

**SUBJECT:** Continuing the Texas Food and Fibers Commission

**COMMITTEE:** Agriculture and Livestock — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Patterson, R. Cuellar, Finnell, Hawley, Rusling, Swinford, Walker  
0 nays  
2 absent — King, Rabuck

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, March 23 — voice vote

**WITNESSES:** (*On companion bill, HB 1776*)  
  
For — Durwood Tucker, Texas Farm Bureau; Tommy Engelke, Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council; Steve Verett; Dan Pustejovsky  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Joey Longley, Sunset Advisory Commission

**BACKGROUND:** The Texas Food and Fibers Commission (TFFC) was created in 1941 by the 47th Legislature as the Cotton Research Committee of Texas. The panel was renamed in 1969 as the Texas Natural Fibers and Food Protein Commission and given its current name in 1989. The mission of TFFC is to foster the sale and use of Texas cotton, wool, mohair, oilseeds and their proteins through sponsorship of cooperative research, development and funding among state and federal government, industry and public educational institutions.

The commission has four members: the chancellor of the Texas A&M University system, the president of the University of Texas at Austin, the president of Texas Tech University and the president of Texas Woman's University.

For fiscal 1994-95 the commission received \$2.8 million in state general revenue and outside funding of \$5.3 million. The TFFC coordinates,

reviews and funds research to improve the quality, quantity and marketability of natural fibers and food proteins.

The commission is subject to the Sunset Act and underwent Sunset Advisory Commission review during the past interim. The TFFC will be abolished on September 1, 1995, unless continued by the Legislature.

**DIGEST:** SB 371 would continue the Texas Food and Fibers Commission and end sunset review of the agency. The bill would also include standard Sunset Advisory Commission recommendations on conflict of interest, legislative review of agency funds, complaint information, compliance with state and federal accessibility laws, open meetings, administrative procedures and other issues. SB 371 would take effect September 1, 1995.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** The Texas Food and Fibers Commission should be continued with a few changes recommended by the Sunset Advisory Commission to update commission across-the-board recommendations that were enacted in 1989.

The coordination and funding of research to improve the quality, quantity and marketability of natural fibers and food proteins continues to be an important function. These industries represent a significant portion of Texas agribusiness, with Texas cotton production about \$1.3 billion in 1991, wool and mohair production at \$29.3 million in 1992 and oilseeds production (cottonseed, peanuts, sunflowers and soybeans) at over \$350 million in 1992.

TFFC should remain an independent agency because it serves a unique function. Transferring the TFFC's functions to another agency would save very little in administrative costs and would require a comparable level of staffing.

The TFFC uses state funds as seed money to obtain matching funds from the federal government, private companies, agricultural cooperatives, industry associations and educational agencies. TFFC minimizes duplication of research and ensures research is fairly funded among the universities. The use of advisory committees that include industry representatives to review projects and recommend funding ensures research funded by the TFFC is relevant and necessary to the industries.

The TFFC should not have to undergo sunset review because its functions are similar to those of state colleges, universities, extension services, university experiment stations and other educational and research entities that are not subject to the sunset review process. Some of these entities initially came under sunset review, but since have been exempted. The TFFC's main function, to disburse research dollars, with limited authority over the university research, does not require sunset review. The TFFC's finances, policies and operations are regularly reviewed by other oversight bodies such as the state auditor, the comptroller and the Legislative Budget Board.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

**NOTES:**

The companion bill, HB 1776 by Black, was considered in public hearing by the Agriculture and Livestock Committee on March 21 and April 4.