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On the Cover: Nada Tunnel on KY 77 in Powell County forms the entrance to Red River Gorge. Photo by Meaghan Kincer

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Livestock, poultry and horses comprise a multi-billion-dollar business in Kentucky and therefore warrant all we can do to provide a solid infrastructure to support them. This certainly should include the availability of diagnostic labs to identify, trace, contain and prevent costly diseases.

Two such facilities have served Kentucky farmers well for many years. The University of Kentucky's diagnostic center in Fayette County was renovated several years ago and now stands second to none with state-of-the-art capabilities. It has been crucial to the development and protection of our cattle and equine industries.

In Western Kentucky, the Breathitt Veterinary Center at Hopkinsville continues to get the job done despite a facility that its director describes as “obsolete.” Among many things, this 42-year-old diagnostic center has provided valuable services to our poultry industry.

A new Breathitt Veterinary Center has been a priority issue of Kentucky Farm Bureau for several years and now appears to be coming closer to reality.

Governor Beshear included \$4 million in the Executive Budget for the land purchase and design of a proposed 52,000-square-foot facility. At this writing in late February, we have been given every indication that the General Assembly will approve this appropriation.

Those who have been pushing for this project have had a sound argument. There's ample evidence that a new facility is greatly needed and represents a sound investment for Kentucky's agriculture industry. An independent survey commissioned in 2009 concluded that a new facility is the best option for upgrading the capabilities of the Vet Center. Breathitt Vet Center Director Dr. Wade Northington perhaps put it best when he said at a KFB meeting last September: “The science we are using today was science fiction when this building was built 42 years ago.”

Funds are needed to upgrade the outdated laboratory facilities and support the high-tech equipment needed in the expanding diagnostic and research environment. It's also important to note that this facility provides a valuable learning environment for both students and staff.

Another key issue is that a new facility would elevate the Breathitt Center's status to fulfill federal emergency response goals.

Construction of a new center in Hopkinsville will establish for Kentucky's animal agriculture industry a solid long-term foundation for protecting this valuable economic asset.



MARK HANEY

PRESIDENT

KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU

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JAMES R. COMER
Commissioner of Agriculture
Commonwealth of Kentucky



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Farm work has always played a significant role in the lives of rural youth across the country, whether they are milking cows on their grandparents' farm or harvesting apples as a summer job. But, because of general misunderstanding and over-zealous activists, the ability of rural kids being able to perform traditional farm chores and jobs is in serious jeopardy.

A proposed rule released by the Department of Labor would have detrimental effects on farm families. No longer would kids be allowed to do many chores on their grandparents' farms, nor would kids under 16 be allowed to get a typical summer job at their neighbor's farm—even with their parent's consent. Under the DOL rule as it was proposed in September, a child can only work on a farm that is 'wholly owned' by his or her parents.

Farm Bureau is hopeful that the recent decision by DOL to re-propose the 'parental exemption' will be a positive step, but we simply don't know. If DOL decides to, it could interpret the parental exemption in a way that would make it much more difficult – if not impossible – for nieces, nephews and grandchildren to work on the family farm.

The DOL rule would also put strict limits on what hired youth can and can't do. In updating its 'hazardous occupation orders,' DOL is saying that a youth under the age of 16 would be mostly prohibited from working with livestock or operating equipment that's not driven by hand or foot power. Read literally, the DOL proposal would mean a 15-year old could not operate a hand-held, battery-powered screwdriver to mend fences or be hired to mow lawns.

Farm and ranch families are more interested than anyone else in assuring the safety of our farms. We have no desire at all to have young teenagers working in jobs that are inappropriate or entail too much risk. But, regulations need to be sensible and within reason – not prohibiting teenagers from performing simple everyday farm functions like operating a battery-powered screwdriver.

Members in the House and Senate, on both sides of the aisle, have called for the rule to be withdrawn, and Farm Bureau agrees. But if DOL proceeds, as seems likely, we will be working actively to assure that any final regulation makes sense, does not infringe on the traditional rights of family farms and does not unnecessarily restrict the ability of young people to work in agriculture. In other words, we need a rule that respects the significance of youth farm work in America and the importance it plays in our system of family-based agriculture.



BOB STALLMAN

PRESIDENT

AFBF

Kentucky Farm Bureau is a voluntary organization of farm families and their allies dedicated to serving as the voice of agriculture by identifying problems, developing solutions and taking actions which will improve net farm income, achieve better economic opportunities and enhance the quality of life for all.

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PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

With agriculture enjoying a period of economic prosperity, it's an opportune time to be pointing toward the future, both on the farm and within the County Farm Bureau organization, KFB President Mark Haney said in his keynote address at the annual Presidents and Vice Presidents Conference. The two-day conference was held last month at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville.

In his remarks at the closing luncheon, Haney urged the county leaders to take a number of steps to strengthen their organization and ensure that it is a "good citizen" in the community. "Be active, be visible, be knowledgeable," he said.

The Pulaski County farmer also suggested that the more experienced Farm Bureau leaders can help lay groundwork for the organization's future by encouraging young farmers.

"Agriculture is the shining star in our economy today. I think the time is right to encourage our young farmers to step up; to expand operations; to enter into partnerships; to pursue opportunities," Haney said.

