Middle Tennessee Agricultural Issues Forum

Purpose

The purpose of the agricultural issues forum is to present a current issue to a public audience; therefore, professional ethics and standards are to be considered. Ignoring truthful information, falsifying needed information, using unreliable sources, and plagiarism are examples of violations that could result in disqualification.

Objectives

This event will provide the participant with the ability to

- Investigate a variety of local, state, national and international issues facing agriculture through classroom instruction.
- Engage students in selecting, researching, planning, and presenting a local, state, national, or international agricultural issue relevant to the local community.
- Demonstrate through the portfolio, presentation and questioning an understanding of the principles and fundamentals of agricultural issue analysis.
- Connect agriculture students with professionals in the industry as they research and present their forum.
- Increase the awareness of an agricultural issue at the local, state or national level through forum presentations.
- Apply teamwork, leadership and communication skills for career success.

Event Rules

The top two teams will advance to the state contest at the Tennessee State FFA Convention.

The regional contest is open to any team and will take place at Tennessee Tech University Hyder Burks Pavilion on February 12th. The snow date will be February 13th.

A team should be composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of seven actively participating students, orally presenting and available to answer the judges' questions. Each student must actively participate in the presentation to be eligible for awards. This includes active participation in the presentation and making themselves available for questions from the judges in all rounds of competition. Only the certified team members can take an active role in the presentation of materials and technology during the presentation.

Presentations may include official FFA dress, costumes, props, skits and other creative paraphernalia. Costumes, props, skits and other paraphernalia must be professional in nature and used to showcase respect for all cultures. The event committee reserves the right to remove any team whose presentation, props, skits, or other actions disrespect others or show a lack of good judgment.

Materials submitted by the team must reflect their own skills and efforts. Any sources used must be properly cited.

Once the team presentation begins, no non-team member can assist in the delivery. If a non-team member were to interject in assisting the team, the team would not advance to the next round.

A minimum of three competent and unbiased judges will be provided. They will be instructed not to take sides on the issue(s). The superintendent of this event will adequately prepare the judges before the event. Teams should refrain from having contact with the judges throughout the competition, i.e., no samples may be left with the judges.

Use of Technology and Props

Teams are encouraged to be creative in developing their team presentations, including technology and other props. Teams are cautioned that the use or overuse of any technology or prop that reduces the focus on the content provided by the team and the team's presentation of the content can result in a lower presentation score.

Showcase Respect of all Cultures

The agricultural issues leadership development event respects and promotes the practice of one's First Amendment rights; however, respect should always be demonstrated to cultures different from the speaker's. A team should not provide a forum that could be considered offensive to a culture different from their own. Answers to questions should be answered with facts rather than opinions or stereotypes. The definition of culture is broadly defined; therefore, it is recommended to consider all cultures as professionals. It is further recommended that teams present their forums to diverse audiences, including the dynamic of cultures represented in the presentation. By completing this task, written and verbal feedback should provide a quality measure on the cultural sensitivity of the forum.

Event Format

Each team will conduct a presentation on the issue developed and presented locally.

A front projection screen will be provided. Other equipment is allowed, but the presenting team must provide any other equipment they may need.

The agricultural issue could come from one of the eight topics listed in the Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials. These are:

- Environmental Issues
- Agricultural Technology Issues
- Animal Issues
- Agricultural Career Issues
- Economy and Trade Issues
- Agricultural Policy Issues
- Food Safety Issues
- Biotechnology Issues

Based on the categories listed above, the same general agricultural issue topic will not be used by the same chapter and/or advisor in the following three years.

Research on the topic must be current, and students must be involved in studying the topic and developing the portfolio.

Portfolio

The portfolio will be limited to 10 single-sided pages or five double-sided 8 ½ x 11-inch pages maximum, not including the cover page. Margins are to be set at a minimum of 1 inch on top and bottom.

A maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum number of pages and/or for not including the cover page containing the required information.

Agricultural issues portfolios must be uploaded to the designated section on Judging Card by 11:59 pm central on March 1st unless otherwise communicated by state staff. If the portfolio is turned after the deadline, a 10% penalty will be given to the portfolio. If it is received later than one week, the portfolio will receive a score of 0.

Cover

Required information on the cover to avoid score deductions:

- The title of the issue is stated as a question.
- Date of the state qualifying event.
    - Teams should use the date of the regional event.
- Name, address, state and phone number of the chapter.

Summary

A maximum of two pages of the portfolio will include a summary of the issue.

