

**American Farm Bureau Federation
Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award**

Rules for 2026 AFBF Convention Competition

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Purpose:

Recognize young farmers/ranchers for their achievements in production agriculture and leadership.

Background

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) annually conducts a Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Achievement Award competition. State Farm Bureaus are encouraged to promote this activity among county Farm Bureaus. Selection of the winning YF&R competitor is based on their efforts in production agriculture and leadership achievement. **The ideal candidate(s) for the Achievement Award is an individual or couple involved in production agriculture with a majority of their gross income subject to farm and/or ranch risks.** It is recommended that state Farm Bureaus provide, as part of the state recognition award, an expense-paid trip to the 2026 AFBF Convention held in Anaheim, California, Jan. 9-14, 2026. Appropriate recognition will be given to all national competitors in attendance at the AFBF Convention. The AFBF YF&R Committee and the AFBF Leadership, Education and Engagement Department will coordinate the program at the national level.

Information about the Achievement Award applicant is requested on the entry form. ALL INFORMATION IS HANDLED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

Eligibility:

The ideal candidate(s) for the Achievement Award is an individual or couple involved in production agriculture with a majority of their gross income subject to farm and/or ranch risks.

- An applicant can be either an individual or a couple that is married or has similar legal rights under the law applicable to the state Farm Bureau organization. An applicant may choose to apply individually, rather than as a couple.
- The applicant must be a Farm Bureau member in good standing with their county Farm Bureau.
- The applicant(s) must be at least 18 years old at the time the national application is submitted and must be no more than 35 years of age as of January 31, 2026.
- Applicant(s) must be in attendance on-site at the AFBF Convention to compete nationally.
- Applicant(s) must be actively engaged in farming and/or ranching, with the majority of their gross income coming from production agriculture. Applicant(s) must have at least three years of financial records showing that the majority of income came from production agriculture.
- Applicant(s) may only compete in one national YF&R competition per year.
- Past and present members of the AFBF Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee and/or their spouses are not eligible to compete.
- Previous AFBF Achievement Award competitors are not eligible to compete. Past state YF&R Achievement Award winners are eligible if they have not previously competed at the national level.
- 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 controlled by another Farm Bureau entity through, for example, ownership (including partial ownership) or the ability to elect the board of directors. Past employees and interns who were responsible for implementing any of the YF&R Competitive Events at the state or national level since January 1, 2021, are ineligible.
- Each state Farm Bureau may submit one entry to be considered for national recognition and must use the AFBF entry form and application.

Entry Form & Application Guidelines

- Do not use the applicant's name, the name of their state or county, or any names that may bring about the recognition or identification of the applicant's state beyond the entry form. The written versions of the application have a search feature to locate any identifiers.
- The entry form and application should be completed in first person narrative (i.e. I, me, we, us), but proper names of the applicant(s) may not be used. Couple applications should follow these instructions: For personal statements, put (A1) or (A2) at the beginning of the paragraph/sentence to denote which applicant is "speaking," and for joint statements, simply use the word "we." Applicants must use (A1)/(A2) to denote each applicant's involvement for all of question 2b and 10-12.

- The Financial Success section must be typed, signed and notarized; handwritten financial forms will be disqualified. If the notarization includes a state identifier such as a state name or seal, the identifier needs to be blacked out.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms, unless it has been spelled out once with the abbreviation in parentheses behind it. For example, the United States Department of Education (USDE). AFBF, FB and YF&R are acceptable to use throughout the application.
- The attached entry form and application is an example of the information needed for the official online application. Authorized state Farm Bureau representatives will have access to the online portal for official state submission. No emailed or mailed entry forms or applications will be accepted.
- State Farm Bureaus have permission to reproduce the attached entry form for a state-level competition or for recruitment.
- It will be up to the judges' discretion to deduct points if applicants include activities before they were 18.

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

VIRTUAL CONVENTION: If AFBF is unable to hold the 2026 Convention in-person for any reason, the competitive events will be held virtually, and all applicants should be made aware of this possibility prior to their application. If the competition will be virtual, all contestants will be given the opportunity to withdraw their application for 2026 to ensure eligibility for future years.

