



TMBC/Border Region Review

The newsletter for the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO in partnership with UTPA and other border region organizations; providing information about TMBC and border region projects coordinated and enhanced through Project FORGE.

Issue 5

Aisha Cruz, Writer/Editor

Small Producers' Conference

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Events Calendar:

July

- 7 FSA Youth Loan Informational
FFA Building
San Isidro, Texas
- 21 Risk Management Wksp
Nutrition Center
San Isidro, Texas

August

- 5 SWCD/TCE Range and Wildlife Management Wksp
Jim Wells Co. Fairgrounds
Alice, Texas
- 17 Risk Management Wksp
Dodier Ranch
Zapata, Texas
- 27 Risk Management Wksp
Margo Ranch
Santa Elena, Texas

September

- 01 Risk Management Wksp
Gonzalitos Ranch
Benavides, Texas
- 15 TCE Deer Seminar & Spotlight Count
Rio Grande City, Texas
- 26 HESTEC Begins
UT – Pan American
Edinburg, Texas

The 2005 Small Producers' Conference, held May 22-25 in Eagle Pass, Texas was a tremendous success. The Conference was hosted by the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition (TMBC) and the Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D Council.

The Conference focused on providing assistance and information to small acreage producers in the Texas-Mexico border region. Participants from all over South Texas and a few from other states attended the Conference and gained valuable information, insight and inspiration on a variety of subjects that could boost economic development along the border region of Texas and in other areas.

"We drew a crowd we can be proud of," said Mario Morales, Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D Coordinator and a lead organizer of the Conference. "Small ag producers from different parts of Texas were here to explore production options that are a little more non-traditional."

The Conference opened Monday morning with a welcome to conference guests by Maverick County Judge Jose "Pepe" Aranda and the Mayor of Eagle Pass, Chad Foster.

The morning proceeded with a presentation by Dr. Daniel Leskovar, Vegetable Specialist with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. The presentation on stevia, a natural sweetener, focused on production and benefits.

Billy Curb with USDA Rural Development spoke about the benefits of producer and marketing co-ops and Dr. Robert Maggiani, TDA Marketing Specialist, covered the processes of moving your product through the marketing chain more efficiently.

A presentation on Electronic Government (eGov) was given by Aisha Cruz, eFARM

Project Director. Computer and Internet demonstrations were available at the conference with the use of the NETmobile, a mobile computer lab furnished by the University of Texas – Pan American's (UTPA) CoSERVE.

Norman Bade of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Juan Garcia of Farm Service Agency (FSA), Geraldine Herring of the Office of Outreach, and Robin Roarke of National Agricultural Statistics Service each gave short presentations about their respective agencies and their interest and involvement in promoting and supporting small producers along the Texas-Mexico border.

Monday afternoon breakout sessions featured Smiljana Goreta with Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, covering hydroponic vegetable production; Robin Bowman of Bowman Farms presenting organic vegetable, poultry, and egg production, and; Nasir Malik with the Agricultural Research Service covering olive



A favorite among participants, Smiljana Goreta, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station presents hydroponic vegetable production.

production. Monday evening, conference participants were treated to a complimentary dinner at the Lucky Eagle Casino.

On Tuesday, attendees enjoyed a field day at local agricultural operations. Participants toured Jim Henry's Olive Orchard, NHS

[Small Producers' Conference, continued on page 2](#)

Range and Wildlife Management Workshop

The Jim Wells Soil and Water Conservation District and the Texas Cooperative Extension Service will be hosting a Range and Wildlife Management Workshop Friday, August 5 at the Jim Well County Fairgrounds in Alice, Texas from 8am to 2pm.

Topics on the agenda are: grazing management, including types of grazing systems and drought management; wildlife habitat management for bobwhite quail, deer, and others; and brush control recommendations.

Presenters are specialist in each area of discussion. Rob Ziehr, Grazinglands Conservation Initiative Coordinator for South Texas; Vivian Garcia, Rangeland Management Specialist; Dr. Wayne Hanselka, Extension Range Specialist; and Daniel Kunz, Texas Parks and Wildlife Biologist will be among the presenters at this workshop.

Three continuing education credits (CEUs) will be awarded to those who complete the entire workshop.

Participation is limited to the first fifty registrants. Pre-registration is available for \$15 through July 28; late registration is \$20. This fee includes handouts and a BBQ lunch.

To register or obtain more information, please contact USDA-NRCS at 361/668-8361 extension 3.

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TMBC Hosts Hispanic Leadership Program

For the past two years, the TMBC has hosted students from The University of Texas – San Antonio (UTSA) and Texas A&M University-College Station during a weekend at the Texas-Mexico border.

The student who make the trip are undergraduates or graduates with the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life



Students visit the historical Tijerina Complex in Rio Grande Citv. Texas.

Small Producers' Conference

Hydroponics Greenhouse, Buddy Jones' Goat Ranch, Ed Ritchie's Avacado Orchard, and Mario A. Escobar's Pecan Orchard. At each site, information about the operation was supplied by the operation owner and Texas Agricultural Extension Agents.

"My husband and I were really interested in the pecan and olive farms. Now that we're retired we want to find a way to use the land we have. The tours gave us lots of information and contacts," said Elvira Alvarado who traveled from San Antonio, Texas.