- The summary pages should be written using a font no smaller than Times New Roman 10.
- The purposes of the summary are to provide an overview of the issue and to demonstrate an understanding of the principles and fundamentals of agricultural issue analysis.
- The summary needs to include the course(s) in which instruction occurred and the number of students involved in the instruction on agricultural issues.
- The summary must include in-text citations where appropriate.
- Citations must conform to the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual.

The summary may also include, but is not limited to, responses to the following questions:

- Why is this issue important now?
- What is the nature of the issue?
- Who is involved in the issue?
- How can the issue be defined?
- What is the historical background of the issue?
- What caused the issue?
- What are the risks?
- What are the benefits?
- A bibliography of all resources and references cited should include personal interviews, when appropriate, and any other supporting material. The bibliography must conform to the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual.

For additional background on these questions, refer to the resource "Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials" and review the PowerPoint "Agricultural Issues Analysis" in the Teaching Materials section at FFA.org/resources/ag-issues.

Documentation

For a forum to be awarded points, it must have occurred before the state qualifying event, and there must be independent verification of the forum presentation date. "Independent" means that verification needs to be provided by someone in the organization or the group to whom the presentation was made. The independent documentation needs to state when, where and to whom the forum was presented.

Documentation can include the following:

- Letters from organizations.
- News articles that include the date of the presentation and/or the date the article is printed.
- Photos showing attendance at forums are needed, but independent documentation of the date of the forum presentation is required.
- If more than one forum is held on the same day, the starting times of the multiple forums on the same day must also be independently documented.

Forum Presentations

A chapter must have a minimum of five high-quality public forum presentations before their regional qualifying event to receive the maximum of 15 points.

- Multiple organizations attending the same forum will count as one forum.

- Portfolio judges may consider the quality and quantity of presentations made to audiences outside the school. No points will be awarded for presenting to other classes or teachers at the schools or neighboring schools. In addition, no points will be awarded for forums presented as part of a local or state FFA competition.

- High-quality forums are those presentations made to community groups that would have an interest in the issue. High-quality forums can also be with smaller numbers of individuals who hold elected, appointed, or other official positions that will make decisions or impact the issue. Suggested procedures for setting up these presentations and examples of community groups have been provided in the Agricultural Issues Forum Presenter's Guide

  For example, providing a water quality issue to a water district board of 6 is still high-quality, and providing your presentation to the governor of 1 is still high quality as long as they play a role in the issue.

- Examples of low-quality forums would be quickly visiting a local business and giving a presentation to the workers, going to the home of one of the parents to deliver the information, presenting the forum at the chapter's FFA banquet, and presenting the forum to a class in the school. Low-quality forums will receive zero or minimal points.

- A team may submit up to two live virtual forums as part of their five community forums. Documentation will remain the same for the forums. If a team were to utilize virtual forums, they must adhere to the existing forum rules for documentation as well as the following: a) clearly identify a section in the portfolio for virtual forums conducted; b) the virtual forum is mentioned in the independent verification and c) virtual forums must include a live interactive audience where live participation is included.

- The team should seek to provide numerous angles for documenting a high-quality forum. Examples of high-quality forum documentation with a variety of angles would be the display of photos, letters, narratives, timestamps, and attendance numbers/sheets.

Time Limits

- Five minutes will be allowed for setup.
- The presentation will be a maximum of 15 minutes in length.
- The presenters will receive a signal at 10 minutes and 14 minutes.
- At 15 minutes, the timekeeper will announce that time is up, and the presentation will end.
- Seven minutes will be allotted to questions and answers in the preliminary and semifinal rounds.
- Eight minutes will be allotted for questions and answers in the final round. Questions and answers will terminate at the end of the allotted time.
- Three minutes will be allowed for take-down.
- The presentations will be designed to be viewed by the judges.
- The audience at-large will not be of concern to the presenters.
- The judges may ask questions of all individuals on the presenting team.
- Each individual is encouraged to respond to at least one question from the judges.

Scoring

Portfolio

Ten single-sided pages or five double-sided pages maximum (Three parts, 25 points total)

1. Summary of the issue, two pages maximum (5 points)

2. Bibliography (5 points)

3. Documentation of local forums (15 points)

- All forums require independent verification of when, where and to whom forums were presented and independent verification of presentation times if more than one forum is held on the same day.

A maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum number of pages and/or not including a cover page containing the required information.

