

MISSISSIPPI FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION YOUNG FARMERS & RANCHERS

2022 COLLEGIATE DISCUSSION MEET HANDBOOK



Mississippi Farm Bureau[®] Federation
Young Farmers & Ranchers
2022 Collegiate Discussion Meet
Registration Form

Contestant Information:

Name: _____

Phonetic Pronunciation: _____ County of Membership: _____

MFBF Membership Number: _____ Member's Name: _____
(Parent's name as listed on MFBF Membership)

College Attending: _____ Student ID: _____

Major: _____ Classification: _____

Cell Phone: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Hometown: _____ Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Month/Day/Year

Street Address: _____

City & State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

I certify that the above named applicant is a fulltime undergraduate student and has met all the contestant qualifications to participate in the MFBF Collegiate Discussion Meet.

Professor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Professor's Name (please print): _____ Email: _____

Application Deadline: September 19, 2022

Email Applications to: Samantha Laird, slaird@msfb.org, **AND** Melissa Holliday, mholliday@msfb.org.

For questions or more information, contact Samantha Laird (slaird@msfb.org or 601-573-7913) or your Farm Bureau Regional Manager.

Collegiate Discussion Meet Contest Specifics:

- **Contest Eligibility:**
 - Eligible contestants include undergraduate students enrolled in a Mississippi college or university who are 18 – 35 years of age as of February 28, 2023 and have a sincere interest in agriculture.
 - Contestants must be a Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation member or the child of a MFBF member.
 - Members of the MFBF State YF&R Committee are not eligible to participate.
 - Individuals who are professional speakers or who have received a fee or honorarium for public speaking are not eligible to participate.
- **Contest Deadline:**
 - Deadline for entry is **Monday, September 19, 2022.**
- **Contest Date and Location:**
 - The Contest will be conducted on **Thursday, October 13, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.** in the **Boyd Conference Center** on the campus of Mississippi State University in Starkville, MS.
 - A mandatory Contestant Orientation will be held prior to the contest on **Thursday, October 13, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.**

For More Information:

For more information, contact your Regional Manager or MFBF YF&R Coordinator, Samantha Laird.

Samantha Laird – 601-573-7913 (call or text); slaird@msfb.org

Topics for the 2022 Collegiate Discussion Meet:

1. How can Farm Bureau effectively support and equip young farmers and ranchers to successfully manage economic and infrastructure challenges to ensure healthy and sustainable farms and ranches across the country?
2. Due to current economic demands, many farmers and ranchers spend a lot of time outside the “fence rows” on off-farm jobs. How can Farm Bureau become more accessible and welcoming to members who are working in related fields and juggling responsibilities on and off the farm?
3. Climate has become a major topic among business leaders, policymakers and consumers. As an industry that depends on the weather, what role do we as farmers and ranchers play in shaping climate initiatives to benefit society overall as well as our own farms and ranches?
4. Advancements in autonomous equipment and drone technology offer solutions to challenges farmers and ranchers have faced for years. How can Farm Bureau improve access to, and help farmers and ranchers deploy, these emerging technologies on their operations?
5. Many external influences are causing supply chain disruption for agricultural goods. How can Farm Bureau reduce the impact of external influences through policy development and programming?

Contest Objectives:

Agriculture's strength depends on producers' ability to analyze problems and decide on solutions that best meet their needs. The Discussion Meet is an activity designed to build these crucial skills in young people. By participating, individuals build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach a consensus and solve problems.

As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the Discussion Meet experience will:

1. Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
2. Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
3. Improve the participants' ability to listen.
4. Aid the participants in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
5. Assist the individuals in the practice of giving and receiving criticism in a helpful manner.
6. Teach the value of compromise.
7. Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

Background Information:

- The Discussion Meet is a contest promoted by the Mississippi Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Program.
- The Discussion Meet is designed to simulate a committee meeting where discussion and active participation are expected from each committee member.
- The contestants discuss a pre-selected topic from the list above, which is drawn at random prior to the competition.
- The four fundamental bases of general discussion are:
 - Constructive Criticism
 - Cooperation
 - Communication
 - Problem Solving
- The discussion should not be "conversation" or aimless talk, nor should the participant take the role of a persuasive speaker. The participant should try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- A successful participant is a productive thinker rather than an emotional persuader. Sometimes it's reasonable to change positions whenever new information and ideas are presented.
- This is not a panel symposium wherein each participant, in turn, makes a presentation with the moderator ending the session with a summary. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers, and statements coming from any person at any time.