Wednesday began with a TMBC annual Directors' Meeting and elections. Omar Garza was elected to another term as Chairman and Dr. Fidel del Barrio was chosen to serve a three-year term as a Director.

Presentations that followed the annual meeting included Dr. Rigoberto Delgado, North America Program Director of Heifer International. Mario Morales, Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D Coordinator, outlined the grant opportunities offered by the Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program (SARE). A short presentation on pasture penned poultry, funded through SARE was provided by George Bennack, Director with UTPA.

Several micro lending institutions spoke about lending opportunities offered by their

Science or participants in the Hispanic Leadership Program in Agriculture and Natural Resources (HLPANR)

According to its web site, HLPANR is a collaborative effort between UTSA , the Agriculture Program of the Texas A&M University System, and USDA to promote professional development and to enhance research and policy issues related to Hispanics and agriculture and natural resources.

Annually, TMBC arranges for the group to experience parts of the Texas-Mexico border region culture, including food and sites. In 2005, the students visited historical locations in Rio Grande City, Texas and learned about colonias and their residents.

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respective organizations, including: Rosa Uribe, Loan Consultant with Accion Texas; Mark Keller with Southwest ACA; Sara Webb with FSA, and; Lucy Maldonado with US Small Business Administration. To close the day, Luis Urbina, Director of the Rio Grande College Small Business Development Center, outlined services the agency offers to small businesses and new producers.

Sponsors of the conference were the City of Eagle Pass, USDA, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas Cooperative Extension Service, Texas Department of Agriculture, Project FORGE – a Division of CoSERVE, area Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Eagle Pass Chamber of Commerce. USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA-NRCS, and USDA Office of Outreach were financial sponsors.



A day of tours began at Jim Henry's Olive Orchard.

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Food Safety Training Element in Ag Outreach

Computer/Internet Training

Mondays

Mercedes, TX ...10a – 12p

Mercedes Memorial Library

Los Fresnos, TX...1p – 3p

Ethel Whipple Library

Thursdays

Hebbronville, TX...1p – 3p

Jim Hogg Co. Public Library

Freer, TX...4p – 530p

Freer Public Library

San Diego, TX.....6p – 8p

San Diego Public Library

Fridays

Zapata, TX.....1p – 3p

Zapata County Public Library

Food Safety training has been an important element in the community outreach project provided by The University of Texas – Pan American (UTPA), TMBC and their partners.

TMBC worked closely with UTPA and the Rio Bravo Resource Conservation & Development Area (RC&D) to provide food-safety training to Hispanic ranchers along the Texas-Mexico border and in other parts of South Texas.

With assistance from USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), this project was able to help provide Hispanic ranchers in South Texas with important information relating to food safety.

Two project focus areas of special interest to Hispanic ranchers in the area have been bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly known as BSE or “mad cow disease,” and country-of-origin labeling, or COOL.

“Both these food-safety-related issues could have a significant impact on local beef producers,” said George Bennack, who oversees UTPA’s food safety project.

“Food safety often starts on the farm or ranch, so these are the people we need to reach out to,” he continued.

Providing an effective forum for relaying food-safety information to Hispanic producers has been a crucial element in the effectiveness of the project. In order to reach as many South Texas producers as possible, TMBC allotted time for UTPA’s food safety program in all of its risk management training seminars.

The risk management training focuses on providing risk management information to border region, Hispanic producers. The cooperation allowed the organizations to provide critical food-safety information.

Along with TMBC, UTPA, RC&D, and the FSIS, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service presented information on cleanliness in preparing food.

Starr County rancher and participant in the food-safety training, Rodolfo Garza III, was glad to have the FSIS-funded project in South Texas.

“This project has provided important information to Hispanic ranchers in our area. For many of us, it was the only source for this kind of information.”

FSIS

“Coincidentally, during this project, there were a number of food-safety-related scares in South Texas, including BSE, Anthrax, Avian Flu, Fever Tick and West Nile Virus. Some of these things don’t directly impact food safety; but how do we know? This project gave us the answers and the information that Hispanic ranchers need,” continued Garza. “It helped us understand the issues better.”

The South Texas border region has the highest number and concentration of Hispanic farmers and ranchers in the nation. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the 26-county area south of San Antonio has over 10,000 Hispanic farmers and ranchers.

Hidalgo County, home to UTPA, has 1,501 Hispanic producers and the neighboring counties of Starr and Duval have a combined total of 2,317.

For more information on the food safety training, contact Ismael Delgado at (956)292-5147.

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TMBC CBO Directors and Staff

Chairman, Omar J. Garza
Santa Elena, Texas

Vice-Chairman, vacant

Secretary, Homero Vera
Premont, Texas

Treasurer, Samuel Rodriguez
Rio Grande City, Texas

Director, Guillermo Benavides
Laredo, Texas

Director, David A. Garza
San Benito, Texas

Director, Fidel del Barrio
San Antonio, Texas

Director, Larry Ernst
Leaky, Texas

Director, Mario A. Escobar
Crystal City, Texas

Director, Ruben Carrasco
Presidio, Texas

Director, Rigoberto Delgado
El Paso, Texas

Technical Assistance,
Neal Alvarado

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Aisha Lee Cruz

Project Director, FARM,
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