to put Texas products on their shelves.
- Now, shopping locally has never been easier. The GO TEXAN market gives you access to the best products Texas makers have to offer. GO TEXAN even added a retailer log-in to shop.gotexan.org for wholesale inquiries.



"Need a wonderful advocate for Texas companies, both large & small? Look no further than GO TEXAN."

- GO TEXAN Partner



STATE FAIR OF TEXAS 2023

The **GO TEXAN Pavilion** saw another extremely profitable year at the 2023 State Fair of Texas.

- TDA's GO TEXAN Pavilion, presented by Southwest Dairy Farmers, saw nearly **\$1 million** in gross sales for GO TEXAN partners
- The **Pioneer Brand Country Store** showcased numerous Texas-made products for fairgoers to purchase at the State Fair.
- TDA's marketing division also secured GO TEXAN's first-ever Wine, Beer, and Spirits sponsor for the GO TEXAN Pavilion.
- The GO TEXAN Pavilion also locked in a record number of sponsorships for the entirety of the Pavilion.
- TDA's Food and Nutrition Division was also present at the State Fair of Texas. Their booth was operated by more than **50 staff members** from Food and Nutrition Education Service Centers. The team distributed **8,904** Texas apples, **24,000** seed packets, and **7,310** seasonality wheels to Texas fairgoers.





TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

AgriStress Helpline 2023



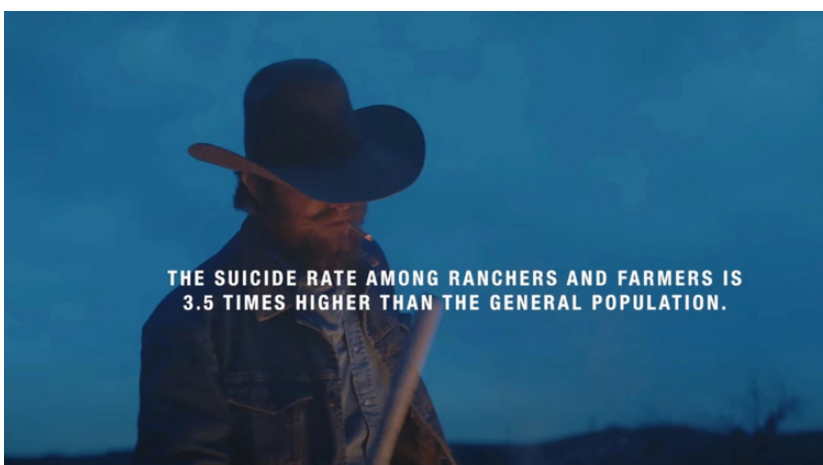
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AGRISTRESS HELPLINE

In 2023, TDA increased their role in promoting rural mental health awareness.

- Concerned about the high rates of suicide among farmers, **Commissioner Miller** implemented the AgriStress Helpline, a 24/7 support service operated by agriculture-aware personnel and offering vital support to struggling individuals.
- Since its establishment in 2022, the helpline has successfully intervened in over **120 cases**. In 2023, the agency increased rural mental health awareness and secured an **additional \$1 million** from the Texas Legislature for the AgriStress Helpline for the 2024-2025 biennium.
- Furthermore, TDA and the SORH collaborated with country western music artist **Jenna Paulette** on her video "You Ain't No Cowboy," which was released October 10, 2023, to break the stigma of addiction in the western lifestyle industry and fight back on the silent epidemic of suicide.
- In support of a new AgriStress campaign, the SORH attended a USDA Faith-Based and Community Partnership Suicide Prevention Conference held in Washington, DC.





Dedicated to serving the health needs of rural Texas, **TDA's State Office of Rural Health (SORH)** staff work with local health care providers and other partners to support access to quality health care for rural Texans.

