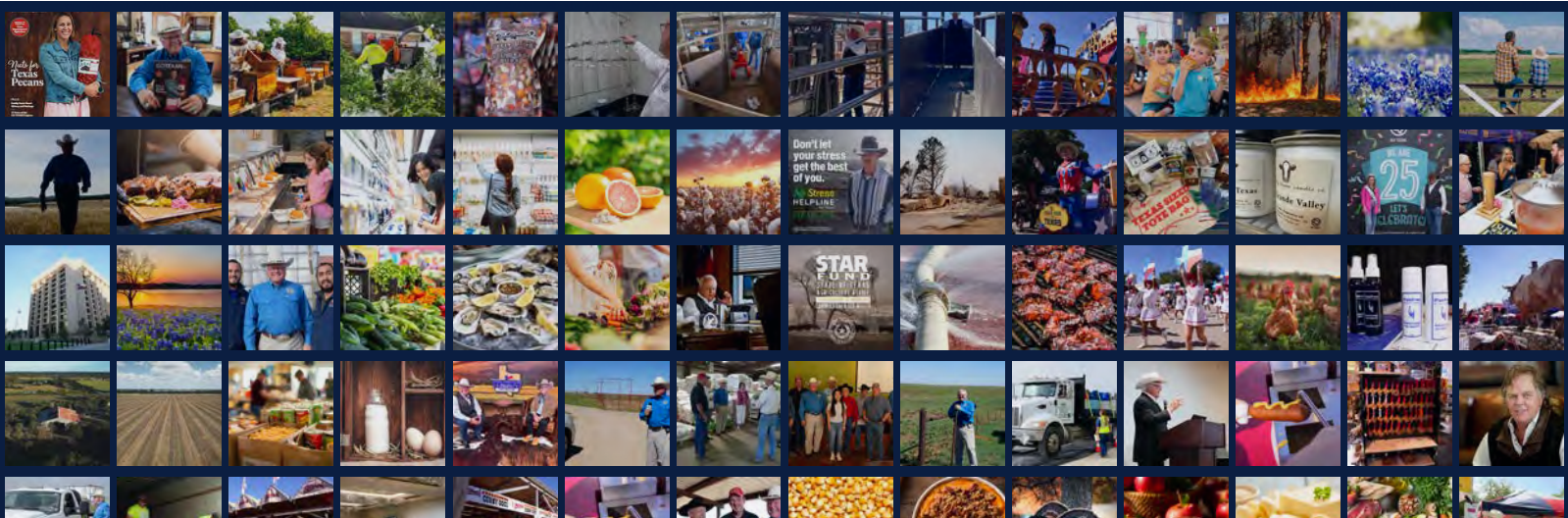




TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

YEAR IN REVIEW 2024



LEADING ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Summary

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller kicks off the new year with his signature Texas charm and a tip of his hat, welcoming 2025 with optimism and gratitude. After a year of hard-fought achievements in 2024, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) stands ready to embrace new opportunities, building on its successes to keep Texas at the forefront of agriculture.

- ★ **Texas Panhandle Wildfires:** Commissioner Miller led national efforts to aid Texas farmers and ranchers devastated by the largest agricultural disaster in Texas history, the historic wildfires in the Texas Panhandle.
- ★ **Texas Dairy H5N1 Avian Flu Outbreak:** Commissioner Miller reinforced confidence in dairy milk pasteurization amid an unprecedented H5N1 outbreak in the Texas Panhandle and communicated the impacts of the outbreak and measures to prohibit spread.
- ★ **Water Crisis Awareness:** Commissioner Miller's Op-Ed and several media appearances brought national attention to Texas' ongoing water crisis, igniting a renewed conversation across the state about the importance of water conservation.
- ★ **Executive Order on Rio Grande Water Use:** Commissioner Miller issued an executive order allowing Texas farmers and ranchers to use Rio Grande water for irrigation. This led to an amendment in the international water agreement with Mexico, providing much-needed relief to border counties.



- ★ **Severe Weather Response:** Commissioner Miller addressed the state and agriculture community with critical information and helpful tips for navigating a historic year of severe weather in Texas. From the deep freeze early in the year, Houston's severe derecho, Hurricane Beryl, and severe flooding throughout Texas, Miller shared effective measures to limit the impact of the disasters on homes, crops, and livestock.
- ★ **Helped Eradicate Red Flour Beetle:** Commissioner Miller provided ongoing aid for both Hockley County and El Paso County during their severe red flour beetle infestations, which led to their mitigation.
- ★ **Advocacy Against Federal Overreach:** Commissioner Miller continued his mission to defend rural farmers and ranchers against federal overreach by vocally criticizing the proposed rule to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act and the proposed expansion of the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge.
- ★ **Disaster Relief Fundraising:** Commissioner Miller revitalized the State of Texas Agriculture Relief (STAR) Fund by successfully seeking fresh donations. The fund was replenished with \$1.3 million without using taxpayer dollars in time to assist Texas farmers and ranchers in several natural disasters in 2024.

