



**National FFA Organization  
Agricultural Issues Forum Career Development Event**

---

**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.**

- Identify specific things you as a teacher and the students will do to accomplish each objective stated in the National FFA Agricultural Issues Forum CDE guidelines.
- Include the *Focusing on Agricultural Issues* instructional materials as part of your regular classroom instruction. In the portfolio, you will be asked to state number of classes/students that received this instruction and some judges pay attention to this.
- Some teachers use Agricultural Issues as a joint project with the English and/or speech teacher. They can be small group class projects, with selection of the most interesting issues to be developed further.
- If you make it to the state and/or national level, the topic needs to be different from what your students presented the previous year. (In the national guidelines, this also applies to the advisor if the advisor changes schools.) All of the research needs to be done by the students during the current year.
- The topic presented as part of the Career Development Event needs to be relevant to your local community. It may be a local, state, national, or international issue. The students will be more excited with a topic that has meaning, and you will have a better chance of getting media coverage. Your title, stating your Agricultural Issue, should be in the format of a question.
- Forum presentations provide many benefits. First, high quality forums are the largest portion of the portfolio score. You can receive the maximum points in this section if your team has a minimum of five high quality forums that are properly documented. Second, you should present to organizations and individuals who are knowledgeable about your topic. They can help you refine the content of your presentation. More specifically, use the forum feedback to refine and/or add relevant content. Third, the stated objective is to inform members of the community about the pros and cons of a specific issue. Do as many high quality forums as you can. (At National, only forums conducted prior to the State qualification count in your score.)
- Forums are given the most points in the portfolio. Portfolio judges score forums on “quantity and quality.” Portfolio scores are added to the oral presentation score at each level of the competition.
- Note in the CDE guidelines that forums presented at the school to teachers and/or students will NOT count as documented forums. Yes, the school is a good place to practice, but one of the objectives is to have the forums presented in the community. It is your choice whether or not you list in-school presentations in the portfolio. The portfolio judges will not count in-school presentations in their scoring. Listing them may have a

positive influence on the oral presentation judges who read your portfolio prior to seeing your oral presentation.

- Document Forums Completely and Properly! You should provide dated letters from the organization or group you presented to, not copies of the letters you have sent to them. In the portfolio, provide a summary of the organizations you presented to along with the number of people in attendance. If a picture is taken, have it show as many people in the audience as possible. Do what you can to show that you had a positive impact in your community with these presentations/discussions. Forums not properly documented will not count in the score.
- Please, please pay attention to the above comments on proper and complete documentation. Arrange for your documentation soon after the presentation is held.
- If it is a state, national or international issue, consider having presentations to state level governing organizations. Let the local newspaper know about it before it happens so you help them give you positive press.

#### **The Portfolio:**

- Since the portfolio is limited to 10 pages total (not including the cover page), you can reduce documentation letters so multiple letters can fit on the same page.
- Submit your portfolio by the stated deadline date or the stated time to avoid penalty points. It is difficult for high presentation scores to fill the gap. (It's like being a college freshman, getting a "C" on the first exam and working hard enough to get an "A" in the course.) It's not impossible, but also not likely. Avoid penalty points by reading and following all of the stated guidelines.
- Proper grammar, correct spelling, and proper editing of text are important. 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.

#### **The Presentation:**

- Your 15 minutes will start when the first words are spoken. You can use music for a short mood-setting introduction. The music needs to fit your overall presentation.
- Your Agricultural Issue, which will be your Title, should be stated as a question.
- It makes no difference if you are in official FFA dress or in costume. What does make a difference is for the students to understand the topic, give a good presentation, be effective in answering questions and have a high score on the portfolio.
- The "Introduction" must clearly provide an overview of the issue.

