

Report on Customer Service June 2020



Texas Department of Agriculture
Commissioner Sid Miller

Introduction

We are pleased to report the customer service survey findings indicate the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is meeting customer needs and expectations exceptionally well, with a majority of categories receiving more than a 90 percent favorable rating. We are proud of these encouraging results. The mission of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), under the leadership of Commissioner Sid Miller, is to partner with all Texans to make Texas the nation's leader in agriculture, fortify our economy, empower rural communities, promote healthy lifestyles, and cultivate winning strategies for rural, suburban and urban Texas through exceptional service and the common threads of agriculture in our daily lives. In doing this, TDA has continually achieved a reputation of customer service excellence. We place a high priority on our ability to continue this tradition, and our agency does so under Commissioner Miller's leadership.

TDA Customers

TDA serves all Texans, ranging from the agriculture production community to the many consumers of agricultural products. TDA's customers are as diverse as the Lone Star State. From shoppers who rely on the accuracy of commercial scales, to school children in need of healthy meals, to farmers licensed to produce industrial hemp. All of the approximately 29 million Texas residents reap the many rewards provided by Texas agriculture every day.

For purposes of this report, TDA's customers are those persons, companies or entities with whom TDA directly interacts for licensing, grant and other program participation. Below is a list of strategies, as listed in the 2020-2021 General Appropriations Act, and a corresponding inventory of our customers:

A.1.1. TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Farmers and Ranchers

Farmers and ranchers are customers of TDA in numerous ways. Specifically, producers benefit from various marketing, consumer education and outreach initiatives promoting Texas agricultural products within our borders, as well as internationally. Additionally, TDA serves farmers and ranchers through partnerships with banks or other agricultural lending institutions. The Texas Agriculture Finance Authority, administered by TDA, provides special incentives to individuals who wish to establish or enhance their farm or ranch operation or to establish an agriculture-related business.

Farmers

Farmers who seek to market certain commodities benefit from TDA's fee-funded Texas Cooperative Inspection Program, which inspects commodities for quality and grade standards, and issues certificates.

Texas Consumers

TDA promotes the role agriculture plays in each person's life and provides resources for Texas consumers to find local products, Direct from Texas.

Livestock Producers and Marketers

TDA's livestock export facilities are holding and inspection sites for livestock leaving the country. Once livestock is inspected, animals are loaded for transport to Mexico through border facilities, or to destinations all over the world by air and sea via Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas.

International sales of Texas livestock and genetics are facilitated through the activities performed by TDA staff in coordination with various industry groups and federal resources

Small Businesses

TDA is working with Community Development Finance Institutes to help small businesses to needed capital and create economic development opportunities. The State Trade Expansion Program allows small businesses to explore export market opportunities and access customers across the globe.

Producers, Processors and Consumers

Through grants, TDA funds short-term, industry priority, applied research at Texas universities. An example is the federally funded Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) which funds a variety of projects including researching, testing and development best practices for specialty crop producers to more efficiently and effectively grow crops such as olives, citrus, pecans, or vegetables. Through SCBG, marketing projects to increase consumer demand of specialty crops are also funded.

TDA's Office of Produce Safety is partnering with FDA through a cooperative agreement to advance efforts for a nationally integrated food safety system that encourages safe production of fresh fruits and vegetables. TDA is also working to promote the understanding and compliance with the requirements of FDA's "Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption" (commonly referred to as the Produce Safety Rule).

A.1.2. PROMOTE TEXAS AGRICULTURE

Texas Consumers

Through GO TEXAN, TDA provides a variety of services for Texas consumers. GO TEXAN offers consumers a one-stop shop on how to go local — everything from how to find locally grown and raised produce and meats, to recipe ideas to hunting opportunities to tourism.

GO TEXAN Member Businesses

The GO TEXAN program works with restaurant owners, food and wine producers, processors, distributors and manufacturers of Texas-made goods, communities and wildlife operation owners to enhance their marketability. From the State Fair of Texas to the annual statewide GO TEXAN Restaurant Round-Up to the international marketing program, the GO TEXAN program is a

unique marketing campaign dedicated to promoting the products, culture and communities of Texas.

GO TEXAN Member Communities

Through the GO TEXAN Certified Retirement Community program, TDA assists city, county and local community leaders with certifying and promoting Texas communities as preferred retirement destinations to people within and outside the Lone Star State. Communities also can become Associate GO TEXAN Rural Communities program members to promote rural Texas communities as places to visit and vacation, and receive economic development assistance to help them thrive.