He called on the county leaders to work closely with their colleagues and utilize the committee structure to share the work load and get things done. It's especially important, he added, to exhibit to members what the organization does and what it stands for.

A strong county Farm Bureau organization will have a community presence and a good number of active members working within committees on various projects. The program of work should include events to forge ties with local lawmakers, the media and other community leaders and organizations, Haney said.

In his remarks, KFB Executive Vice President David S. Beck reminded the group that the County Improvement

Program provides incentives for committees to conduct activities.

"We're always looking at ways to get more committees and more people involved," he explained, adding that conducting projects and activities is great public relations for the county Farm Bureau.

the Kentuckians. He cited how work on tobacco issues over the years had brought the two organizations together for "a special relationship."

Comer noted that he attended Monroe County FB meetings as a youth and participated in the Discussion Meet and Outstanding Young Farm Family pro-



KFB President Mark Haney introduced North Carolina FB President Larry Wooten, who was in Louisville with a group of colleagues to attend the Farm Machinery Show.

The conference agenda covered a lot of ground, to include legislative issues, member services, public relations strategies, the young farmers and women's programs, environmental issues and an update on the current status of the KFB Insurance Company. Guest speakers were Agriculture Commissioner James Comer and motivational humorist Jack McCall, who touched on the need to slow down and focus on what's most important in one's life.

There also were some special guests – a contingent from North Carolina FB that was in town for the National Farm Machinery Show. North Carolina FB President Larry Wooten spoke briefly to

grams. He served as County Vice President prior to his election to the state legislature. In that capacity he attended the Presidents and Vice Presidents Conference, he said.

"Farm Bureau had a lot to do with my development," Comer said.

McCall, who was raised on a Tennessee farm, reinforced the core value of Farm Bureau when he advised the county leaders to "be in the game."

"Don't be a spectator .. because the next step is being the victim," he said.

Among McCall's many words of encouragement were calls to "stay grounded, make wise decisions, have a healthy attitude."



KFB's lobbying team in Frankfort provided a legislative update. From left are Paula Smith, Bryan Alvey, David S. Beck, Jeff Harper and Tony Sholar. Mrs. Smith represents KFB Insurance Company and Sholar works under a contract with the organization.

RIGHT: KFB Executive Vice President David S. Beck introduced the panel for a discussion about the young farmers' and women's programs. From left are KFB Young Farmer Director Stacy Lowe, Erica Robards of Bullitt County, Zack Ison of Mercer County, Butler County FB President and KFB Women's Committee member Betty Farris, KFB Director and AFBF Women's Committee Chairperson Terry Gilbert of Boyle County and KFB Women's Program Director Scott Christmas.



BOTTOM LEFT: KFB President Mark Haney and Second Vice President Fritz Giesecke chatted with Agriculture Commissioner James Comer (center), who spoke to the group of county leaders.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A large number of county leaders participated in the annual conference.



YOUNG FARMERS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



TOP: The young farm families filled most of a large meeting room for a breakfast program. More than 300 attended the conference.

TOP LEFT: KFB Executive Vice President David S. Beck urged the young farmers to be active in public policy and public relations initiatives.

TOP RIGHT: Young Farmers Committee Chairman Brent Cornett emceed the breakfast program.

In a presentation titled “Finding Your Second Wind in a Warp Speed World,” motivational speaker Jack McCall likes to remind the audience that “life is not a sprint, it’s a marathon.”

No better group to receive that message than young farm families, most of whom are juggling a variety of roles and responsibilities while working within a dynamic industry.

A former disc jockey, livestock auctioneer and business executive who has written three books, McCall was among the featured presenters at KFB’s Young Farmer Leadership Conference last month in Bowling Green. The annual event attracted just over 300 members

from young farm families in 59 counties.

McCall had two workshops dealing with the “warp speed world” theme and also was the keynote luncheon speaker during the final day of the two-day conference. He had some sound advice for the young people as they race through a fast-paced world.

“We’ve entered a time in history when technology has changed us quite a bit,” he said in his opening. “We’re living at high speed with information coming at us fast. Things like cell phones, which are supposed to be a convenience, only make life more complicated. You live by these devices. And it takes so much out of us; to live life so fast.”

A noted humorist, McCall told several

funny tales to illustrate his point about today's culture. He drew laughter after relating a story in which he was at an airport check-in desk seeking a change to get an earlier flight home. While typing furiously into the computer system, the airline clerk told him the prospects were bleak. Then, the e-mail suddenly buzzed on his phone, with a message confirming he had been transferred to an earlier flight. It was many seconds later when the embarrassed clerk received that information on her computer, McCall said.

He also made several references to the lack of common sense and emphasis on "political correctness" that permeates today's society, making life more frustrating.

The gist of his presentation was to recommend four things to help people slow down and re-energize. They are: (1)

Exercise. "Challenge your heart. Be physically stronger. That will help you deal with your daily responsibilities." (2) Spend more time with people who make you feel good about yourself. "Avoid negativity. Commit yourself to being one of those people who say good things; a person that others want to be with because you make them feel good."

(3) Take a day off every now and then. "Step out of the arena and catch your breath. Most people are reluctant to do that because they don't think it's right. There's a difference between selfishness and self-preservation." (4) Read something inspirational every day.

