

# Tennessee Fresh



# DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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As Tennessee's first state agency, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture promotes wise uses of its agricultural and forest resources, develops economic opportunities and ensures safe, dependable food and fiber. Tennessee's farming industry is diverse with products ranging from cattle and poultry to tomatoes and honey. The department helps protect the farming industry and Tennesseans by ensuring food safety, proper pesticide use, fuel quality and fairness in the marketplace. The department supports industry development through farmer incentive programs and promotional activities to expand markets.

Tennessee is heavily forested and consistently one of the top hardwood producing states. Division of Forestry services include landowner assistance, wildfire suppression and state forests management while water quality programs encourage and promote stewardship of our natural resources.

The department is divided into four major program areas including Administration, Forestry, Market Development and Regulatory Services.

## Tennessee Agriculture

Tennessee's top agricultural products include cattle and calves, broilers, cotton, greenhouse/nursery, corn, dairy products, soybeans, tobacco, hay, wheat and a variety of fruits and vegetables. Agricultural production alone generates more than \$2.7 billion annually in farm cash receipts. Food manufacturing, marketing and distribution, forestry-related industries, equine and other agricultural products make the economic impact much greater.

International trade has a significant impact on Tennessee agriculture as exports of raw agricultural commodities generally total more than \$770 million annually. Raw and processed farm and forest products are leading state exports valued at about \$2 billion annually.

Farming and forestry dominate Tennessee's landscape with farm production occurring on 79,000 farms. About 11.4 million acres, or nearly half the state's land area, are in farms. Forestlands total more than 14 million acres. Tennessee's forests produce millions of board feet of hardwood and softwood lumber, with timber sales topping \$462 million in 2007.

With a temperate climate and abundant water supply, Tennessee farmers produce a variety of food and fiber products which help Tennessee live up to its official slogan, "America at its best."

In and around hillsides, in the shadows of mountains and along the fertile river valleys of East Tennessee are the forests, beef cattle, dairy, tobacco and vegetable farms that are well suited to this terrain.

Middle Tennessee is made up of a dish-shaped basin rimmed with mountains to the east, sloping off to rolling hills westward and bordered on either side by the

Tennessee River. The rolling pasturelands make beef cattle, horse and dairy farms practical for the region. A variety of row crops also flourish in Middle Tennessee, as does the World's Nursery Capital in Warren County.

West Tennessee is lush flatland created by the Mississippi River's ancient flood plains. This delta region traditionally has the state's largest production of soybeans, wheat, corn, cotton and sorghum. West Tennessee's famous river city, Memphis, has long been known as a major commodity transportation hub.

## History

In 1854 the Bureau of Agriculture, as the department was then known, was established as the first state agency. It was organized primarily to promote agriculture through fairs and livestock expositions. The original agency had a staff of nine—the governor and eight others who met twice a year to conduct state business. The Bureau of Agriculture was discontinued during the Civil War but was reorganized in 1871. In 1875, the state legislature created the Bureau of Agriculture, Statistics and Mines. The duties of immigration were also added to the responsibilities of the commissioner of agriculture for a brief period. In 1923 the name was officially changed to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA).

Ellington Agricultural Center, the former estate of 1920s financier Rogers Caldwell, has been the home of TDA since January 1961. The 200-acre center, located in Nashville, is named for Buford Ellington, former governor of Tennessee who served as commissioner of agriculture from 1952-56. TDA was the first state department of agriculture in the nation to be located on a working farm.

## Services

**Administration**—Administration provides budgetary, legal, human resources and communications support to help department programs achieve goals and objectives in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Staff also works with legislators and the industry to ensure programs have adequate statutory authority, staffing and clerical support. Other programs within administration include the Agricultural Crime Unit, Boll Weevil Eradication, Commodity Distribution, Water Resources and a partnership with USDA to provide agricultural statistics.

**Agricultural Crime Unit (ACU)**. The ACU provides law enforcement support for the department's regulatory and forestry programs related to animal and plant health, food safety, pesticide use and wildland fire arson investigation. The unit frequently assists local law enforcement agencies in the investigation and prosecution of crimes related to livestock theft and illegal drug manufacturing.

**Boll Weevil Eradication**. The Boll Weevil Eradication Program is a cooperative effort among the Tennessee and Southeastern Boll Weevil Eradication Foundations, TDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to rid the state of one of the costliest agricultural pests in history. The multi-year initiative to spray and monitor for boll weevils is primarily funded by cotton producers. The program is reaping substantial economic and environmental benefits by making farmers more competitive and reducing their reliance on cotton insecticides.

