

Texas Agriculture Tour 2022

SARE Program Funds

Submitted by the Texas Agriculture Tour Planning Committee:

Kim Hall, Rachel Painter, Anthony Tuggle, Anna Duncan, Steve Harris, and Larry Moorehead

This tour of Texas Agriculture provided Extension Agents an opportunity to learn agricultural techniques and management practices used in Texas that could be implemented on the farm in Tennessee. Agents will be able to take the information learned and share their knowledge gained with Tennessee producers in their communities. The Texas Agriculture tour included many diverse operations practicing sustainability. The three pillars of sustainability are profit over the long-term, stewardship of natural resources, and quality of life for farmers and their communities. The tour also provided an opportunity for Tennessee Extension agents to connect with one another and learn from agribusiness owners and Texas A&M Extension Agents.

Capitol Land and Livestock in Schwertner, TX is one of the largest cattle dealers in the United States. The operation was established in 1946 and still owned and operated by the Schwertner family today. Capitol Land and Livestock also offers a weaning program, called Schwertner Select, that adds value to the consumers cattle. They have weaned over 175,000 calves yearly for the past 30 years on over 20,000 acres of improved pastures that are set up in 100-500 acre tracts. Calves are turned out on their natural habitat in order to decrease stress throughout the weaning process. This has enabled them to guarantee less than a 4% death loss using these practices. They are also able to utilize the pastures to ensure long-term availability through rotations. (<https://cllnet.com/schwertner-select/>)

Lindner Show Feeds and Lindner Show Pigs is a family owned and operated operation in Comfort, TX. They make mixed feeds and assist with creating a ration for healthy pigs across the nation. At 25, Luke Lindner is the youngest generation on the farm and shared with participants how to evaluate the muscle and fat cover on a pig and adjustments that can be made to ensure the best conditions for the animal. Through their Show Pigs side of the operation, they offer multiple breeds of show pigs that are farrowed year-round and sold off the farm. Many show pigs come from their farm on consignment, allowing the next generation to care for and show the pig and then return the pig to the Lindner farm. (<https://www.lindnershowfeeds.com/>)

Lyssy Beefmasters is a family farm in Stockdale, TX that has been in operation since 1972. The Lyssy family has passed down the passion for ranching by implementing many management practices to improve the herd. Their program includes multi-trait selection to create proven outcrosses exhibiting performance and predictability. Their pedigrees meet market demands and are known to be reputable across the world to registered cattle breeders and commercial cattlemen. Lyssy Beefmasters has been recording feed efficiency data the longest of any beefmasters genetics operation, offering bull buyers data from EPDs and feed conversions. One of their most memorable quotes they strive to live and manage their herd by is, "You cannot manage what is not measured." They stressed the importance of keeping herd and financial records. This allows their farm to be profitable in the long term and known for their good management practices. (<https://www.lyssybeefmasters.com/>)

King Ranch was founded in 1853 when Captain Richard King purchased a creek-fed oasis in South Texas. King Ranch now covers 825,000 acres- more land than the state of Rhode Island. King Ranch is

known for developing the Santa Gertrudis and Santa Cruz cattle breeds, breeding the finest Quarter Horses, and producing champion Thoroughbreds. King Ranch is a major agribusiness known for ranching, farming citrus, cotton, grain, sugar cane, and turfgrass, recreational hunting, and a wildlife refuge. King Ranch operates in a “systems” approach to sustainability, combining practices as environmental stewardship is interconnected with every step of production and management on the ranch. King Ranch’s game conservation efforts were some of the earliest and most progressive initiatives of their kind in American ranching history. That same vision for maintaining the balance of wild and domestic species on King Ranch lands is alive and well and very evident in modern-day King Ranch’s thorough and extensive nature stewardship programs. King Ranch also utilizes fire breaks and brush piles to manage fire and provide habitat for wild animals. GIS and GPS techniques are used to design the brush management patterns employed on each pasture. The targeted goal, following treatment, is for 65% of the pasture to be open grassland and 35% to remain in brush. This ratio should meet wildlife needs for concealment, browse, and edge, while also improving forage production for cattle. (<https://king-ranch.com/>)

J.D. Hudgins Ranch is located in Hungerford, Texas, 50 miles southwest of Houston. In the early 1900’s, as the family searched for a type of cattle which would thrive in the heat and parasites of the harsh Gulf Coast area, they turned their interest to the few humped Indian cattle which were available. In 1915, J.D. Hudgins and his son, Walter, began putting together all of the Indian cattle they could find and afford to purchase. In 1924, they were able to purchase a group of bulls which had been imported from Brazil. These, and other breeders’ humped cattle, formed the basis of the first breed to be developed in the United States – the American Brahman. The registry for the American Brahman breed was organized in that same year. J.D. Hudgins, Inc., is annually recognized by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association as being one of the ten largest purebred producers in the United States. The fifth and sixth generations of the family are now actively managing the business. Family members are always available to accommodate visitors, and visitors are always welcome. One of the youngest generations on the farm has been implementing intensive rotational grazing strategies utilizing a sprinkler timer system to raise the hot wire fences up 8 feet in the air when it is time for the cattle to move to the next paddock. Their ability to learn from and implement practices from all family members leads to high quality of life for their families and profitability for the long-term. (<https://www.idhudgins.com/>)