McCall, who lives in northern Tennessee, later gave a keynote address about keeping priorities in order.

Other workshops and presentations focused on agricultural literacy programs, public policy issues, production technology, estate planning and a beginning farmer program administered by the UK College of Agriculture.

KFB President Mark Haney gave a welcome at the opening luncheon, saying the conference afforded a "great opportunity to learn about issues, hone your leadership skills and network with your peers."

Haney said he hoped young farmers would "seize the opportunities" that have emerged because of a strong farm economy. "This is such a special time for agriculture," he said. "Opportunity is the greatest I've seen. I urge you to look at how you can benefit."

KFB Executive Vice President David S. Beck told the group during breakfast remarks that "our young farmer program is second to none." He encouraged the young farmers to become involved with their respective county Farm Bureau by working on projects through the various county committees. "Identify the areas you'd like to get involved with; work through the committee process," he said.

Beck also encouraged involvement in public policy and public relations initiatives.

"This organization needs to hear from our young farmers to make sure that our policy meets the needs of young farmers," he said.

Agriculture Commissioner James Comer was the featured speaker at the closing session.



TOP: Motivational speaker Jack McCall advised the young farm families to slow down now and then and re-energize.

BOTTOM: Joel Armistead of Armistead Farms in Logan County gave a presentation on modern technologies. Among several things, he touched on precision planting equipment and irrigation systems, explaining how various systems have performed in his operation.

LINKED IN

KFB Directors meet with legislators

KFB's Board of Directors went to Frankfort last month to mix a business meeting with some socializing with legislators and other state officials. Senate President David Williams, House Majority Leader Rocky Adkins and Agriculture Commissioner James Comer dropped in the board meeting to speak to the group. At an evening reception, Governor Steve Beshear and dozens of legislators mingled with the KFB leaders and representatives from several commodity groups.

KFB Executive Vice President David S. Beck described the reception as "a great opportunity to re-establish our relationships and discuss policy."

"I thought our legislative session went extremely well," said KFB President Mark Haney. "It was pretty special that the Governor came over and brought his chief of staff."

KFB Director Joe Paul Mattingly of Marion County told his colleagues that "several (legislators) told me they don't go to many of these (receptions) but this is one they don't miss."

Perhaps the best news that emerged from all the discussions was a positive outlook for one of KFB's top priorities for this legislative session – funding for a new Breathitt Veterinary Center in Hopkinsville. Both Williams and Adkins told the directors that they expected approval of the governor's \$4 million appropriation for land purchase and development.

The two legislative leaders also said they expected no significant changes in the agricultural development fund.

Williams credited the ag development fund with strengthening the state's farm economy, calling the fund "money well spent." He said agriculture was a bright spot in Kentucky's economy.

The Republican leader reiterated his interest in reforming the state's tax code and vowed to include agriculture in the discussions. "As long as I have anything to do with it, agriculture will have a seat at the table," Williams said.

Adkins also praised agriculture's contribution and called for the industry to take advantage of opportunities in energy development. In 2006 Adkins sponsored a major piece of legislation to provide incentives and other provisions for energy development initiatives.

"We put our money where our mouth is; into research and development," he said of House Bill 1 from that session. "I believe Kentucky is well positioned to be a national and international leader in the energy field. We have agriculture. We have coal. We have natural gas. It's an exciting time for



Senate President David Williams vowed that agriculture would have "a seat at the table" for tax reform discussions.

Executive Committee members (from left) Fritz Giesecke, Eddie Melton, Mark Haney and David S. Beck listened intently while Senate President David Williams addressed the board.



us. This is an opportunity for us to push the envelope.”

Since House Bill 1 was enacted, more than \$1 billion worth of incentives have been approved (but some not yet utilized) for energy development projects, Adkins added.

Commissioner Comer took time out from an exhausting schedule to speak to the board. He noted that the agriculture community was largely responsible for his election victory as the lone Republican to win on the statewide ballot. He pledged to work closely with Farm Bureau.

Comer, who formerly was a Director for Monroe County FB, also spoke about his reorganization of the agriculture department and the budget problems it faces. He said the department’s website would be revamped to include links to fiscal reports.



RIGHT: Agriculture Commissioner James Comer said he would work closely with Farm Bureau.

BOTTOM: Enjoying a lighter moment during the meeting were Directors (from left) Terry Gilbert, Phyllis Amyx, Carroll Amyx, David Campbell and Shane Wiseman.

BOTTOM RIGHT: House Majority Leader Rocky Adkins (left) chatted with KFB Public Affairs Director Jeff Harper at the board meeting.



Congressman Guthrie among coalition fighting youth ag labor proposal

Kentucky's Brett Guthrie is among a group of congressmen who have mounted a concerted campaign to force the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to rescind proposed regulations making it difficult for farmers to hire youth to work in agriculture. Specifically, the proposed rule mandates that those under the age of 16 working on a parent's farm could only continue to work on that farm if it is 'wholly owned' by a parent.

Last month, after concerns were raised by Congressman Guthrie, along with several other Members of Congress and numerous farm groups (including AFBF), the DOL announced it would re-propose the rule to allow children to work on farms in which the parent is a part owner or a corporation officer of the farm. However, the changes still do not allow for distant relatives, such as grandchildren, or outside youth to obtain employment on farms.

