

# Ag Matters

Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter



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By Nathan Hermond, AgNR Extension Associate,

## 7th Annual Landowners Conference Program

The PVAMU Landowner's Conference and Virtual Farm Tourism Program was hosted by Bowie County Extension Agent Brandon Hawkins on Oct. 7. The program included virtual tours of the Sullifarm and Kitchen Farm and the Long Walk Spring Farm.

The event featured presentations from the United States Department of Agriculture, including NRCS EQIP Programs and FSA Farm Loans as well as topics on Forestry and Livestock Production. Pollinators and beekeeping were also among the topics discussed during the conference. Nathan Hermond, extension entomologist for PVAMU Cooperative Extension Program's Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit, engaged the attendees in discussions about bee species vital to agriculture and their lifestyles.

Emphasis was placed on bee species outside of honeybees to encourage listeners to advocate for and conserve native bee species. Hermond provided insight into bumblebees, carpenter bees, sweat bees, and leafcutter bees, and the specific features that differentiated bees from ants and wasps. The presentation also included statistics about bee pollination and their importance to wildflowers and crops such as tomatoes, stone fruits, and berries.

Finally, Hermond encouraged the audience to create bee gardens by providing native wildflowers in colors such as gold, blue, and purple to attract bees and provide them a safe haven. The end goal was to ensure that bees have bountiful food sources, shelter, and homes protected from deforestation and urban construction. The Buzz About Bees also increased awareness of unique species and their role in the daily lives of humans and other wildlife.



## Forestry Production and Management Virtual Workshop

The Forestry Production and Management Workshop was held on Oct. 27. The topics covered included:

- How to Develop and Manage a Sustainable and Viable Forestry Operation
- Generational Wealth and Land Management
- USDA/NRCS Forestry Management Programs and Resources
- Texas AgriForestry Small Farmers and Ranchers



## Moringa Educational Workshop

By Rolando Zamora, AgNR Extension Agent, Willacy County

By Peter Ampim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor



On Oct. 15, Dr. Peter Ampim, assistant professor in the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, presented an educational workshop on Moringa at the Blackwood Education Land Institute (BELI) in Hempstead. The workshop was organized at the request of Cath Conlon, president and chief operating officer of BELI, and Waller County Extension Agent Stedman Douglas. It covered a range of topics including what Moringa is, its nutritional and medicinal properties, and its potential as a specialty crop for Texas amongst others. The workshop was attended by Conlon and her staff.

The BELI is a non-profit 33-acre farm that models the indispensable role of regenerative agriculture and food systems in our lives. BELI serves the community in a variety of ways, including through programs such as camps, field trips, farm school, workshops, and farm-to-table dinners. BELI has been supportive of our programs and has provided letters to support our extramural grant proposals.



## Beef Cattle Production Workshop

PVAMU hosted the Beef Cattle Production Virtual Program on Sept. 11. The well-attended program focused on developing livestock management practices including increasing awareness of the health and productivity of livestock.

A livestock supply company discussed how they are using the internet during this pandemic to make sales to small producers who rather buy online than going into a store to buy their product. The featured event was the Preparing Your Cattle for The Winter Months program. Dr. Randy Stanko, professor of Reproductive Physiology at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, highlighted nutrition, health, body conditioning, and reproduction aspects that contribute to preparing for the winter.



## Forage Management Workshop

PVAMU hosted the Improving Forage Management Virtual Program on Oct. 8. Thirty attendees participated in the program which featured topics in brush control where we highlighted tools, application process and methods, time of season for spraying, and regulations. Pasture rainfall insurance and a decision-making tool were also highlighted.

Dr. Samuel Zapata, extension specialist with the Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension provided information to give producers a better opportunity to receive a higher return for their investment when setting up their insurance plan. Also, Henry Gonzalez, USDA NRCS conservationist for Willacy County, presented information on programs and planning procedures that are involved with the NRCS when working on forage planning and farm design.



By Corey Hicks, AgNR Extension Agent, Houston County

## Winter Pasture Management Workshop



The Winter Pasture Management Workshop was held virtually on Sept. 30 by Houston County Agent Corey Hicks.

Farmers and ranchers were taught about different sustainable practices that can help improve soils while reducing winter feeding costs, which can lead to both financial and overall farm benefits.

The Winter Pasture Workshop was a great opportunity for farmers and ranchers to receive viable information from Extension agents, specialists, and local USDA representatives. The topics discussed were:

- \* Small grain variety selection, varieties of cool-season grasses to plant, production benefits, soil health, and USDA updates on the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (Crops/Livestock) by Dr. Vanessa Corriher-Olson, TAMU AgriLife Forage Specialist
- \* USDA Cost Share Programs Update presented by local USDA Representatives

The Prairie View Cooperative Extension Program's responsibility is vital to ensure research-based information reaches our clientele to assist with their farm operation endeavors.

## Rain Garden Planning Project

Bowie County CEP Agent (AGNr) Brandon C. Hawkins and Texas AgriLife Integrated Water Resource Management Specialist Dr. Fouad Jaber worked on a CEP rain garden planning project in the rural community in Naples for local farmers Bob and Judy Stovers.



The Stovers had issues with soil erosion in their front yard for the last past three years. Bob decided to resolve the problem by turning their worries into a Cooperative Extension Community Outreach project and invited Dr. Jaber to join the effort.

A few activities with the producers were planned before the event, which included aerial shots of the property. The Stovers were provided with a list of things to purchase two months prior to the start of the project, including a list of plants and trees that are adapted for semi-boggy soil conditions.

On March 3, an educational program was held. Local producers got the opportunity to be involved in the rain garden outreach community project. They learned about the functions and the purpose of a rain garden in a home, farm, or commercial landscape. The rain garden's construction and design took about eight hours to complete.

