

# TACC NEWSLETTER

## TEXAS AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE COUNCIL

1210 San Antonio Street; Suite 101  
Austin, Texas 78701  
512-450-0555 - Phone  
512-450-0655 - Fax  
[www.texas.coop](http://www.texas.coop)

### OFFICERS

#### President

**Suzy Davis**

Brownfield Farmers Co-op Station  
Brownfield, Texas

#### Vice President

**Brian Lehrmann**

Ropes Farmers Co-op Gin  
Ropesville, Texas

#### Secretary

**Tony Morton**

PYCO Industries, Inc.  
Lubbock, Texas

#### Immediate Past President

**James Massey**

Valley Co-op Oil Mill  
Harlingen, Texas

### STAFF

**Tommy Engelke**

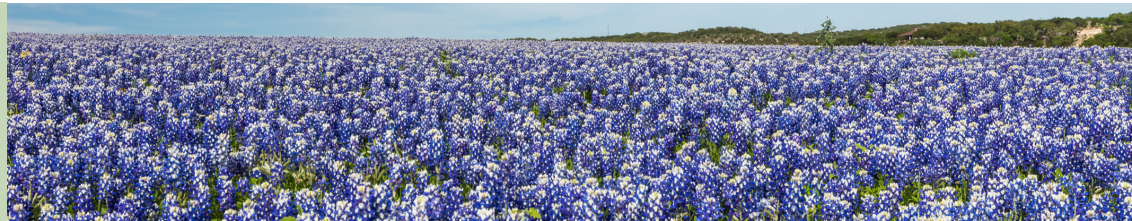
Executive Vice president

**Christy Lewis**

Director of Member Services

**Jessica Minter**

Administration and  
Communications Assistant



## A NOTE FROM TACC ASSOCIATE MEMBER AND CO-OP LAWYER, GARY MCLAREN

Many Texas agricultural cooperatives have asked questions about the Coronavirus and its implications on their annual meetings, particularly those meetings scheduled for April and May. TACC associate member and co-op lawyer, **Gary McLaren**, compiled a FAQ and suggestions document for any co-ops wondering what steps to take next. *A snippet of the material has been included below, and the full document, can be found on our "TACC News" page under 2020, or use this URL: [www.texas.coop/tacc-news/](http://www.texas.coop/tacc-news/).*

#### Can our coop simply cancel its annual meeting for this year?

- No. Texas agricultural cooperatives operate under two state laws, the Texas Business Organizations Code-Nonprofit Corporations and the Texas Agricultural Code-Cooperative Marketing Association Act pertaining to annual meetings, each of which mandates that an agricultural cooperative must have an annual meeting.

#### Could we postpone our meeting to a later date?

- Yes. Some coops have a bylaw provision which states a specific date or time frame for the coop's annual meeting. Such bylaw provisions can be overcome, in these circumstances, by a reasonable postponement, in this case based upon meeting restrictions imposed by city and county officials essentially rendering most annual meetings impossible to conduct through May. In this regard, many coops are contemplating late August or September meetings to accommodate crop schedules and perhaps get beyond the projected meeting restriction schedules.

## RECRUITMENT EFFORTS FOR SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM CONTINUED THROUGH SPRING SEMESTER

During the beginning of the spring semester, TACC visited four ag colleges across the state in an effort to educate students about the co-op business model and recruit for the upcoming summer internship program. We spoke to several classes at Angelo State University, Tarleton State University, and West Texas A&M University, where we visited with several impressive and motivated students.

While making the rounds in West Texas during the beginning of February, a snowstorm caused Texas Tech University's campus to close the day of our visits. With the help of our professor contact, the word got out to various classes and we had multiple students apply. Class visits for this semester ended with a day trip to College Station where we spoke to a large group of students of mixed class years that asked some great questions. In all, TACC and participating co-op and industry representatives will interview 12 students for potential internship placement.

## TACC HOSTS IT'S FIRST – EVER FARM STORE SUMMIT

It's funny how ideas can be borne. One happened late last Fall during a routine field contact visit in the Rio Grande Valley. During the stop, the co-op manager said, "Tommy, we need to hold a 'Farm Store Summit' because this is one area of the company that consistently seems to operate on thin margins throughout the state." That was all it took. From there TACC, in cooperation with the Texas A&M Co-op Chair, a school was assembled in Fredericksburg, Texas on two half days: Monday afternoon (to allow attendees to drive in), January 20 and Tuesday morning (to allow attendees to drive home) January 21.