FOOD AND NUTRITION



Commissioner Miller has positioned Texas as a leader in federal nutrition programs like the National School Lunch Program and Summer Meal Programs. His nearly decade-old Farm Fresh Initiative continues to strengthen ties between children and local agriculture.

Federal Funding: TDA administered over **\$3 billion** to provide healthy meals for Texans.

Farm Fresh Challenge: **127** schools were recognized for serving Texas products and promoting agriculture. Spending on Texas products increased from \$13.9 million in 2023 to **\$18.8 million** in 2024, with a **76%** completion rate.

Farm Fresh Network: 90 producers were added, bringing the membership to **221**. This network fosters connections between schools and local agriculture.

Local Food Success: Texas schools spent **\$257.8 million** on local foods in 2022-2023, a **70.2%** increase from 2019, with rising farm-to-school participation and student fruit and vegetable consumption.

Local Food Grants: TDA administered **\$22 million** to increase Texas-grown products in school meals, supporting regional producers.

Summer Meal Excellence: Texas led the nation for the third year with **38** USDA Turnip the Beet awards for high-quality summer meals.

New Initiatives: TDA launched Texas **Fruit and Vegetable Day** and expanded the Health Ambassadors for a Ready Texas (HART) program to 85 high school students, promoting health and agriculture awareness on campuses statewide.

AGRISTRESS HELPLINE

Concerned about the increasingly high rates of suicide among farmers, Commissioner Miller established the AgriStress Helpline, a 24/7 support service operated by agriculture-aware personnel that offers support to struggling individuals. TDA continues to take an active role in promoting rural mental health awareness.

- The helpline has successfully intervened in over **250** cases.
- TDA launched the new Texas Peace of Mind campaign to promote the Helpline at the State Fair of Texas.
- TDA placed six billboards throughout the state and mailed over **103,000** postcards to producer homes.



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.

Over the past year, TDA's international trade team traveled to **Africa, Australia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Europe, Dubai, Germany, Romania, South Korea, Thailand, France, and Mexico** on outbound trade missions, opening new markets for Texas exporters and generating millions in revenue for farmers, ranchers, and businesses.

Commissioner Miller remains committed to showcasing Texas' strength in the global marketplace, promoting exports ranging from airplanes to barbecue.

Through partnerships with groups like the Southern U.S. Trade Association, TDA has supported the expansion of small- to mid-size agriculture businesses globally.

DOMESTIC MARKETING

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



Texas' thriving wine industry saw a spotlight moment with the 2024 Vintners Cup, featuring **223** wine submissions. The top 12 winners were celebrated in a 10-page Texas Monthly spread and honored with Belt Buckle awards during the GO TEXAN Pavilion Preview Night, showcasing the best of Texas winemaking.



GO TEXAN

For twenty-five years, TDA's GO TEXAN program has showcased products and businesses made in the Lone Star State, and 2024 was no exception.

GO TEXAN celebrated its 25th birthday, full of monthly giveaways and an online GO TEXAN Birthday Catalogue to shop GO TEXAN partners.

GO TEXAN worked closely with major grocery chain partners, including H-E-B, to promote Texas products on their shelves through programs like Texas Quest for the Best.

Throughout the year, GO TEXAN hosted numerous buyer meetings with retailers.

Shopping locally has never been easier. The online GO TEXAN market gives consumers access to the best products Texas makers offer. GO TEXAN has also added a retailer log-in to shop.gotexan.org for wholesale inquiries.



STATE FAIR

The GO TEXAN Pavilion, presented by Southwest Dairy Farmers, achieved record-breaking success at the State Fair of Texas, with **over \$1.1 million** in gross sales during **just 24 days** for GO TEXAN partners—the highest in its history.

The Pioneer Brand General Store highlighted various Texas-made products, offering fairgoers the chance to shop local and support Texas businesses.

TDA's marketing division debuted the first-ever daily whiskey hour in the Pavilion, accompanied by a spinoff podcast, GO TEXAN Explores: The Texas Whiskey Trail, celebrating the state's booming spirits industry.

TDA's Food and Nutrition Division also significantly impacted the fair. Staffed by more than **50** team members from Food and Nutrition Education Service Centers, their booth distributed **8,904** Texas apples, **24,000** seed packets, and **7,310** seasonality wheels, promoting healthy eating and Texas agriculture to thousands of fairgoers.



CONSUMER PROTECTION

In 2024, the Texas Department of Agriculture's Consumer Protection division ensured fairness and safety for producers and consumers statewide. Upholding transparency and accountability protected consumer trust while supporting Texas producers in delivering high-quality goods and services.

Weights and Measures conducted 41,253 device inspections, ensuring accuracy and fairness in the marketplace.

Price Verification and Package Inspections totaled **2,571**, safeguarding consumers.

Egg Inspections reached **2,158**, maintaining high standards for quality and safety.

Metrology Lab calibrated **23,707** artifacts, supporting precision in measurements across industries. It also earned its first-ever accreditation from the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) for Echelon III, with preliminary accreditation for Echelon II.

