



VF **YOUNG FARMER**
Discussion Meet

2025 CONTEST GUIDE



ADVOCATE
for agriculture



NETWORK
across Michigan



BUILD
leadership skills

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What is a Discussion Meet?

The Discussion Meet is a contest sponsored by the MFB State Young Farmer Committee at the District and State level. The Discussion Meet Contest is sponsored by the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee at the National Level. The Discussion Meet, started in 1948, 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 (page 12). 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 agricultural 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 farmers. 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 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

The contest itself involves a moderator and competitors. The moderator's responsibility is to introduce the topic and the competitors start the discussion, keep it on track and see that no one monopolizes the time.

During each round, competitors will participate in the three parts of a discussion meet contest: the opening statement, body of discussion, and the closing statement.

1. The opening statement is 30 seconds. The statement should be broad in scope, show relevancy, and importance of the topic.
2. In all rounds of the competition, the body of the discussion will last 20 minutes (district competitions may range from 15-20 minutes at the timekeeper's discretion). During the body of the discussion, competitors will provide background and perspective on the topic, discuss why it is an issue, elevate potential solutions to address the issue, and identify organizational opportunities for Farm Bureau and its members to engage.

3. The closing statement is given at the end of the body of the discussion. Competitors will be given one minute of quiet time to develop closing statements. Closing statements should summarize the body of the discussion and identify future opportunities. The closing statements are one minute or less and should not be "canned."

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 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 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.

A sample score sheet and the rubric are on pages 13-15. Competitors should remember that this is a discussion...not a debate.

Prizes

All district competitors will receive an appreciation gift for their participation. Competitors who place in their District and compete at the state competition will choose one of the prizes below and receive it after the state competition.

- Jacket
- Carhartt Hoodie
- RTIC Gallon Jug
- \$50 Key Apparel Voucher

The State Winner will receive \$2,000 and the chance to compete and travel to the national contest at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting held in January the following year. The top four finalists at the state contest will also receive additional, sponsor-provided gifts.

Official Rules

1. Competitors must be at least 18 years of age and not have reached their 36th birthday before January 31, 2026.
2. Competitors must be classified as regular Farm Bureau members. If a competitor is under 21 years of age, the competitor or parents must be regular Farm Bureau members.
3. Each county Farm Bureau may enter an unlimited number of competitors in the district contest.
4. Participation in a county contest is not required for participation in a district contest.
5. The three (or four, if a district has 10 or more competitors) top participants from each district contest will compete in the state contest.
6. All former competitors, except for previous state winners, are eligible for the contest.
7. A Collegiate member who is also a Regular member cannot win both the State Level Collegiate and Young Farmer Discussion Meet in the same year. However, they may compete in both at the district/chapter level and must decide which state-level competition they will compete in by October 1.

8. Members of the State Young Farmer Committee, and State Board of Directors, and the spouses of both State Young Farmer Committee and State Board of Directors are ineligible.
9. Employees of MFB and their spouses are ineligible to compete.
10. Individuals that win the Young Farmer Achievement Award and the Excellence in Agriculture Award cannot compete in Discussion Meet that same year. If the Discussion Meet takes place prior to awards being finalized, the contestant will have to choose what contest to move forward in.
11. In the event that one of the three district finalists is unable to attend the state contest, alternates will be given the opportunity. Selection will be in the order ranked by the judges.
12. Competitors cannot compete if they have received an honorarium (set their own speaking fees).

Timeline & Format of the State Discussion Meet

The 2025 State Discussion Meet will be conducted in two formats, virtual and in-person on the following dates.

September TBD: Statewide Virtual Makeup Discussion Meet

TBD: Communication to state qualifiers

TBD: Two Virtual Preliminary Rounds

TBD: Sweet Sixteen Announcement via Facebook Live

December 2: Two Sweet Sixteen In-Person Rounds at State Annual Meeting

December 2: In-Person Final Four Round at State Annual Meeting

Logistics of the 2025 State Discussion Meet

For all portions of the competition, MFB staff will be photographing and shooting video. These images and videos may be used in MFB member publications, on social media, and to promote the contest.

