

**Texas Department of Agriculture
Major Border and Cross Border Initiatives**

Food and Nutrition Initiatives

- The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) Food and Nutrition division provides bilingual (Spanish/English) educational materials to promote good nutrition among students and their families and increase participation in the school meals program.
- TDA Summer nutrition programs provide access to nutritious meals to children, aged 18 years or younger, at no cost. The Summer Food Service or the Seamless program during the summer months provides nutritious meals to children during long school vacations when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast.
- The TDA Commodity Supplemental Food Program provides nutrition education activities and the donation of supplemental foods to low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children under six years of age, and elderly persons. Limited amounts of food assistance are provided to service area residents of two contracted food banks. The North Texas Food Bank serves Dallas County and the Food Bank of the Rio Grande Valley serves Dimmit, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Kinney, Maverick, Val Verde, Webb, and Zapata Counties.
- TDA Texas Commodity Assistance Program (TEXCAP) distributes USDA-donated food statewide to low-income individuals and households. TDA contracts with 15 food banks across the state, which distribute the food through approximately 4,500 food pantries and soup kitchens.
- The adult day care industry in South Texas is booming. More than 60 percent of the state's 420 adult day care centers are in South Texas. Through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) children in day care homes, centers, emergency shelters and after-school programs, and adults in day activity centers along the border are afforded nutritious meals along with other services being provided.

Marketing Initiatives

- The mission of the Texas Department of Agriculture's Marketing and Promotion Division is to promote the products, culture and communities that call Texas home through GO TEXAN, a focused, broad-based strategic marketing effort. GO TEXAN links buyers and sellers of Texas-produced and Texas-processed products, working to expand markets for agricultural products through program membership, focused marketing campaigns and state, national and international promotions and events. In addition, the program promotes the development and tourism initiatives of rural Texas through the GO TEXAN Rural Communities

Program (formerly Texas Yes!) and encourages people worldwide to retire in Texas through the GO TEXAN Certified Retirement Community Program.

- TDA operates six livestock export facilities in Brownsville, Eagle Pass, Laredo, Del Rio, El Paso and Houston. These facilities are inspection locations for Mexican veterinarians to conduct inspections to ensure the livestock meet all Mexican import requirements. These facilities also serve as feed, water and rest locations for livestock prior to being exported and before the transfer of livestock from owners to international buyers. There are five TDA export facilities located along the Mexican border. Following any necessary processing on-site, the livestock are exported via truck into Mexico. The export facility located at Brownsville is also authorized to conduct truck-to-boat transfers with all countries. The export facility located at the George Bush International Airport in Houston is authorized to conduct truck-to-airplane or truck-to-boat transfers with all countries.
- TDA's Livestock Marketing Division and regional staff work with international committees for Texas' major livestock shows (including Dallas, Fort Worth, Mercedes, San Antonio and Houston) to develop and strengthen key international contacts. Additionally, this division works with organizations such as the U.S. Livestock Genetics Export Inc., Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau to host trade missions that promote Texas genetics. The regional staff works year-round facilitating sales to foreign buyers as well as expediting shipments to foreign countries. For instance, the staff annually hosts a group of sheep and goat buyers from Mexico during the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo. Additionally, TDA coordinates a reverse trade mission of Texas sheep and goat breeders to travel to Mexico to exhibit at an annual livestock show. During all shows, the livestock marketing division works along with regional staff to coordinate and conduct ranch visits, tours and facilitate livestock sales and referrals.
- TDA's International Marketing Program conducts Minority Export Training in coordination with the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA), of which TDA is a member, and the San Antonio-area Small Business Development Center through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Emerging Market Office grant program. This training educates Texas companies on how to export and increase export sales of Texas products. The training identifies each company's potential markets, which, in many cases, include Mexico.
- TDA, partnering with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture and SUSTA, will conduct an in-store promotion in Mexico in 2008. One of the top grocery store chains will be targeted for this promotion. The designated supermarket chain will appoint representatives who will assist in the selection of products best suited for the taste and preferences of local consumers. In addition, products selected for

the promotion could be purchased by the supermarket chain and showcased in five to ten high-end stores for a period of four consecutive weeks.

- The GO TEXAN Rural Communities Program (formerly Texas Yes!) is a broad-based TDA membership program that creates a single rallying call for rural Texas. The Rural Communities Program encourages rural communities to share and promote tourism as a way to successfully build a network of thriving rural Texas communities ensuring sustainable economic growth, business development and the prosperity of rural Texas towns, cities and counties. The program has recruited 78 border communities since the program's inception in October 2003.

