



# 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 which are coordinated and enhanced through Project FORGE.

Issue 4

Aisha Cruz, Writer/Editor

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## eFARM – getting the word out

In the months of planning for the launch of the Electronic Farm and Ranch Management (eFARM) Project, the TMBC staff has designed a simple and easily recognizable promotional tool to include in all eFARM advertisements and training materials.

The eFARM logo, shown below, is a symbol of the efforts of the TMBC to connect agricultural producers to the USDA and USDA programs through the electronic government (eGov) initiative.

an electronic medium, including the use of the Internet, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and call centers.

The TMBC anticipates that producers will recognize the eFARM logo and associate it with the numerous benefits of doing USDA-related business online.

Because this logo will be included on all

*[eFARM. Continued on page 2](#)*

## Events Calendar:

### January

28 **Risk Management: Investing in your Future, Rio Grande City, Texas**

### February

15 FSA eGov Training, College Station, Texas

17 TCE Ag and Financial Management Seminar, Weslaco, Texas

### March

10 NRCS eGov Training, Corpus Christi, Texas

24 **Producer Awareness Seminar, Hebbronville, Texas**

30 USDA Training Sessions, Edinburg, Texas

31 Grant Proposal Workshop, Edinburg, Texas

### April

4 **eFARM Help Desk Start Up**

### May

22 **Border Region Hispanic Producers' Conference, Eagle Pass, Texas**

To keep up with always-advancing technology, and to better serve its customers, eGov is how the USDA is making its services available on the Internet. Using the Internet, producers will be able to review, complete, and submit USDA program applications online. Additionally, producers can track personal program information without the time and expense of visiting a USDA Service Center.

According to the USDA eGov strategic plan, all objectives of the eGov initiative lead to enhanced program service and delivery using



# eFARM

## Save the date

The TMBC will be hosting its annual Directors' Meeting in conjunction with the **2005 Texas/Mexico Border Region Small Producers' Conference**.

This year, the regional conference will be held May 22 – 25 in Eagle Pass, Texas. The venue for the conference is the Eagle Pass Multi-purpose Center at Fort Duncan.

The target audiences for this conference are owners and operators of small farms and ranches located within the Texas/Mexico border region.

A minimal conference registration fee is

required for producers, but, as an incentive, scholarships are available for small producers and small acreage landowners who attend the conference. The stipend will cover mileage costs for travel to and from the conference and hotel costs. The stipend is available on a first come, first serve basis.

Conference topics are intended to educate and inform producers of new crop and value-added opportunities that are available to small producers or on small acreages.

Some topics included on the conference agenda are: Potential Crops and Markets for

*[Save the date, continued on page 2](#)*

## GLCI

By: Rob Zeihr

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) is a national initiative that began in 1991 when a group of concerned grazing lands producers gathered to discuss the decline in technical assistance available for grazing lands. The GLCI is focused on enhancing privately owned grazing lands by advocating for direct conservation technical assistance for the farmers and ranchers who own and manage these lands.

The GLCI enables increased conservation technical assistance for private grazing lands producers through a legislative earmark in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) budget. NRCS is a leader in promoting grazing lands conservation.

Texas NRCS has 731 permanent full-time employees, including 59 that are designated Rangeland Management Specialists. Statewide, NRCS employees spend more than half of their time providing technical assistance on grazing lands. In Texas, GLCI Coordinators devote 100 percent of their efforts to promoting GLCI activities in the field.

What does this mean for the grazing lands owner/operator? Through GLCI, more direct technical assistance is available to help meet grazing lands production and conservation goals and objectives. Trained specialists are available to assist in many facets of conservation technical assistance such as: prescribed grazing, prescribed burning, brush management, and wildlife habitat management planning and implementation. Additionally, Texas GLCI provides grants of up to

[GLCI, continued on page 3](#)

## eFARM

eFARM marketing material, the TMBC also hopes that recognition of the logo will spur interest in the free Internet and computer training sessions the organization is providing.

Training sessions include instruction on parts of the computer, basic computer skills, navigating the Internet and setting up and using e-mail. Sessions are arranged so that participants can choose to attend the specific classes that best suit their Internet and computer skills or experience level.



A vital component of the series of training sessions is instruction on the eGov initiative. Lessons on eGov

will include how to sign-up for, access and use online services that include the personalized Customer Statement and eForms and eFile.

