2026
COMPETITION GUIDE



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What is a Discussion Meet?

The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) High School Discussion Meet is a competition sponsored by the MFB Young Farmer program held each fall in conjunction with MFB's Collegiate and Young Farmer level discussion meets.

The Discussion Meet, at any level, is designed to replicate a committee meeting where participants explore an agricultural topic and ways to address it.

This competition is evaluated on an exchange of ideas and information on a pre-determined topic. Participants build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems.

The discussion should not be "conversation" or aimless talk, nor should the participant take the role of a persuasive speaker. The participant should attempt to cooperatively shed further light on the problem and tentatively retain a flexible position. A successful participant is a productive thinker, rather than an emotional persuader, who is free to state beliefs and change positions whenever new information and ideas make that a reasonable thing to do.

Finally, this is not a panel symposium where 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 participant at any time.

The discussion should follow these steps:

1. State the problem or need.
2. Explore, define and understand the problem or need.
3. Identify causes of problem or need.
4. Elaborate on 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.

Purpose of a Discussion Meet

The strength of Farm Bureau is largely in its ability to involve members in analyzing their problems and deciding on solutions which best fit their needs. Experience has proven the Discussion Meet will provide an opportunity for greater participation on the part of young, active students interested in agriculture. It will help them develop a greater command of basic discussion skills. They will acquire a better understanding of how people can think in groups for the sake of better understanding solutions to problems.

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

1. Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
2. Develop a concise and convenient manner of speaking.
3. Develop the ability to listen.
4. Help the participant to overcome timidity or stage fright.
5. Assist the individual in learning to give and receive criticism in a gainful manner.
6. Teach the value of compromise.
7. Develop leaders for effective problem-solving through group discussion.

Parts of a Discussion Meet

There are three parts to a Discussion Meet competition: the opening statement, body of discussion and the closing statement.

A. The opening statement is **30 seconds** in length. The statement should be broad in scope, show relevancy and importance of the topic.

B. The body of the discussion will be **20 minutes** in length. During the body of the discussion, first background the topic, discuss why it is an issue, come up with solutions to the issue and be sure to bring Farm Bureau into the discussion.

C. The closing statement is given at the end of the discussion. Competitors will be given **one minute** of quiet time to put their closing statements together. Closing statements should summarize the discussion that took place during the body. The closing statement should not be "canned" and is one minute or less.

Who Can Compete?

All high school students who are FFA members, 4-H members, and/or dependents of Michigan Farm Bureau members, except past Michigan Farm Bureau High School Discussion Meet state winners, are eligible to compete. Each regional competition is based on FFA regional boundaries and hosted by FFA chapters.

Each FFA chapter, 4-H club and county Farm Bureau can send up to three competitors to compete in the regional competition. Competitors may only compete in one regional competition per year. The top three individuals from each regional competition will move on to the state competition at the Michigan Farm Bureau State Annual Meeting on **Wednesday, December 2nd** in Grand Rapids, MI.

Competitors should wear business casual attire (khakis/dress pants, polo shirts, button-up shirts, blouses, business dresses, etc.)

Scoring

Competitors will be scored in six areas:

1. OPENING STATEMENT (10 points): Defines problem; conveys importance and relevance; sets the stage for an interesting discussion; clear point of view; uses time wisely.

2. ANALYSIS OR TOPIC OR PROBLEM (20 points): Has thoroughly researched topic; builds on the ideas of others to achieve coherent analysis; asks relevant questions; helps ensure thorough analysis before problem solving; aware of relevant FB policy.

3. PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION (25 points): Leader in guiding the conversation to specific and relevant solutions; has achievable and specific plan of action; clearly defines how FB is part of the action plan.

4. COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE (15 points): Active listener; comments on specific ideas mentioned by others and ties them back to the bigger conversation; shows grace, courtesy, and respect to others; shows integrity especially when they do not agree.

5. DELIVERY (15 points): Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear.

6. CLOSING STATEMENT (15 points): Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans; memorable; inspires confidence.

Regional Competition Information

FFA advisors in each FFA region have volunteered to act as a regional competition coordinator for the Michigan Farm Bureau Youth Discussion Meet. They will work with their MFB Regional Manager to secure the location, judges, and supplies. For date, location, and logistics of competition please refer to this guidebook as well as contact your Regional FFA advisor or County Farm Bureau Administrative Manager.

To register, complete the registration form at https://wkf.ms/3znR2au.

Online registration must be completed one week prior to the competition date. Please direct all registration questions and overall discussion meet questions to Katie Cooper at kcooper@michfb.com.

Who selects the regional winners?

