

2026 Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award

Background

The WFBF Young Farmer and Agriculturist (YFA) Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award is designed as an opportunity for YFA members to earn recognition, while actively contributing to agriculture and growing their involvement in Farm Bureau. Participants will be judged on their agriculture involvement, leadership abilities and participation in Farm Bureau and other civic and service organizations. **The ideal candidate(s) for the Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award include agriculturists (individual or couple) who derive a majority of their income from an off-farm job.**

It is recommended that the county Farm Bureaus provide, as part of the county recognition and award, an expenses-paid trip to the WFBF Annual Meeting and YFA Conference held December 4-6, 2026 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Appropriate recognition will be given to all state competitors in attendance at the WFBF Annual Meeting. The WFBF YFA Committee and the WFBF Director of Young Leader Programs will coordinate the program at the state level.

Information about the Outstanding Agriculture Professional applicant is requested on the entry form. ALL INFORMATION IS HANDLED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE AND IS DESTROYED AFTER JUDGING IS COMPLETED.

Eligibility

- An applicant can be either an individual or a couple that is married or has similar legal rights under the law. Applicant may choose to apply individually, rather than as a couple.
- Applicant(s) shall be a Farm Bureau member(s) between the ages of 18 and 35 in good standing with his/her county Farm Bureau. The individual or spouse/spousal-equivalent shall have reached his/her 18th birthday at the time he/she qualifies for the competition and shall not have reached his/her 36th birthday by December 31, 2026.
- If applying as a couple, both applicants must meet age requirements.
- Applicant(s) must not have derived a majority of his/her net income from an owned production agriculture enterprise in any of the past three years.
- Previous AFBF Excellence in Agriculture Award competitors are not eligible to compete.
- Current employees or agents of county, state and/or the American Farm Bureau organizations and their affiliates are not eligible to compete. An affiliate is defined as an entity owned or controlled in whole or in part by another entity through, for example, ownership (including partial ownership) or positions on the board of directors.
- Current WFBF YFA Committee members are not eligible to compete unless they have reached their last year of eligibility.

Entry Form & Application Guidelines

- Do not use your name, name of your county or any names that may bring about the recognition or identification of your county beyond the entry form and signature page.
- The entry form and application must be completed in first person narrative (i.e. I, me, we, etc.) for questions 1-5. Applicants must use "A1" and "A2" to denote each applicant for questions 6-8.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms, unless it has been spelled out once with the abbreviation in parentheses behind it. For example, United States Department of Education (USDE). AFBF, FB, YFA and YF&R are acceptable to use throughout the application.
- It will be up to the judges' discretion to deduct points if applicants include activities before they were 18.
- Only the named applicant(s) on the application are permitted into the interview.

Note: Disregarding the guidelines will result in disqualification of the application.

Application Scoring

- Information contained in the entry form and application is considered confidential.
- The entry form and application of each county entry will be coded upon receipt by WFBF. The applicant's name and county will not be revealed to the judges until judging is completed.
- Values used in scoring the applications will be:

Personal Impact on Agriculture: 50 points

Goals: 50 points

Agriculture Issues: 50 points

Farm Bureau Leadership Experience: 25 points

Other Leadership Experience: 25 points

MAXIMUM POINTS: 200

- The application will be judged by a panel of three qualified industry judges. Each judge may award a maximum of 200 points.
- The Final Four contestants are chosen based on this system. **The final four contestants will be interviewed on Saturday, December 5 at the WFBF Annual Meeting and YFA Conference.**

Deadline

Online applications are due by **July 1, 2026** to be considered for state recognition and awards. The signature page is due no later than **August 1, 2026** and should be returned to Melissa Jacobson, WFBF Director of Young Leader Programs, at mjacobson@wfbf.com.

Final Four

The Final Four contestants will be selected by **August 1, 2026**.

- Interviews will be held during the WFBF Annual Meeting & YFA Conference on Saturday, December 5.
- Interviews may be up to 20 minutes in length and are intended to clear up any 'gray areas' which may arise from the written application.
- Judging is based on the application forms sent to WFBF and the clarifying interview held during the WFBF Annual Meeting & YFA Conference.

AFBF Opportunity

The winner of the YFA Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award will have the **option** to either attend the AFBF FUSION Conference in March of 2027 or compete in the national competition at the AFBF Annual Convention in January of 2028.

- The AFBF FUSION Conference provides learning opportunities for attendees to increase their knowledge and skills in the areas of leadership development, consumer outreach, membership value, and advocacy and education while building networks and connecting with industry leaders and experts. Location and date to be announced.
- The AFBF Annual Convention hosts the national competitions for the Achievement Award, Discussion Meet and Excellence in Ag Award. It will be held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, from January 14-19, 2028. **To qualify for the national competition, the individual or spouse/spouse-equivalent shall not have reached their 36th birthday by the completion of the competition.**

In order to compete at the national level, the winner will need to complete a new application for the **Excellence in Agriculture Award**. Competitors are evaluated on their understanding of agricultural issues, leadership experiences and achievement, and their ability to communicate their agricultural story. Additionally, contestants must prepare a **25-minute interactive presentation** to share the contents of their entire application in narrative form. An example of the application can be found [here](#).

Because this option requires complete commitment and additional preparation time, you will need to decide upon submission of this application your intentions of whether or not you would like to be considered to represent WFBF and compete at the national level if you are selected as the 2026 Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award winner. **WFBF staff and contest judges will be the final decision makers in determining your eligibility to compete at the AFBF Annual Convention.*

Questions

Please direct application questions to Melissa Jacobson, WFBF Director of Young Leader Programs, at mjacobson@wfbf.com.

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Application Questions

Note: Remember to complete the application in first person narrative (i.e. I, me, we, etc.) for questions 1-5. Applicants must use "A1" and "A2" to denote each applicant for questions 6-8.

PERSONAL IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

- 1. Explain your occupation. (Approximately 2,000 characters.)**
- 2. How do you feel your involvement within your company/organization contributes to the growth of the company/business? (Approximately 3,000 characters.)**
- 3. What do you do to positively promote and impact the agriculture industry? (Approximately 3,000 characters.)**
May include things such as hosting farm tours, legislative visits, writing a blog, etc.

GOALS

- 4. What goals do you have for the next five years related to your career, Farm Bureau involvement and participation with other organizations? What steps have been made to reach these goals? (Approximately 5,000 characters.)**

AGRICULTURE ISSUES

- 5. List three important issues that will impact agriculture within the next five years and what you have done/will do to address those issues. (Approximately 5,000 characters.)**

FARM BUREAU LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- 6. List Farm Bureau leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers at the COUNTY, STATE and NATIONAL LEVELS. (5,000 characters max.)**

List each activity on a new line, followed by the applicable year(s). For example:

1. *A1 – Elected President of the County Farm Bureau Board of Directors (2015-2016)*
2. *A1 & A2 – State Achievement Award Winners (2018)*

OTHER LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- 7. List other agricultural leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers. For example: Farm Credit, Soil Conservation, Farm Service Agency, farm cooperatives, 4-H, etc. (2,500 characters max.)**

Please list each organization on a new line, followed by a short description of your involvement, followed by the year(s). For Example:

1. *A2 – National FFA Organization: American Degree Recipient (2011)*

- 8. List other community and non-agricultural leadership roles, involvement opportunities, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant(s), indicating service on committees, boards or as officers. For example: Civic/service clubs, church, school, volunteer leadership, etc. (2,500 characters max.)**

Please list each organization on a new line, followed by a short description of your involvement, followed by the year(s). For Example:

1. *A1 & A2 – Pleasant View Methodist Church: Church Deacons (2012-2016)*