## Save the date

Small Producers; a Producers' discussion panel; breakout sessions covering specialty crops, and; marketing co-ops and produce co-ops. EGov Training will be available on-site.

Speakers and presenters that have been invited include Dr. Ed Mahoney and Claude Ross; Rigoberto Delgado of Heifer International; Merlin Bartz, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief; Billy Curb, USDA Rural Development Business and Cooperative Specialist; John Mayne Ph D; Mark Keller; and Omar Garza.

The conference will open with a mixer on Sunday evening with entertainment provided by local cultural groups.

Monday's activities include a keynote speaker and breakout sessions. Monday night's dinner is scheduled to take place in a local casino.

Tours of an olive farm, hydroponics greenhouse, pecan orchard and the Del Monte farm and processing plant are scheduled for Tuesday.

The conference will come to a close on Wednesday after an informative session on

To further marketing efforts, an eFARM informational brochure has been developed. Through cooperation with USDA county service centers in the TMBC service area, the eFARM brochure will be distributed in communities where training sessions can be held. Responses about the project will be used to plan future Internet and computer training sessions.

The eFARM brochure will be available to advocates of the eFARM Project. Producers who pick up the brochure and are interested in attending or helping to organize an Internet and computer training session should mail the inside right panel to the TMBC.

For a sample of the brochure or to assist in disbursing, please contact the Aisha Cruz at 956-488-0543 or [tmbc@tm-bc.org](mailto:tmbc@tm-bc.org).

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getting research crops to market through small producers and micro lending.

This regional conference is sponsored by the TMBC, the City of Eagle Pass, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas Department of Agriculture, University of Texas – Pan American Project FORGE, area Soil & Water Conservation Districts and the Rio Grande-Nueces RC&D. Additional supporters are the Cooperative State Research Extension and Education Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and National Agricultural Statistics Service.

EGov training will be available throughout the Conference. All conference participants are encouraged to attend the training regardless of Internet and computer experience, as eGov will become more and more important for agricultural producers in the near future.

A conference agenda is located on pages four and five of this newsletter. For more information about the Conference or the scholarship and to RSVP, please contact Aisha Cruz at 956-488-0534.

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## GLCI

\$2,500 available to individuals or organizations to implement projects that promote the conservation of privately owned grazing lands.

Because Texas is made up of more than 70 percent grazing lands and ninety-seven percent of the grazing lands are privately owned, providing technical assistance to grazing land managers is a priority. [Back to page 1](#)

### TMBC CBO Directors and Staff

**Chairman,** Omar J. Garza  
Santa Elena, Texas

**Vice-Chairman,** Ray Margo  
Santa Elena, Texas

**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,** Mark Grijalva  
Fabens, Texas

**Director,** Larry Ernst  
Leaky, Texas

**Director,** Mario Escobar  
Crystal City, Texas

**Director,** Ruben Carrasco  
Presidio, Texas

**Director,** Rigoberto Delgado  
El Paso, Texas

**Technical Assistance,**  
Neal Alvarado

**Project Director, eFARM,**  
Aisha Lee Cruz

**Project Director, FARM,**  
Raul Villarreal, Jr.

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## Outreach staff training in College Station

Project FORGE outreach staff received USDA electronic government (eGov) training from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in College Station in February 15.

The training emphasized the USDA eGov initiative, including eAuthentication, eForms, Customer Statements and the My.USDA.gov web portal. The training also reviewed eGov initiatives specific to FSA, including electronic Direct and Counter Cyclical Payments (eDCP) and electronic Loan Deficiency Payments (eLDP).

Project FORGE outreach staff attending the training included Aisha Cruz and Eduardo Orozco, the director and an instructor, respectfully, for the eFARM Project which is operated by the TMBC. Orozco conducts weekly Internet and computer training classes in rural communities and Cruz will lead the eGov training sessions. The two will incorporate training material and strategies into their own sessions.

The TMBC is also implementing an eGov Help Desk. Ismael Delgado, director of the project, also attended the training.

John Fuston, FSA State Executive Director, welcomed the training participants, made introductions, and emphasized the importance of the training curriculum, entitled eGov Training – Electronic Access to FSA. He followed by providing the opening session, an overview of FSA eGov.