The revised rule would still limit the ability of the Cooperative Extension Service and vocational education programs, like those operated by 4-H, FFA and local school districts, to offer training to rural youth.

"I have serious concerns that the proposed rule threatens the future of the agriculture industry, and ultimately our national security. Working on a family farm is a tradition that runs deep in Kentucky and across the country," said Guthrie, a Republican representing Kentucky's Second Congressional District, which has a significant agricultural base. "Agriculture in our community also teaches children the values of hard work and responsibility, regardless of what career path they choose."

The DOL also has not identified reliable evidence and data that shows a need for these changes, and admits it lacks the data to justify many of its suggested changes.

Congressman Guthrie is encouraging constituents who are concerned about the proposed rule to log onto www.KeepFamiliesFarming.com and provide a comment, send a photo or submit a video showing why they think the family farm is important. He is among 13 members of Congress who are listed as originators of that web site. AFBF is listed as a supporter along with several state Farm Bureaus.

"This issue came up during several of my town hall meetings and I can think of no better way to express the value of families farming together than individuals sharing their personal stories and photos," Congressman Guthrie said. "I hope individuals will use this opportunity to send their message directly to Washington and help us preserve our way of life for the next generation of Kentucky's farmers."

IOU UTV

Michael McCain (middle) received a Case IH scout that he and wife Nora won for being named the 2011 Outstanding Young Farm Family. The utility vehicle came through Jacobi Sales in Elizabethtown. At left is sales associate Bob Berry and at right is territory sales manager Mark Baumer. The McCains are from Washington County.



THREE VETERINARIANS RECEIVE GRANTS

Nathaniel Glaza of Pendleton County, James Lewis of Caldwell County and Laura Williams of Lyon County were selected to receive financial awards under the 2012 Kentucky Large/Food Animal Veterinary Incentive Program. Each will be awarded with up to \$18,000 over three years for payment toward outstanding school loans.

All three recipients are doctoral graduates of Auburn University and practicing as large/food animal veterinarians in Kentucky.

Glaza completed his undergraduate degree in university studies with an emphasis on pre-veterinary curricula at Morehead State University. He currently owns and serves as the primary veterinarian at Licking Valley Veterinary Services in Butler.

Lewis completed his undergraduate degree in Animal Science and Biology at the University of Kentucky. He currently works as an associate veterinarian at Rogers Veterinary Clinic in Princeton, providing multi-breed medical and surgical services.

Williams, of Eddyville, completed her undergraduate degree from the School of Agriculture at Murray State University. She currently works at Williams Veterinary Clinic as an associate veterinarian, providing clinical diagnosis, medical and surgical services and client education.

The program, funded by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund and supported by several key Kentucky agricultural organizations, was developed to help alleviate shortages in the state's large-animal medical workforce.

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Energy Savings

STATE PROGRAM HELPS FARMERS REDUCE COSTS

Article and Photos by Walt Reichert

It is early February and Cumberland County farmer Doug Lewis has just received a shipment of about 107,000 baby chicks from Equity Group of Kentucky. While the temperature hovers in the 30s and 40s outside, the chicks inside his eight, 40-by-500-foot buildings bask in 92-degree heat. Lewis will drop the temperature about a degree per day during the production process. But in the meantime, those chickens are requiring a whole lot of energy to grow.

High energy costs have poultry producers like Lewis, as well as other farmers, looking to take advantage of programs providing incentives to cut energy use. For the last several years, the poultry industry has been at the top of the list in agricultural receipts in the state, earning more than \$900 million per year. It is also one of the most energy-intensive farm enterprises.

From 2009-2011, farmers were eligible

for cost-share dollars from Federal stimulus funds for new equipment, insulation and other improvements to cut energy costs. The \$1.4 million in federal dollars helped pay for 190 on-farm energy saving projects across the state and saved farmers approximately \$2 million in energy costs per year, according to the Governor's Office for Agricultural Policy (GOAP). The funds paid for energy audits, new building components, on-farm energy upgrades and on-farm energy efficiency training.

Lewis took advantage of the program to buy \$40,000 worth of energy-saving appliances for his chicken houses. He was reimbursed \$10,000 of the cost. He bought new tunnel doors to his poultry houses that replaced the curtains he had used. The tunnel doors provide a tighter seal, keeping the buildings warmer in winter. He also bought 52-inch fans, at \$1,000 each, for his eight houses. The fans move air better than his previous equipment,

ABOVE: Doug Lewis moves a lever that will feed wood pellets into a burner. Lewis has three pellet-burning furnaces providing heat to his chicken houses.

keeping the buildings cooler in summer. An audit of Lewis' energy use showed he can expect to save about \$10,000 in energy costs with the new equipment. "I probably don't keep track of it as well as I should," Lewis said. "But I know it's much more efficient. Those doors just seal better and keep the heat in better. And those fans can move a whole lot more air."

With the federal stimulus funds running out at the end of last year, the Kentucky Ag Development Board stepped up with \$2 million to carry the On-farm Energy Efficiency and Production Incentives Program forward. The program will pay farmers up to 25 percent of the cost of on-farm energy-saving upgrades and installations up to \$10,000.