Mississippi Farm Bureau Collegiate Discussion Meet Awards:

- **One contest winner** will receive the following prizes:
 - A **\$2,000 scholarship** made payable to the student’s college or university to be used for tuition, books, or related academic expenses.
 - An expense-paid trip to Jacksonville, Florida to compete in the American Farm Bureau Federation Collegiate Discussion Meet – March 3-6, 2023

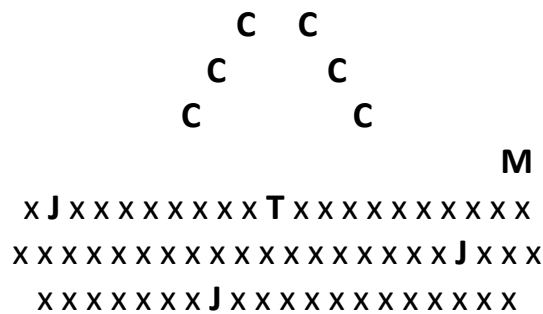
- **All other finalists** advancing to the final round of competition will each receive:
 - A **\$500 scholarship** made payable to the student’s college or university to be used for tuition, books, or related academic expenses.

Contest:

1. All contestants will compete in at least one preliminary round of the contest. Preliminary rounds will have three to six contestants. The total number of contestants registered will determine the number of preliminary rounds necessary. A “Final Four” will be selected from the preliminary rounds. Typically, four finalists will compete in the “Final Four” round to determine the winner. Depending on the total number of contestants competing, there may be a time when five contestants advance to the final round of competition.

2. The physical arrangements of the Discussion Meet rooms should provide for two tables at the front of the room facing each other and the audience. Half the participants should be seated at each table with the moderator in the center. Name cards identifying contestants should be visible to both the moderator and audience. Cards should show only the contestant’s name. These cards will be provided for you and distributed at orientation. A writing pad, pen, and water will be provided at each contestant’s seat.

Room Layout



M = Moderator **C** = Contestant **J** = Judge **T** = Timer **X** = Audience

Contest Flow:

Generally speaking, the discussion should follow these steps:

1. State Problem or need.
2. Explore, define, understand problem or need.
3. Identify causes of problem or need.
4. Elaborate all possible alternative solutions.
5. Evaluate and compare alternatives.
6. Test and project what appears to be the best solution.
7. Arrive at ways to implement the solution.

Contest Format:

1. All contest facilitators and contestants will meet in the pre-assigned contest room ten minutes prior to the start of the contest to receive last minute comments by the room chairman.
2. No contestant notes are allowed at the table prior to the moderator starting the meet.
3. The room chairman will call the meeting to order, announce the topic to be discussed, and introduce the timekeeper and moderator.
4. The moderator will introduce the contestants and, in voluntary order, give each contestant the opportunity to make a **30-second opening statement** directed to the audience.
5. The timekeeper may stand or otherwise indicate when 30 seconds has elapsed. Judges may subtract points at their discretion for contestants who abuse the time limit.
6. The moderator will then indicate the opportunity to begin **open discussion**, which will continue for a total of **20 minutes in Preliminary rounds** and **25 minutes in the Final Four round**. The discussion should be directed to fellow contestants during open discussion.
7. The timekeeper will indicate to the moderator when 15 minutes in the Preliminary rounds and 20 minutes in the Final Four round have elapsed to indicate that five minutes of open discussion time remains. The moderator will indicate to contestants the time remaining by raising a table tent. He/She will ensure each contestant has seen the table tent before it is removed.
8. If the discussion is lagging, the moderator may close the discussion at this time.
9. At the end of 20 minutes for Preliminary rounds and 25 minutes for the Final Four round, the moderator will call for open discussion to stop and ask for one minute of quiet time, allowing the contestants to consider a closing statement.
10. The moderator will give each of the contestants, in voluntary order, the opportunity to make a **one-minute closing statement** directed to the audience.