Prasek’s is a smokehouse and meat processing facility. The Prasek family stands by two founding principles that launched the brand to future success. The first, a true sense of family permeated all aspects of the operations, including the way the Praseks treated each customer – almost as if welcoming them into their home. The second founding conviction was the laser focus on quality and freshness in all that they offered to their patrons. The operation is now growing larger than ever before with the fourth generation of the Prasek family. From a small-town grocery in the 1970s to now being a major player in the Texas meats. They have two locations of their own and are in major retailer outlets like Costco, Pilot, Love’s, and more, and are expanding to Disney and other global retailers. They offer over 100 smoked meat items and over 100 fresh-baked delicacies. The popularity of their smoked meat products facilitated demand across the region, leading to the wholesale distribution division, including Prasek’s own label of smoked sausages and jerky now sold around the country. Prasek’s is also one of Texas’s leading wild game processors known to hunters far and wide. As product and service demand grew via expanding influence and the popular mall-order catalog, the family met the challenge by building Prasek’s own major meat processing facility in El Campo, Texas, securing unhindered growth

opportunities well into the future. With the expansion of their business, they have been able to offer many jobs in the small community of El Campo and bolstered the local economy. Three generations of the Prasek family welcomed Tennessee Extension to tour their facility and learn about meat processing and baking. The family atmosphere, transparency, and vertical integration of their business was apparent in everything they did. (<https://www.praseks.com/>)

Saha Fish Farm is located in El Campo, TX and raises catfish and hybrid-striped bass at two farm locations. They have about 500 acres of ponds. These ponds are maintained and monitored using sophisticated technology to provide high-quality fish. All of the fish are hatched, grown, and processed in the United States. The owners are also diversifying the operations to include solar energy. The solar panels are placed surrounding the fish ponds and rotate to capture the most sunlight possible throughout the day. Most of this energy goes to power Austin, TX. Mark Kubecka, partner in Saha Fish Farm, shared about sustainable practices in aquaculture and how farm-raised fishing can be a sustainable method to protect our seas and aquatic habitat. Mark also partners with his father and brother in M&W Kubecka Farms a diverse agricultural business growing crops. He is involved in budgeting, developing rotation plans, choosing varieties based on production history and market conditions and making financial decisions for the 5,000-plus acres of row crop and rice production. His aquaculture businesses have been in operation since 2002 and have grown tremendously since. (<https://www.texasaquaculture.org/PDF/2017%20PDF%20Documents/Tex.%20aquaculture%20industry%202017.pdf>)

Pierce Ranch was started by Abel “Shanghai” Pierce. He was constantly trying to improve the quality of his herd, known as “mossyhorns,” and had a keen understanding of the climactic constraints posed by both his home pasture and the places he was sending the cattle – all over the United States. Towards the end of his life, he planned to experiment with a new breed resistant to the heat, humidity, and ticks so prevalent in the Gulf Coast area. He toured Europe and returned convinced that Brahman cattle were the most likely to be immune. Though these cattle only lived in India, and were sacred to the Hindu religion, he was determined to bring them to his ranch. Pierce died before the realization of this dream. However, his nephew and executor of the estate was sent to India to import the Brahman cattle. A total of 51 head reached the United States and were placed under quarantine. After a special pardon by President Theodore Roosevelt, the cows cleared quarantine and headed to Texas. Today, the Brahman breed remains a vital part of the Pierce Ranch and continues to be the cornerstone of most Texas breeding operations. Today, the ranch is a diversified operation raising F-1 Braford cattle and farming rice, corn, sorghum, cotton, and soybeans. The ranch has also established native prairies for wildlife and offers tours and agritourism opportunities to stay on-site and enjoy the birds and wildlife in the prairies. They also use regenerative agriculture techniques including carbon sequestration and minimal soil disturbance. They plan to implement solar and wind energy on the property within the next decade. The operation is owned and operated by sixth generation of the family. One of the siblings shared, “We still run Brahman cattle, in honor of our great-great-grandfather Shanghai Pierce. We also farm row crops and oversee a crawfish operation, an irrigation company, and a commercial hunting operation. You can’t just sit on a piece of land, because you never know what the future holds.” —Laurance Armour. The owners shared about their practices and meeting the needs of consumers by constantly evolving to keep the agribusiness profitable for the long-term. (<https://www.pierceranchhouse.com/> <https://txliving.com/pierce-ranch/>)

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ promotes agriculture by hosting an annual, family-friendly experience that educates and entertains the public, supports Texas youth, showcases Western heritage and provides year-round educational support within the community. Since its beginning in 1932, the Rodeo has committed more than \$550 million to Texas youth and education. The nonprofit utilizes over 35,000 volunteers to put on the 24-day event. They committed \$27 million to scholarships, junior show exhibitors, educational program grants and graduate assistantships for 2020, which means that the Rodeo surpassed \$500 million in their total commitment to youth and education since 1932. With more than 19,000 scholarship recipients to date, including 2,300 current scholars, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is one of the largest scholarship providers in the country, and this diverse group of scholars represents more than 80 different Texas colleges and universities. This opens the door to agriculture for over 2 million visitors annually. This year, visitors came from over 75 different countries. By sharing and teaching others and supporting youth scholarships in agriculture, they are ensuring the sustainability of not only the livestock show and rodeo itself but connecting others to agriculture and the impact of this industry as a whole. (<https://annualreport.rodeohouston.com/> <https://www.rodeohouston.com/About-Us/Who-We-Are/Economic-Impact>)

See photos of the tour in this shared google album:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/KRx76s5yApCwWZX18>