A.2.1. RURAL COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Rural Cities and Counties

TDA supports rural Texas through technical and educational assistance to target constituents through field-based staff and Austin-based program staff. Field-based personnel are often the first point of contact and provide a wide variety of information about the assistance available through TDA and its partners. This assistance includes economic, community and workforce development, entrepreneurship, and funding sources for capital investment.

In addition, TDA administers the state's non-entitlement Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG). This rural-focused program is the largest state CDBG program in the nation and serves approximately 995 eligible non-entitlement communities and 244 nonentitlement counties, as well as providing services to more than 400,000 rural Texans each year. Of the 995 cities eligible for CDBG funds, 723 have a population of less than 3,000 and 410 have a population of less than 1,000. The demographics and rural characteristics of Texas have shaped various programs that focus on community and economic development. Programs target infrastructure needs to help rural residents and assist with attraction of new capital investment and new job creation in rural businesses to help ensure sustainability in rural economies.

TDA also acts as a clearinghouse for rural information available to all customers. In an effort to improve programs affecting rural communities, TDA works with other state agencies, associations, rural stakeholders and legislators to identify specific challenges to the development and vitality of rural areas. Rural issues include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) Climate for Job Creation, 2) Infrastructure Development, 3) Health Care, 4) Workforce and Skills Development, and 5) Broadband.

A.2.2. RURAL HEALTH

TDA oversees the Texas State Office of Rural Health (SORH), which strives to ensure and improve access to health care for residents in rural areas of the state. SORH provides technical assistance to rural hospitals to improve quality of care, as well as operational and financial functions. Funds also are distributed to rural hospitals for capital improvements. The shortage of health care professionals in rural areas is partially addressed through limited loan repayment and stipend programs to non-physician healthcare professionals who agree to practice in rural medically underserved areas. SORH also encourages the development of cooperative systems of

care joining together critical access hospitals, EMS providers, clinics and health practitioners to increase efficiencies and quality of care.

B.1.1. PLANT HEALTH & SEED QUALITY

Consumers, Farmers and Ranchers

TDA conducts inspections to prevent the introduction of harmful plant pests and diseases into the state and enacts quarantines for the presence of pests that may enter the state. TDA conducts various road station inspections, which are conducted at specific major points of entry, to monitor and regulate the commercial movement of plant material into the state.

Hemp Farmers, Handlers and Laboratories

TDA ensures industrial hemp is produced and handled in compliance with state and federal regulations. Hemp producers, handlers, and handler samplers must complete criminal background checks and be licensed by TDA. The movement of hemp samples, transplants and harvested material must also have a transport manifest included with each shipment to show the origination source and final destination. Laboratories conducting official hemp samples must also be registered with TDA to ensure they meet standards set in USDA requirements.

Seed Companies, Farmers, Ranchers and Home Gardeners

Seed Companies, farmers, ranchers and home gardeners rely on seed testing to ensure truthful labeling. Purity and germination tests are conducted at the TDA seed laboratory, located in Giddings, Texas, on seed samples collected by TDA inspectors. These seed tests ensure farmers and home gardeners receive the quality of seed promised by the producer.

B.1.2. COMMODITY REGULATION & PRODUCTION

Egg Consumers

Purchasers of eggs rely on TDA to license egg wholesalers and dealers who buy or sell eggs for resale. Facilities where eggs are graded, stored, packed or processed must be licensed. TDA also licenses brokers of eggs to ensure that consumers are purchasing products that meet quality standards for labeling and grade. TDA maintains these registrations and provides related information to the public.

Grain Owners

Grain owners who deposit their grain with a grain warehouse for storage purposes rely on TDA to license grain elevators or businesses engaged in the operation of a public warehouse where grain is stored. TDA maintains these registrations and inspects the licensed grain warehouses regularly. Records are available to the public.

Fruit and Vegetable Producers

To protect producers of Texas grown fruits and vegetables from losses of payment associated with commodities sold on credit, TDA issues licenses to packers, handlers, dealers, processors and warehouses of Texas-grown fruits and vegetables under the Handling and Marketing of Perishable Commodities law, and administers the Produce Recovery Fund.

B.2.1. REGULATE PESTICIDE USE

Texas Consumers, Home and Business Owners, and Agricultural Producers

TDA helps ensure pesticides are utilized safely and effectively with the protection of the consumers, homeowners and business owners as the top priority. This is done through various inspections, pesticide misuse complaint investigations, sampling and laboratory analysis. TDA strives to minimize unnecessary impacts to agriculture, while also enhancing protection for consumers and farm workers.