- During the presentation, it must be clear if the speaker is “pro” or “con.” You can use the moderator to introduce them as a pro or con or have them state which side they are on during the first part of their comments.
- You can use a variety of methods to present the “Summary of Pros and Cons.” It will be to your advantage to have both the “List of Pros” and “List of Cons” visual aid available so the judges can see these summaries during the question and answer period. Also when they assign the points on the scorecard for Pro, Con and Summary (possible total of 60 points) they will see something to remind them what they heard. You have heard the presentation many, many times. They hear and see it once. If it is a complicated topic, do you really think they will remember everything? Help them be good judges.
- If you have a hand-out, realize you are making the judges choose between listening to what you are saying in the presentation or reading your hand-out.
- Proper citation of research during the presentation should follow the same style guide as recommended for the portfolio.

### **Questioning:**

- Line-up near the front of the “stage.” When you prepare to answer the question, step forward and stand comfortably. When you finish, step back.
- Make sure you understand the question. If you don’t, ask for clarification.
- Be clear, be complete and be short with your response to the questions.
- Follow-up answers (second student answering the same question) are ok with-in limits. Do not use it as a stall tactic to limit the number a questions the judges can ask. If the judges feel like the question has been answered satisfactorily, they have been told that they can interrupt.
- Have each presenter answer at least one question. Points given for answering questions is typically what separates the top teams.
- In summary, the highest placed team will have both strong content and presentation. A relatively high portfolio score is necessary and the students must demonstrate their understanding of the issue during the question and answer period. Of the many different FFA career development events, the agricultural issues forum has the potential to be one of the most positive learning experiences available. It requires a lot of work, but you will receive a lot of positives.
- Finally, take time to attend the preliminary or semi-final rounds at the national FFA convention Wednesday morning or Thursday afternoon. The final four teams on Thursday afternoon can also be helpful, but good and bad ways of doing things can be learned by watching the earlier rounds.

## **AGRICULTURAL ISSUES FORUM CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENT**

### **What is it?**

This CDE begins by developing a presentation about an agricultural issue, based on criteria outlined in the CDE Handbook. From the start, member teams develop a portfolio and deliver a presentation that stresses both pros and cons of an agricultural issue. At the event competition, you use verbal skills and presentation abilities to defend your findings and answer judges' questions.

### **Career Opportunities**

#### *Career Clusters*

- Agricultural and Forestry Production
- Management and Financial Specialties
- Marketing, Merchandising and Sales Careers
- Science and Engineering
- Social Services
- Education and Communication

#### ***Career opportunities found in the career cluster areas:***

- The Agricultural Issues CDE could be directly applied to any of the career clusters as well as the occupations found within those career clusters. A broad understanding of the many diverse issues found within the agriculture industry is essential for any agriculture occupation.

### **SAE Opportunities**

Working as page for the legislature, job shadowing at a law firm, researching an agricultural issue and presenting it at a community forum

### **Proficiency Award Areas**

Agricultural Communications

### **Curriculum Resources**

- Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials, Agricultural Education Resources Catalog, National FFA Organization
- Global Vision Instructional Materials, Agricultural Education Resources Catalog, National FFA Organization
- Agricultural Issues: Food Safety Video, Agricultural Education Resources Catalog, National FFA Organization
- Agricultural Issues: Ground Water Safety Video, Agricultural Education Resources Catalog, National FFA Organization

# 2 CHAPTER

NATIONAL FFA

# AGRICULTURAL ISSUES FORUM

CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENT

*A Special Project of the National FFA Foundation*

## IMPORTANT NOTE

*Please thoroughly read the Introduction Section at the beginning of this handbook for complete rules and procedures that are relevant to all National FFA Career Development Events.*

### I. OBJECTIVES

1. To provide an opportunity to expose a wide variety of students to the selection, research, planning and presentation of an agricultural issue.
2. To acquire knowledge and skills in community leadership for present and future use.
3. To become knowledgeable of, and familiar with a variety of local, state, national and international issues facing agriculture.
4. To understand the principles and fundamentals of agricultural issue analysis.
5. To further the awareness of agricultural issues in the local community.
6. To promote integration of agricultural issue analysis in local school academic subject matter areas.