Natural Resources Initiatives

- TDA is a participant in a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service steering committee for an experimental introduction of the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow.
- TDA cooperates with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Environmental Defense, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Forgotten River Project. The goal of this project is to first chemically treat salt cedar along this stretch of river and later to revegetate with native vegetation to improve flow and water quality.
- TDA participates in the steering committee of the Rio Grande Basin Initiative, an agricultural and urban water conservation research project. The goal of the research is to further develop water conservation and irrigation technology that is specifically applicable to the basin's needs and to decide what type of educational programs are needed to increase water use efficiencies.
- TDA is a member of the Steering Committee and the Agricultural Subcommittee of the Arroyo Colorado TMDL for Dissolved Oxygen and Legacy Pesticides. The Arroyo travels through Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties and empties into the Lower Laguna Madre.
- TDA participates in the Pecos River Brush Control Project. This project works to control invasive brush species in the Pecos River Basin for the purpose of increasing water supplies for municipalities, industry and the citizens of Texas.
- TDA continues to work with state and federal officials to ensure Mexico abides by the 1944 U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty and that Lower Rio Grande Valley agricultural producers have the necessary water to remain viable.

Regulatory Initiatives

- TDA along with USDA provide phytosanitary certificates to facilitate export of Texas agricultural products to Mexico. USDA and TDA cooperate with the state of Tamaulipas and Sanidade Vegetal to release sterile Mexican fruit flies in Tamaulipas along the Texas/Tamaulipas border.
- As a part of the Border Governors Ag Work Table activities, Coahuilla, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas and Texas developed a plan to eradicate the Mexican fruit fly from these states; however, the plan was not implemented because of a lack of funds.
- TDA participates with Mexico in developing phytosanitary standards related to pests and diseases under the guidance of the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO).
- TDA and its counterparts from the nine U.S. and Mexican border states continue to work together to protect the border and each state's plant and animal production systems against diseases and potential terrorist attacks. These states have participated in two functional exercises over the past two years to improve communications and emergency preparedness.

Rural Economic Development Initiatives

- The Rural Economic Development Division (RED) assists Texas communities and business people in expanding the rural Texas economy. Seven TDA specialists are located across Texas to work directly with communities and assist Texas producers, processors, marketers and entrepreneurs in diversifying agricultural production and in expanding or creating value-added agricultural businesses that will capture a greater share of state, national and international markets through various finance programs. RED staff also work directly with non-agricultural business people and community leaders, providing planning assistance and information on different programs available through TDA and other agencies.
- TDA works with Texas grain producers to connect them directly with Mexican consumers. TDA does this by providing assistance in facilitating truck-, rail- and port-loading facilities in Texas for grain producers to increase economic opportunity in border communities.
- Trade Adjustment - Staff provided rural businesses with contacts and information on Southwest Trade Adjustment Assistance Center grant opportunities, including successful applications by businesses in the cities of Stockdale, Weslaco, San Benito, Lyford, Odem, El Campo, McAllen, Pharr and Weatherford, as well as, El Paso, Hudspeth and Jeff Davis counties.

- Minority Farmers and Ranchers - The Texas/Mexico Border Coalition, with the support of the University of Texas Pan American and Natural Resources Conservation Service, continuously hold workshops throughout Texas targeting minority farmers and ranchers.
- TDA Rural Economic Development staff participates in the Texas-Tamaulipas Economic Alliance. The group meets once a month and it includes mayors from the Valley, county judges, and some other mayors from other parts of the state, as well as mayors from Reynosa and Matamoros, Mexico. The importance of this group is to study geography, economics and globalization.
- TDA coordinated the International Olive Grower Workshop near Presidio, Texas on November 6, 2007. Co-hosting the workshop with TDA was the Development Corporation of Presidio, Presidio County, Cibolo Creek Ranch, Presidio County Rail District, Big Bend Region Minority and Small Business Development Center, Texas Cooperative Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Fort Davis State Bank and Consejo para el Desarrollo Economico Del Estado de Chihuahua. A panel discussion addressing economic and business development issues included Dave Wilson, Big Bend Region Minority and Small Business Development Center; Bill and Daila McAnally, USDA; Jed Elrod, Texas Cooperative Extension Center; and Ernesto Villalobos, Southwest Trade Adjustment Assistance Center. There were fifty attendees of which about one third were from Mexico which included the mayor of Ojinaga, representatives of the Consulate of Mexico in Presidio, representatives from the State of Chihuahua Economic Development Agency and private business people from Mexico.
- TDA Rural Economic Development staff continue to work with Mexican businesses to find business and trade opportunities in Texas, including developing operations in the state.
- Other Workshops - TDA partnered with local groups and American Electric Power (AEP) to organize economic development workshops in South Texas and the Lower Rio Grande Valley featuring state and federal agencies in panel discussions.

Texas Cooperative Inspection Program (TCIP) Initiative:

- Imported fruits, vegetables, peanuts and tree nuts from Mexico and other countries are inspected by the Texas Cooperative Inspection Program (TCIP). TCIP is a cooperative program between TDA and USDA that ensures USDA marketing standards of quality are met.

Miscellaneous:

- TDA is a member of the Border Governors' Conference Agriculture Work Table and a member the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Tri-National Accord U.S./Mexico Working Group.
- TDA is working to develop a Texas-Mexico Agriculture Exchange Program to exchange information and increase trade relationships between the agricultural industries of Texas and the Mexican states bordering Texas.