Pesticide Dealers

TDA requires a person or business who distributes state-limited or restricted-use pesticides, or regulated herbicides, to obtain a pesticide dealer's license from TDA and adhere to recordkeeping and other requirements. TDA monitors compliance by conducting periodic inspections at these facilities that are required to have a Pesticide Dealer License. TDA monitors for record-keeping and to ensure these businesses are distributing pesticide to appropriately licensed applicators.

Pesticide Product Registrants

Texas pesticide laws and regulations require pesticides to be registered before they are sold or distributed in Texas. TDA maintains these registrations and provides related information to the public.

Pesticide Applicators

TDA certifies and licenses individuals who use state-limited or restricted-use pesticides or regulated herbicides in Texas. Through the continuing education requirement for its licensees, TDA educates pesticide users to help increase compliance with pesticide laws and regulations.

Farm Employees

Worker safety compliance monitoring is part of a comprehensive inspection program conducted through TDA's pesticide agricultural applicator inspections. TDA monitors for compliance with state and federal worker safety rules.

Consumers, Farmers and Ranchers

Agricultural industries and consumers benefit from an array of pest management programs that control the spread of plant pests in the state.

Cotton Producers

Cotton producers benefit from the TDA boll weevil eradication program. Boll weevils can have devastating economic impacts on the cotton industry. The boll weevil program has been successful in significantly reducing the number of boll weevils in Texas, thereby preserving an industry that provides one-fourth of the world's cotton production.

Organic Producers, Handlers, Distributors, Retailers and Consumers

TDA is approved by the USDA to certify producers, processors, distributors and retailers of organic products. This industry-funded program ensures entities meet the requirements for being certified organic. This not only helps Texas farmers diversify their operations and capture a

larger share of a growing premium market, but also offers another layer of consumer protection by ensuring the authenticity of the organic marketing claim.

Citrus Producers

Texas citrus producers rely on TDA's Budwood Certification Program to protect their crops from viral diseases and quarantined citrus pests. TDA also enacts plant pest quarantines in areas of the state to slow the spread of specific pests and diseases such as the Mexican fruit fly and citrus greening, which are detrimental to the citrus industry. TDA works closely with USDA/APHIS (the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) to monitor for these pests through various federal grants.

B.2.2. STRUCTURAL PEST CONTROL

Home Owners, Business Owners and Customers of Business Owners

The purpose of TDA's Structural Pest Control Service is to license and regulate the business of structural pest control. Structural pest control involves pesticide and other control methods used by pest control operators to control pests inside or around structures, such as residential properties, businesses, schools, daycare facilities, restaurants and nursing homes. TDA licenses commercial and noncommercial pesticide applicators, approves continuing education courses for the recertification of licensees and conducts inspections of pest control businesses to ensure compliance with structural pest control requirements. TDA provides educational awareness to the public concerning matters relating to pest control, with an emphasis on integrated pest management in Texas public schools, and providing education and information to the public and pest control industry.

B.3.1. WEIGHTS/MEASURES DEVICE ACCURACY

All Texans and Travelers from Other States

All Texans and travelers from other states are provided consumer protection as they use business-operated commercial scales (from grocery to jewelry stores, as well as livestock scales) and liquefied petroleum gas meters. TDA conducts and provides oversight of all device inspections, testing and calibrations on a regular scheduled interval to ensure that consumers receive the correct weight or measure of the product they purchase. TDA maintains these registrations and provides the related information to the public.

Scale Service Companies

In order to maintain a fair and equitable marketplace for both consumers and businesses, service companies are licensed by TDA to service and repair commercial weighing or measuring devices to include the installation, inspection, testing and calibration. All field test standards used in the inspection, testing and calibration of weights and measures devices must have their equipment calibrated annually by an approved metrology lab. TDA's Metrology Lab is recognized by the National Institute of Standards and Technology and performs these types of calibrations on an annual basis.

C.1.1. NUTRITION PROGRAMS (FEDERAL)

Infants, Children and Adults

Texans of all ages benefit from TDA's efficient and effective administration of nutrition programs that provide healthy low-cost meals or meals at no charge to qualifying participants. Meals are made possible through USDA commodity foods and federal meal reimbursements. All nutrition program providers receive outreach assistance; training and compliance monitoring to help them successfully administer the programs and furnish services for needy Texans. Administration of these programs is primarily funded through federal administrative funds. Some matching dollars are required and are primarily provided to local education agencies through the Texas Education Agency.