7. To promote career choices by providing an opportunity for individuals to become acquainted with professionals in the industry.
8. To foster teamwork, leadership and communication skills.

### II. EVENT RULES

1. 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 which could result in disqualification.
2. 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 scholarships

- and awards each student must take an active role in the presentation to be eligible for scholarships and awards. This includes active participation in the presentation and making themselves available for questions from the judges in all rounds of competition.
3. Presentations may include official FFA dress, costumes, props, skits and other creative paraphernalia.
  4. If there is not a state qualifying event, the date on which the state appoints the team to be the representative to the National FFA Agricultural Issues Forum will be considered as the state qualifying date. This must be substantiated by the state FFA advisor or other authorized individual from the state FFA association.
  5. 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 CDE will adequately prepare the judges before the event competition.
  6. Seating of teams in the preliminary rounds will be done by the event superintendent in a fair and impartial manner as determined by the event committee.
3. The issue will come from one of the following eight agricultural issue topic areas as listed in the Focusing on Agricultural Issues instructional materials:
    - a. Environmental Issues
    - b. Agricultural Technology Issues
    - c. Animal Issues
    - d. Agricultural Career Issues
    - e. Economy and Trade Issues
    - f. Agricultural Policy Issues
    - g. Food Safety Issues
    - h. Biotechnology
  4. The same agricultural issue presentation and portfolio will not be used in subsequent years by the same chapter and/or advisor.
  5. Research on the topic must be current and students must be involved in all the research of the topic and development of the portfolio.
  6. The portfolio should include items described in a, b and c below, and will be limited to ten pages single sided or five pages double sided maximum not including cover page. The cover page will include the title of the issue, the date of the state qualifying event, name, address and phone number of the chapter. A maximum of ten (10) points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum amount of pages and /or for not including the cover page containing required information. ~~Ten copies of the portfolio must be sent to the Career Development Event Program Manager, National FFA Center postmarked by September 15th prior to the national FFA convention at which the issue is to be presented. A penalty of 10% (2.5 points) will be assessed for documents received after the postmark deadline. If document is not~~

### III. EVENT FORMAT

1. EQUIPMENT PROVIDED- Equipment provided by the event superintendent includes: two easels and a front projection screen. Other equipment is allowed, but the presenting team must provide it.
2. Each team will conduct a presentation on the issue developed and presented at the local level.

~~received seven days after postmark deadline, the team may be subject to disqualification. States qualifying after the September 15th deadline will have seven days from state qualifying event date to submit their portfolio.~~

- a) A maximum of two pages of the portfolio will include a summary of the issue, answering the questions that are most relevant to your topic:
  - List course(s) in which instruction occurred including the number of students involved in the instruction of the issue. (See Objective 6.)
  - 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?
  - Is there strong disagreement on the issue?
- b) A bibliography of all resources and references cited which may include personal interviews and any other supporting material.
- c) Provide documentation that local forum(s) occurred prior to state qualifying event such as:
  - Letters from organizations
  - News articles
  - Photos showing attendance at forums
- d) Please state when, where and to whom the forum(s) were presented and indicate how many community members were in attendance at each of the forum(s).
- e) A chapter must have a minimum of five high quality public forums prior to their

state qualifying event in order to receive the maximum of 15 points. Forum presentations given after having won the state competition are encouraged, but will not count toward the portfolio score.

- Multiple organizations attending the same forum will count as one forum. If more than one forum is held on the same day, the starting time of each forum must be independently documented.
- 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 school presentations to teachers and students. In addition, no points shall 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 your 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.*

7. Time Limits: Five minutes will be allowed for set up. 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. A maximum of seven (7) minutes for questions and answers will be allotted. Questions and answers will terminate at the end of seven (7) minutes. Three (3) minutes will be allowed for take down.

8. The presentations will be designed to be viewed by the judges. The audience at-large will not be of concern to the presenters.
9. 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.