**Commodity Distribution**. TDA administers USDA's food distribution program for the National School Lunch Program. This program supports American agriculture while providing nutritious food to school children. TDA also administers the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which supplements the diets of low-income individuals. In fiscal year 2008, 29 million pounds of food valued at \$28.5 million were

ordered and allocated for schools, childcare institutions and non-profit charities.

*USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Tennessee Field Office.* The department maintains a cooperative relationship with this USDA agency to provide timely, unbiased statistics and analysis of farm production in Tennessee.

*Water Resources.* The state Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund helps landowners install Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality. In fiscal year 2008, 2,459 BMPs and 115 educational projects were funded through Soil Conservation Districts, local Resource Conservation and Development Districts and universities.

The goal of the federally-funded '319' program is to remove rivers and streams from the state's list of impaired waters. The program funds projects that address nonpoint-source pollution from urban areas, abandoned mine lands, farms and forests. In fiscal year 2008, the program had 22 ongoing watershed restoration projects, 12 educational projects and 12 watershed planning projects. TDA continues its involvement in the federal permitting program for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, administered by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. The department's primary role is to review all nutrient management plans associated with CAFOs.

**Forestry** — The Division of Forestry promotes the wise use of forest resources by helping landowners, fighting wildfires, providing quality seedlings, monitoring insects and diseases, improving urban forests, managing state forests, protecting water quality and collecting forest inventory data. To prevent wildfires, the division trains volunteer fire departments, issues burning permits, enforces fire laws and teaches the public fire safety.

*Landowner Assistance.* The Division provides technical advice and assistance to private, non-industrial landowners in forestry practices including timber and wildlife management, water quality protection, forest health and reforestation.

*Fire Protection.* The Division of Forestry has primary responsibility for wildfire suppression statewide. The department controls an average of 2,100 wildfires each year, saving timber and personal property valued in the tens of millions of dollars. The agency works to prevent fires by issuing outdoor burning permits and through education and law enforcement. The Division of Forestry also provides wildfire training, grants and surplus federal property to volunteer fire departments.

*Seedling Nursery & Tree Improvement.* The Division produces millions of high quality, low cost pine and hardwood seedlings for timber production, wildlife habitat improvement and erosion control. Working with the University of Tennessee and other organizations, the Division develops genetically superior stock capable of producing up to 30 percent more usable wood per acre.

*Forest Health Protection.* Foresters monitor native as well as exotic insect pests and diseases through a variety of aerial and ground survey techniques, provide information to the public and take action to control or slow the spread of certain forest pests. Foremost of these are the gypsy moth, the southern pine beetle, oak decline and mortality and more recently the hemlock woolly adelgid.

*Urban Forestry.* The urban forestry section provides urban tree management assistance to communities through federally funded grants administered by the division. This section also administers tree planting grants through the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program, and the Champion Tree, Tree City USA and TreeLine USA programs.

*Forest Products Utilization.* Forest products demand and harvested timber volume and value are monitored in the state. A directory of the state's wood-using industries is maintained, and better utilization practices are promoted to extend the state's forest resources.

*Water Quality Protection.* Protection of water quality during forestry operations is a priority. Partnering with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, foresters inspect logging sites for compliance with state water quality regulations and the use of forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs). Division foresters also train and advise loggers in the application of forestry BMPs.

*Forest Inventory and Analysis.* Certified inventory foresters take precise and detailed measurements on tree growth, quality, health and utilization at pre-determined locations across the state to provide an annual update on the condition of Tennessee's forests.

*State Forests.* Fifteen state forests totaling 164,111 acres are managed for a variety of public benefits including recreation, wildlife, unique features, timber and water quality. In 2002, Tennessee became the first southern state to have its state forests system "certified" by an independent auditor. Certification verifies that forest management practices are employed in accordance with strict environmental, social and economic standards.

State Forest	Acreage	County
Bledsoe	7,033	Bledsoe, Cumberland, Van Buren, White
Cedars of Lebanon	8,001	Wilson
Chickasaw	12,751	Chester, Hardeman
Chuck Swan	24,279	Campbell, Union
Franklin	6,907	Franklin, Marion
John Tully	2,132	Lauderdale
Lewis	1,288	Lewis
Lone Mountain	3,591	Morgan
Martha Sundquist	2,001	Cocke
Natchez Trace	36,643	Benton, Carroll, Decatur, Henderson
Pickett	19,848	Fentress, Pickett
Prentice Cooper	24,342	Hamilton, Marion, Sequatchie
Scott	2,827	Scott
Standing Stone	8,350	Clay, Overton
Stewart	4,259	Stewart

**Market Development** — With its prime geographical location, transportation infrastructure and production capacity, Tennessee is poised to fully participate in the expanding world market for agricultural products. Market Development works to maximize economic opportunities for Tennessee agriculture through innovative marketing programs and promotional services.

*Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program.* The TAEP was created in 2005 to help improve cattle production and to encourage diversification and innovation on Tennessee farms. The program provides cost share assistance to farmers for investment in key areas of agriculture with the goal of increasing farm income. In addition to cattle genetic improvement, livestock equipment and hay and feed storage facilities, the division also provides cost share assistance to farmers for organics, grape production, fruits and vegetables, honey, agritourism and many other developing areas of agriculture.

*Agricultural Industry Development and Recruitment.* Marketing efforts focus on increasing income for farmers and forestland owners and new jobs, which enhance income both locally and statewide. Emphasis is on recruiting new businesses including alternative fuels, emerging biotechnologies and expanding existing industries in food manufacturing and in the forest products industry.

*International Marketing.* Efforts are aimed at building opportunities for Tennessee producers and processors in world markets. Special emphasis is placed on marketing of food products, fruits and vegetables, horticultural products and livestock. Coop-

erative marketing activities are conducted in conjunction with the Southern United States Trade Association and other agricultural trade organizations to increase overseas sales of a variety of Tennessee agricultural products including nursery stock, livestock as well as processed food products. Recent trade missions have targeted marketing opportunities in Australia, China, Germany, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom, and reverse trade missions from Turkey, the Netherlands and Chile.

*Agritourism.* An ongoing statewide Agritourism Initiative is aimed at increasing income for Tennessee farmers and their communities. Primary partners include the Tennessee Departments of Agriculture, Tourist Development, Economic and Community Development, Transportation and the University of Tennessee Center for Profitable Agriculture with USDA Rural Development, the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation and Tennessee's Agritourism Association. Outreach efforts also include assistance to local governments and chambers of commerce interested in agritourism development. A vital part of this program is alerting consumers and potential tourists about farm-direct crops, like apples, pumpkins or strawberries, and entertainment opportunities and activities. The ultimate goal is to increase farm income and make a positive impact on rural communities in our state by identifying and promoting existing agritourism operations while developing additional farm-based venues.

*Pick Tennessee Products.* Market Development's domestic services focus on disseminating updated information through the division's Web site, [www.picktnproducts.org](http://www.picktnproducts.org). The aim of the promotional campaign is to increase consumer awareness of high quality, locally grown and processed food and other products. Participation in the program by Tennessee manufacturers, growers and retailers results in increased sales of Tennessee products as consumers learn to recognize and choose products featuring the "Pick Tennessee Products" logo.

*Tennessee Ag Tag.* The specialty license plate funds the Tennessee Agricultural Development Fund which pays thousands of dollars annually to agricultural organizations across the state for projects involving agricultural or forestry market development, public awareness, information and education. Ag Tags serve as traveling billboards for the *Pick Tennessee Products* promotion and have helped unify the state's agricultural industry with a single positive image.

*Market News Service.* Market Development assists farmers in the areas of price discovery and in packaging through Livestock Grading Services. Fruit and vegetable grading is provided through a joint program with USDA.

*Agricultural Fairs.* Fairs are a tradition and the department proudly supports some 50 agricultural fairs and livestock shows held each year throughout the state. In addition to showcasing the best of Tennessee agriculture, these events are a source of education, community pride and enjoyment. More than 3 million people attend a fair in Tennessee each year.

*Tennessee Agricultural Museum.* The museum is the department's outreach program to provide school children and adults an appreciation for agriculture's importance—past and present. About 25,000 visitors each year view the museum's 2,600 artifacts and participate in educational activities.

**Regulatory Services** — Regulatory Services monitors agricultural materials, food and consumer products and services to assure quality, public safety and a fair marketplace.

*Animal Diagnostics.* The C.E. Kord Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory provides a variety of diagnostic services in support of animal disease detection and animal health regulatory programs. Services range from animal export and import health certification to diagnostic support for practicing veterinarians, individual farmers

and companion animal owners. The department partners with the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and the University of Tennessee at Martin to provide animal diagnostic services in each grand division of the state.

*Agricultural Inputs.* This section ensures the safety and effectiveness of agricultural products for all Tennesseans. Animal feed, seed, fertilizer and agricultural lime products are inspected for proper labeling, and analyses are performed to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.

*Animal Health.* TDA is the common denominator between state and federal regulators, private veterinarians and livestock industries for animal disease surveillance, diagnosis and protection. Increased monitoring for potentially devastating animal health problems is part of the department's ongoing emergency planning and Homeland Security efforts. A portion of Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program funding is helping to improve and protect livestock health in the state through expanded diagnostic services, animal identification, increased access to veterinarian care, and through the promotion of livestock health management practices and record-keeping to increase the marketability of Tennessee livestock.

