



January 2015

## Happy New Year, Friends!

It's hard to believe another year is already under our belts, and 2015 was a great one for Texas agriculture. From much-needed rainfall and bountiful harvests to the rebuilding of herds, the Texas agriculture industry continues to thrive. Unfortunately, Mother Nature's unpredictability is part of our daily lives as agricultural producers, and we rounded out the year with severe weather across the state.

From blizzard conditions that led to livestock losses for ranchers and dairy producers in West Texas to tornadoes affecting families in North Texas, our prayers remain with all the families impacted by Winter Storm Goliath. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) stands ready to assist in any way we can through a variety of resources to help farmers, ranchers and communities that have been affected by severe weather. This includes offering assistance through the State of Texas Agriculture Relief (STAR) fund, as well as Community Development Block Grants, which help rebuild damaged infrastructure. To apply for or donate to the STAR fund, click [here](#). I've also asked Gov. Greg Abbott to expand his disaster declaration to include rural counties in West Texas that were affected by Winter Storm Goliath's blizzard.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a variety of resources available to help producers who have suffered livestock losses as a result of this storm. It's critical to contact your local USDA Farm Services Agency office to apply as soon as you identify a livestock loss, as there may be a deadline to apply for some types of assistance. For more information about USDA resources available, click [here](#).

Agriculture is essential to our national security and our prosperity. While the men and women who work to provide our food and fiber are no strangers to adversity, we here at TDA do everything we can to pitch in when our neighbors need it most. I'm proud to say that the work we do at TDA helps sustain our farmers and ranchers.

No matter where I am, I'm always fighting for Texas agriculture, working to protect our farmers and ranchers, and spread the word that *Texas agriculture matters*. Much promise lies ahead in 2016, and I look forward to another great year for Texas agriculture.

Many wishes for a blessed and prosperous new year!

Your servant,

Sid Miller

## Giving Agriculture a Voice in Washington, D.C.



TDA is working hard to give Texas agricultural producers a voice in venues across the country and around the world. In fact, last month, Commissioner Miller traveled to Washington, D.C., to spread the word that *Texas agriculture matters* on Capitol Hill. Commissioner Miller met with lawmakers and federal officials and fought for the issues that Texas ag producers care about.

One topic of discussion was the impact of federal overreach on agricultural operations. Commissioner Miller addressed two items in particular — the Environmental Protection Agency's heavy-handed Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule and the Bureau of Land Management's attempted land-grab near the Red River. Both of these threaten private property rights and our agriculture industry, and Commissioner Miller is working hard to ensure our farmers, ranchers and property owners are protected.

Additionally, Commissioner Miller highlighted the issues Texas shrimpers are facing. There has been a flood of imported, farm-raised shrimp entering the U.S. market. Much of this imported shrimp is raised in less-than-ideal circumstances. Then, when this shrimp arrives in the U.S., only two percent is inspected by the Food and Drug Administration. Commissioner Miller is hopeful that his meetings in D.C. will help begin the process of leveling the playing field for local shrimpers, so everyone can have access to healthy, quality Gulf shrimp, as well as protect this important segment of Texas' agriculture industry.

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## Applications Being Accepted for Shrimp Marketing Committee, Deadline is Jan. 22

Want to make a positive impact on the Texas shrimp industry? TDA is looking to fill spots on the Texas Shrimp Marketing Program Advisory Committee. The committee was created by the Texas Legislature to assist TDA in marketing Texas Gulf shrimp, as well as assess the state of the Texas shrimp industry and develop recommendations for Commissioner Miller to pursue in promoting and expanding the industry.

The Texas Shrimp Marketing Program Advisory Committee is looking for the following individuals to fill the open positions:

- seafood restaurant industry leader,
- retail wild caught shrimp dealer,
- commercial Gulf shrimp boat owners and
- representative of the general public.

Applications are available [online](#). Should you have questions, contact [Robert Champion Jr.](#), coordinator for marketing at TDA. The deadline to submit your application is **Jan. 22, 2016**.

