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table

of CONTENTS

Member Services 6-9

Ag feature 10

Wild hog problem 14

Women's Conference 16

Markets 20

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Kentucky
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Following a couple years on an “up” cycle, dairy farmers are very concerned about where prices are headed. An oversupply of milk is a familiar culprit, driving prices to levels that are putting the squeeze on producers who already are faced with higher prices for fuel, feed grains, fertilize, seeds, power and just about everything else they need to do business.



As part of the Farm Bill debate, Congress is considering major reforms to a federal dairy program which has not proved to serve producers well during tough economic periods. There's a movement afoot to replace the old system of price supports and direct payments with a risk-management plan centered on protecting margins, which is the real problem dairy farmers face today.

Most dairy producer groups are behind The Dairy Security Act introduced by House Agriculture ranking member Collin Peterson of Minnesota. The bill would provide dairy farmers with protection against rising input costs and would use federal authority to encourage them to reduce production temporarily during periods of low prices.

American Farm Bureau Federation supports The Dairy Security Act because the proposed supply management concept is voluntary. Those who don't want the protection of a government safety net can opt out. Those who want the assistance during tough times must agree upfront to reduce their milk output for designated periods.

As is often the case with dairy policy, there is not a consensus on this proposal. Opponents – including a number of Kentucky dairy farmers – argue that a one-size-fits-all program will not work, particularly with milk-deficit states in the southeast, including Kentucky. This group is calling for a regional approach to stabilizing the market.

We have learned over the many years of a national dairy program that what's best for the large dairies in California, New York and the Midwest isn't necessarily the formula for survival on a Kentucky dairy farm. Kentucky currently has about 800 dairy farms, as compared to nearly 2,000 only 10 years ago. We have only a handful of what would be considered large dairy operations. Our average herd size remains well below the national average. And yet because of continuing advances on the farms, our total milk production has remained about the same. But we remain a milk deficit state, which is unfortunate.

The challenge for Kentucky's dairy industry is finding a formula that allows our producers to survive on a family-sized scale. I'll leave it up to the experts to decide if the Dairy Security Act fits the bill. But in keeping with AFBF's stance, I look favorably upon the concept because it provides a viable safety net along with options for producers.

MARK HANEY

PRESIDENT

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**INGRAM NAMED
TO TWO ROLES
IN MANAGEMENT**



MATTHEW W. INGRAM

Matthew W. Ingram has been given dual responsibilities as the new Director of the Organization Division and Assistant to the Executive Vice President. In this role he will lead the Organization Division's efforts to promote and implement effective programming for the Young Farmer, Women, Ag Education, and Member Services program areas, as well as coordinate the responsibilities of the division's ten area program directors. He will also be responsible for the proper billing and processing of membership dues, monitoring membership growth and helping achieve its goals.

Ingram's transition into these new roles comes after serving nearly three years as director of accounting and finance, more than eight years as an area program director, and two summers as a college intern for KFB Federation. A graduate of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture with a degree in agricultural economics, Ingram is a native of Bath County. He was State FFA President in 1997-98.

Executive Vice President David S. Beck said in making the announcement: "Matthew has an extensive background in Farm Bureau that makes him well qualified for these positions. I'm confident he will play a significant role in our future development."

Ingram and his wife, Suzanne, live in Jefferson County. They have three children.

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A THANK-YOU MESSAGE FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE

The tornadoes of February/March 2012 forever changed the rural landscape of Morgan and surrounding counties as over 250 scenic farmsteads became postcards of ruin. In a matter of minutes, the tornadoes devastated families, flattened homes, leveled barns, mangled equipment, killed or injured livestock, destroyed fencing, ruined valuable timber and scattered fields with debris.

But remaining unchanged was the generosity of the agricultural community that crossed county, state and even national boundaries. Locally, farmers put aside their own losses to clear roads, help neighbors dig out from the rubble and fix roofs. County lines melted as fellow farmers drove many miles to bring supplies of hay, feed, wire and posts. They stayed to build fences, corral animals, deliver tetanus shots and pick up debris in hay & pasture fields.

