

Ag Issues and Perceptions Leadership Event

The purpose of this event is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned during the past year while studying “Agricultural Issues” as a part of their agricultural education program.

Event Objectives

A. To reward learning achievements in the “Agriculture Issues” curriculum conducted during the school year by using the competitive approach to provide motivation while at the same time provide an opportunity to:

1. Evaluate the perceptions concept- do students understand the influence of perceptions and how to effectively respond?
2. Evaluate student’s ability to understand how issues in agriculture develop.
3. Test students’ awareness of how issues develop, how decisions are made, and their influence on society.
4. Determine students’ ability to understand both sides of an issue and effectively deal with opposing views.
5. Understand the importance of facts and risk/benefit tradeoffs in making decisions.

B. To acknowledge skills learned in group problems solving efforts which include:

1. Cohesive interaction of the group (maintaining focus of the discussion by staying on the subject).
2. Exemplifying a broad based, problem-solving approach for dealing with controversial agricultural issues.
3. Ability to quickly understand the problem and arrive at a solution.
4. Ability to draw logical conclusions through an understanding of the issues and “best” response strategies.

C. To develop individual contribution to group problem-solving by encouraging participants to:

1. Demonstrate their understanding of leadership roles assigned
2. Demonstrate skill in performing “role” assigned within the group discussion.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of issues and perceptions from the point of view required by the assigned role.
4. Present facts and issues in a clear and precise manner.
5. Exhibit qualities of a team player with good group interaction skill.

Event Rules

1. The number of members on each discussion team will be six (6).
2. Two teams from each district will advance to the state event.
3. The state event may consist of preliminary and final rounds or be divided into pools depending on the number of entries.
4. Each discussion team will be limited to the following sequence and time allotment:
 - a) Introduction of participant teams and judges and announcement of the topic by the event moderator.
 - b) An opening two (2) minute (maximum) statement given by the team facilitator.
 - c) A maximum of 15 minutes for the team discussion.
 - d) Seven (7) minutes for judges' questions of the discussion team will be allowed.
5. Each team member will discuss the issue from the perspective of the position he or she holds. The Board Chairperson is responsible to keep order and to provide an opportunity for all on the team to speak.
6. It is the responsibility of the Board Chairperson to conclude the discussion with summary comments and recommendations with at least one (1) action step concerning resolution of the issue.
7. The winner of the state event will advance to the national level event.
8. The discussion topic will be decided by each individual team prior to the district event.

Event Procedures

1. There will be three judges for the event. Judges will have knowledge of agriculture and an understanding of the techniques of good discussion and group decision-making. Past judges for the state event have included professors from ISU and prominent agricultural industry leaders.
2. Each team member will role play a career category, the list of which will be determined in advance of the district event. Teams will determine which member will play each role. Career categories may be similar to, but not limited to, the following:
 - a) Board Chairperson- Local Political Person
 - b) Farm Manager- Landowner/Farmer Landowner
 - c) Ag Professional- Technical Person- Farm Supply Manager/Field person
 - d) Environmentalist- DNR- Regulatory Affairs Manager
 - e) Consumer- Concerned Citizen
 - f) Moderator- County Education Coordinator- Ag Ed Instructor- County Extension Director

General Instructions To Teams

1. Preparation for the Event:
 - a) Become familiar with the discussion issue or issues assigned.
 - b) Learn as much as possible about the procedure of the FFA's Ag Issues Forum.
 - c) Study material relating to the issues from which event topics will be selected. Sources: Library; newspapers; magazines; farm organization policies; county, state and agricultural publications; and conversations with those having knowledge of the subject.

2. During the event:
 - a) Teams should consider using nameplates to identify to the judges, the role of each member: (i.e., Consumer Farm Supplier, Environmentalist, Moderator, etc.).
 - b) Listen carefully to other participants as they make arguments and suggestions.
 - c) Keep within time limit allowed for team discussion.
 - d) There should be a conflict of ideas, but not of personalities. Remember, this is a discussion forum, not a debate.
 - e) Try to determine whether there are enough facts presented and available in order to make a decision. What additional facts are needed and can be gathered- short term- long term?
 - f) Be aware of audience, but not to the exclusion of the discussion team. (Talk loudly enough to be heard by all of the audience.)
 - g) Be prepared to contribute ideas, state facts and opinions, and participate such that others become involved in the discussion.
 - h) Participate whenever it will contribute to furthering the discussion without monopolizing the time. Be enthusiastic and, in general, use logic rather than emotion. Be specific and concise with comments.
 - i) Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds to assist in making a contribution of ideas and recommendations.
 - j) Facilitator or moderator of the team will summarize actions and recommendations as the discussion concludes.
 - k) In the past, some teams have enhanced their presentations with visual aids such as flip charts, example products, etc.

Example of Event Topics

Past topics have included food safety, livestock industry, and biotechnology. Following are topics to be used only as examples of issues that may be used in the Ag Issues and Perceptions Event:

1. How will the animal rights movement affect agriculture? What do farmers have to gain or lose from the animal protection movement? What strategies could producers use to create a more balanced view and constructive approach to animal management?
2. What influences will growth hormones have on animal agriculture? What are the issues, which need to be addressed so that products of biotechnology, including growth hormones, are accepted as safe for animals and society?
3. How can producers manage nitrogen programs so that water supplies are protected from excess nitrate levels?
4. What can be done to ensure that herbicide resistance technology can be employed so that weed resistance does not become a problem?
5. How can the general public be assured that biotechnology applications in crop production represent sound new technology representing acceptable risk?
6. How can the public be assured that pesticide use does not represent unacceptable risk to our food supply or the environment?
7. What is reasonable policy regarding wetlands, and at what point does it become a farmers' rights issue?
8. How shall CRP land classified as highly erodible be managed as it is returned to crop production?

9. How has conservation compliance affected farmers and will full implementation represent a problem to farmers with highly erodible land on a majority of his or her acreage?

Awards

The Iowa Chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (ASFMRA) will provide sponsorship for awards through the Iowa FFA Foundation. These will include cash for the top five teams and plaques for the top two teams. Also, the champion team will receive travel money to participate in the National Ag Issues Event.

**AG ISSUES AND PERCEPTION EVENT
JUDGES' SCORE FORM**

Topic: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Judge: _____ <b style="font-size: 1.2em;">Team Names					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
20 Points per category, total of 100: Superior= 20 Fair= 8 Excellent= 16 Poor= 4 Good= 12						
How well did the team demonstrate understanding of how issues develop, how decisions are made, and influence perceptions have on society?						
How well did the team demonstrate understanding of both sides of an issue and how to deal with opposing views?						
How well did the team use facts and demonstrate understanding of risk tradeoffs in the decision-making process?						
How well did the team maintain focus of discussion?						
How well did team members perform their assigned roles, present facts and issues,						
Total Score						