

# Ag Matters



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ★ COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



September 2016

## Visit TDA at The State Fair!

The countdown is officially on, and the State Fair is less than a month away! And this year, we've got some big news. If you've visited the Fair in the past, you'll remember the Food and Fiber Pavilion — the place where you get to sample all that great food. This year, it has been renamed the GO TEXAN Pavilion, where we will continue to offer a glimpse into the world of agriculture and have the best Texas-made, Texas-grown goods available for you to sample and buy.

The State Fair, much like our GO TEXAN program, embodies the many wonderful reasons we all love Texas and are proud to be from the Lone Star State. The GO TEXAN Pavilion is brought to you by Southwest Dairy Farmers, and I hope you'll take a peek inside and shop the GO TEXAN Pioneer Brand General Store. Like I said, we have some of the best in Texas in the store for you — from pies to salsa and everything in between!

If you're in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, be sure to tune in to *Good Morning, Texas* on Monday, **Sept. 19**. The show airs from 9-10 a.m. on WFAA, the ABC affiliate in Dallas. I'll be on the show LIVE talking about the GO TEXAN Pavilion, State Fair and all the exciting happenings we have planned. I hope to catch you on TV, and more importantly, at the State Fair.

The fair runs **Sept. 30 through Oct. 23!** See you there!

Your servant,

Sid Miller

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## September Marks Hunger Action Month

Here at the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), we want Texans to know what we're doing to help in the fight against hunger in the Lone Star State, particularly during Hunger Action Month this September. There are a number of different initiatives we focus on at TDA that are related to hunger, including the [Summer Feeding Programs](#), [National School Lunch Program](#), [the Emergency Food Assistance Program](#) and [Community Engagement Initiative](#) — that's just to name a few.

Our Community Engagement Initiative is one example of how we're empowering communities with the local resources and strategies they need to reduce hunger. To maximize these efforts, TDA will enlist the assistance of the dedicated volunteers in the [AmeriCorps VISTA program](#). AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers will be working directly with community members to promote TDA's efforts to connect farmers and producers with local school nutrition programs, improve school wellness policies and increase participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) summer food programs. In the coming months, TDA will be recruiting five VISTA volunteers who will serve 16 counties in Texas. Interested in making a difference? Click [here](#) to find out how you can do just that.

As we continue to raise awareness of Hunger Action Month this September, remember, the official color of the month is orange. So be sure to wear orange sometime during Hunger Action Month, and check with your local food bank to see what they are doing to promote hunger awareness.

Another way you can get involved is by participating in the [Feeding America](#) “Spoonember” campaign. All you have to do is take a “selfie” with a spoon on your nose and share it on your social media outlets using the hashtag #Spoonember to help raise awareness. It’s a fun way to bring attention to this important issue that impacts many Americans.

“Orange” you glad TDA is playing a big part in reducing hunger in Texas? Click [here](#) to learn more about how TDA is working to make Texas a healthier place to live.

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## Texas Kids Jump With Jill For Good Nutrition



Just in time for back to school, TDA is helping 20 schools and 20 child care centers reinforce their nutrition education with a live music show that will have children singing, dancing and learning about healthy lifestyles and Texas agriculture. In September and October, TDA’s Texas Farm Fresh *Jump with Jill* Live Tour will take children on a musical journey to a world where healthy living is not just important, it’s the cool thing to do! A registered dietitian and a professional musician teamed up to create this interactive live show that teaches children why eating breakfast is important and why eating nutritious foods from the Lone Star State is fun and healthy.

TDA is bringing the show to schools and child care centers in seven counties in the Rio Grande Valley. There will be a special performance at the State Fair of Texas on **Oct. 7**, and everyone is invited. For more information, [click here](#).

## Shoot The Bull With Commissioner Miller



Each weekday, listeners on affiliates of the Texas State Network (TSN) are treated to the daily *Shoot the Bull* segment with Commissioner Miller. Everything from the latest agriculture news to Texas pumpkins to childhood nutrition is talked about during the Q&A between Commissioner Miller and TSN host Tony Purcell. In case you miss *Shoot the Bull* on the radio, we post each segment on our [website](#). Tune in here, and take a moment to “shoot the bull” with your Agriculture Commissioner!

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## Go on a State Fair Scavenger Hunt



Did you know? **October 11** is Ag Awareness Day at the State Fair in Dallas. TDA is excited to announce that we'll host a photo scavenger hunt that day at the Fair. We'll announce the official content rules, including what you'll be hunting for and how to win awesome prizes on our [Facebook](#) page. Stay tuned for more, and plan to be at the State Fair for Ag Awareness Day and have some Texas-sized fun!