11. The moderator will recognize the judges and request them to leave the room with the room chairman to finalize the tabulation of their score sheets. Judges are not to confer with each other until the room chairman has collected their tabulated score sheets.
12. The next round topic to be discussed will be announced.
13. The moderator will thank the panel and ask the audience to recognize their efforts.
14. The open discussion time may be lengthened or shortened to fit the contest format.

Contest Orientations:

- **Contestant Orientation**
 - Held on **Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.** in the **Bost Conference Center** at Mississippi State University.
 - All contestants are required to attend.
 - Roll call of contestants.
 - Announcement of Discussion Meet topic time schedule:
 - First Round topic will be announced during Orientation.
 - Each subsequent round topic announced at close of prior round.
 - Distribute contest room locations.
- **Judges' Orientation**
 - Held on **Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.** in the **Bost Conference Center** at Mississippi State University.
 - Roll call of judges.
 - Review judges' duties along with any announcements.
 - Review timing sequences.
 - Allow time for questions.
 - Distribute contest room locations.
- **Volunteer Orientation**
 - Held 30 minutes before the contest begins.
 - Roll call of timekeepers and moderators.
 - Distribution of a time schedule and time cards.
 - Distribute contest room locations and Round Robin bracket sheets.

Preparing for Competition:

Study as much material as possible relating to the overall topics using the following approaches:

- **Utilize government research.** Search government agency websites and databases for strong statistics and data to use in your discussions. This information is reliable and well-researched.

- **Learn from the best.** Reach out to former Discussion Meet and Collegiate Discussion Meet participants. Even though the discussion questions change each year, former competitors can provide valuable insight and tips on the nature of the contest. Also, reach out to YF&R staff and committee members who have familiarity with the competition to get clarification.
- **Pros and Cons.** Review each question and create discussion points from both sides of the issue. This will not only give you greater understanding of how an issue developed, but it will prepare you to discuss potential obstacles when working to find a solution.
- **Diversify written sources.** Besides the internet, gather resources and information from the library, newspapers, magazines, Farm Bureau policies and other agriculture publications.
- **Real talk.** Engage in conversations with your local county Farm Bureau members, state and national representatives, lobbyists and agriculture industry employees to gather information and examples. Seek conversations with those who are not familiar with the issue to gain their perspective. Explaining the topic helps provide practice articulating what you know. As you speak, address all angles to gather additional points and as many ideas as possible.
- **Farm Bureau history and policies.** Take time to review prior county, state and American Farm Bureau engagement on the topic. What are our standing policies with the questions?
- **Expert opinion.** If you don't have a personal relationship with the content of the question, find a credible source who does and get their opinion. Be prepared to cite and properly establish your source as an expert in their field.

Helpful Hints for Contestants:

- The Discussion Meet should be a conflict of ideas, not personalities. **Remember this is a discussion, not a debate.** The discussion should generate a solution to the issue at hand.
- Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions, and urge others to be specific.
- Be aware of the audience, but generally address the panel. Speak loudly to be heard by all.
- Participate whenever your contribution will further the discussion. Do not monopolize the discussion.
- The discussion should not be "conversation" or aimless talk, nor should you take the role of a persuasive speaker. Try to cooperatively shed light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position.
- This is not a panel symposium wherein each participant, in turn, makes a presentation, with the moderator ending the session with a summary. Rather, it is an exercise in cooperative problem solving, with the questions, answers and statements coming from any person at any time. The moderator plays an inactive role during the discussion.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds for use in a summary statement.
- Use the one minute of quiet time to organize your summary statement.
- Stand and make your opening and closing statements to the audience. Speak clearly. Use accepted speech techniques. Stay within the time limit.