MICHIGAN FFA

Contest Details

Team Event
Participants: 3-7
Official Dress Required: No*
National Qualifying Event: Yes

**See clarification in rules*

AGRICULTURAL ISSUES FORUM

Leadership Development Event

OBJECTIVES

To provide an opportunity to expose a wide variety of students to the selection, research, planning and presentation of an agricultural issue.

To acquire knowledge and skills in community leadership for present and future use.

To become knowledgeable of, and familiar with, a variety of local, state, national and international issues facing agriculture.

To understand the principles and fundamentals of agricultural issue analysis.

To further the awareness of agricultural issues in the local community.

To promote integration of agricultural issue analysis in local school academic subject matter areas.

To promote career choices by providing an opportunity for individuals to become acquainted with professionals in the industry.

To foster teamwork, leadership, and communication skills.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

For educational standards, please refer to the Agricultural Issues Forum Handbook located at https://www.ffa.org/participate/cde-lde/agricultural-issues-forum/

TEAM MAKE-UP/ELIGIBILITY

Number of students

A minimum of three and a maximum of seven high school FFA members who are actively participating, orally presenting, and available to answer judges' questions.

One additional non-speaking high school member may assist the team by running technology but may not speak during the contest or answer any questions. **This member must be in official dress.**

Number of members must remain the same for each contest level.

Alternates must be listed on the district entry form submitted to the state office.

All participants (including technology person and alternates) must be members in good standing with the Michigan FFA Association and on the official roster.

Equipment needed by students/provided by contest

Equipment provided by the contest coordinator includes tables and projection screen.

Other equipment is allowed, but the presenting team must provide it.

Presentations may include official FFA dress, costumes, props, skits, and other creative paraphernalia.

Official Dress

Official dress is not required for presenters, but if a member is helping with technology, they are required to wear official dress. When official dress is worn it must comply with the guidelines below.

When worn, official dress for an FFA member includes:

1. An official FFA jacket zipped to the top
2. Black slacks and black socks/nylons or black skirt and black nylons
    a. *Skirt should be a minimum of knee length*
    b. *Slacks should be full length*
3. White collared blouse or white collared shirt

4. Official FFA tie or official FFA scarf
5. Black dress shoes with closed heel and toe

Note: Medical or cultural adjustments to required official dress may be made with prior approval of contest/event chair. Also, appropriate personal protective equipment may be used with Official Dress. Junior high FFA members are allowed to wear FFA jackets, but it is optional. Participants in junior high contests should not be judged differently for wearing or not wearing a jacket.

If warranted, deductions for non-compliance with official dress guidelines will be determined by the contest chair and enforced equally by all judges. The chair may make a deduction of 0, 2, 5, 7, or 10 points.

CONTEST PERSONNEL

Judges

A total of three competent and unbiased judges will be provided. They will be instructed not to take sides on the issue(s).

Educators and industry representatives are recommended.

During the contest, the judges will seat themselves apart from one another in different sections of the room.

Contest Chair

The contest chair will monitor the contest room and assist the judges as they compile their final placing.

The contest chair will adequately prepare the judges before the event competition.

Timekeeper

The timekeeper should use a stopwatch and the guidelines provided on the Michigan FFA website. The timekeeper should also use the 8 ½" x 11" cards available at https://www.michiganffa.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/Agricultural%20Issues%20Timekeeper%20Signs.pdf

Holding Room Monitor

The holding room should be monitored at all times.

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS

Topic and Research

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

The issue will come from one of the following eight agricultural issue topic areas:

1. Environmental Issues
2. Agricultural Technology Issues
3. Animal Issues
4. Agricultural Career Issues
5. Economy and Trade Issues
6. Agricultural Policy Issues
7. Food Safety Issues
8. Biotechnology

An agricultural issues presentation and portfolio may not be used that received a gold award at the regional or state level during the past four years.

Research on the topic must be current and students must be involved in all research of the topic.

Portfolio

A portfolio will be constructed and turned into the contest chair before the contest starts. The portfolio must:

1. Be the work of the student participants.
2. **Be limited to ten pages single-sided or five pages double-sided maximum, not including the Statement of Authenticity Form or cover page.**
3. The Statement of Authenticity Form must be included as the first page of the portfolio. *See additional requirements in Statement of Authenticity section below.*

4. The cover page will include the title of the issue, 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. The team must present four copies of the portfolio to the contest chair.