## Food Safety Virtual Training

The Small Farm Outreach Program's Food Safety Training was conducted virtually on Sept. 28 by Bowie County Extension Agent Brandon Hawkins. The speaker was Iris Crosby, horticulture specialist with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Topics included safe production, harvesting and handling of produce.



By Stedman Douglas, AgNR Extension Agent, Bowie County

## Rainwater Harvesting Workshop

Waller County Extension Agent Stedman Douglas hosted a virtual rainwater harvesting workshop on Sept. 3.

Topics discussed included:

- USDA/NRCS resources to support water conservation and management systems.
- How to construct a do-it-yourself rainwater harvesting system.
- Benefits and economics of rainwater harvesting system.
- How to determine the size of the system needed.
- How to manage the system.



## PVAMU Welcomes New Agent in Smith County



**Anthony Brown has been hired as the new Prairie View A&M University Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Smith County.**

**Brown grew up in Smith County, a few miles outside of Whitehouse, where he graduated from high school. He attended Prairie View A&M University. In December 2019, he completed his Bachelor's degree in Agriculture with a concentration in AgriBusiness and Economics.**

**Brown has a farming background. His family has been involved in sustainable crop production and cow-calf operation for many years. He also participated in a youth 4-H Club (Lakeside 4-H) in Smith County. During his 4-H career, he exhibited many animals such as goats, sheep, rabbits, roasters, and broilers.**

**"I have a profound love for Prairie View," Brown said, "and I am excited about working for my alma mater and with the many producers in Smith County building relationships throughout the community."**

**We are excited to have him as a part of the Cooperative Extension Program at Prairie View A&M University. We know that he will do a great job of assisting the farmers, ranchers, and landowners in Smith County.**

## PROGRAM LEADER'S CORNER

**Virtual Workshops: The New Norm in Education Delivery Method!** Like many agriculture-focused land-grant institutions, Prairie View A&M University's

Agriculture and Natural Resources Department (AgNR) is faced with adjusting education delivery methods to deal with the new norm due to COVID-19. As Dr. Anthony Fauci said, "As coronavirus cases break new records every day, you must be wondering when, if ever, life will return to normal again." Certainly, he says, "it's going to be some time till we get back to what we considered normal." As a result, we have are now providing agricultural educational workshops through a virtual platform.

In 2020, the AgNR Unit's extension agents, extension associate, and program specialist have done a remarkable job. This year, they have conducted more than 40 virtual workshops around education programs such as livestock management, farm financial resource management, small farm outreach, sustainable agriculture, specialty crops, and urban agriculture programs to educate farmers and ranchers. Also, they have expanded new clientele, built new relationships, and strengthened old partnerships. Because of the COVID-19 challenge, we will most likely continue conducting the majority of 2021 workshops through our virtual platform. Yet, we encourage you to reach out to us, as we are still conducting limited field visits, meetings, etc. per CDC guidelines. Next year, we will continue to conduct relevant, informative, and research-based extension education workshops through our Small Farm Institute Program (SFIP) with our new the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, Sustainable Forest African American Land Retention, and Center for Innovation and Sustainable Small Farms, Ranches, and Forestlands programs to limited resource producers and landowners in Texas.

As I have said, the future of agriculture is subject to scientific and technological revolutions, farmer's making a profit and cutting cost, and increasing production yields. Today, we must answer the question, "How to be sustainable?" In 2021, PVAMU Cooperative Extension Program's AgNR unit is committed to building a strong unit

Clarence Bunch, Ph.D., AgNR Program Leader



- Earlier this year, it was announced that the **PVAMU CEP Agriculture and Natural Resources** unit will be awarded a 2501 Program grant through the USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE). The grant, officially titled, "Outreach And Assistance For Socially Disadvantaged Farmers And Ranchers And Veteran Farmers And Ranchers Program" is intended to assist socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers. The project aims to work collaboratively with USDA and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to assist Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (SDVFRs) population in counties in East Texas, to enhance rural prosperity, profitability, and sustainability of SDVFRs in Texas. (Ashley Pellerin, M.S., Extension Program Specialist)
- The **PVAMU CEP** through the AgNR unit is developing a Small Farm Institute Program (SFIP). The SFIP will center around the economic, research, technological, policy, food, production, and sustainable agricultural issues facing limited resource producers and provide a holistic education, service, and training program. (Nelson Daniels, Ph.D., Extension Program Specialist). This project will create a large systems consortium of 1890 Universities and farmer cooperators to enhance the sustainability of the goat industry and improve economic opportunities for goat producers in the southeastern U.S. The 1890 Universities involved in this project are Florida A&M University, Fort Valley State University, Langston University, **PVAMU**, Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University, and Virginia State University. Each university will have at least two farmer cooperators.
- **PVAMU CEP** awarded a Sustainable Forest African American Land Retention to help forestland owners manage their forestland for maximum production. It also helps educate landowners about ways to retain land in families and avoid Heir property issues.
- **USDA FSA** signup for general CRP will be open from Jan. 4 to Feb. 12, 2021, and signup for CRP Grasslands runs from March 15 to April 23, 2021.

### Upcoming AgNR County Events

**BEEF CATTLE  
NUTRITION  
MANAGEMENT  
VIRTUAL PROGRAM**  
Smith County  
Date: January 19, 2021  
Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

**SOIL & FERTILITY  
MANAGEMENT  
VIRTUAL WORKSHOP**  
Willacy County  
Date: January 20, 2021  
Time: 10:00 am - 11:30am

**SOIL FERTILITY  
MANAGEMENT  
VIRTUAL PROGRAM**  
Smith County  
Date: February 18, 2021  
Time: 10:00—11:30a am

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