

2019 Farm-City State Essay Contest

How do agriculture and forestry “Keep Alabama Growing?”

Besides the obvious answers related to production of food and fiber and preservation of green space, this year’s Farm-City Week theme provides hints to the contributions agriculture and forestry make to the state’s economy, workforce, nutrition and society.

American Farm Bureau Federation recently released its Feeding the Economy study, which showed Alabama’s agriculture and food industries account for more than 312,000 direct jobs; \$8 billion in wages; \$34.7 billion in economic output; \$8.3 billion in business taxes; and \$551.6 million in exports. When indirect jobs are counted, employment jumps to more than 579,000, and output exceeds \$83.8 billion.

These impacts demonstrate how agriculture and forestry play an important role in Alabama’s vitality, despite declining farm numbers. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture released this year, the state’s total number of farms declined to about 40,000, a loss of 2,600 farms since 2012. Total land in farms also was down slightly. Meanwhile, the market value of crops and livestock increased.

In short, fewer farmers are producing more food and fiber on less land with fewer inputs. They’re helping to “Keep Alabama Growing.”

Agriculture and forestry contribute to our health, nutrition and comfort. Alabama farmers provide food and fiber for children and families here and around the world. From fresh produce at local farmers markets to lean beef, pork, poultry and catfish, Alabama grows a bounty of wholesome foods. The state’s fields yield grain, soybeans and forage for feed; fluffy white cotton for clothing and linens; and flowers, shrubs and sod to beautify homes and businesses.

Farmers also keep Alabama’s natural resources growing. They provide habitat for woodland creatures, wetlands for waterfowl, and forestland for hunting, recreation, timber and more. Modern agricultural practices conserve water and reduce erosion. Precision agriculture also uses less fertilizer, fuel and pesticides while improving soil health.

The high-tech world of farming speaks to another contribution agriculture and forestry make to our society. For centuries, farms have been incubators for innovation. The innate ingenuity, independence and resilience of farmers fuels development of new products and practices.

Farmers also “Keep Alabama Growing” through their values and service. Faith, family, citizenship, stewardship and being a good neighbor are as common in agriculture and forestry as tractors and trucks.

Whether students focus on the economic and environmental impacts of farmers or the diversity and innovation in agriculture, they’re sure to discover many ways farming and forestry “Keep Alabama Growing.”

Resources:

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>

<https://feedingtheeconomy.com>

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org>

<http://alfafarmers.org>

<https://www.agfoundation.org>

The contest is sponsored by the Farm-City Committee of Alabama, P.O. Box 11000, Montgomery, AL 36191-0001, in cooperation with Alabama Ag in the Classroom and Alabama Farmers Cooperative. More information for teachers and students is available online at www.AlfaFarmers.org, www.AlabamaAITC.org and www.AgEducate.org or by contacting your local Alabama Cooperative Extension System office.

State winners in the poster, essay and video contests will be featured in the Alabama Farm-City Committee’s 2021 Farm-City Calendar.

Eligibility and Rules

1. Division I - open to all students in grades 7 – 9.
Division II - open to all students in grades 10 – 12.
2. First- and second-place winners will be named.
3. Essays must relate to the theme. The name of the theme must be stated in the essay.
4. Each student is required to complete the enclosed information form and attach it to the essay entry.

All entries will be judged first at the county Farm-City committee level with the first place winner in each county being submitted to the State Farm-City Committee. One entry per division, per county may be submitted for judging at the state level.

5. Criteria: Essay should be 500–1000 words, neatly typed, and double-spaced, on 8 ½ x 11, white paper. They will be judged on:
 - a. Content
 - Topic Sentence
 - Adherence to theme
 - Accuracy of information
 - Supporting details
 - Originality
 - Reader Appeal
 - b. Mechanics
 - Grammar
 - Punctuation
 - Sentence Structure
 - Capitalization
 - Spelling
 - c. Organization
 - Clarity
 - Flow of material
 - Conclusion
6. **Deadline for entry at the state level is February 7, 2020. State winners will be notified by mail no later than March 6, 2020. Award winners will be announced at the state Farm-City Awards Luncheon and Program on April 2, 2020.**
7. All entries may be used at the discretion of the Ag in the Classroom Steering Committee and Farm-City Committee of Alabama without further permission or monetary consideration.

Awards in Each Category

1st PLACE: \$300 Cash

Student's Classroom: \$300 Cash

2nd PLACE: \$200 Cash

Student's Classroom: \$200 Cash

For further information, contact your local Farm-City Committee or the State Farm-City Committee at 1(800)392-5705 or 1(334)613-4410. E-mail: pculver@alfafarmers.org. Fax: 1(334)284-3957. Mailing address: Alabama Farmers Federation, Attn: Jeff Helms, P.O. Box 11000, Montgomery, AL 36191.