The Monday afternoon program had one concept: allow all 38 people in attendance to sit around one big square table and, one at a time, vent about their respective farm store best practices and concerns. To this day, people are still talking about all the ideas that surfaced, the good, the bad, the new ideas that came to light, and how to proceed in the future. The Tuesday morning program featured several key people on how they run their stores. One was **Rich White**, the CEO of an HEB Grocery Store in Bryan, who teaches many business classes at Texas A&M University. His insight was simply amazing and how that practice can translate into many co-op farm supply operations. A second speaker was **Mike Musselman** of Orgill, which provides hardware products to many co-op farm supply stores. This opened many eyes and provided new avenues for operating co-op stores in the future.

A third speaker was **James Deatherage**, CEO of one of the largest farm supply co-ops in the country in Bryan, Texas. James talked about how his operation has transformed itself since it began in 1943 ---- AND NEVER LOST MONEY! His business insight into operational philosophy was inspiring to say the least. The meeting closed with final thoughts from co-op attorney **Gary McLaren** of Lubbock and **Dr. John Park** of the Roy B. Davis Chair at A&M. The group was so impressed that they called for another one in 2021. It is set for January 28 - 29, 2021 back again in Fredericksburg and at least one featured speaker has already been confirmed: **Bart Krisle**, CEO of one of the largest farm supply regional co-op's in the nation out of Nashville, TN.



## TACC RELOADS AND CONDUCTS IT'S SECOND CONSECUTIVE TEXAS ACADEMY IN COOPERATIVE EXCELLENCE

For the second consecutive year, the Council hosted an emerging leaders program whereby local cooperatives could select and send an emerging & enterprising farm couple to a leadership school to learn more about the co-op form of business. It was nicknamed the ACE program for short. The three day meeting was held over the January 31 - February 2 weekend so that grandparents could keep the little toots at home while the parents enjoyed their time in the popular central Texas community of Fredericksburg. In the prior year, the conference had been held in downtown San Antonio.

The program consisted of: history of the co-op model, how it has transformed over the years, how a co-op can be made to work for you, common practices of co-op directors, and most of the speech topics were not handled by one person, but a panel or group instead which caused considerable dialog and discussion. Many co-op leaders served as speakers for the conference.

The meeting attracted nearly 60 attendees, speakers, and guests, but it also included tours on Saturday afternoon to three wineries in the area. Farmers Co-op Compress, Plains Cotton Cooperative Association, Gulf Compress, Valley Co-op Oil Mill, and PYCO Industries underwrote much of the financing of the event, but many other co-ops participated as well like CoBank, Triangle Insurance and countless others. Next year the conference returns to Lubbock to be hosted by the Lubbock regional cotton cooperatives.

## HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF TACC'S EFFORTS IN AUSTIN

The inaugural year for Fundraiser February brought to light some of the highlights and important activities of TACC-PAC. In an effort to raise awareness and support, TACC distributed flyers at various meetings, sent out weekly emails and posted multiple times on Facebook. TACC also developed a new tri-fold flyer that you will soon see circulating around the membership that highlights TACC-PAC and our faithful supporters. If you have not yet, check out information about TACC-PAC efforts in Austin on our website at [texas.coop/legislative/tacc-pac/](https://texas.coop/legislative/tacc-pac/).

## INTERVIEWS FOR SUMMER INTERNSHIP APPLICANTS CONTINUES BY UTILIZING VIDEO CONFERENCING

The interview process for TACC's 2020 internship program began Monday, March 23, 2020. Over the next two weeks, TACC staff along with co-op managers and staff, industry representatives, and college professors will interview a total of 12 students from six ag universities. TACC offers a unique application process that allows students to experience panel interviews and receive constructive feedback on their presented materials. Experiences like this are invaluable as we help to prepare students not only for our internship program, but also for their future careers. What an awesome opportunity we have to pour into students and help guide them to be successful future employees!

## TRUCKING REGULATIONS SUSPENDED TO AID IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott issued a state of disaster declaration and the next day took additional steps regarding the pandemic by waiving some commercial trucking regulations, thereby allowing these vehicles to exceed their 84,000-pound maximum load limitations. He also suspended some registration and temporary permit requirements so long as the trucks are registered in one of the states in the U.S. This will aid in distributing food to grocery stores across the state.