- Throughout the year, SORH staff worked with the **Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals (TORCH)** and **Lucky Dog Analytics** to give hospitals access to a variety of data. Access to this data strategically sets up hospitals and clinics to improve their financial and operational strategies. Over **300** facilities across Texas have been given access to the hub and **all 88 critical access hospitals** have been given individual data hub sites to work with.
- Additionally, SORH staff worked closely with **Ochiltree General Hospital** to redevelop their disaster response and preparedness strategies after the July tornado that impacted their community. Throughout this process, staff members helped redevelop their incident command structure, reorganize a hazard analysis checklist, and revise their after-action report from the event. Staff will continue to help this facility review their human resource emergency response policies.
- In 2023, TDA was able to award:
 - 119 rural hospitals over **\$1 million** through the **Small Rural Hospital Investment Program**.
 - 49 rural hospitals more than **\$3 million** through the **Capital Improvement Program** for equipment or construction projects.
 - **\$23 million** to various rural hospitals across the state to improve broadband capabilities.



NUTRITION PROGRAMS



Commissioner Miller is committed to building a healthier Texas. Throughout 2023, TDA's Food and Nutrition Division continued to promote the 3 E's of healthy living: **education, exercise, and eating right.**

- Over the year, Food and Nutrition distributed almost **\$3.5 billion** worth of federal funding, providing affordable access to quality and nutritious foods to adults and children across the state.
- TDA implemented the free reduced-price breakfast benefit after the 88th Texas Legislature allocated funding to cover the cost of reduced-price breakfast through the 2024-25 school year. In the first month of September 2023, **2,100 schools** served **783,765** free reduced-price breakfasts.
- TDA awarded **over \$3 million** in National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance Grants to school nutrition programs, enabling them to purchase new, top-quality kitchen equipment such as refrigerators, ovens, and coolers.
- Determined to increase the use of the absence of local produce in school meals, Commissioner Miller continues to promote his Farm Fresh Initiative, connecting schools directly with Texas farmers. This year's Farm Fresh Challenge increased **36%** over 2022 with **192** school districts, charter organizations, and child and adult care centers participating. The Farm Fresh Initiative resulted in **\$300 million** worth of locally sourced, healthy, and fresh student meals in 2023.
- Additionally, TDA implemented The United States Department of Agriculture's Local Food for Schools program, bringing in **\$22.3 million** in grant funds for Texas schools to improve local and regional food systems.
- TDA implemented a Farm to Food Bank grant project providing **more than \$1 million** in funding to support the harvest and transport of surplus agricultural products to food banks.
- TDA awarded **over \$4.4 million** in the Emergency Food Assistance Program Reach and Resiliency grant to support food bank infrastructure in rural areas.

GRANTS AND SERVICES



2023 marked a notable year for **TDA's Grants and Services Division**. The Texas Agriculture Finance Authority's Interest Rate Reduction/Young Farmer Interest Rate Reduction Programs saw their first application after several years of inactivity. Along with that, TDA awarded:

- **\$9.6 million** to home delivered meal organizations.
- **\$20 million** under the **Ag Surplus grant** to food banks to purchase surplus agriculture products from Texas farmers and ranchers.
- **\$35 million** to supplement the federal **Texas Local Food Purchasing Assistance** program.
- **\$80 million** in grants to rural communities for water, wastewater, street, and other infrastructure projects.
- **\$1.5 million** was split equally between three different communities to address damage from the June 2023 tornadoes in Motley and Ochiltree Counties.
- **17 grants** totaling **\$250,000** for the **Young Farmer Grant Program**.
- **195 CDBG** awards were made to **188** unique communities.



CONSUMER PROTECTION



Commissioner Miller ensures that TDA's consumer protection efforts promote success, unity, and prosperity for the people of Texas and provides for a fair and equitable marketplace for Texas businesses.

- TDA held pesticides waste collection and disposal events in 2023: one in Hondo, Texas and one in Tornillo, Texas. Between the two events, over **133,000 pounds** of waste were safely collected. This free public event allowed agriculture producers to dispose of unwanted pesticides and pesticide containers safely.
- There are currently a total of **710 licensed hemp producers** in Texas. This year, the Hemp Program virtually hosted the 2023 Hemp Regulator's Conference, which was a huge success, with over **130 participants** representing state departments of agriculture and Tribes from around the country.
- **Commissioner Miller** also established a rule after careful consideration that puts a powerful weapon into the hands of farmers and ranchers embroiled in a long and continuous fight against feral hogs, issuing a limited use product designation for Warfarin-based feral hog toxicant.
- The decision came after a two-year study, "Warfarin-based feral hog Toxicant to Mitigate Economic Harm and Damage to Texas Lands," found that the poison was an effective control measure for feral hog depredations in Texas.
- A fun fact most Texans don't know: TDA calibrated **130 Lottery Ball** sets, equivalent to **3,455** individual lottery balls in the last year, making sure every Texan has a fair chance to win.
- This past year, licensing issued **75,886 licenses** across all programs, processed approximately **5,519 insurance documents** for the Structural Pest Control program, and processed about **2,789 eligibility documents**. TDA's Licensing staff answered **29,878 phone calls** through August 2023.