C.1.2. NUTRITION ASSISTANCE (STATE)

Food Insecure Citizens

TDA administers two food assistance programs under the Texans Feeding Texans initiative, which supplements and extends funding for home-delivered meal agencies and food banks in Texas. The home-delivered meal funding allows homebound elderly and disabled citizens to remain self-sufficient and in their homes longer. The food bank funding provides a temporary means of assistance to various other food insecure Texans.

Preschoolers and Students

Nutrition education grants, TDA's "Establishing the 3E's" and "Expanding the 3E's," allow TDA to reach children in daycares and elementary school settings to high schools to after school community programs. The objectives of these programs are to increase awareness of the importance of the 3E's of Healthy Living – Education, Exercise and Eating Right. The initiatives under this effort promote good nutrition, especially for children, and encourage children to stay active and do their part to live a healthy life.

Students

The Urban Schools Agriculture Grant program is designed to foster an understanding and awareness of agriculture in public urban elementary and middle schools. This program provides funding for hands-on projects to teach children about the role that agriculture plays in their daily lives.

Survey Methodology

TDA created an online customer service survey using the Instructions for Preparing and Submitting Agency Strategic Plans as a guide.

On May 1, 2020, TDA sent an email invitation to 7,150 randomly selected stakeholders (account holders, licensees and customers) from a pool of more than 110,000 customer accounts to participate in the survey. The group was gathered from existing data sources and verified for accuracy. Duplicate contacts were removed. A link to the customer satisfaction survey was also posted on the Texas Department of Agriculture home page at TexasAgriculture.gov. The purpose of the survey was to assess the customer's perception of TDA and to gather information to assist in strategic planning for the agency.

The survey remained online for a period of ten calendar days.

Data Limitations:

Twenty percent of TDA customers with an active account and a valid email address were targeted, and only a percentage of those customers respond to the survey request. Additionally, the survey recipients had ten days to respond. Finally, the frequency may vary as a result of the responses reported. This would be contingent on the valid responses completed and received to date.

Confidence Intervals:

The sample size for the survey was selected using a 95 percent confidence level with a confidence interval within 1.12.

Error/Response Rate:

Of 7,150 emails sent, 702 responses to the survey were received by email, giving a response rate of 9.81 percent. This response rate is up from the 2018 survey, which was 7.67 percent. One response from the survey was received through the link on the TDA website, TexasAgriculture.gov.

TDA did not allow the survey to be performed from the same computer twice by checking the respondent's IP address against previously submitted surveys, unless it was from a different email address.

The questionnaire design grouped questions in sets: facilities, staff, communications, internet, complaint, timeliness and printed information.

There were not enough comments to adjust the methodology for the survey in the next biennium.

TDA continues to respond to comments provided by our customers to strengthen the quality of service the agency provides to the citizens of Texas.

Analysis narrative of the findings identified

TDA excelled in the areas of facilities services; having valuable, supportive and communicative staff; and upholding the mission of the Texas Department of Agriculture (see Figure 1). In keeping with TDA's mission of recent years, the agency strives to meet the needs of Texas citizens and promote the state's products and culture. We take feedback seriously and look forward to receiving comments.