The program takes applications, which are reviewed quarterly, and the first quarterly deadline is April 30 (See box for details).

Roger Thomas, executive director of GOAP, said energy savings have significant potential to help all farmers' bottom lines.

"Over the last several years reducing energy usage and developing alternative sources of energy have become critical for Kentucky agriculture," Thomas said.

Lewis, who took to poultry production after careers as a store manager, truck driver and barber, has his chicken houses on land that originally belonged to his grandfather. He and his wife, Flo, live in a house built in 1818 near Allen Creek.

Lewis raises a batch of about 107,000 broilers five or six times a year for Equity Group of Kentucky, which supplies the feed and chicks. He provides the land and buildings, water and energy to heat or cool the buildings.

With energy providing a large chunk of his inputs, Lewis works hard to find ways to cut costs. Besides the tunnel doors and new, larger fans, Lewis has installed new heating systems in three of the buildings that use furnaces capable of burning wood pellets. Lewis hires a truck driver to deliver wood pellets made out of waste wood from Southern Kentucky Hardwood and Flooring in Gamaliel.

He spends about \$3,000 per load of

wood pellets, but he saves about 75 percent over the cost of gas to heat the buildings. Lewis said the furnaces, made in Alabama, also come with ductwork that puts the heat closer to the chicks and keeps the litter drier. That reduces losses at the processing plant, he said.

"If chickens stand around in wet litter, they can get blisters on their feet," Lewis said. "If a chicken has a blister on its foot larger than a dime, it is rejected on the processing line."

So if the air is better and the litter is drier, the chickens do better."

Lewis is also using waste products to offset costs. A farmer in Franklin pays him for his litter, which is spread as fertilizer on corn and soybean fields. The sale of fertilizer helps offset the cost of shavings, Lewis said. He also makes compost of the chickens that die on the farm and sells that for fertilizer. Lewis said last year he sold \$50,000 worth of chicken litter and compost for fertilizer.

"I tell you, there's nothing that goes to waste around here," he said.

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE ONLINE

The On-farm Energy Efficiency and Production Incentives Program pays farmers up to 25 percent of the actual cost of installing energy upgrades on the farm, providing a maximum payout of \$10,000. The first quarterly deadline to apply is April 30, 2012. Applications are available at www.ag-energy.ky.gov. Questions about the program should be directed to www.govkyagpolicy@ky.gov.

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KFB PROMOTES

“FOOD CHECK-OUT DAY”

KFB and many of its county affiliates used the annual “Food Check-Out Week” to remind consumers of how they benefit from the work of farmers. “Food Check-Out Day” was initiated 16 years ago to put a spotlight on the low cost of food in the United States. While that remains the primary message, Farm Bureau also is stressing nutrition and value in the food supply.

KFB uses the occasion to also show appreciation to state lawmakers for their continuing support of our agriculture industry. KFB staff distributed gift baskets of Kentucky products to legislators and other state officials to signify Food Check-Out Week, which was February 19-25. KFB Women’s Committee member Betty Farris of Butler County greeted the legislators and explained the purpose of the event. State FFA President Kendall Mallory also assisted.

More than 60 lawmakers dropped by the Capitol Annex office to receive a basket and chat with the KFB group. Baskets also were given to Governor Steve Beshear, Lieutenant Governor Jerry Abramson, Agriculture Commissioner James Comer and Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes.

At the request of Jefferson County FB, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer issued a proclamation recognizing Food Check-Out Day in that city.

Meanwhile, County Farm Bureaus held a variety of events such as distributing materials at supermarkets or schools, disseminating information through local media or providing food to charitable organizations.

Christian and Muhlenberg counties were among those who used supermarket events to deliver the mes-

sage. Both counties held contests inviting shoppers to guess the price of a shopping cart full of food.

FFA students in Muhlenberg County operated displays at a Kroger store in Powderly and at IGA stores in Beechmont, Greenville and Central City. KFB Director Mary Kate Kordes, who lives in Central City, helped the youngsters plan and conduct the event. The prize for the closest guess was a \$50 gift card to the respective store. The event also drew attention to the coinciding National FFA Week.

In Christian County, customers of the IGA store on Canton Street guess the cost for a grocery basket that included a country ham from the award-winning Broadbent B&B Foods, located in neighboring Trigg County. All of the remaining food products were from the IGA brand.

The winner received the food. Second place got a \$75 IGA gift card and third place received a \$50 card.

The contest received plenty of promotion from ads aired on WKDZ radio.

The most powerful message is that food remains a bargain, even during these tough economic times. USDA estimates that the average American spends about 11 percent of disposable income on food, which is far below the share for housing, health care and some other necessities. And while Americans can work about two months to earn enough money to pay their annual food bill, it takes twice as long to pay taxes for the year.

The combination of the incredible efficiency of American farm production and federal policies that protect the economic viability of our agriculture industry make food a bargain in the United States. As a result, Americans have more money to spend on other things, which boosts the overall economy and quality of life.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: KFB Women’s Committee member Betty Farris of Butler County was joined by Women’s program director Scott Christmas (right) and Public Affairs Director Jeff Harper in presenting Governor Steve Beshear with a gift basket to recognize Food Check-Out Day.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Christian County FB President Joe Rives poses with the organization’s display at an IGA store (Canton Street) in Hopkinsville. His wife, Jennifer, chairs the county women’s committee which coordinated the event along with administrator Carole Sweeney.