Farm organizations such as Farm Bureau harnessed resources to overcome transportation and communication barriers to bring direct and immediate relief. Area 9 Program Director George Hieneman was one of the first to arrive in Morgan County bearing supplies. This was quickly followed by much needed solar fence chargers donated by Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation that helped to meet the critical need of temporary fencing for roaming cattle and horses. These chargers were crucial in preventing additional livestock loss and potential harm to motorists from roaming animals.

Our urgent needs sparked an outpouring of kindness and generosity that we can only recognize with grateful appreciation. In the midst of difficult circumstances, extraordinary events do occur. Thank you to the Farm Bureau family and to others for being a part of those extraordinary actions. Reflecting on this generosity of spirit brings encouragement to keep the difficult task of recovery efforts underway.

SARAH G. FANNIN

**MORGAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT
FOR AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES**

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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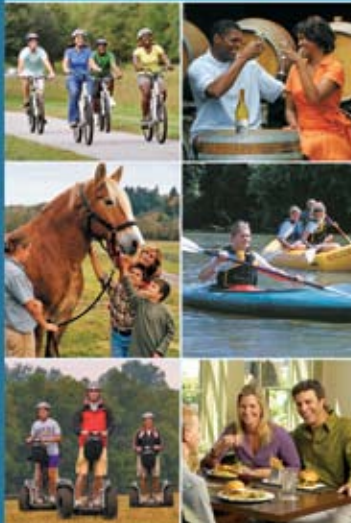
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A recent exchange provided useful information about the National Consumers Telecom and Utility Exchange. This is a little-known national database of consumer information compiled from telecommunications, pay TV companies and utility companies. NCTUE maintains consumer files on information reported from member companies, including current account subscriptions and negative information such as unpaid bills. Companies in these industries use NCTUE to share account and payment info, allowing them access to the consumer's history when considering new applications for service.

The NCTUE database is housed and managed by Equifax Information Services, one of the three major credit bureaus, but does not include traditional credit information. The good news for consumers is that NCTUE is covered by the FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act), which means that consumers have access to a free copy of their file yearly. Consumers can also dispute any inaccuracies they find on their NCTUE report and NCTUE will investigate and correct their file.

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A group of feeder cattle in the ring sold at the Bluegrass Stockyards of Richmond recently. The sale arena in Albany will look very similar to the Richmond arena.

Article and photos by Walt Reichert

CATTLE DRIVE(N)

BLUE GRASS LIVESTOCK MARKETING GROUP IS THRIVING

Barry Bogie, 90, makes it to the Bluegrass Stockyards in Richmond for the sale every Friday. He sits in his wheelchair on the landing above the pit and marks the prices paid on a card.

Manager Jim Dause said Bogie is a fixture there.

"We keep a wheelchair at the stockyards for him, and his family comes and puts him in it," Dause said. "He comes every week, and at his age, when he doesn't come we get kind of worried about him."

That service to customers like Bogie may be one of the reasons Blue Grass Livestock Marketing Group, of which the Richmond yards is a member, is the largest livestock marketing company in the state – and growing.

Blue Grass, based in Lexington, is by far the largest cattle marketing business

in the state, accounting for about half of all cattle sold at stockyards in Kentucky, according to Jim Akers, chief operating officer. Blue Grass expects to sell about half a million cattle this year, Akers said. Besides the Lexington and Richmond facilities, Blue Grass operates yards in Campbellsville, Stanford, Mount Sterling and Maysville. At various times during the week and month, the yards sell cattle, but also horses, goats, sheep and hogs.

Blue Grass will soon open a new facility in Albany, Kentucky, which will replace the yards that burned down in Monticello a few years ago.

"When the yards burned in Monticello, that created a void and cattle farmers in the area were having to drive incredible distances, distances that were not sustainable, to market their cattle," Akers said. "That created a void and we saw an opportunity."

