

## Spending Packages Clear Congress; House Passes USMCA

Friday, December 20, 2019

By Mary Jane Buerkle

Congress avoided a government shutdown this week by passing two spending packages that will extend funding for a variety of programs, including provisions for agriculture, particularly in disaster assistance.

A couple of key provisions important to the PCG region will:

- Extend the availability of unobligated/unused funds that were initially designated for agriculture disaster assistance due to the 2017 hurricanes through the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 which were set to expire at the end of this calendar year.
- Make producers affected by additional disaster events including drought, excessive moisture, and quality losses due to a qualifying disaster eligible to apply for aid via the WHIP plus program for losses in 2018 and 2019.
  - Of note, drought losses will be eligible for application if any area within the county in which the loss occurs was rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having been a D3 (Extreme Drought) or higher level of drought intensity at any time during the applicable calendar years.

“We’ve spent considerable time in Washington, DC, advocating for these provisions that will benefit growers,” PCG Vice President of Operations and Legislative Affairs Kody Bessent said. “We greatly appreciate everyone involved in helping move this legislative package through Congress and ultimately to the President’s desk.”

On Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement by a vote of 385-41.

All three PCG-area representatives issued statements.

“USMCA is expected to result in an additional \$2.2 billion in annual agricultural exports from the United States,” U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway of Midland, who is Ranking Member on the House Agriculture Committee, said. “Perhaps most importantly, today’s vote provides a much-needed element of certainty for our farmers and ranchers who have suffered under a 6-year slump in the farm economy.”

U.S. Rep. Jodey Arrington of Lubbock said, “I applaud our president for his dogged commitment to American first trade policies – that doesn’t mean America only, it means that we negotiate from strength and we negotiate for the best interest of American workers, manufacturers, and farmers. That’s what the USMCA does – \$70 billion in economic growth, 170,000 jobs and billions in investment in the auto manufacturing sector. Our agriculture producers, dairy producers, and farmers are going to have open access to new customers in Canada.”

U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry of Amarillo said, “Our trade partnerships with Mexico and Canada are important to the well-being of our economy. USMCA is a win for farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and the American economy. This agreement is good for our markets. It is important that Americans have open markets to sell goods.”

The bill will go to the Senate after the first of the new year.

### All Ag/Timber Exemptions Expire December 31! RENEW NOW!

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/ag-timber/>

### USDA, USTR Seek Experts for Agricultural Trade Advisory Committees

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

From USDA-FAS

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) are accepting applications for new members to serve on seven agricultural trade advisory committees.

Members of the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) advise USDA and USTR on operating existing U.S. trade agreements, on negotiating new agreements, and on other trade policy matters. Members of six Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees (ATACs) provide technical advice and guidance on international trade issues that affect both domestic and foreign production in specific commodity sectors. The ATACs focus on trade in:

- Animals and animal products;
- Fruits and vegetables;
- Grains, feed, oilseeds and planting seeds;
- Processed foods;
- Sweeteners and sweetener products; and
- Tobacco, cotton and peanuts.

To be considered for candidacy, applicants must have significant expertise in both agriculture and international trade matters. Committee members, who serve four-year terms, represent a cross-section of U.S. food and agricultural stakeholders. They must be U.S. citizens, qualify for a security clearance, and be willing to serve without compensation for time, travel or expenses. The committees hold frequent conference calls and generally meet in Washington, D.C., twice a year.

Application instructions are available at <https://www.fas.usda.gov/trade-advisory-committees-applying-membership>. Applications must be received by 5 p.m. ET on January 31, 2020. Any applications received after the deadline will be considered for future appointments as appropriate.

For more information, visit [www.fas.usda.gov/ATACs](http://www.fas.usda.gov/ATACs) or e-mail [ATACs@fas.usda.gov](mailto:ATACs@fas.usda.gov).

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Check out PCG's NEW website!  
[www.plainscotton.org](http://www.plainscotton.org)  
We'd love to hear your feedback!

## Extension Releases 2020 High Plains Crop Profitability Analyzer

Tuesday, December 17, 2019 From AgriLife TODAY

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has released an updated 2020 High Plains Crop Profitability Analyzer budgeting tool just in time to help Texas High Plains producers plan for the new year, said Justin Benavidez, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist in Amarillo.

"This decision aid assists producers in making management decisions on the optimal crop mix for their land," Benavidez said.

DeDe Jones, AgriLife Extension risk management specialist said the tool originated in 2016 and was created by a team of AgriLife Extension and Texas A&M AgriLife Research specialists, along with a producer advisory committee.

Jones said while the tool employs High Plains' budgets, the program's flexibility makes it usable in other areas of the country as well.

The irrigated crops available for analysis are alfalfa, canola, corn, corn silage, cotton, peanuts, sorghum, sorghum seed, sorghum silage, sorghum Sudan grass, soybeans, sunflowers, triticale and wheat. Dryland crops include canola, cotton, sorghum, sorghum Sudan grass, sunflowers and wheat.

"This is an extremely flexible tool that can assist producers in evaluating their cropping choices and water use for the upcoming year," Benavidez said.

He said the budget cost estimates are averages and producers using it can and will need to modify the prices, input costs and yields to fit their operations.

The spreadsheet contains four sections where analysis is performed: enterprise budgets that require user input, breakeven price estimates, comparative returns and optimal irrigation analysis.

"The enterprise budgets not only provide a measure of crop profitability but also allow for evaluating the landowner/tenant shares of a crop-share lease agreement," Benavidez said. "In the break-even section, a sensitivity analysis is performed that varies yield and calculates the various prices that would be required to cover out-of-pocket and total costs for each of the crops."

The comparative section provides the expected revenue, out-of-pocket and total costs for each of the crops, he said. The irrigation section allows a producer to identify their optimal crop mix by taking into consideration the water available and any water-use restrictions that apply.

"Based on all that information and the crop budgets, the amount of land and profitability is calculated for each of the crops and presented both numerically and graphically," Benavidez said.

"Another interesting feature is that you can 'toggle on' or 'toggle off' crops, so you can limit the analysis to only crops you are interested in growing," Jones said.

The 2020 High Plains Crop Profitability Analyzer can be downloaded for free at <http://amarillo.tamu.edu/>.

## Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program Seeking Applicants

The Governor Dolph Briscoe Jr. Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership Program, or TALL, is seeking applicants for its new cohort, which will begin in July.

TALL is a two-year leadership development program managed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Applications for the new cohort, Class XVII, are due March 15 and are available online at <https://tall.tamu.edu/tall-xvii/>.

"The agriculture industry constantly faces new and unique challenges, and there is a need for individuals who have leadership potential to serve in decision-making positions," said Jim Mazurkiewicz, professor and AgriLife Extension leadership program director. "TALL graduates provide a new pool of proven leaders who can provide the leadership, insight, knowledge and direction to ensure that agriculture is viable in the future."

The program invests 455 hours of intensive training per person in seminars, speakers and domestic and international study trips over two years, Mazurkiewicz said.

"It's equivalent to the time spent obtaining a master's degree in agriculture," he said.

The typical class size is about 26, and participation cost is \$3,000.

"The mission of the program is to create a cadre of Texas leaders to ensure effective understanding and encourage positive action on key issues, theories, policy and economics that will advance the agriculture industry," Mazurkiewicz said.

Participants include traditional crop producers, ranchers, bankers and attorneys, as well as those who work in lumber, food processing, agricultural corporations and horticultural industries, he said.

"The TALL program has taught me a lot about agriculture across the state, but most importantly, it's taught me that the future of ag in our great state is in good hands," said Lauren Echols Decker, Rolling Plains Cotton Growers Inc. executive vice president, Stamford. "Not only with my fellow cohort members, but with the families we've met across the country and in Texas who are deeply committed to sustaining rural communities and preserving agriculture's many rich traditions."

"The TALL Program has given me an incredible opportunity to become an ambassador of agriculture by allowing me to participate in such an amazing experience," said Kyle Watts, Texas Farm Credit branch manager, Tyler. "I have been fortunate to learn through the unique curriculum, investment, hard work and dedication of those who believe and support such a remarkable program."

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### Editor's Note:

"Cotton News", a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: [editor@plainscotton.org](mailto:editor@plainscotton.org)