Judging

- The entry form and application of each state entry will be coded upon receipt by AFBF. The applicant's name and state will not be revealed to the judges until judging is completed.
- Judging is based on the application sent to AFBF by the state Farm Bureau. An interview with the Top 10 finalists during the AFBF Convention determines final scores, rank and winners.
- A panel of qualified judges will select the national winners. The Top 10 competitors will be interviewed by the same judges who reviewed the written applications.
- Interviews will be up to 25 minutes in length and are intended to evaluate the competitor's command of the farm/ranch business and financials, familiarity of the contents of the application and appreciation for the value of Farm Bureau (see rubric document). In addition to the five (5) points allocated for the interview, judges may alter scores/ranks from other sections based on what they learn in the interview.
- During the interview process, only the named applicant(s) on the entry form is permitted into the interview, and the applicant(s) should refrain from using the name of their state or county, or any names that may bring about the recognition or identification of their state. Applicants can refer to each other by their first name throughout the interview.

Scoring:

Category	Points
1. Personal Background	10
2. Scope of Farm/Ranch	15
3. Growth & Achievements	25
4. Management Decisions	15
5. Goals & Planning	10
6. Resiliency	10
7. Financial Success Part 1: Debt-to-Asset Ratio and Profit	25
8. Financial Success Part 2: Analysis and Record Keeping	15
9. Financial Success Part 3: Off-Farm Income	10
10. Leadership Experience: Farm Bureau	30
11. Leadership Experience: Other Ag Organizations	10
12. Leadership Experience: Other	10
13. Leadership Growth and Development	10
Total Application Points	195
Interview (Top 10 competitors only)	5
TOTAL POINTS	200

****The chart above is NOT a rubric. Please refer to the separate rubric document for all scoring criteria.**

State Promotion of National Awards

State Farm Bureaus are required to advertise the national prizes **one time** during the year through a print advertisement, an article in the state's publication(s), or on social media. These promotions will qualify the state entries to receive the national prizes, should they be the winner or finalist of one of the national competitions.

Promotion must be specific to promoting the AFBF YF&R competitions and must recognize the national sponsors.

PowerPoint Competitor Template

PowerPoint competitor templates that highlight the state entry must be completed using the template provided by AFBF. This template is available from the state YF&R coordinator. It should include the applicant's 500-character bio written in third person and 2-3 pictures of the applicant and their agricultural operation or involvement. Please include crediting information for photos in the appropriate section of the signature page. *All pictures and presentations become the property of AFBF.*

Deadline

States are encouraged to select their entries in time for recognition at their state annual meeting. The state's entry form and application must be submitted via the online portal **on or before 5:00 p.m. EST Dec. 9th, 2025. The state's signed verification form, signature page, national awards advertisement and competitor PowerPoints are also due at this time** to be considered for national recognition and awards.

*Please refer to the Handbook made available to AFBF competitors for all competition details.

**American Farm Bureau Federation
Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award**

2026 Entry Form

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Please submit this form via the online application process. No emailed or mailed entry forms or applications will be accepted.

The state's entry form and application must be submitted via the online portal **on or before 5:00 p.m. EST Dec. 9, 2025.**

The data below and throughout the application applies to you and your spouse/spouse-equivalent, if married. Please fill out in first person, following guidelines above, and indicate "Applicant 1" (A1) and "Applicant 2" (A2) on questions 2b and 10-12.

Applicant(s)*: A1: _____ A2: _____

**Will be used in the program and for recognition*

Phonetic Pronunciation: A1: _____ A2: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: A1: _____ A2: _____

Date of Birth: A1: _____ A2: _____

Age on January 31, 2026: A1: _____ A2: _____

Are you an alumnus of any of the following youth organizations? (Check all that apply)

☐ 4-H ☐ AFA ☐ FFA ☐ MANRRS

Do you have any ADA special requirements we should be aware of?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please list: _____

I (we) hereby certify the information on this entry form and attached application to be accurate and true statements. **AFBF DOES NOT ACCEPT LIABILITY FOR APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED INCORRECTLY BY A STATE FARM BUREAU OFFICE.** AFBF reserves the right to use my (our) photos and/or any video footage for use in promoting Farm Bureau. The photos and/or video footage of the undersigned contestant(s) may also be available to Farm Bureau sponsors. By participating in the Event, I (we) warrant that I (we) fully and unconditionally agree to and accept the YF&R official contest rules and the decisions of the AFBF YF&R Committee, which are final and binding.