## TDA Employee Receives Lifetime Achievement Award



*(Photo courtesy of the Texas Plant Protection Association)*

Congratulations to Randy Rivera, TDA's administrator for agriculture protection and certification, for receiving the Norman Borlaug Lifetime Achievement Award from the Texas Plant Protection Association (TPPA). The award honors Randy's contributions to TPPA and the Texas agriculture industry.

Randy's career at TDA has spanned 28 years, from his time working in TDA's seed lab in Lubbock to later working as an agricultural pesticide inspector to his current role as an administrator in Austin. Randy is truly an asset to TDA and the agriculture industry in our great state. Congratulations, Randy, and keep up the good work!

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## TDA Awards \$1.8 Million to Improve Production of Fruits, Vegetables And Specialty Crops



In December, Commissioner Miller announced TDA awarded more than \$1.8 million in federal funding to [15 specialty crop projects](#) across the state. Administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program helps enhance markets for specialty crops like fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery crops. These grants also help promote the horticulture and floriculture industries.

"Texas is a leader in the production of many specialty crops, including citrus, onions, watermelons, pecans and grapes," Commissioner Miller said. "This round of

specialty crop funding will support these growing segments of the Texas agriculture industry and producers across the state through research and promotional activities. The more support we give our Texas farmers, the more we can enjoy locally grown, fresh products."

Read the full announcement [here](#), and [learn more](#) about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.



## Networking Works for Agriculture and Young Texans

TDA's innovative new Farm Fresh Network offers a simple way for Texas farmers, ranchers and distributors to connect their agricultural products with the schools and child care centers in their communities. Agricultural producers can simply go [online](#) and enter their product and contact information, and the Texas Farm Fresh Network does the rest.

Schools and child care centers can access producer information when looking for specific products in their area. Texas child nutrition programs represent a vast market that already accounts for millions of dollars spent on locally produced grains, proteins, fruits, vegetables and dairy. At TDA, we're working to grow this connection because wholesome, locally grown food helps nourish both growing Texans and our growing economy.

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## Applications for Plant Seed Board Due Jan. 30

TDA is currently accepting applications to fill a seat on the Texas Seed and Plant Board. The six-member board prescribes rules and procedures by which seed and plant certification is conducted in Texas and serves as the mechanism for proposing new seed varieties for Texas growers. Additionally, the board reviews and approves foundation, registered and certified seed growers, and approves TDA inspectors to perform duties under the seed certification program.

A member who sells Texas foundation, registered or certified seeds or plants is needed to fill the vacancy and complete the six-member board. Click [here](#) to download an application.

The deadline to submit an application is **Jan. 30, 2016**. Should you have questions, contact [Mike Mann](#), director of agriculture commodity programs at TDA.

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## Weigh Stations Weigh More Than Just Trucks

In an effort to enhance biosecurity and consumer protection, TDA monitors agriculture plant products entering the state through a critical entry point inspection program. Road station inspections serve as a vital tool in conducting quarantine enforcement. Using weigh station sites in cooperation with the Texas Department of Public Safety, TDA inspectors stop commercial vehicles for inspection purposes. Agriculture shipments and equipment are checked to verify that they meet specific quarantine requirements and are free of any quarantined pests and diseases.



The results of the road station inspections provide useful pest interception data for sharing with industry, the Legislature and other key stakeholders, so that we can better understand and study the risks posed by interstate commerce to agriculture, our health and the environment. Road stations are just another way TDA protects Texans across the state and Texas agriculture.

## Appointments Announced for Texas Wine Industry Development Advisory Committee

The Texas Wine Industry Development Advisory Committee helps assess the condition of Texas' wine industry and develops recommendations for Commissioner Miller to assist in promoting and expanding the industry. The committee is a key component of TDA's efforts to administer the Wine Industry Development Fund and Texas Wine Marketing Assistance Program. In December, Commissioner Miller [announced](#) the latest appointments to the committee.

"Working together, we will be able to draw on the collective expertise of our committee members to raise awareness of this dynamic agricultural segment," Commissioner Miller said. "I'm thankful to these individuals for their service to our state and our agriculture industry, and I look forward to seeing the important work they will do to promote Texas vineyards and viticulture."

[Read](#) Commissioner Miller's full announcement.