5. At the district level, only a Statement of Authenticity Form, cover sheet, and bibliography will be due as part of the portfolio. *See additional requirements for in Statement of Authenticity and Bibliography Requirements sections below.*

6. Prior to the regional level, students shall add a summary to the portfolio.

   Summary should answer questions like the following:

   - Explain why the issue is important now.
   - What is the nature of the issue and who is involved?
   - How can the issue be defined and describe history?
   - What caused the issue and risks/benefits of the issue?
   - Is there disagreement on how the issue could be solved?

7. Prior to the regional and state level, students shall add documentation of high-quality local forums to the portfolio using the certification form. *See additional requirements in Forum Expectations section below.*

For more information on the portfolio, please refer to the following link: https://www.ffa.org/participate/cdes/agricultural-issues-forum

Sample top four national portfolios for reference: https://ffa.app.box.com/s/v1hqdkm9ubaqfel5d9osgvq6hrl72oiw/folder/50515756786

Bibliography Requirements

The purpose of the agricultural issues contest is to present a current issue to a public audience; therefore, professional ethics and standards are to be considered. Ignoring truthful information, using unreliable sources and plagiarism are violation examples which could result in disqualification by the dispute committee.

A bibliography includes a complete list of all resources and references cited which may include personal interviews and any other supporting material. The

bibliography must conform to the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual.

If deductions for non-compliance with the bibliography requirements are warranted, the contest chair will have the judges confer when all presentations have finished. During this time, judges may only discuss the quality of the bibliography provided and must come to an agreement on the completeness and quality of the provided bibliography. The following guidance should be followed for bibliography point deductions. For formatting examples, judges should refer to Reference List Formatting & Examples resource.

BIBLIOGRAPHY	POINT DEDUCTION
Bibliography is present and includes a complete list of sources and is formatted following the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual.	No deduction
Bibliography is present and complete but formatting is somewhat inconsistent with the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual.	-1 point
Bibliography is present but the list is incomplete and/or formatting is inconsistent with the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual.	-3 points
Bibliography is not present.	-5 points

Note: State winning portfolios that advance to nationals must contain in-text citations throughout the summary in addition to the complete bibliography. While in-text citations are not required for district, regional, or state contests, it is recommended that in-text citations are included when creating the portfolio.

Statement of Authenticity

All portfolio submissions must include a signed copy of the Michigan FFA Statement of Authenticity Form verifying that the portfolio and presentation result from the students' original work. The Statement of Authenticity Form can be found on the Michigan FFA website at:

https://www.michiganffa.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/Statement%20of%20Authenticity%20Form_Fillable%20%20Update%209182 6_0.pdf

For district, regional, and state contests, the Statement of Authenticity Form should be included as the first page of the portfolio.
If the signed Statement of Authenticity Form is not included, a deduction of 5 points will be determined by the contest chair and enforced equally by all judges.

Forum Expectations

Prior to regional contests, students shall add two high-quality local forum documentations on the certification form.

Prior to the state level, students shall add documentation on the certification form of a minimum of three additional high quality local forums. If a team does not have a total of five high-quality forums at the state level, they cannot be the state winner.

To receive full points at the national level, teams must have documentation of a minimum of five high-quality local forums prior to the state contest.

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.

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 school 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. 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 a student to make a presentation to their family. Low-quality forums will receive zero or minimal points.

Overview of Portfolio Requirements

	DISTRICT	REGIONAL	STATE SEMI-FINALS	STATE FINALS
Statement of Authenticity	Required	Required	Required	Required
Cover Page	Required	Required	Required	Required
Summary	N/A	Required	Required	Required
Bibliography	Required	Required	Required	Required
High Quality Forums	N/A	2 Required	3 Additional Required ***(Total of 5)***	
Submission Format	Submit four printed copies of portfolio at contest site	Submit four printed copies of portfolio at contest site	Submit four printed copies of portfolio at contest site	Submit four printed copies of portfolio at contest site
Extra Copies	N/A	N/A	Bring four **additional** copies for advancing to state finals	N/A
Note: See detailed requirements in above sections.				