Preliminary Rounds: Virtual Format

- Preliminary competitors, judges, room chairs, room host/timekeepers, and IT support will enter a virtual meeting for a briefing. A link will be provided to all confirmed participants to the email provided during registration.
- The question for Round 1 will be shared during the briefing and the question for Round 2 at the conclusion of Round 1.
- Competitors will be split into preassigned virtual contest rooms; one room for the Round 1 competition and one room for the Round 2 competition – 5-6 competitors, three judges, one room chair/moderator, host/timekeeper and IT support each.
- Competitors will be required to join the virtual contest room at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the designated competition time to double-check technology. During this check-in, the room chair/moderator will draw for opening statement order. The same order will be followed for closing statements.
- The Discussion Meet competitive event will ensue in virtual fashion.
- Judges will evaluate and score competitors using a provided rubric and tally sheet and submit scores to MFB Staff for tabulation.
- Top sixteen competitors from the Preliminary Rounds will advance to the Sweet Sixteen Rounds, to take place in-person on December 2 in Grand Rapids.
- Competitors advancing will be announced via Facebook Live the evening of the Preliminary Rounds.

Sweet Sixteen and Final Four: In-Person at the Devos Center, Grand Rapids

- The question for the first Sweet Sixteen round will be shared during the competitor and judge briefing on Tuesday, December 2. The question for Sweet Sixteen Round 2 will be shared at the end of Round 1.

- Judges will evaluate and score competitors using a provided rubric and tally sheet and submit scores to MFB Staff for tabulation.
- Two rounds of competition will determine the top four competitors by rank scoring and those competitors will advance to the Final Four Round.
- Judges will evaluate and score competitors using a provided rubric and tally sheet and submit scores to MFB staff for tabulation.
- The Final Four will be announced after the two Sweet Sixteen rounds have concluded on December 2.

Best Practices for Competitors

District Discussion Meets:

*District contests have increased flexibility in both structure and logistics. **Notes are allowed at district-level contests.***

- Make sure to RSVP for your District contest.
- [Check out some videos of Discussion Meets and see what they're like.](#)
- Read up on the topic being discussed (all districts will use the same topic, see pg. 12).
- At the time of the contest:
 - Meet the other competitors and moderator.
 - Ask questions to clarify any instructions that are not clear.
 - Have fun discussing an important ag topic with other Young Farmer members to come to some unique solutions!

Preliminary Virtual Rounds:

- Dress should be business professional.
- Find a location with strong Wi-Fi signal.
 - If possible, plug in to a wired internet source.
 - Ensure that others on your connection are not streaming at the same time as the competitive event to avoid lagging.
 - If you are having trouble finding a location with a strong signal, reach out to your Regional Manager.
- Pay attention to your background. Though you will not be evaluated on your background, find a solid or subtle colored background that will not distract.

- Position your light source in front of you rather than behind or to the side of you. Judges should clearly see your face.
- Find a quiet location to prevent interruptions and background noise. Headphones/earbuds are acceptable if they help minimize distractions and interruptions.
- Practice using Zoom prior to the competition. Take advantage of the practice session to check your connection and settings.
- Acquaint yourself with the topics that will be used. Study as much material as possible related to the topics.

In-Person Sweet Sixteen and Final Four:

- At registration, competitors will receive their name card and room assignments. NOTE: Discussion Meet Registration is NOT at the MFB State Annual Meeting Registration. It's a separate registration located outside Discussion Meet rooms in Devos Place Convention Center – reference location map.
- Arrive early to the competition and ON TIME to the competitor briefing. If you are not in the competitor briefing, you will be disqualified. No Exceptions.
- Dress should be business professional.

During both STATE Virtual & In-Person Discussion Meet Competition:

- Opening Statements:
 - Listen carefully to the other competitors as they make their opening statements.
 - Keep within the time limit of your opening statement. Time will be called by the room chair/moderator if you exceed the time.
 - Notes written prior to the discussion meet start are prohibited.
- During the Discussion:
 - There should be a conflict of ideas, but not of personalities. Remember, this is a discussion, not a debate.
 - Ask questions, state facts and opinions and urge others to be specific.
 - Address your fellow competitors by their first name.
 - Participate whenever it will contribute to furthering the discussion without monopolizing the time.
 - Be enthusiastic and, in general, use logic rather than emotion.
 - Consider providing your personal connection to the topic.

- Provide examples or opportunities within your county Farm Bureau, Michigan Farm Bureau, and American Farm Bureau Federation.
- Make notes of key points as the discussion proceeds; you will use them to develop your summary statement.
- Closing Statement:
 - Use your one minute of silence to organize your summary statement.
 - This should be a summary of the discussion. Considering address the other competitors' input as well as your own.
 - New content should NOT be brought up in your closing statement.
 - Stay within your one-minute time limit. Time will be called by the moderator if you exceed the time.
 - If in-person, stand to make your closing statement.