BOTTOM RIGHT: State FFA President Kendall Mallory presented a gift basket to retiring State Representative Danny Ford of Mount Vernon. Ford has been in the General Assembly since 1982 and served on the agriculture committee for many years. KFB has enjoyed a good relationship with Representative Ford and wishes him well in his future endeavors. He is a realtor and auctioneer based in Mount Vernon.

BOTTOM LEFT: The events in Muhlenberg County recognized both Food Check-Out Week and National FFA Week. Four groups of FFA students set up displays.

MIDDLE LEFT: At the Kroger store in Powderly, customers submit their guess of the cost of a grocery basket of food, under the watchful eye of FFA students (from left) Jeffrey Simpson, Audrey Middleton and Hunter Robinson.



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SPEAKING UP

“FARMERS CARE” PROGRAM SURFACES AG ADVOCATES

A small Army of people devoted to agriculture is mounting throughout the nation to engage in the communications battle over the merits of farming practices and food production. Several organizations have been established to unite farmers and other agriculture interests and provide the training and resources necessary to get the job done.

On the national level, KFB is supporting the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, which is developing a network of advocates to connect to consumers.

In Kentucky, KFB endorses the “Kentucky Farmers Care” project administered by the Kentucky Agriculture Council and the Kentucky Livestock Coalition. This initiative is well underway in establishing local contacts to educate Kentuckians about farming and food, particularly by providing accurate and timely information about such hot topics as food safety, animal welfare and environmental stewardship.

Kentucky Farmers Care held a summit last month at the Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association office in Lexington. A group of about 20 agriculture interests – including farmers and representatives from extension, 4-H, agribusinesses, government and commodity groups – participated in a day-long workshop. The focus was to gain knowledge about controversial issues, advice on effective messages and communications techniques plus some media relations training.

“This is all about the need to engage with the public,” explained Brent Burchett, a program director for the Kentucky Soybean Board. “Our message is that Kentucky farmers of all different sizes, commodities and production practices care about what’s right for people, animals and the environment.

“At the end of the day, this is about free-

dom to operate.”

The Soybean Board was a major force in organizing the Kentucky Livestock Coalition as an organization to defend the interests of animal agriculture. KFB also was among the founding members.

Burchett, who is the son of former KFB Director Mike Burchett of Marshall County, played host to the summit. Handling the bulk of the agenda were Beth Anne Mumford and Jana McGuire from the Center for Food Integrity, a five-year-old organization formed to build public trust in the food system. AFBF is a mem-

as food safety, animal welfare, chemical use, etc.

To illustrate the disconnect between farms and most Americans, a video was played showing people from the Midwest farm belt cities of Kansas City, Omaha and Des Moines fielding basic questions about agriculture. Most of their responses were way off base.

To further illustrate the need for capable spokespersons, graphics were displayed of negative newspaper and magazine headlines, along with a rapidly-streamed lengthy list of organizations such as PETA, HSUS

and Greenpeace that have attacked agriculture.

Among the summit participants were Becky Thomas of Hardin County, who has long been active with Hardin County FB and the KFB Women’s program, and Sierra Enlow of LaRue County, a UK student who won KFB’s 2011 Discussion Meet.

Mrs. Thomas, who attended at

the request of the Soybean Board, told the group she deals with agricultural public relations every day in her job as the produce manager at a Kroger store in Elizabethtown.

“I’m constantly asked about organics and about chemicals,” she said. “I try to explain the cost of pesticides and other inputs; that we don’t use any more than necessary to protect the crop. I have to tell them that they have to wash the organic produce, as well.

“More people are wanting to know how produce is raised and where it comes from. The country of origin labeling really helps.”

Her husband, KFB Director Larry Thomas, has been an active spokesman on environmental issues. He is chairman of KFB’s Natural Resources Advisory Committee.



ABOVE: Participants in the day-long program included farmers and agriculture industry officials.

ber of that Kansas City-based organization.

Ms. Mumford framed a primary objective by stressing the importance of communicating a commitment to values.

“If you want to talk about practices on the farm, you have to start with the values behind those practices,” she said. “Most consumers don’t understand what you do, how you do it and why you do it. They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Ms. McGuire outlined “six best practices for communicating shared values. They are: (1) Be principle-driven. (2) Listen – Don’t Judge. (3) Ask questions and invite dialogue. (4) Identify common values. (6) Define the conversation outcome; how do you want it to end?”

She encouraged the participants to develop “value statements” on such issues

SPELLING BEE



KFB Director Randy Chrisman (left) was on hand to present the awards for the spelling bee that Anderson County FB sponsored. To the right is the winner, Hannah Drury, followed by runner-up Brooke Carpenter, third-place finisher Lydia Fuqua and fourth-place winner Tyler Parr. At far right is the judge, Krista Sawyer.