Prior to the lunch break, FSA District Director Eddie Trevino provided the group with training on creating a Level 2 account and eAuthentication. He also provided training on eForms, which included filing FSA forms electronically and the FSA steps involved in processing FSA forms electronically.

After lunch, FSA Program Specialists Chris



L to R: Omar Garza, Eduardo Orozco, Ismael Delgado, Olivia Garcia, Amy Coslin, Aisha Cruz, Chris Morris, Eddie Trevino, Juan Garcia, Raymond Lopez and Herbie Marchbanks.

Morris, Kirk Goodman and Herbie Marchbanks provided training on electronic Direct- and Counter-Cyclical Program (eDCP), electronic Loan Deficiency Program (eLDP) and the USDA Customer Statement. Marchbanks and Program Specialist Amy McCoslin also provided training on Geographic Information Systems and the My.USDA.gov portal.

Juan Garcia, FSA Program Manager, ended the training session with a general review and a wrap up.

“FSA did a great job with this training,” said Omar Garza, HiFARM Project Director and TMBC Chairman. This will allow us to do a better job with USDA eGov training and technical assistance projects.”

George Bennack, director of Project FORGE, concurred, “FSA has really helped us prepare for USDA eGov projects. It’s also an innovative way to provide FSA program and outreach.”

The TMBC provides Internet, computer and eGov training, primarily to Hispanic producers, in Texas and New Mexico. For more information on this eGov training, contact Aisha Cruz at 956/488-0534 or [tmbc@tm-bc.org](mailto:tmbc@tm-bc.org).

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### Texas/Mexico Border Coalition Community-based Organization

208 South Norris Street  
Rio Grande City, Texas 78582

[www.tm-bc.org](http://www.tm-bc.org)  
[tmbc@tm-bc.org](mailto:tmbc@tm-bc.org)

Phone: (956)488-0534  
Fax: (956)487-2414



# notes

## Is Your Land Benefiting Your Family?

The Purpose of the Small Producers' Conference is to:

- Introduce potential cash crops that can be produced on small acreages:
  - Olive Production; Dairy Goat and Meat Goat Production; Traditional and Specialty Crops such as: Hydroponics; Organic Vegetable Production; and new crops such as Stevia.
- Assist producers in the development of commodity groups in order to market their products.
- Assist in providing technical assistance and training to producers.
- Assist in identifying public and private funding .
- **Offer 3 General CEUs.**

*Our efforts will focus on what we term as "small producers."*

If you have the use of half an acre or more, you should attend. However, there is no limit. If you have more, this conference will benefit you also.

## Texas/Mexico Border Region Small Producers' Conference

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**Fort Duncan**

**Multi-purpose Center**

**Eagle Pass, Texas**

**May 22-25, 2005**

# AGENDA

## Sunday, May 22nd

Opening Mixer

## Monday, May 23rd

7 - 9 Registration (continues all day)

9 - 10 Welcome and Introductions -  
Local and agency officials

1015 - 1130 Potential Crops & Markets for  
Small Producers - Claude Ross, USDA  
and Jason Johnson, TCES

1130 - 12 Heifer International - Rigoberto  
Delgado

12 - 1 Luncheon  
Speaker Merlin Bartz, USDA NRCS  
Regional Assistant Chief (Invited)

1 - 2 Break Out Sessions I  
Olive Production  
Hydroponics  
Dairy and Meat Goat  
Organic Vegetables

2 - 3 Break Out Sessions II

320 - 350 Stevia Production & its  
Medical Benefits - Dr. Daniel Lescovar

350 - 435 Marketing Co-ops & Producer  
Co-ops - Billy Curb, USDA

435 - 5 Marketing to Grocery Chains -  
Robert Maggiani, TDA

630 - 9 Casino Visit & Dinner

## AGENDA, CONT.

### Tuesday, May 24th

8 - 12 Tour of Pecan Orchard & Del  
Monte Processing Plant

1230 - 130 Lunch at Double C Ranch

130 - 5 Tour of Olive Farm & Hydroponics  
Greenhouse

### Wednesday, May 25th

8 - 9 Getting Research Crops to Market  
Faster Using Small Producers - Dr. J.  
W. Halloway

9-930 Sustainable Agriculture & Research  
Education - John Mayne, Ph.D.