The Texas Department of Motor vehicles will coordinate this action (888-368-4689).

## CANCELLATION OF JOINT COOPERATIVE MEETING

The Council is deeply saddened that we were forced to cancel the TACC Joint Cooperative Meeting scheduled for The Woodland Resort down near Houston due to a declaration order by the Montgomery County judge. Given the health concern of everyone, it was the right thing to do. Next year's meeting has been set for March 14 - 16, 2021 at the very popular La Cantera Hotel and Resort on the northwest side of San Antonio. Most all of the guest speakers confirmed for the 2020 meeting have agreed to work with us and delay their financial requirements and presentations until the 2021 meeting.

TACC's **Tommy Engelke** says of the cancellation, "It was unfortunate that we had to come to this decision and like the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and other similar ag events, on the surface it looks like a pretty simple ordeal to cancel, but nothing could be further from the truth. There are financial concerns, a multitude of contracts and firms to deal with, and a disruption in the normal flow of everyday business. So many people had made plans months in advance and to them those cancellations were not easy as well. We can't say enough for all the effort so many people made to make this event so special only to have it cancelled."

The TACC Executive Committee is working through a number of options so as to conduct its annual meeting in the near future via electronic technology and the Council will keep you posted on those measures as they are confirmed. Award winner presentations and TACC - PAC recognitions are also being considered for the most opportune time.

## NEW TO TACC SOCIAL MEDIA -- LINKED IN

In addition to our very successful Facebook page, TACC has recently established a new professional networking opportunity through LinkedIn. We will be using this platform to talk about professional development opportunities, important takeaways from meetings, and as a professional outreach tool. This will allow potential interns, other associations, and legislative members to gain an overview of the professional development opportunities TACC offers, and the takeaways from each.



TACC'S UNIQUE QR CODE  
TO ACCESS LINKEDIN PAGE

## TACC EXPANDS ASSISTANCE TO ELECTRIC CO-OPS

TACC took a giant leap recently when it completed its first-ever economic footprint placemat for an electric co-op. It was for the 2,200-member Lighthouse Electric Co-op (806-983-2814) in Floydada, Texas, which has been serving the electrical needs of 12 counties Northeast of Lubbock since 1938. In the placemat, we were able to highlight several of their services, report important outage information, and display their districts. **Albert Daniel** serves as general manager. Many of its directors are also on the board of a number of ag co-ops in the area.



Floydada — Memphis, Texas

## TOMMY'S TODDLES

If you go to enough conferences in recent years many of the speakers stress to “do things to get out of your comfort zone.” HELLO ---- HELLO ---- HELLO!!! Are we there yet?

I've heard some say we are now living in a time where there is “a golden opportunity at leadership” for the ag industry. Others have said, one of the bright spots during this pandemic is that more and more people are beginning to realize where their food comes from and the difficulty so many people have to endure to make that process happen --- all the way from the turn row to the super market shelves! Still others laminate hopefully some of the younger generations - long removed from the land -- will no longer take their food for granted.

Good things can come from this. Maybe there is a lesson to be learned from the U.S. dependency on foreign oil in the 1980s where we saw long lines at the gas pumps in cyclical fashion for years. Finally the U.S. stood up and said no more! They became creative because the hard times demanded it. Just look at what has happen with the U.S. energy industry in the last decade!

Because of this virus, perhaps a more creative generation will develop more than what we have ever experienced before. Maybe because of this, medicinal and biotechnological advances will be made to find cures never seen before and at a much more rapid rate. Challenging times seem to bring out the best and most creative and innovative passions in all of us. Our reserve energies seem to come to the forefront like never before.

I am excited and interested in seeing what and who is a part of that new dawning!



## NEW 2020 DIRECTORY IN THE WORKS

Once again, TACC has begun preparing the 2020 TACC Directory and Handbook which gives members access to a multitude of information. It contains contact information on all ag, electric, telephone and farm credit co-ops in the state AND has the information cross-referenced three ways: by city, by managers last name, and by type of co-op. The book also has a section on “Co-op 101”, history of co-ops, and state and federal agencies / trade associations that impact cooperatives. Everything you need to know about co-ops in Texas in one place!

Due to current national health concerns, the printing and delivery of the directory and handbook will be delayed. TACC continues to monitor and assess the situation, and its effects on our organization and members.