POLICY, EXTERNAL RELATIONS, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



TDA had one of its most successful appropriations requests under the direction of Commissioner Miller.

- With a historic budget surplus, TDA took the opportunity to advocate to fund initiatives that will improve the state's biosecurity, bolster our rural health landscape, modernize our licensing capabilities, adjust projections for our cost recovery programs, and increase staffing for high-demand programs.
- TDA received appropriations for:
 - *Agriculture and Livestock Entry Point Inspection Stations*
 - *Farmer Mental Health and Rural Nursing Recruitment Retention*
 - *New Licensing System and Expanded Use of Data Center Services*
- Also, during the 87th session, TDA was tasked with studying and proposing tools to mitigate food deserts in the state. The resulting Texas Food Access Study was delivered to legislators at the beginning of the 88th session and spurred enthusiastic and bipartisan discussions on food security and resiliency in the state.
- The legislature passed **HB 3323**, which established the Texas Food Security and Resiliency Planning Council under the administration of TDA.
- To keep legislators engaged with agriculture during the interim, the policy and external relations team publishes a quarterly policy newsletter that reaches over **400 legislators, staffers, and government relations colleagues**.
- The legislative team connects closely with our counterparts in other states and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. These relationships are leveraged to collaborate on industry-wide issues and advocate for farm bill priorities with Congressional leaders.
- TDA now has an official dedicated team for activations to the State Operations Center during emergencies and disasters.

BUDGET AND LEGAL SERVICES



In 2023, the Budget Team saw a successful Legislative Session.

- This legislative session resulted in **72 new positions** that supported the TDA Road Stations, Citrus Canker, Structural Pest, and Mexican Fruit Fly programs.
- TDA's biennial budget increased from \$1.4 billion to **\$1.6 billion**.
- The Budget Team successfully submitted **79 Fiscal Notes** to the Legislative Budget Board.

Legal Services Annual Summary

- TDA processed over **733 public information requests** in 2023.
- TDA investigated numerous complaints and issued **almost 700 violations**.



AGENCY ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES



- Commissioner Miller has made it a priority to **go paperless** throughout the agency.
- TDA has advanced with the creation of two electronic mileage use forms accessible by phone and computer. TDA is currently piloting both apps to see which one will work best for the agency's fleet program.
- This year TDA has taken a step forward to reduce fuel emissions, enhance performance for agency vehicles, and save on fuel costs.
- TDA is currently piloting the **EcoBoost system** in hopes of creating a better air to fuel ratio which causes a more complete burn in the combustion chamber. A more complete burn means increased horsepower, lowered harmful emissions emitted from the exhaust systems, and less fuel needed to create the same performance as before. All these benefits equate to fuel savings.
- TDA Records Management created **101** destruction requests in 2023.
- Records Management destroyed **699** boxes in 2023 and only sent **198** boxes to storage. The numbers of box storage will continue to go down as TDA is able to go digital with more of its programs.



LIVESTOCK EXPORT FACILITIES

In 2023, TDA continued to support ranchers through its livestock export facilities.

- TDA's livestock export facilities are the gateways for exporting livestock from Texas. From cattle and horses to pigs and poultry, these facilities are tools to help get Texas livestock around the world.
- TDA livestock export facilities processed over 38,500 head of livestock this year.



TEXAS AGRICULTURE *Matters!*

COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



Conclusion

2023 was a busy year for TDA. In the coming year, the agency will continue to promote agriculture, protect consumers, champion healthy living, facilitate trade and market development, and ensure the Lone Star State remains a leader in agricultural production.

“Texas Agriculture touches the lives of Americans every day,” Commissioner Miller said. **“We have accomplished a lot in the last year, but we aren’t done yet! Here’s to a prosperous 2024. May God continue to bless you and your families and the great State of Texas.”**