1. Farmers and ranchers are at the forefront of environmental stewardship. From soil health to local ecosystems, producers are concerned about how to be both environmentally and financially sustainable. How can farmers and ranchers effectively advance environmental stewardship while balancing the needs of their farms?
This question will be used at all district discussion meets.
2. Urban sprawl presents significant challenges for farmers and ranchers, impacting access to land and resources. We see that 1.9 million acres of agricultural land are lost to development each year. How can Farm Bureau help promote responsible growth in communities while mitigating the loss of farms, ranches, and the agrarian way of life?
This is the backup question at district discussion meets, if a second round is needed.
3. Technology has made the world more interconnected than ever, creating new avenues for communication with policymakers. How can digital engagement be leveraged to effectively connect Farm Bureau members with their local, state, and national elected and appointed officials?
4. There are numerous resources available to support seamless farm and ranch succession planning. How can Farm Bureau help increase understanding, access and utilization of tools and resources that help facilitate the smooth transition of land and capital from one generation to the next?
5. Farm Bureau offers a diverse range of member benefits at the state and national levels. What strategies can be implemented to ensure members are fully informed about the savings on products and services available to them? Additionally, how can young farmers and ranchers leverage these industry relationships to strengthen local partnerships and increase utilization of these discounts to keep their operations running smoothly?

All questions will be used during the State Discussion Meet, two during Preliminary Rounds, two during Sweet Sixteen and one for the Final Round.

TOPIC: _____

PARTICIPANT'S NAME:	PARTICIPANTS, LISTED LEFT TO RIGHT									
(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 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.										
<i>Total score for each competitor is to be tabulated by Judge. Any tie scores are to be broken by Judge. Total of 100 points possible.</i>	TOTAL									
<i>Rank competitors: highest score = 1; second highest = 2, etc.</i>	RANK									

JUDGE'S SIGNATURE: _____

(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 for further conversation.
- Sets the stage for an interesting conversation with a very clear point of view.
- Uses their time very wisely and stays in the given time.

Award 7-10 points

Competitor...

- Defines the problem.
- Sets the problem in context.
- Makes a statement that leaves some room for 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 or relevancy of the problem.
- Makes a "closed" statement that does not allow 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 OF TOPIC OR PROBLEM: 20 PTS

Competitor...

- Identifies and addresses the causes of the problem and 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, does not directly address them, but remains on topic.
- Has done research.
- Addresses the ideas of others but does not build upon them – or only drops in information they learned without connecting it to previous ideas and moving the conversation forward.
- Asks some questions to help vet the ideas of others.
- Shares relevant personal examples – maybe slightly off topic.
- Demonstrates knowledge of this problem but not why it exists.
- Is aware of current FB policy.

Award 6-12 points

Competitor...

- Does not address the problem or does not remain on topic/wanders/distracts.
- Hasn't done much research or lacks quality facts.
- Doesn't build on other's ideas, only pushes their own.
- Doesn't ask questions to clarify other's ideas.
- Doesn't share relevant personal examples.
- Misinterprets the issue or does not display competency 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 conversation to 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 opportunities to 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 conversation to 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 is involved.

Award 0-6 points



(4) COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE: 15 PTS

<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is an active listener and comments on references or specific ideas mentioned by others tying them back to the bigger conversation.• Clearly shows grace, courtesy and respect to other participants.• Shows integrity especially when they do not agree with others. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>	<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not listen to others – just waits for their turn to talk.• Cuts others off or simply repeats what others have already said.• Is rude, defensive or combative when they do not agree with others. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>
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(5) DELIVERY: 15 PTS

<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is interesting to listen to, animated and lively, speaks at an appropriate volume and with a professional and courteous tone.• Is poised and uses gestures and eye contact that emit respect and professionalism.• Confidently conveys thoughts and viewpoints clearly. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>	<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaks at an appropriate volume and pace with appropriate tone.• Uses effective posture, gestures and eye contact.• Conveys thoughts and viewpoints but could seem overly rehearsed. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is boring/ mumbling/ monotoned.• Slouches, does not use appropriate gestures or have eye contact• Ideas are difficult to understand, or they are not confident in speaking. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>
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(6) CLOSING STATEMENT: 15 PTS

<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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. <p>Award 10-15 points</p>	<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarizes the conversation that happened.• Uses take-away points from the discussion to help develop a plan.• Closing statement is memorable. <p>Award 5-9 points</p>	<p>Competitor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not accurately summarize the conversation.• Uses memorized speech that doesn't reflect the content of the conversation.• Closing statement is forgettable. <p>Award 0-4 points</p>
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