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Total ag exports decline, but horticulture soars

Fiscal 2012 agricultural exports are forecast at \$131 billion, down \$1 billion from the November forecast and \$6.4 billion below fiscal 2011. Compared to last year, grain and feed exports are forecast down \$3.9 billion with wheat, corn, rice, and feeds all lowered due to competition, especially from the Black Sea region. Oilseed and product exports are down \$4.2 billion, mostly due to strong early-season shipments from South America. Horticultural exports are forecast at a record \$28 billion, \$2.1 billion above 2011. The forecast for livestock, poultry and dairy is up \$1.9 billion to a record \$29.2 billion.

The fiscal 2012 import projection is raised to \$106.5 billion. This represents a 13-percent increase from 2011. The estimated gains for the various import sectors are: sugar and tropical products - \$5.5 billion more than in 2011; horticulture products—\$3.9 billion higher; oilseeds and products - up \$600 million; livestock and dairy products - up \$1.2 billion; and grains and feeds - up \$950 million.

The trade balance forecast for fiscal 2012 is a surplus of \$24.5 billion, down from the \$43 billion for 2011.

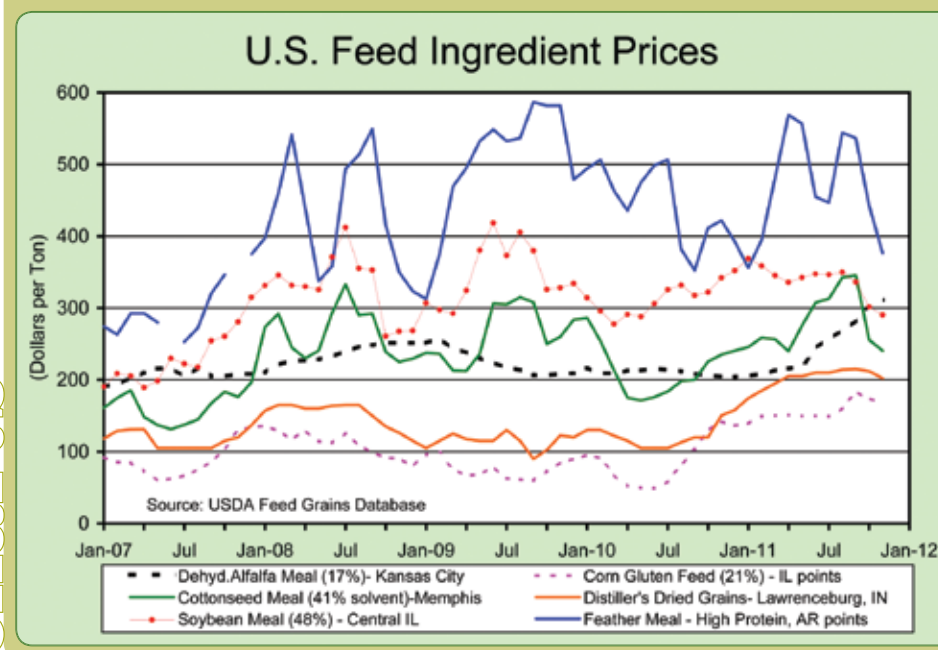
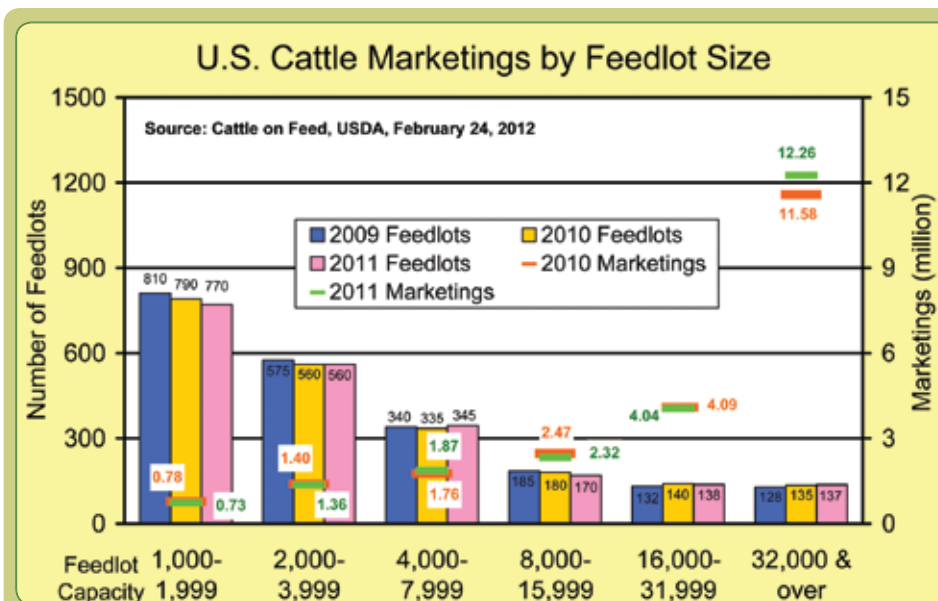
Highest milk production in 2011

Milk production in the 23 major States during January totaled 15.8 billion pounds, up 3.7 percent from January 2011, according to USDA. Milk cows totaled 8.5 million head, up 93,000 from a year ago. Production per cow was 59.9 lbs. per day, up 1.5 pounds (+2.5%) from January 2011. For all of 2011, U.S. milk production was a record high 196.2 billion pounds, up 1.8 percent from 2010's total. Kentucky's 2011 production dropped 5.6 percent to 1.09 billion pounds.