PROCEDURE

Contest Procedures

Contestants will draw for order of competition. The contest chair will introduce each contestant in order of drawing and announce the subject of their presentation.

A team may be disqualified if anyone other than the contest chair or holding room monitor enters the holding room at any time during the competition.

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

Time will begin when the first member speaks.

The team must conclude their presentation with, "Timekeeper, this concludes our presentation," or "Honorable Timekeeper, this concludes our presentation."

At the conclusion of the presentation, the judges may ask questions of all individuals of the presenting team. The only exception is if there is an additional person whose sole task was to run the technology. Each individual is encouraged to respond to at least one question from the judges.

TIME

The timekeeper will record the length of the presentation, set up, and take down. These times will be reported to the judges. The exact total minutes and seconds must be recorded showing undertime or overtime for which deductions will be made.

Set Up Time

Teams' contest materials should be stored in a way so they do not interfere with other teams moving their materials in and out of the contest room or the presentation area.

Five minutes will be allowed for set up which may be completed by a maximum of eight people, including team members.

Set up time will begin when all presentation materials are in the room. When 3:00 minutes of set up time have elapsed, the timekeeper will stand holding a timecard and announce "3:00 minutes." When 4:30 minutes have elapsed, the timekeeper will stand holding a timecard and announce "4:30 minutes."

For deductions, see time deduction chart.

SET UP TIME	POINT DEDUCTION
0:00 - 5:30	No deduction
5:31 - 6:30	-2 points
6:31 - 7:30	-4 points
7:31 - 8:30	-6 points
8:31 - 9:30	-8 points

Presentation Time

Time will begin when the first member speaks.

The presentations will be a maximum of 15 minutes in length and a minimum of 10 minutes.

The presenters will receive a signal at 9:30 minutes and at 14:30 minutes.

At 15 minutes, the timekeeper will stand and remain standing until the presentation is done.

A maximum of 5 minutes for questions and answers will be allotted. Questions and answers will terminate at the end of 5 minutes.

For deductions, see time deduction chart.

PRESENTATION LENGTH	POINT DEDUCTION
5:31 - 6:30	-16 points
6:31 - 7:30	-12 points
7:31 - 8:30	-8 points
8:31 - 9:30	-4 points
9:31 - 15:30	No deduction
15:31 - 16:30	-2 points
16:31 - 17:30	-4 points
17:31 - 18:30	-6 points
18:31 - 19:30	-8 points

Take Down Time

Five minutes will be allowed for take down.

For deductions, see time deduction chart.

TAKE DOWN TIME	POINT DEDUCTION
0:00 - 5:30	No deduction
5:31 - 6:30	-2 points
6:31 - 7:30	-4 points
7:31 - 8:30	-6 points
8:31 - 9:30	-8 points

SCORES

The presentation will be scored on the following criteria.

Introduction: Statement of issue and its importance	20 points
Pro Viewpoint: Identification of positive points Points addressed are relevant	20 points
Con Viewpoint: Identification of negative points Points addressed are relevant	20 points
Summary: Summarize pros and cons without taking sides	20 points
Effectiveness of Presentation: Participation, creativity, quality and power, clear with right pace and word pronunciation, no distractions, appropriate gestures, poised	20 points
Questions: Appropriate responses and knowledge of issues	25 points
Portfolio: District Contest: 5 points Regional Contest: 15 points State Contest: 25 points	Varies by contest level

Determining Awards

After scoring presentations, each judge will use their total score to rank the teams numerically without consultation among judges. All judges' rankings for each team will then be totaled together. The winner will be the team whose total of rankings is the lowest (low point score method of selection).

District and regional teams will be rated **gold** or **silver.** State semi-finals teams will be rated **silver** or **bronze.** State finals teams will be rated **gold** or **silver.** Determinations should be based on the score break of the performance. The top team and an alternate will be selected to move on to another contest level.

Placing and awards shall be determined utilizing the Guide to Ranking Teams and General Rules Governing Michigan FFA Leadership Contests.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

In addition to these rules, please review the following documents:

- General Rules Governing Michigan FFA Leadership Contests
- Agricultural Issues Certification Form
- Agricultural Issues Scorecard
- Guide to Ranking Teams
- Agricultural Issues Timekeeper Instructions
- Contest Chair Instructions
- Reference List Formatting & Examples
- American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual