



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 violation examples 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 the selection, research, planning and presentation of a local, state, national or international agricultural issue with relevance 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 presentations of the forum.
- Apply teamwork, leadership and communication skills for career success.

Event Rules

A team should be composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of seven students who are actively participating, orally presenting and available to answer the judges' questions. To be eligible for awards, each student must take an active role in the presentation. 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 use of 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 of all cultures. The event committee reserves the right to remove any team whose presentation, props, skits or other actions are disrespectful of others or shows lack of good judgement.

A minimum of three competent and unbiased judges will be provided. They will be instructed not to take sides on the issue(s). Professors and industry representatives are recommended. The superintendent of this LDE 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 the approach used to develop their team presentations including the use of technology and other props. Teams are cautioned that the use or over use 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.

Event Format

Each team will conduct a presentation on the issue developed and presented at the local level.

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 following eight agricultural issue topic areas as listed in the [Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials](#).

Environmental Issues

Agricultural Technology Issues

Animal Issues

Agricultural Career Issues

Economy and Trade Issues

Agricultural Policy Issues

Food Safety Issues

Biotechnology Issues

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

Research on the topic must be current, and students must be involved in all the research of the topic and development of 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 top and bottom.

A maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum amount 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 JudgingCard by 11:59 pm Central on March 1st unless otherwise communicated by state staff.

Cover

Required information on the cover to avoid score deductions:

- Title of the issue stated as a question.
- Date of the state qualifying 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 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, which should include personal interviews, when appropriate, and any other supporting material. 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

In order for a forum to be awarded points, it must have occurred prior to 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 also include the date of the presentation and/or the date the article is printed.
- Photos showing attendance at forums but also need independent documentation of the date of the forum presentation.
- If more than one forum is held on the same day, the starting times of the multiple forums held on the same day also must be independently documented.

Forum Presentations

A chapter must have a minimum of five high-quality public forum presentations prior to their state qualifying event in order to receive the maximum of 15 points. Tennessee FFA State Convention will count as the state qualifying event.

- Multiple organizations attending the same forum will count as one forum.
- Portfolio judges may take into consideration the quality and quantity of presentations made to audiences outside of 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 any 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. Suggested procedures for setting up these presentations and examples of community groups have been provided in the Agricultural Issues Forum Presenter’s Guide. High-quality forums can also be with smaller numbers of individuals who hold elected, appointed or some other official position that will be making decisions on the issue.
- Examples of low-quality forums would be dropping in at a local business and giving a presentation to the workers or going to the home of one of the parents to make a presentation. 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.

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 for questions and answers will be allotted in both the preliminary and semifinal rounds.
- Eight minutes for questions and answers will be allotted 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 of 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.

Prior to 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 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 good stage presence
- 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

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.

Awards

The top two teams will be recognized on state during the 7th general session of the Tennessee FFA State Convention.

References

This list of references is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Other sources may be utilized, and teachers are encouraged to make use of the very best instructional materials available. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation.

- Past CDE Material – Past top portfolios and videos
- Updated [Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials](#)
- “Helpful hints to give your students the best opportunity to do well in the Agricultural Issues Forum Career Development Event at the State and National FFA Conventions” can be found on the Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials website listed above and the National FFA website ([FFA.org/documents/cde_agissues_resources.pdf](https://www.ffa.org/documents/cde_agissues_resources.pdf))

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 prior to the National FFA Convention & Expo at which the issue is to 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				0	0	
# of Low-Quality				0	0	
<i>Subtotal</i>						
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 _____

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						
<i>Subtotal</i>							
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 _____