U.S. cattle produce more beef

In the February Livestock, Dairy & Poultry Outlook, USDA discussed the amount of technical efficiency gains and genetic improvement seen in U.S. beef production since 1972. A study in 1999 by Brester and Marsh estimated that beef production per U.S. beef cow had increased by 26 percent over the 25-year period ending in 1998. USDA economists extended the Brester-Marsh study methodology through 2010 and found an increase in beef production per U.S. cow of 44 percent from 1972 to 2010. The article reports the average beef produced per U.S. cow has increased from 457 pounds in 1975 to more than 600 pounds today.

The article also showed the variable contribution of imported beef and cattle to the total U.S. beef supply. Foreign sources have accounted for as little as 8.2 percent (1974-75) to as much as 18.2 percent (2005). The study estimates foreign sources in 2011 at 11 percent, down from almost 13 percent in 2010.



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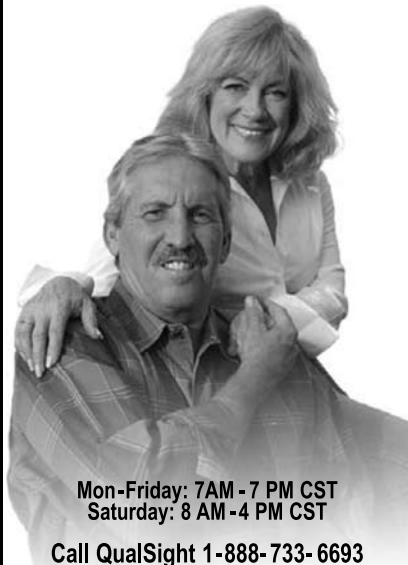
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New website supports youth labor battle

A newly launched website, "Keep Families Farming," allows individual farmers, as well as organizations, to register their concerns about the Labor Department's youth labor proposal.

DOL last year announced it was considering amending the department's regulations concerning agricultural jobs that are off-limits to minors. Despite the department's announcement that it is going to re-propose the "parental exemption" part of the rule, farmers and ranchers are still worried about the proposed changes, which could significantly affect the way families work their operations.

Through Keep Families Farming, individuals can tell their own stories and file comments. In addition, the site also allows organizations to register their support of the effort.

Meat groups announce merger

The National Meat Association (NMA) and the North American Meat Processors Association (NAMP) made their consolidation into a new association official.

The NAMP Board approved the consolidation agreement and by-laws of the new association in a special meeting Friday afternoon. The NMA Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the NMA Board, approved the documents on Thursday. Members of both associations voted overwhelming for the consolidation last month.

This action sets in motion establishing a new North American meat industry trade association consisting of member companies of both groups, and the termination of NMA and NAMP as separate entities. The target date for the start of the new association is July 1, 2012.

Farmplate sales can aid FFA, 4-H and Ky. Proud

Agriculture Commissioner James Comer joined Kentucky 4-H and Kentucky FFA leaders to announce that proceeds from voluntary donations to the Agricultural Program Trust Fund will be divided equally among 4-H, FFA, and Kentucky Proud.

"When Kentucky farmers renew their farm license plates, they can add a voluntary \$10 donation that will be split evenly among these three fine organizations," said Commissioner Comer, a former state FFA president. "FFA and 4-H give Kentucky's young people opportunities to participate in constructive activities while they learn the value of hard work and discipline. Kentucky Proud helps Kentucky producers find new markets for their products. All three programs are vital to the future of Kentucky agriculture and Kentucky as a whole."

Kentucky FFA has about 15,000 members in nearly 140 chapters. FFA is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. It is open to any student ages 12-21 who is enrolled in an agriculture course in a public school.

Some 205,000 youths are involved in Kentucky 4-H programs, and Kentucky ranks in the top 10 in several 4-H enrollment categories nationwide. 4-H is found in every Kentucky county and is a community of more than six million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills.

Kentucky Proud is the official state program for food and farm products that are grown, raised, made or processed in Kentucky. Nearly 3,000 farmers, processors, retailers, restaurants, farmers' markets, school systems, Kentucky state parks, and KFB roadside markets are members of Kentucky Proud.

Foundation cites need for more ag research

The relative lack of money devoted to agricultural innovation and research was a key point in this year's annual letter from Microsoft founder Bill Gates on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's 2012 priorities. "Given the central role that food plays in human welfare and national stability, it is shocking – not to mention short-sighted and potentially dangerous – how little money is spent on agricultural research," Gates wrote.

According to a foundation study, only \$3 billion is spent each year on research dedicated to the seven most important crops, which include wheat, corn, rice, cassava, sorghum, legumes and sweet potatoes. Out of that total, about half comes from countries' public funds, \$1.2 billion is from private companies and \$300 million comes from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. In 2010 alone, the foundation made \$2.4 billion in grant payments to a number of agricultural development programs.

In his letter, Gates noted that the world population is projected to grow to 9.7 billion by 2050, which makes it imperative to help poor farmers sustainably increase their productivity so they can feed themselves and their families. But this will be possible only if agricultural innovation is a priority, he concluded.

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