930 - 10 Micro Lending - Mark Keller,  
Southwest ACA & Lucy  
Maldonado, US SBA

1015 - 1045 Wrap Up

1045 - 12 Texas/Mexico Border Coalition  
Annual Meeting - Omar Garza,  
Chairman

#### Hotel Information:

La Quinta 800-531-5900 (Headquarters)  
Holiday Inn 830-757-3050  
Best Western 830-758-1234

\*\*Please inquire for the Small Producers' Conference rate.

#### Hosted By:



## Small Producers' Conference Registration Form

Sign up for:

Conference Registration

Price:

\$25.00/ person

Number of people attending \_\_\_\_\_

x \$25 each

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment:

Check

NFC

Bill me

Please indicate which tours you are interested in  
attending (check all that apply).

Pecan Orchard and Del Monte

Lunch at Double C Ranch

Olive Farm and Hydroponics Greenhouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

**\*\*Scholarships** available for travel costs, hotel costs,  
and registration.\*\*

For information or to RSVP, please contact:

**Aisha Cruz**

956-488-0534 or

956-481-3256

aishac14@hotmail.com

**Erika Melo**

316-527-3529

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Texas/Mexico Border Region Small Producers' Conference

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## Goal of the eFARM Project

Provide USDA program outreach through Internet and computer training and technical assistance in rural areas, in order to encourage and assist border region farmers and ranchers to participate in agricultural programs. The project will support USDA's eGovernment strategic plan by improving producers' knowledge of and access to USDA programs.

## Purpose of the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition Community-based Organization

To establish and maintain the health, social, environmental and economic integrity and survival of small rural communities along the Texas/Mexico border by being an advocate of change while focusing on their plight.

Provide information, education and training addressing needs unique to the historically underserved and unserved rural communities.

Provide a voice at local, state, and national levels of government to bring equality to the communities of the area.



208 South Norris Street  
Rio Grande City, Texas 78582

Additional Contact Information:  
Phone: 956-488-0534  
Fax: 956-487-2414



# eFARM

Electronic Farm and Ranch  
Management Project

*Internet,  
computer and  
eGovernment  
training for  
border region  
agricultural  
producers.*



# Connecting Producers to Programs

The Texas/Mexico Border Coalition, a non-profit educational organization, has teamed up with local organizations in your community to offer free Internet and computer training sessions. Training sessions will be held at a local school, library or community center. In communities where Internet connections are not available, other arrangements can be made. Classes will cover computer skills at the beginning level and at the intermediate to advanced level and will teach you how to navigate the Internet. Internet session will lead to instruction on USDA eGovernment objectives that help producers save time and money and operate more efficiently.

The eGov initiative has been implemented by the USDA to provide up-to-date, readily available information for each producer. The purpose of this online option is to enhance USDA program service and delivery. The eGov web site provides access to your personalized USDA customer statement and to program applications that can be submitted online at your convenience.



## Internet

In the Internet classes, you will learn how to navigate the Internet, find information you want at anytime of day or night, and set-up an E-mail account. A demonstration of the eGov web site and its attributes will expose you to the benefits of doing business with the USDA online, including viewing your customer statement, personalized web portal and setting up direct deposits for program payments.

## Computer

These training sessions will be available at beginning and intermediate to advanced skill levels. Basic skills include learning the parts of the computer and how to use the keyboard and mouse. Intermediate and advanced sessions will cover computer software such as Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint.

## Technical Assistance

Technical assistance will be available beyond the training sessions in the form of the WTT Ag Help Desk. The Help Desk will be available Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm for any participants with question about computer applications or USDA eGov concerns. Help Desk technicians speak English and Spanish. The Help Desk can be reached at (956)318-9831 and (956)318-9832 or faxed at (956)318-8930.



# eFARM

## Internet and Computer Training

If you would like TMBC to schedule training in your area, please answer a few questions below so that we may plan appropriately.

Level of computer experience:  
 Beginning  
 Intermediate/Advanced

Level of Internet experience:  
 Beginning  
 Intermediate/Advanced

Are you an Agricultural Producer?  
 Yes  
 No

Have you ever applied for a USDA program?  
 Yes  
 No

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

**Please return to:**  
Texas/Mexico Border Coalition- CBO

208 South Norris Street  
Rio Grande City, Texas 78582

**Additional Contact Information:**  
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