VIRTUAL CONVENTION: If AFBF is unable to hold the 2026 Convention in-person for any reason, the competitive events will be held virtually, and all applicants should be made aware of this possibility prior to their application. If the competition will be virtual, all contestants will be given the opportunity to withdraw their application for 2026 to ensure eligibility for future years.

Applicant(s) Signature(s): A1: _____ A2: _____

I hereby certify that the above-named applicant(s) is the official state entry and is therefore eligible to be entered in and considered for AFBF's Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award for 2026.

State President/Administrator: _____ Date: _____

State: _____

**American Farm Bureau Federation
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2026 Application

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1. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- a. Briefly tell us about yourself, your family, education, and personal interests. **Approximately 2,000 characters**

- b. Please describe your farm/ranch including how you acquired it, acres owned and rented, years in operation, crops and livestock. **Approximately 2,000 characters**

- c. List any other related business enterprises and their relationship to/importance in the total farm/ranch. **Approximately 1,500 characters**

- d. Tell us about how you advocate for agriculture. **Approximately 1,500 characters**

2. SCOPE OF YOUR FARM OR RANCH

- a. Explain the ownership structure of your farm/ranch and your vested interest. Please include all enterprises in your explanation, if applicable. **Approximately 2,000 characters**

- b. What percentage of the farm/ranch management decisions are you responsible for? Please break down for each enterprise, if applicable. **Approximately 1,250 characters – 10 lines**
 **Remember to indicate A1/A2 throughout this response, if applicable.

<u>Enterprise</u>	<u>% Management Decisions</u>

- c. Please add any additional information that helps explain the previous two responses, if needed.
Approximately 1,000 characters

- d. Describe your role in the operation. Explain specifically your duties and decision-making responsibilities.
Approximately 2,000 characters

3. GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- a. Please tell the story of your farm growth since your first year of owning/managing your farm/ranch. Where were you then and where are you now? Use specific examples to show how your operation has grown and highlight your contributions to the success of the operation over time. **Approximately 3,000 characters**

- b. List and describe any production efficiency growth you have achieved since your first year of owning/managing your farm/ranch. **Approximately 2,500 characters**

4. MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Please explain how your understanding of the market has led you to create strategies that make your operation thrive and ensure its success now and into the future. Discuss up to two impactful strategic or management decisions you have made on your farm/ranch, why you made them, and the changes that resulted from implementing those decisions. **Approximately 3,500 characters**

5. GOALS & PLANNING

Moving forward, what short-term and long-term goals do you have for your farm/ranch? Explain how you plan to achieve these goals. **Approximately 2,500 characters**

6. RESILIENCY

- a. Describe any major business challenges your farm/ranch has encountered and what you did to overcome them (i.e., policy, financial, family, management, etc.). **Approximately 2,000 characters**

- b. Describe the transition or succession plan(s) you have for your farm/ranch. If you do not have either, please explain. **Approximately 1,500 characters**

7. FINANCIAL SUCCESS: Part 1

NOTE: In considering financial situation, judges will consider the whole application and how the financials are connected to the history, goals and strategies of the farm/ranch. Financials are not to be evaluated independent of the other sections.

**All figures must appear as whole numbers.*

- a. Using the grid below, please show your debt-to-asset ratio, including farm/ranch/personal debts and assets for each year requested:

Year	Total Debt (combined farm/ranch and personal debt)	Total Assets (combined farm/ranch and personal assets)	Debt to Asset Ratio (total debt divided by total assets)
First year (____)			
3 years ago			
2 years ago			
1 year ago			
2025 year-end projections			

Please indicate whether the above reflects:

- ☐ the portion of the farm/ranch you own, as indicated in 2(a).

OR

- ☐ the portion of the farm/ranch for which you make management decisions *if more than the amount you own*, as indicated in 2(b).