Akers said the Albany facility, which

will have a sale ring modeled on the yards in Richmond, will be designed to move as many as 50,000 to 60,000 head of cattle a year at sales scheduled for Wednesdays and Saturdays each week.

"We wanted a Saturday sale to help the many part-time cattle farmers in the area," Akers said.

Akers said Blue Grass was fortunate to find a spot just outside of Albany at an intersection of two major roads, Ky 90 and U.S. 127, for its new operation.

The company is also offering virtual cattle sales, where beef producers can move their feeders without ever having to go through a stockyards. Blue Grass sends its representatives to the farm to check the cattle for age, weight, sex and quality. The calves are videotaped and sold through a virtual market. After the cattle are sold, a company rep assists in checking the load of cattle before they head out

directly to the customer.

"The virtual sales account for about 10 percent of our sales, and it's a growing part of our business," Akers said.

With the yards scattered across eastern Kentucky and its virtual market, Blue Grass is able to provide a market to cattle producers in the eastern half of Kentucky and nine surrounding states.

"We don't go into western Kentucky or any farther than we can send representatives to service the farmers," Akers said. "All we have to sell is service and if we can't have a personal relationship with the producer we don't want the business."

HISTORY

The company's history begins with the yards in Lexington that opened in 1946. In 1976, the Hope and Barber families bought into the business but sold it in the 90s. They got back into the business in 2000 and are among the owners today. Blue Grass currently has a total of 11 owners, all of them either farmers, buyers or hands-on managers and actively involved in the day-to-day operation, Akers said.

When they decided to expand operations in the state, the owners hired Akers to take over as chief operating officer in 2006. Akers had previously been working for the University of Kentucky and was involved in setting up the Kentucky Beef Network.

Dause, who managed the former Madison Livestock Sales in Richmond, said that business decided to join Blue Grass about five years ago. The Richmond yards moves 45,000 to 50,000 cattle yearly and also markets goats on the second Monday of the month and horses and farm equipment periodically. Dause said the advantage of joining Blue Grass was access to larger capitalization to make sure their customers got paid.

"With prices the way they are we are selling \$1 million to \$1-and-a-half million worth of cattle every Friday," Dause said.

Being well-capitalized also helped Blue Grass weather the bankruptcy of Eastern Livestock Company, with which it had done business. Akers said Blue Grass "is still actively involved" in the bankruptcy proceedings but the producers who sold through Blue Grass all got paid.

"Over 400 farmers all got paid for cattle, and we never saw a penny of it," Akers said.

The state has subsequently passed new regulations aimed at ensuring that what happened with Eastern Livestock doesn't happen again. Meanwhile, Akers said in the past year or two he has attended farmers' meetings around the state gauging producer interest in creating a beef cattle indemnity fund that would serve as insurance against future collapses like the Eastern Livestock debacle. But there isn't much interest out there, Akers said.

"I think it's because we took the hit, and farmers didn't take the hit," Akers said. "They didn't feel the sting."



Jim Akers, chief operating officer of Blue Grass Livestock Marketing Group, stands in front of the Bluegrass Stockyards in Lexington.

Jim Akers didn't move far from his roots when he landed the job as chief operating officer for Blue Grass Livestock Marketing Group.

Akers grew up on a part-time cattle and tobacco farm in Hardin County, where Hereford cattle were the mainstay.

"I didn't know there was such a thing as black cattle until I moved off the farm," Akers said.

Like many farm kids, Akers was involved in 4-H, FFA and livestock judging teams. After graduating from the University of Kentucky in 1985 with an Animal Science degree, Akers went to Morehead State University where he was involved in the school's Sheep Development Project. He taught adult education and worked with 100 sheep producers in the area. Akers then worked as a farm manager in Bourbon County for 14 years and also managed a cattle operation in Alabama that also included cotton and timber.

"I've been fortunate to touch a lot of different projects in agriculture," Akers said.