## IV. SCORING

### 1. Team Presentation

- A. Introduction, Pro, Con and Summary of Pro and Con (20 points each, 80 points total)  
There will be a 5-point deduction from the scorecard of any team that draws a conclusion supporting a pro or con viewpoint during the formal presentation.
- B. Overall presentation (participation of each member of the team, quality and power of the presentations, creativity, stage presence) (20 points)
- C. Questions (25 points)

### 2. Portfolio: 10 single sided pages maximum or 5 double sided pages. (Three parts, 25 points total)

- A. Summary of the Issue, 2 pages maximum (5 points).
- B. Bibliography (5 points).
- C. Documentation of local forums (15 points).

- i. Please state when, (date and time) where, and to whom the forums were presented. If you indicate that more than one forum was held on the same date, independent documentation of the time of day the forums were held must be provided.
- ii. Maximum of 10 points will be deducted for exceeding the maximum number of pages and/or not including cover page containing 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 completed by portfolio judges and presented to the teams at the awards function. Presentation judges will be furnished with copies of the team portfolio, which they may use to formulate questions.~~

PORTFOLIOS  
ARE JUDGED  
THE DAY OF  
THE CONTEST.

3. Judges' ranking will be used to place teams.
4. Teams shall be ranked in numerical order on the basis of the final score to be determined by each judge without consultation. The judges' ranking of each team then shall be added, and the winner will be that team whose total ranking is the lowest. Other placings will be determined in the same manner (low rank method of selection).
5. 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.

## ■ V. TIEBREAKERS

Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks. Team's 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 question 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.

## ■ VI. AWARDS

Awards will be presented at an awards ceremony. Plaques and scholarships will be awarded to the top four teams, based on the current year's availability. Plaques and medals will be presented to all teams participating, based on ranking. Awards are sponsored by a cooperating industry sponsor(s) as a special project, and/or by the general fund of the National FFA Foundation.

## ■ VII. REFERENCES

This list of references is not intended to be 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.

Updated Focusing on Agricultural Issues Instructional Materials located at: <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~peters/> or can be purchased through The Core Catalog, National FFA Organization.

Agricultural Issues: Ground Water Safety Video, The Core Catalog, National FFA Organization

Document entitled: "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 at the following link: [http://www.ffa.org/programs/cde/documents/cde\\_agissues\\_resources.pdf](http://www.ffa.org/programs/cde/documents/cde_agissues_resources.pdf)

## Agricultural Issues Forum

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

The *portfolio* should include items described in Section 6a, 6b and 6c of the Guidelines, and is limited to ten pages single-sided [5 pages double-sided] maximum.

~~Ten copies of the portfolio must be sent to the Career Development Event Program Manager, National FFA Center postmarked by September 15th prior to the National FFA Convention at which the issue is to be presented.~~

### PORTFOLIO

	POSSIBLE POINTS	15 – 11	10 – 6	5 – 1
1. Summary of the Issue (2 pages maximum)	5			
2. Bibliography	5			
3. Documentation of Local Forums	15			
Subtotal:	25			

Team Sub Total:

• Deduction for exceeding the maximum number of pages and incomplete cover page [10 pts. Max]:	Deduction:	(   )
• Deduction for portfolios received after postmark deadline [ 2.5 points Max]	Deduction	(   )

Total Score:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Judge's signature*

## Agricultural Issues Forum

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Flight: \_\_\_\_\_

### TEAM PRESENTATION

	POSSIBLE POINTS	25 - 21	20 - 15	14 - 10	9 - 5	4 - 0
1. Introduction Statement of the issue and its importance	20					
2. Pro View Point	20					
3. Con View Point	20					
4. Summary of Pro and Con	20					
5. Overall Presentation	20					
6. Questions	25					
7. Portfolio	25					
Total:	150					
Deduction for Presenting a Conclusion During Teams' 15 minute presentation	(5)					( ____ )

Team Presentation Total:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Judge's signature*