## Meal Program Helps Feed Hungry Texans



More than 18 percent of our state's elderly population suffers from unnecessary hunger. That's why the Texans Feeding Texans: Home-Delivered Meal (HDM) Grant Program administered by TDA is so important. First funded in 2008 by the Texas Legislature, this year marks the tenth cycle of funding for the program.

Today, efforts continue to help ensure our elderly don't go hungry. Since the program began, participation has nearly doubled and the lists of people waiting to receive home-delivered meals have been greatly reduced, and in some cases, eliminated.

TDA is currently accepting applications for 2017 grants. If you are a nonprofit or governmental agency and meet the following

requirements, your organization is eligible for a grant and encouraged to apply:

- Receive a grant from the county in which meals are delivered, documented through a signed [County Resolution](#),
- Deliver meals during the previous state fiscal year to homebound elderly (60 or older) or disabled individuals, and
- Submit a completed [HDM application](#) with accurate [meal numbers](#) by the postmark deadline of **Nov. 1, 2016**.

For additional information on the HDM program, including all application documents, click [here](#).

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## ICYMI: STAR Fund Gets Boost, Brazilian Beef Markets Opened

Recently, TDA proudly announced the donation of \$5,000 by Land O'Lakes Inc. to the State of Texas Agriculture Relief (STAR) Fund. The STAR Fund provides emergency assistance to Texas farmers and ranchers affected by disasters like the flooding that's occurred in parts of the state this year. Funded exclusively by private donations, STAR funds are often used to rebuild fences vital to livestock businesses, restore operations and pay for other agricultural disaster relief.



"I am so grateful that Land O'Lakes has reached out to help Texas farmers and ranchers in their time of need," Commissioner Miller said. "Companies like Land O'Lakes understand the importance of the American farmer and rancher, and their willingness to step up and help is much appreciated. On behalf of Texas farmers and ranchers, I want to say thank you." Read the full STAR Fund announcement [here](#).

In early August, USDA announced an agreement with Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply to allow U.S. beef and beef products into the Brazilian market for the first time since 2003. USDA said both countries will immediately begin updating their administrative procedures in order to allow trade to resume. TDA launched a global initiative under Commissioner Miller to bring more Texas products to international markets and secure international trade opportunities for Texas producers. Read the full announcement [here](#).

## Federal Funds Available For Organic Cost-Share Reimbursement Program

TDA is an accredited certifying agent by USDA's National Organic Program. The mission of TDA's Organic Certification Program is to ensure the integrity of organic agriculture products produced and manufactured in Texas by providing certification services to Texas producers and agribusinesses.

In addition to these duties and through support from the 2014 Farm Bill and USDA's National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, TDA has been awarded federal funds to disburse to currently certified organic farmers and businesses to make it easier for them to obtain their organic certification. In 2015, TDA funded more than 100 reimbursements, totaling close to \$70,000.

Who is eligible?

Producers and handlers who incur expenses for obtaining or renewing their organic certification between Oct. 1, 2015 and Sept. 30, 2016 are eligible for reimbursement. Payments are limited to 75 percent of an individual producer's certification costs, up to a maximum of \$750 per certificate or category of certification.

Funding is available nationwide for organic certification cost-share assistance. This is making certification more accessible and affordable for operations across the organic supply chain. The deadline to submit an application in Texas is **Monday, Oct. 31, 2016** by 5 p.m. CDT.

To learn more and download an application, click [here](#). For questions about the application process, contact TDA's grants office at (512) 463-6695 or [Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov).

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## TDA Protects Consumers Every Day



Did you know that TDA has a Pesticide Data Program (PDP)? Since 1991, TDA has been working as part of this USDA food safety initiative. PDP samples are collected so that we can learn the level of exposure to pesticide residues in our foods. Twelve state departments of agriculture, including TDA, work with USDA to collect and test samples for pesticide residue and publish the results in an annual report. We do this to protect crops and benefit consumers, food processors, pesticide producers and farmers.

Recently, USDA provided certificates of appreciation to food distribution centers, including the Kroger Company and Cullum Companies, to mark 25 years of voluntary participation by these companies in PDP. TDA inspectors, like Erica Graham, work with companies throughout the state to collect PDP samples. Graham presented the certificates of appreciation to the warehouse managers for both the Kroger Company and Cullum Companies.