At the regional level, a panel of two to three judges will score each competitor using the scorecard found in this guidebook.

Judges may be (but are not limited to) Michigan Farm Bureau staff, county Farm Bureau board members, State Young Farmer Committee members, Young Farmer county chairs, retired agriscience educators, local farmers, FFA alumni, MSU Extension staff or agribusiness professionals.

The individuals who score the highest in the final round will move on to represent the region at the state level. The number of competitors moving on is based on total pre-registered & actual competitors:

- 0-39 regional pre-registered & participants who competed at the regional competition: three state qualifiers and up to three alternates.
- 40+ regional pre-registered & participants who competed at the regional competition: four state qualifiers and up to three alternates.

Substitutions are allowed on the day of regional competitions. Additions on the day of regional competition will not be allowed.

Prizes

All regional competitors receive an appreciation gift for their participation with the top three receiving a $50 cash prize. The state runner-up will receive a $150 cash prize and plaque. The state winner will receive $250 and a plaque. All prizes are courtesy of DTE Energy and the Michigan Foundation for Agriculture.

Suggestions for Competitors

1. Make the decision to enter the Discussion Meet as far in advance of the actual meet as possible.
2. Watch previous discussion meets on MFB's YouTube Channel.
3. Utilize the High School Discussion Meet study guide to gain as much material as possible related to the topics.
4. Practice talking about the various topics with others.
5. At the time of the competition, be early for orientation.
    a. Become acquainted with the other competitors and moderator.
    b. Ask questions to clarify any unclear instructions.
    c. Listen carefully to the moderator as he or she outlines the procedures you will follow.
6. During the competition:
    a. Listen carefully to the other competitors as they make their opening statements.
    b. Keep within the time limit of your opening statement.
    c. There should be a conflict of ideas, but not of personalities. **Remember, this is a discussion, not a debate.**
    d. Be prepared to ask questions, state facts and opinions and urge others to be specific.
    e. Be aware of the audience, but not to the exclusion of other competitors.
    f. Participate whenever it will contribute to furthering the discussion without monopolizing the time. Be enthusiastic and, in general, use logic rather than emotion.
    g. Make **notes of key points as the discussion proceeds;** you will use them to develop your closing statement.
    h. Use your one minute of time to organize your closing statement.
    i. Stand and make your closing statement to the audience. Use accepted speech techniques. Stay within the time limit.

2026 REGIONAL DATES & QUESTIONS

HIGH SCHOOL DISCUSSION MEET

Each question has been assigned for a specific round. Prior to the regional event, competitors will be notified how many rounds will be held based on the number of registrations.

REGION	EVENT DATE	REGISTRATION DUE DATE	TIME	LOCATION	COUNTIES IN REGION
I	11/17	11/5	5 p.m.	Vicksburg High School	Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Cass, Calhoun, Eaton, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren
II	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne
III	11/12	11/2	10 a.m.	Delta College	Bay, Gratiot, Huron, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, and Tuscola
IV	10/03	9/23	9 a.m.	Durand High School	Clinton, Genesee, Ingham, Lapeer, Livingston, Shiawassee, and St. Clair
V	11/18	11/6	4 p.m.	Ravenna High School	Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceania, Osceola, and Ottawa
VI	10/29	10/19	4:30 p.m.	Magnus Center	Alcona, Alger, Alpena, Antrim, Arenac, Baraga, Bay, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Crawford, Delta, Dickinson, Emmet, Gladwin, Gogebic, Grand Traverse, Houghton, Iosco, Iron, Kalkaska, Keweenaw, Leelanau, Luce, Mackinac, Manistee, Marquette, Menominee, Missaukee, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Ontonagon, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon, Schoolcraft, and Wexford

REGIONAL LEVEL QUESTIONS

Round One Question: Schools serve meals to students every day, and many of those same communities are surrounded by farms producing meat, fruits, vegetables and other food. **How can schools, farmers and communities work together to bring more locally grown and raised food into school meals?**

Round Two Question: Consumers are increasingly interested in how their food is produced and how food choices affect their health. At the same time, farmers rely on science, technology, and research to produce safe and sustainable food. **How can 4-H, FFA and youth involved in agriculture help farmers communicate with consumers and build trust in modern agricultural practices and the food system?**

Final Round Question: When important decisions about agricultural issues (energy, farmland, water use, conservation, etc) are being made locally; **How can young people get informed, build relationships and influence change in their community?**

To help you prepare, check out resources at
https://www.michfb.com/agriculture/education/discussion-meets

STATE LEVEL INFO & QUESTIONS:

HIGH SCHOOL DISCUSSION MEET

The top three (or four) competitors from each region will need to register for the state level competition by November 19th. Information will be emailed to the competitor and adult leader after the regional competition. If a finalist is unable to complete, please email kcooper@michfb.com ASAP so the region's alternate can be notified in a timely manner.