Licensing processed **78,243** licenses alone. In addition, countless numbers of change forms, insurance documents, and ancillary documents.

BIOSECURITY ENFORCEMENT

The Texas Department of Agriculture's Biosecurity Road Stations made remarkable progress in inspections during FY24. Funded by the legislature, they ensure compliance and safety in commodity transportation.



Orange Road Station:

- o **270%** more trucks were monitored
- o **225%** more trucks inspected carrying regulated materials
- o **77%** increase in violations recorded

Terrell/Mt. Pleasant Road Station:

- o **128%** more trucks were monitored
- o **115%** more trucks inspected carrying regulated materials
- o **271%** increase in violations recorded

ORGANIC, CROP, AND PLANT INDUSTRY

Processed over **4,500** seed samples for analysis

Conducted **182** organic compliance inspections

Inspected **194,056** fruit fly traps

Conducted **182** organic compliance inspections.

Developed new standards for Hybrid Canola to allow Hybrid Canola to be certified in Texas.

Processed over **4,500** seed samples for analysis

Organic program integrated new software to allow online fee payment for producers.

PESTICIDES

Commissioner Miller held pesticide waste disposal events, collecting over **312,500 lbs.** of expired, unwanted, poisons, or unused pesticides.

TDA conducted **4,846** agricultural pesticide inspections.

TDA's Pesticide Lab conducted **5,920** analyses of pesticide residue.

The agency oversaw **17,000** registered pesticides in Texas.

TDA conducted over **1,200** structural pesticide inspections.



LIVESTOCK EXPORT FACILITIES



TDA's livestock export facilities are the gateways for exporting livestock from the United States. From cattle and horses to pigs and poultry, these facilities are tools to help get Texas livestock worldwide.

TDA livestock export facilities processed over **283,000** head of livestock this year.

TEXAS OFFICE OF PRODUCE SAFETY

TDA's Texas Office of Produce Safety (TOPS) works with the FDA to shift food safety regulations from a reactive system that responds to a food-borne outbreak to a proactive one that prevents it. TOPS works to educate farms on the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption.

Since the inception of the program in 2017, TOPS has worked with 5,508 farms and has conducted 239 inspections.



GRANTS PROGRAMS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

144 CDBG grants were processed for improvements in:

- Rural communities for water, wastewater, street, and drainage infrastructure projects.
- Pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks and lighting in downtown areas for rural communities.
- Fire protection equipment and facilities.



The following are some of the grant highlights the TDA awarded:

- Home-delivered meal organizations.
- Specialty Crop Block Program grants to promote Texas specialty crops.
- **28** grants supporting young farmers through the Young Farmer Grant Program.





POLICY AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The legislative team built strong connections with state counterparts and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, advancing farm bill priorities and collaborating on industry issues.

HB 3323 created the Texas Food System Security and Resiliency Planning Council, which is led by TDA and made up of members appointed by Commissioner Miller and Governor Abbott. The council met four times in 2024 and began developing a state food system security plan.



COMMUNICATIONS

This year, Communications released 64 public statements, a staggering 200% increase over 2023.

Agency social media impressions soared past **4.5 million**, doubling the previous year's total.

News mentions of Commissioner Miller and the Texas Department of Agriculture rose **111%**, totaling **14.1K** mentions—an average of **42 mentions per day**. This achievement made TDA the most-mentioned state agency in Texas in 2024.

Commissioner Miller ranked in the top 6 for media mentions among Texas elected officials in 2024.

The 50th anniversary of the Family Land Heritage program was celebrated, honoring families who have kept land in agricultural production for a century or more.





Legal

In 2024, the Texas Department of Agriculture demonstrated its commitment to transparency, accountability, and enforcement through several key accomplishments.

The department efficiently managed 564 Public Information Requests.

Additionally, it processed 142 subpoenas and issued 960 violations, underscoring its dedication to upholding regulations and ensuring compliance across Texas.



Operations & Emergency Management

Operational Support Fleet Management worked with Samsara GPS representatives and TDA Information Technology to bring the latest technology into our TDA fleet this year. This device allows for an accurate and efficient electronic recording and reporting of information to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts monthly.

Information Technology

The IT team developed and launched a Chat Bot on the public-facing website. The bot provides after-hours and weekend support for user inquiries and earned recognition for Innovation at the Texas Digital Summit.

The team successfully created 47+ security and role-based user stories for the high-priority Texas Automated Nutrition System (TANS) project, playing a key role in its successful launch.

IT documented and cross-trained on mission-critical production support processes, mitigating risk and ensuring uninterrupted agency operations.

The department handled over 9,500 service desk tickets, maintaining smooth day-to-day operations.

Throughout the year, IT worked diligently to mitigate cyberattacks and disruptions, including the global CrowdStrike outage, by mobilizing quickly and effectively and responding to Incidents, minimizing the impact on TDA.

IT thwarted three cyberattacks from international threat actors, ensuring the security of TDA's digital infrastructure

