

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Response from Texas Department of Agriculture

(1) From your agency's point of view, what regulations can be reduced to improve communication and cooperation between federal, state, and local governments within the Texas-Mexico border region?

Communication and cooperation among federal, state and local governments within the Texas-Mexico border region is very important to facilitating trade. Simplification and streamlining of the paperwork process for animal health documentation and other product paperwork would increase communication on animal health and trade issues. Increased understanding and sharing of information on sanitary and phytosanitary requirements would also improve communication and cooperation.

(2) What are the main trade issues between the United States and Mexico that you have identified as having an impact (both positive and negative) on your agency or your area of work?

The Texas Department of Agriculture continues to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Mexican counterparts to fully normalize livestock trade between the United States and Mexico. The continued limitation on livestock exports into Mexico from the United States has had a negative impact to the livestock industry in the state. From 2004-2006, Texas experienced a loss of nearly \$210 million in business activity as a result of the continued closed border to U.S. cattle exports. The limiting of exports also has a negative impact on the traffic going through TDA's export facilities.

TDA also works with USDA and the Texas agriculture industry to address other trade sector issues as they arise.

(3) Having studied the flow of commerce at ports of entry between this state and Mexico, including the movement of commercial vehicles across the border, what actions would you establish to aid that commerce and improve the movement of those vehicles?

Vehicle movement could be improved by working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to develop a process where livestock can be inspected and exported quicker. According to numerous complaints, the time spent waiting at inspection stations has caused livestock in transit to suffer from stress and heat exhaustion. Increased communication and sharing of necessary documentation and protocols could possibly improve the movement of those vehicles.

(4) How do you work with federal officials to resolve transportation issues involving infrastructure, including roads and bridges, to allow for the efficient movement of goods and people across the border between Texas and Mexico?

The Commissioner frequently communicates with federal officials on key trade issues to keep them apprised of problems occurring at the border and throughout Texas. TDA also works regularly with various individuals, organizations and agencies in the U.S. and in Mexico, to

clarify export requirements and assist exporters in the smooth shipment of their livestock and agricultural products. Additionally the TDA director of commodity reporting and livestock exports has begun meeting with U.S. Customs and Border Protection staff along the border to help expedite and facilitate livestock export into Mexico.

(5) How does your agency work with federal officials to create a unified federal agency process to streamline border crossing needs?

Please see response to question four.

(6) Has your agency identified problems involved with border truck inspections and related trade and transportation infrastructure? What are those? What solutions/recommendations does your agency propose?

Problems are often seen during the summer months, when livestock trailers sit in long lines for many hours awaiting inspection and approval to enter Mexico. The heat and truck fumes jeopardize the health and safety of the livestock. Having an additional, dedicated line for live animals would protect the health and well-being of the livestock.

(7) How do you work to increase funding for the North American Development Bank to assist in the financing of water and wastewater facilities?

N/A

(8) Has your agency explored the sale of excess electric power from Texas to Mexico? What are your findings?

N/A

(9) Has your agency identified any areas of environmental protection that need to be addressed cooperatively between Texas and the Mexican states? If so, which are those areas and what type of protective measures need to be taken?

TDA participates in several agricultural and urban water conservation initiatives across the state and in the border region. The goal of these initiatives is to further develop water conservation and irrigation technology that is specifically applicable to the basin's needs and decide what type of educational programs are needed to increase water use efficiencies.

TDA continues to work with state and federal officials to ensure Mexico abides by the 1944 U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty and that Lower Rio Grande Valley agricultural producers have the necessary water to remain viable.

(10) Has your agency identified common challenges to health care on which all border states can collaborate? If so, what are those challenges and how can all border states collaborate to overcome them?

Obesity is one of the most difficult health care challenges facing Texas and other border states. The Texas Public School Nutrition Policy developed and implemented by TDA works to address the health and nutrition of our public school children from kindergarten to high school. Assisting to ensure well-balanced nutritional meals and choices are being established for our school children will be a key element in fighting the obesity crisis. Border states can work together to identify the best policies to end obesity.

Two TDA programs, the Texas Commodity Assistance Program (TEXCAP), which is statewide, and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), limited to Dallas County and certain Rio Grande Valley counties, address hunger by providing food assistance. The programs distribute food to residents of contracted food bank service areas. CSFP participants are women, infants and children or elderly residents. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides benefits to children in day care homes, centers, emergency shelters and after-school programs, and adults in care centers in border communities. Other border states address hunger and care issues through the same federal nutrition programs.

(11) Has your agency developed any recommendations to address border challenges in general? If so, what are they?

Communication and relationship building are key to working with Mexico's leadership. TDA is approaching this in the immediate term by using existing groups such as the Border Governors' Agriculture Work Table and by reaching out specifically to Mexican border state leaders. Over the long term, we are connecting Texas and Mexican agricultural producers and business leaders through an exchange program to facilitate trading relationships and information sharing.

The obesity epidemic has been identified as a challenge that is applicable not only in Texas, but in the border region. A 2004 report by the American Journal of Public Health noted the highest prevalence of overweight was reported for Hispanic boys at all grade levels. The Texas Public Nutrition Policy was created to address this challenge and is applicable to all Texas public schools. The policy promotes healthy eating for Texas families.

(12) What programs and services does your agency offer to border communities?

TDA provides funding for school meals, as well as nutritious meals served to children and eligible adults enrolled in day care, and those participating in summer activity programs.

TDA livestock export facilities provide a service for the border communities as a consistent means to export livestock, as well as a source of information regarding livestock importation and exportation along the Texas-Mexico border.

TDA Rural Economic Development staff continue to work with Mexican businesses to find business and trade opportunities in Texas, including developing operations in the state.

For additional programs, please see attached document on TDA Major Border and Cross Border Initiatives.

(13) What are some regulatory and/or legislative recommendations to eliminate duplication and combine programs and services?

N/A

(14) Please share any considerations from your agency regarding the effect of policies instituted by the federal government impacting the border region.

Strengthening immigration enforcement along the border is essential, but continued enforcement focus without regard for the need for reliable worker programs to supply non-U.S. workers to perform jobs Americans are not available to perform is worsening the labor shortage in Texas agriculture.

Please see responses to questions one and two.

(15) Please give a brief summary of all your agency's activities related to the Border and/or Mexico.

Please see attached document on TDA Major Border and Cross Border Initiatives.