STATE DISCUSSION MEET AGENDA – Wednesday, December 2nd

Devos Place Convention Center, Grand Rapids, MI

7:45 a.m.	Arrive to allow for time to park and walk to Grand Gallery
8:00 a.m.	Registration, Grand Gallery Ballrooms
8:15 a.m.	Contestant AND Judges Briefing
8:45 a.m.	Discussion Meet Round One
10:00 a.m.	Discussion Meet Round Two
11:15 a.m.	Final Six Announcement
11:30 a.m.	Discussion Meet Final Round
12:45 – 2:30 p.m.	MFB State Annual Member Engagement Luncheon & Program – Winners Announced

COMPETITION STRUCTURE

At registration, students will receive their room assignments. Each student will compete in both Round One and Round Two. The top ranking six students will move on to the Final Round. Each competitor and their one adult guest will receive a meal ticket to attend the MFB State Annual Member Engagement Luncheon, where the runner-up and winner will be announced. Additional guests are welcome to watch all discussion meet rounds but will need to enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. A designated seating area in the back of the banquet hall will be available for additional guests to view the announcement.

STATE LEVEL QUESTIONS

1. Consumers are increasingly interested in how their food is produced and how food choices affect their health. At the same time, farmers rely on science, technology, and research to produce safe and sustainable food. How can 4-H, FFA and youth involved in agriculture help farmers communicate with consumers and build trust in modern agricultural practices and the food system?
2. Many rural communities are struggling to attract and keep veterinarians, especially those who work with livestock and other large animals. How can Farm Bureau, 4-H and FFA help address the shortage of rural and large-animal veterinarians and ensure farmers have access to the veterinary care they need?
3. When important decisions about agricultural issues (energy, farmland, water use, conservation, etc) are being made locally, How can young people get informed, build relationships and influence change?
4. Schools serve meals to students every day, and many of those same communities are surrounded by farms producing meat, fruits, vegetables and other food. How can schools, farmers and communities work together to bring more locally grown and raised food into school meals?

HIGH SCHOOL DISCUSSION MEET

REGIONAL SCORECARD

ROUND: One Two Final
ROOM:

TOPIC: Diversity Energy Income Sources

	COMPETITORS, LISTED LEFT TO RIGHT							
COMPETITOR'S NAME:								
(1) OPENING STATEMENT: (10 points) Defines problem; conveys importance and relevance; sets the stage for an interesting discussion; clear point of view; uses time wisely.								
(2) ANALYSIS OR TOPIC OR PROBLEM: (20 points) Has thoroughly researched topic; builds on the ideas of others to help achieve coherent analysis; asks relevant questions; helps ensure thorough analysis before problem solving; aware of relevant FB policy.								
(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION: (25 points) Leader in guiding the conversation to specific and relevant solutions; has achievable plan of action; clearly defines how FB is part of the action plan.								
(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: (15 points) Active listener; comments on specific ideas mentioned by others and ties them back to the bigger Conversation; shows grace, courtesy and respect to others; shows integrity especially when they do not agree.								
(5) DELIVERY: (15 points) Interesting to listen to; animated; appropriate volume and tone; poised; uses gestures and eye contact; confident and clear.								
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: (15 points) Shows that they have listened to the conversation; develops relevant and realistic plans; memorable; inspires confidence.								

Total score for each competitor is to be tabulated by the judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by the judge. ***Total of 100 points possible.***	*TOTAL*								
Rank competitors: highest score = 1; second highest = 2, etc.	*RANK*								