Akers was working at a purebred seedstock operation in Paris, Kentucky, when he got the opportunity to assist the University of Kentucky's efforts to improve the beef cattle herd in the state using Tobacco Settlement funds. He was hired to coordinate the formation of the Kentucky Beef Network.

When the owners of what was then Blue Grass Stockyards wanted to expand operations in 2006 he joined the company as its chief operating officer.

"If I could put a finger on the one place he has been most helpful, it's been public relations," said Jim Dause, one of Blue Grass's owners and manager of the Richmond stockyards. "He relates well to farmers, and financial people, and makes sure we stay up on humane handling of livestock issues. There's not enough of him for what he tries to do."

Akers is managing the stockyards at a time of historic high prices for beef cattle, prices he expects will continue for some time. Akers said the low cattle numbers and technology that can take the ups-and-downs out of a volatile market should help keep cattle prices high for several years.

"It's pretty hard to go away unhappy," Akers said. "But even as high as cattle are, there is still really good profit potential for the cow-calf operator. These are historically good times for Kentucky cattle producers."

Ag Education in Bullitt County

b

ullitt County's
annual agriculture
field day was held
last month at the
County Extension

Office, with around 300 third-graders from three schools enjoying the presentations. Bullitt County FB joined with the extension office and other groups to stage the annual event. The various displays provided the youngsters with facts and fun about a variety of agriculture topics, including dairy, beef, greenhouse products, soybeans, apples, poultry, soil science and entomology. There also was a display for forestry.

Bullitt County FB Director Jim Robards handed out bags for the youngsters to collect souvenirs from the event. "Kate the Cow," a prop to illustrate how cows are milked, was a popular attraction. KFB is a co-sponsor of "Kate."



“Shear” business

IT'S HARVEST SEASON AT ALPACA FARM

at Flaggy Meadow Farm in Washington County, April is when the flagship farm commodity is harvested for processing and marketing. In this instance, the product is wool from the 107 alpacas that share the farm with Shawn and Lori Malloy.

The Malloys came to Kentucky several years ago from Maine, intent on establishing a fiber mill. With a lot of hard work and marketing expertise, they've made a mark in the “niche farming” business. The line of products they have developed includes “Kentucky Royalty Surino Golf Socks,” which is fast gaining notoriety for its unique comfort.

The processing stage, of course, begins with the shearing of the alpacas, who are willing participants. It is serious business for the Malloys and the handful of helpers who came to their barn on a chilly April morning. The group included two professionals -- Peter Connelly of Colorado and Scotland-born Neville Leverett -- who travel the country shearing alpacas

One alpaca renders about five pounds of fiber which, in turn, can produce 50 pair of socks, said Jeff Gonzalez, who is the marketing director. “We certainly don't want any waste - -which is why we have the experts doing this,” he said.

After the animal is sheared the wool is sorted into grades for the mill process.

“It's a pretty intense process,” explained Gonzalez. “This is not a hobby. Most people in alpacas mess around with breeding and showing them. We look at this as a performance fiber.”

The herd at Flaggy Meadow is among some 500 head of alpacas on three farms within 25 miles of Springfield, the Washington County seat.

Flaggy Meadow Farm, which Shawn Malloy has vowed to transform into “an agri-tourism destination,” is further diversifying with the production of free-range eggs, greenhouse vegetables and farm-raised tilapia.

Check out all the farm has to offer at www.kentuckyroyalty.com and <http://flaggy Meadowfiberworks.com>.



TOP: Shawn Malloy sorts the wool as some alpacas await their turn.

BOTTOM: Two freshly-sheared alpacas reunite with some of their herdmates at Flaggy Meadow Farm. The docile animals seemingly welcome losing their coats for the warm weather season.



Rooting 'em out . . .

FARMERS, WILDLIFE OFFICIALS BATTLING WILD HOG INVASION

By Walt Reichert

ABOVE: A family of wild hogs. They are particularly troublesome at night.