Before the event, the portfolios will be judged and scored by qualified individuals using the portfolio scorecard. Portfolio scores will be averaged and supplied to the presentation judges after they have scored the presentation. Portfolio comment cards will be provided. Comments will be available after the event results have been announced.

Proper grammar, correct spelling and proper editing of text are important. The most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide should be used for all research citations. Adherence to these editorial guidelines is expected to receive maximum points for the portfolio score.

Team Presentation

Introduction, Pro, Con, and Summary of Pro and Con (20 points each, 80 points total)

Effectiveness of Presentation (20 points)

- Participation of each team member

- Creative in how main points are made (It makes no difference for the "creativity" score, if the team is in costume or official FFA dress.)

- Quality and power of the presentations

- Speaks at the right pace to be clear

- Pronunciation of words is clear and intent apparent

- No distracting mannerisms that affect effectiveness

- Gestures are purposeful and effective

- Well-poised with a good stage presence

- Use or overuse of any technology or prop that reduces the focus on the content provided by the team and the team's presentation of the content can result in a lower presentation score.

Questions (25 points)

- Appropriate response and knowledge of the issue will be evaluated from team members' responses.

- There will be a five-point deduction from the scorecard of any team that draws a conclusion supporting a pro or con viewpoint during the formal presentation. During the question period, students may draw a conclusion supporting a pro or con viewpoint if asked to do so by a judge.

- Presentation comment cards will be completed by presentation judges and presented to the teams at the awards function.

Ranking

Judges' rankings will be used to place teams. Teams will be ranked in numerical order based on the final score to be determined by each judge without consultation. The judges' rankings of each team shall then be added, and the winner will be the team whose total ranking is the lowest. (Use the low-rank method of selection where a rank of 1 is assigned to the highest place team, 2 to the second place team, etc.)

Tiebreakers

Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks. Teams' low ranks will be counted, and the team with the greatest number of low ranks will be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, then the event superintendent will rank the team's response to questions. The team with the greatest number of low ranks from the response to questions will be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, then the team's raw scores will be totaled. The team with the greatest total of raw points will be declared the winner.

Portfolio Scorecard

25 POINTS

Chapter	State	Team Number

The portfolio should include items described in the event format guidelines and is limited to 10 single-sided pages or five double-sided pages maximum.
The agricultural issues portfolio must be uploaded to the declaration/certification site by the designated deadline before the National FFA Convention & Expo at which the issue will be presented.

	Very Strong evidence of skills is present 5-4 Points	Moderate evidence of skills is present 3-2 Points	Very Strong evidence of skills is not present 1-0 Point	x factor	Possible Points	Total Score
Summary of the issue (two pages maximum)				1	5	
Bibliography				1	5	
Documentation of local forums				3	15	
# of High-Quality Forums				0	0	
# of Low-Quality Forums				0	0	
				Subtotal		
Deductions						
Late submission to the National FFA Organization		-2.5 points			( )	
For exceeding maximum number of pages, excluding cover page (-1 pt./page for each page exceeding 10 pages)					( )	
Summary pages exceed 2 pages (-1 pt./page for each page exceeding 2 pages)					( )	
Cover page not stating title in form of a question		-1 point			( )	
Cover page — missing date of state qualifying event		-1 point			( )	
Cover page — missing Name of chapter		-1 point			( )	
Cover page — missing Address of chapter		-1 point			( )	
Cover page — missing State of chapter		-1 point			( )	
Cover page — missing Phone number of chapter		-1 point			( )	
			TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 25 POSSIBLE			

Judge's Name	Judge's Signature	Date

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Team Presentation Scorecard

150 POINTS

Chapter		State	Team Number

Circle One: Preliminaries   Semifinals   Finals

	Possible Points	25–21 points	20–15 points	14–10 points	9–5 points	4–0 points	Total Score
Introduction Statement of the issue Why issue is important	20						
Pro viewpoint Identification of positive points Points addressed are relevant	20						
Con viewpoint Identification of negative points Points addressed are relevant	20						
Summary of pro/con viewpoints	20						
Effectiveness of presentation Participation, creativity, quality and power, clear with right pace and word pronunciation, no distractions, appropriate gestures, poised	20						
Questions Appropriate responses Knowledge of issue	25						
						Subtotal	
Portfolio Score							
Deduction for presenting a conclusion during the 15-minute presentation (-5 points)							( )
						TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 150 POSSIBLE	

Use or overuse of any technology or prop that reduces the focus on the content provided by the team and team's presentation of the content can result in a lower presentation score.

Judge's Name	Judge's Signature	Date

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