JUDGE'S NAME (PLEASE PRINT): _____

HIGH SCHOOL DISCUSSION MEET RUBRIC

(1) OPENING STATEMENT 10 PTS		
Competitor… • Clearly defines the problem. • Conveys the importance and relevancy of the problem. • Makes an "open" statement that leaves room forfurther conversation. • Sets the stage for an interesting conversation with avery clear point of view. • Uses their time very wisely and stays in the giventime. **Award 7-10 points**	**Competitor…** • Defines the problem. • Sets the problem in context. • Makes a statement that leaves some roomfor further conversation but could be more open. • Has a general point of view. • Stays in the given time. **Award 4-6 points**	**Competitor…** • Does not address the problem – is off topic. • Does not address the importance orrelevancy of the problem. • Makes a "closed" statement that does notallow room for further conversation. • Does not seem to have a point of view. • Does not finish in the allotted time. **Award 0-3 points**
(2) ANALYSIS OFTOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 PTS		
Competitor… • Identifies and addresses the causes of the problemand remains on topic. • Has thoroughly researched the topic. • Confidently builds on the ideas of others to contribute to a coherent analysis • Asks relevant questions to vet the ideas of others. • Shares relevant personal examples that add to the conversation. • Helps ensure thorough analysis before moving to problem solving. • Is aware of current and relevant FB policy. **Award 13-20 points**	**Competitor…** • Identifies the causes of the problem, doesnot directly address them, but remains on topic. • Has done research. • Addresses the ideas of others but doesnot build upon them – or only drops • in information they learned without connecting it to previous ideas and movingthe conversation forward. • Asks some questions to help vet the ideasof others. • Shares relevant personal examples – maybe slightly off topic. • Demonstrates knowledge of this problembut not why it exists. • Is aware of current FB policy. **Award 6-12 points**	**Competitor…** • Does not address the problem or does notremain on topic/wanders/distracts. • Hasn't done much research or lacks qualityfacts. • Doesn't build on other's ideas, only pushestheir own. • Doesn't ask questions to clarify other'sideas. • Doesn't share relevant personal examples. • Misinterprets the issue or does not displaycompetency and therefore does not help with problem solving. • Is unaware of FB policy. **Award 0-5 points**
(3) PROBLEM SOLVING AND IMPLEMENTATION 25 PTS		
Competitor… • Is a leader in guiding the group and the conversationto specific and relevant solutions. • Generates ideas that contribute to an achievable and specific plan of action to resolve the issue. • Clearly defines how Farm Bureau is part of the action plan. **Award 17-25 points**	**Competitor…** • Tries to help lead the conversation to address a solution but misses opportunitiesto collaborate with the group. • Has a plan but is missing specificity. • Farm Bureau is mentioned but is not a crucial piece of the solution. **Award 7-16 points**	**Competitor…** • Instead of helping to guide the conversationto a solution, just data drops. • Offers no plan for a solution or a generic plan like "tell our story" or "educate consumers." • Does not identify how Farm Bureau isinvolved. **Award 0-6 points**

(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE:15 PTS		
Competitor… • Is an active listener and comments on references or specific ideas mentioned by others tying them backto the bigger conversation? • Clearly shows grace, courtesy and respect to other participants. • Shows integrity especially when they do not agreewith others. **Award 10-15 points**	**Competitor…** • Competitor listens to others but does not comment specifically on their ideas or tie ideas back to the bigger conversation. • Is respectful of others. • Is not rude or defensive when they disagree with others. **Award 5-9 points**	**Competitor…** • Does not listen to others – just waits fortheir turn to talk. • Cuts others off or simply repeats whatothers have already said. • Is rude, defensive or combative when theydo not agree with others. **Award 0-4 points**
(5) DELIVERY: 15 PTS		
Competitor… • Is interesting to listen to, animated and lively, speaksat an appropriate volume and with a professional and courteous tone. • Is poised and uses gestures and eye contact thatemit respect and professionalism. • Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly. **Award 10-15 points**	**Competitor…** • Speaks at an appropriate volume and pacewith appropriate tone. • Uses effective posture, gestures and eye contact. • Conveys thoughts and viewpoints butcould seem overly rehearsed. **Award 5-9 points**	**Competitor…** • Is boring/ mumbling/ monotoned. • Slouches and does not use appropriate gestures. • Do not have eye contact. • Ideas are difficult to understand, or they arenot confident in speaking. **Award 0-4 points**
(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 PTS		
Competitor… • Shows that they have actively listened to the conversation in their summary. • Uses take away points from the discussion to develop relevant, realistic and specific action items and plans for the future. • Closing statement is memorable and inspires confidence in their ability to work toward a solution. **Award 10-15 points**	**Competitor…** • Summarizes the conversation that happened. • Uses take-away points from the discussionto help develop a plan. • Closing statement is memorable. **Award 5-9 points**	**Competitor…** • Does not accurately summarize theconversation. • Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation. • Closing statement is forgettable. **Award 0-4 points**



TIME TO GET READY FOR YOUR

Discussion Meet

Pick a question and share why the issue is important to you.

Explain the background of the issue.

Why is this an issue? Think about why it's important to you, your family, your school, your county, our world etc.

Share two to three solutions for the issue and how to apply the solutions.

How can you partner with organizations like Farm Bureau, MSU Extension, FFA Alumni groups, etc. to address the issue?

Ready to really prep yourself? Go back and REPEAT the process for each question!