INSET: Wild hogs can do this type of damage to a farm field.

At Tommy Ward's corn and soybean fields in West Kentucky, they're eating up plants and rooting around on hillsides, creating washing and digging wallows.

In south central Kentucky, Rod Wolford had to resort to electric fencing to protect his produce crops after the animals started tearing up pastures.

In north central Kentucky, cattle farmer Randy Kelly has a herd of 25 to 30 at a time come through and tear up his fields.

Says Kelly: "They ain't nothing but trouble."

The "trouble" is wild hogs.

Once confined to a couple of counties in extreme southeastern Kentucky, wild hogs have spread across the state over the last two decades, thanks to help from humans (mostly hunters). As a result, farmers are battling to protect their crops, pastures and livestock from the invaders. Meanwhile, officials with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife

Resources are trying to send them all to hog heaven because of the damage to native wildlife and ecosystems.

"Our goal is complete eradication," said Chad Soard, wildlife biologist with the department.

But that won't be easy.

Related to the Eurasian wild boar and descended from domestic stock released, sometimes deliberately, sometimes accidentally, over the last three centuries in North America, wild hogs are hardy and prolific. Omnivores, wild hogs will eat nearly anything from roots and tender plants to mast on the forest floor, even eggs and young birds. A sow can have two litters a year, averaging three to eight piglets per litter. The piglets hit sexual maturity at a mere six months of age. Boars can reach mature weights of 400 pounds or more. They feed mostly at night, making control that much more difficult.

Yet populations of wild pigs in Kentucky had remained small and isolated in the

southeastern mountains until the 1990s, when the department started getting reports of hog damage in other parts of the state.

Soard blames hunters, who illegally caught and transported hogs from other states, for the spread across the state.

"When you see populations stay isolated for hundreds of years in a couple of counties, like some were in Florida, and then all of a sudden they are all over the place, it tells you humans are moving them," Soard said.

Soard said the hogs, smart and wary, are popular with hunters who often use dogs to run the animals or shoot them from stands. Some are killed for meat while others, caught alive with dogs, are transported to game preserves.

"Selling hogs to game preserves can be lucrative, unfortunately," Soard said.

In western Kentucky, Ward said he heard that the hogs that bedevil him originally came from Arkansas and Louisiana, brought in by local hunters. Kelly said in his county the hogs are likely descendants of domestic stock that had been released by a local farmer who was getting out of the business. He said he has seen a sow with eight piglets on his farm that was red and black spotted, while most hogs that have been feral for many generations are all black.

Soard said the department does not have an estimate of how many are in the state.

To address the influx of these pesky pigs, the General Assembly just passed a bill from Reps. Steven Rudy of Paducah and Fred Nesler of Mayfield that sets penalties for releasing the animals into the wild. KFB supported the measure.

DAMAGE CONTROL

While farmers deal with threats to their cropland, wildlife takes a direct hit, Soard said.

"They go through the land like a vacuum cleaner," he said.

The pigs devouring hickory nuts and acorns remove food sources for deer and turkey. They also take out the eggs and sometimes the young of ground-nesting songbirds, quail and turkey.

Kelly said he noticed that after the pigs moved onto his property four or five years ago the deer and turkey, which had

been abundant, disappeared.

The pigs rooting through the forest also cause the siltation of streams, harming fish, mussels and other wildlife, Soard said.

Another concern is disease. Wild hogs carry over 45 diseases and parasites, Soard said, including pseudorabies, which can infect pets and wildlife, and swine brucellosis, which can also infect livestock but also humans.

"Probably the biggest concern would be that if we ever got a foreign disease, like foot and mouth disease that has been eradicated in the U. S., into the wild pig stock; it would take billions of dollars to get it back out," Soard said.

Kentucky has an open hunting season on wild pigs, Soard said, but that is part of the problem, not the cure. In fact, hunting makes the situation worse, he said. Not only was it hunters who spread the pigs around in the first place, their hunting makes the herd "smarter" and more difficult to catch.