Give an explanation of related irregularities or strategies, if needed: **Approximately 1,000 characters**

- b. Using the grids below, please show total **farm/ranch** income, expenses and net profit for each year requested. *This should reflect anything related to the farm/ranch business(es) described in the application regardless of marketing practices, production methods or sources.*

TOTAL INCOME = Farm/Ranch Income + All other income related to the farm/ranch business(es)

Other Income Examples: farm bill payments, trade aid, conservation payments, net crop insurance benefits, and/or income derived from the marketing or selling of farm/ranch products/services such as specialty marketing, agritourism, etc. *(do not include off-farm or other enterprises that are unrelated to the farm/ranch operation)*

Year	Farm/Ranch Income	+ All other farm/ranch-related income	= Total Income
First year (____)			
3 years ago			
2 years ago			
1 year ago			
2025 year-end projections			

TOTAL EXPENSES = Farm/Ranch Expenses + Interest + Depreciation

Year	Farm/Ranch Expenses	+ Interest	+ Depreciation	= Total Expenses
First year (____)				
3 years ago				
2 years ago				
1 year ago				
2025 year-end projections				

NET PROFIT = Income - Expenses

Year	Total Income	- Total Expenses	= Net Profit
First year (____)			
3 years ago			
2 years ago			
1 year ago			
2025 year-end projections			

Please indicate whether the above reflects:

☐ the portion of the farm/ranch you own, as indicated in 2(a).

OR

☐ the portion of the farm/ranch for which you make management decisions *if more than the amount you own*, as indicated in 2(b).

Give an explanation of related irregularities or strategies, if needed: **Approximately 1,000 characters**

Banker/Loan Officer/Tax Accountant Signature: _____

**This signature verifies the years completed, not the projections and/or irregularities.*

Notary Signature: _____ **Notary Stamp:** _____

8. FINANCIAL SUCCESS: Part 2

- a. Describe the practices you use to evaluate the financial success of your farm/ranch, including ratios or analysis, record keeping systems and/or advisors used to support successful financial management.
Approximately 2,000 characters

- b. Describe where you see your greatest financial strengths and weaknesses in your farm/ranch business.
Approximately 2,000 characters

9. FINANCIAL SUCCESS: Part 3

- a. Do you have any other **farm/ranch business** income not otherwise shown in the financials section (such as supporting agri-businesses)? If so, how is that income used? **Approximately 1,000 characters**

- b. Is any **off-farm** income earned by you or your spouse and how is that income used? **Approximately 1,000 characters**

- c. What **additional income**, if any, from inheritances, winnings, etc. did the applicant(s) accept and how is/was it used? **Approximately 1,000 characters**

10. LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE: FARM BUREAU (from age 18 to current)

Note: This applies to both applicants, if applying together. Please indicate A1 and A2 when applicable.

List Farm Bureau leadership roles, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant, including service on committees, boards or as officers. Please include years and level of involvement (county, state, national).

Example: A1 – Elected President of the County Farm Bureau Board of Directors (2022-2023)

Approximately 2,500 characters

County Farm Bureau

State/American Farm Bureau

11. LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE: OTHER AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS (from age 18 to current)

List other agricultural leadership roles, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant, including service on committees, boards or as officers (i.e. Farm Credit, Soil Conservation, Farm Service Agency, farm cooperatives, adult roles in 4-H or FFA) *Example: A1 and A2 – 4-H, Serves as a 4-H Livestock Club Leader (2021 – present)* **Approximately 2,500 characters**

12. LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE: OTHER (from age 18 to current)

List other community and non-agricultural leadership roles, recognitions and/or awards received by the applicant, including service on committees, boards or as officers (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, civic/service clubs, church, school, scouts, coaching, etc.) *Example: A1 – Local Elementary School, Served as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) President (2020-2024)* **Approximately 2,500 characters**

13. LEADERSHIP GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- a. Describe your most impactful leadership experience and any actions you have taken to better yourself as a leader or businessperson. **Approximately 2,500 characters**

- b. Describe your goals for leadership growth and development. **Approximately 1,500 characters**