*Dairy.* TDA inspects dairy farms, dairy plants, milk transport trucks, dairy and trade product distributors, and milk samplers. Every dairy product offered for sale must be registered with the department.

*Food and Drug.* All retail food stores are inspected at least twice yearly. Food manufacturers, warehouses and distributors are also inspected. Other responsibilities include shell egg inspections, bottled water regulations, custom slaughterhouse inspections, hazardous substance inspection and labeling, nutritional labeling, and the enforcement of state tobacco laws regarding sales to minors.

*Laboratory Services.* The L.H. "Cotton" Ivy Laboratory provides quality analytical data in a safe, timely and efficient manner. The laboratory consists of biological services, including animal diagnostics and food microbiology; chemical services comprised of toxicology, food residue services and environmental monitoring; and feed, seed and fertilizer testing.

*Pesticides.* TDA registers all pesticides, administers certification and licensing exams for commercial and private applicators, inspects and regulates pest control businesses, as well as monitors the state's groundwater supply. The department also enforces agricultural pesticide Worker Protection Standards to ensure farm worker and pesticide applicator safety.

*Petroleum Quality.* The department verifies accurate octane rating labeling and the exclusion of harmful impurities in petroleum products.

*Plant Certification.* Nursery, greenhouse and plant dealer certification programs ensure the continued movement of healthy, pest-free plant material in interstate and international trade. The phytosanitary condition of plants coming into the state is also monitored. Some of the pests of major concern include gypsy moths, imported fire ants, Japanese beetles and boll weevils—all of which threaten Tennessee's forests, nurseries and major crops.

*Weights and Measures.* Commercially used weighing and measuring devices such as fuel pumps, scales and liquid propane gas meters are tested for accuracy and related requirements. Inspections are also conducted to ensure proper labeling, correct packaged product net quantity and price scanner accuracy.

## Related Boards and Commissions

**State Soil Conservation Committee** — In 1939 the Tennessee General Assembly passed the Soil Conservation District Act, creating the State Soil Conservation Committee. The committee assisted with the formation of soil conservation districts in all 95 counties, and today it continues to provide overall guidance and leadership to the state's soil and water conservation efforts. The committee advises the Commissioner of Agriculture and helps develop the state's plan for controlling agricultural-related nonpoint source pollution. Other duties include assisting the supervisors of soil conservation districts in carrying out their programs, coordinating such programs and assisting with watershed treatment programs.

**Tennessee Forestry Commission** — This seven-member panel appointed by the Governor with three ex-officio members provides guidance on program and policy development regarding forest resource programs of the department. The commission advises the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Governor on matters pertaining to forest protection, management, reforestation and related educational activities. Other responsibilities include reviewing the annual forestry budget and submitting an annual report of program accomplishments.

### Commissioner Ken Givens Tennessee Department of Agriculture

**Commissioner Ken Givens** was appointed by Governor Phil Bredesen and became Tennessee's 34th commissioner of agriculture on Jan. 18, 2003. Givens is a native of Rogersville where he grew up in dairy, beef cattle and tobacco farming. He is a U.S. Army veteran and holds a bachelor's degree in history and political science and a master's degree in political science from East Tennessee State University. He was first elected to the state House of Representatives in 1988, and he served as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee from 1997 to 2002. He was the House of Representatives' designee to the Tennessee Tobacco Farmers Certifying Board, which administered Phase II tobacco settlement funds for growers. During his 14 years in the House, Givens was instrumental in passing key farm legislation including a measure to ensure the ability of existing farm operations to expand under Tennessee's right-to-farm law. He also sponsored important legislation regarding forest management and dairy farming. He took a special interest in school health issues, sponsoring and passing legislation that created pilot programs for the model school health initiative, now expanded statewide. In April 2004, Governor Bredesen named Givens Chairman of the Governor's Task Force on Methamphetamine Abuse to develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing the manufacture, trafficking and abuse of the drug, which has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of homegrown meth labs. Givens serves on the Tennessee Homeland Security Council, representing the department in animal health, chemical use, food safety and other security matters. He is past-president of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture and the Southern U.S. Trade Association, both organizations representing the agricultural interests of 15 southern states and two U.S. territories. As commissioner of agriculture, he also serves on The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the Board of Regents for the State University and Community College System and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission. Commissioner Givens is married to Connie Hall Givens, who serves as state director of the Coordinated School Health Program in the Department of Education. They have three grown children and one wonderful granddaughter, Zoë.