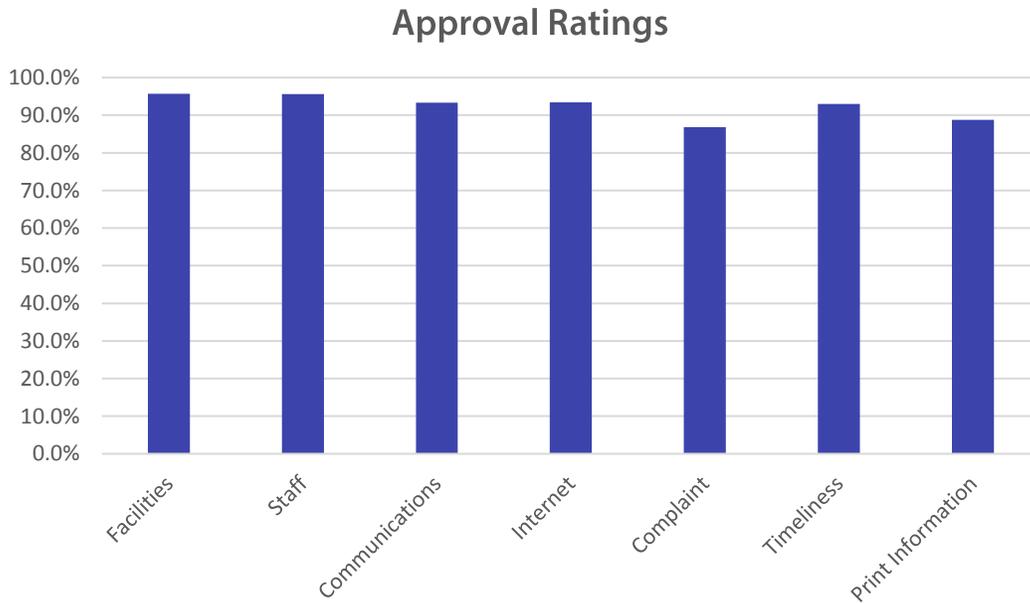


Figure 1

Conclusion

The survey findings indicate TDA is doing an excellent job overall, with a majority of categories receiving a 90 percent or higher favorable rating. TDA will continue to conduct this customer service survey and other surveys to continually seek opinions regarding the agency's service delivery. TDA takes pride in its mission, service and customers, and will continue to provide Texans with excellent service.

Appendix A

Standard Measures

Outcome Measures

Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Services Received:

94 percent

Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery:

7.6 percent of respondents provided specific comments regarding ways to improve service delivery.

91 percent of all respondents support increased online electronic payment capabilities.

Output Measures

Total Customers Responding to the Survey:

703

Total Customers Served

TDA directly impacts the lives of 29 million Texans.

Efficiency Measures

Cost per Customer Surveyed:

\$ 1.93 / survey

Explanatory Measures

Total Customers Identified:

TDA identified more than 110,000 customers that have an active account.

Total Customer Groups Inventoried

Individuals from 72 customer groups participated in the survey. The customer groups are incorporated within the strategies, as listed in the 2020-2021 General Appropriations Act.

Appendix B

Following are the overall responses to the Texas Department of Agriculture's survey:

1. I believe the mission of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is important.
99 percent Agree
2. If TDA services were interrupted, it would negatively impact me and/or my business.
91 percent Agree
3. Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received at TDA.
94 percent Agree
4. If I had other options, I would still choose to get services from TDA.
93 percent Agree
5. Select the TDA location referred to in questions 5 and 6
150 selected Austin Headquarters
9 selected College Station – Pesticide Residue Lab
2 selected Giddings Metrology
2 selected Houston – Livestock Export Facility
1 selected Laredo – Livestock Export Facility
0 selected Brownsville – Livestock Export Facility
1 selected El Paso – Livestock Export Facility
3 selected Austin Warehouse
80 selected Dallas – Regional Office
58 selected Houston – Regional Office
53 selected Lubbock – Regional Office
60 selected San Antonio – Regional Office
24 selected San Juan – Regional Office
8 selected El Paso – Sub Office
22 selected Ft Worth – Sub Office
3 selected Giddings – W. H. “Bill” Pieratt Bldg. State Seed Laboratory
6. The location of services was convenient (parking, ADA accessibility, public transportation, distance, etc.).
92 percent Agree
7. The facility where I received services was clean, orderly and easy to get around.
98 percent Agree
8. The facility is open during reasonable hours.
97 percent Agree
9. The staff was able to answer my questions.
94 percent Agree

10. The staff was courteous.
96 percent Agree
11. Staff members were knowledgeable and demonstrated a willingness to assist.
95 percent Agree
12. Staff members identified themselves or wore nametags.
97 percent Agree
13. TDA has been responsive to my requests and needs.
94 percent Agree
14. I received services in a timely manner.
93 percent Agree
15. I was given a clear explanation about the services available to me.
92 percent Agree
16. I was given a clear explanation about the documentation needed to receive services.
94 percent Agree
17. My telephone call, e-mail or letter was routed to the proper person and responded to in a timely manner.
94 percent Agree
18. I use the Internet to conduct business or communicate with TDA.
96 percent Agree
19. I am able to access information about the services I need using the Internet.
95 percent Agree
20. The TDA website was easy to use and well organized.
91 percent Agree
21. The TDA website contained clear and accurate information on events, services and contact information.
94 percent Agree
22. I think there is an increased need for online electronic payment capabilities.
91 percent Agree
23. I know how to make a complaint regarding services at TDA.
83 percent Agree
24. If I complained, I believe it would be addressed in reasonable manner.
90 percent Agree

25. The time I waited to receive services was reasonable.
93 percent Agree
26. I have received printed information (such as brochures, handouts, etc.) clearly explaining the services available.
89 percent Agree