"If you shoot into a herd of pigs, you might take out one or two, but you've just educated the rest," Soard said. "Hunters could take out 90 percent of the pigs and, because of their reproductive capacity, that wouldn't affect the size of the herd."

Soard said the state of Kansas has had success reducing the population of wild pigs by eliminating its open hunting season while still allowing landowners to kill the pigs and trap the animals.

"It is counterintuitive to most people that eliminating hunting would help reduce the herd, but they have shown in Kansas that it works," Soard said.

The department has hired a technician in western Kentucky whose job is to monitor and help control the size of the herd in that part of the state. He uses trip cameras to locate herds, which are sometimes attacked by aerial gunning. But the weapon of choice for controlling the wild pig population has been corral trapping, Soard said, because they take out the reproductive units of the herd – sows and piglets.

The department sets up corrals made of cattle panels secured to fence posts with a trap door. The corral is baited and once the hogs get used to eating inside,

the door is sprung and groups of animals are trapped and destroyed. The department has used cost-share dollars to help farmers set up traps on their land.

Wolford said he has had two traps set up on his farm in southern Kentucky, one with state cost-share dollars and another with USDA assistance. Wolford said the traps have taken at least 10 pigs out of circulation, but another four or five have escaped the enclosures.

"We lost a big boar, I'd guess 315 pounds, that had been in the trap for four hours," Wolford said. "But he just went over the top."

Soard said the traps have been effective in reducing the size of the population in western Kentucky, and he hopes that the beasts can eventually be eradicated from the state.

"Because our population is smaller and more isolated than those in other southeastern states, there's a chance they can be eliminated," Soard said.

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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The annual Women's Leadership Conference was held last month in Bowling Green with a diverse agenda that included keynote addresses, workshops and tours of area agribusinesses.

The presenters included Janet Gray, a retired Florida teacher who has won national awards for using agriculture as a theme for teaching in a core curriculum. Because she is so well received, Ms. Gray has become a fixture at KFB's annual series of summer workshops for teachers. At this conference she made an address at a general session plus conducted two workshops on ways to effectively use agriculture as a theme in the classroom.

John Torres, Director of Leadership Development at AFBF, also did double duty with a general session address and two workshops. His workshops focused on effective communications, emphasizing the importance and the best ways of personalizing messages.

In his presentation to the entire group, Torres spoke about how local Farm Bureau leaders can create movements that bring action and, subsequently, positive results. Leaders are important, he said, but it's the followers who make the big difference. The key to an effective leader is to nurture a "first follower" who'll become the key to others joining in the cause.

"Those first followers are the ones who help us start a movement," said Torres, a former field director for Ohio FB.

He spoke about "four rules" for assembling a team to accomplish objectives: (1) A scale of economy - having a reasonably-sized group that is more decentralized. (2) A network effect - having a good number of activities and commitments. (3) Find good ideas and surface knowledgeable people. (4) Find ways for everyone to contribute to the effort.

"It's up to every Farm Bureau member

to decide what's important to get them going," Torres said. "But at the end of the day, we want a hybrid organization that has leadership and direction."

Torres concluded with a challenge to "champion those issues that are important to you and nurture those followers."

In her workshop, Ms. Gray had participants doing several exercises to illustrate how to attract students' attention. She provided apples as a prop for teaching about agriculture in an interesting fashion. She urged the ladies to get involved with agricultural education.

"Teaching is not hard," she said. "We need volunteers like you."

KFB President Mark Haney provided a welcome address, touching on the valuable roles handled by Farm Bureau women. "Because of your persistence and persuasiveness, you have a great influence," he said.

The Pulaski County farmer noted how women have played a significant role in both communications and public advocacy.

"Farm Bureau women have gone from a supporting role to a full partner in helping us reach our goals," Haney said.

Agriculture Commissioner James Comer also made greetings.

Additionally, there were presentations on member benefits programs, a state legislative update from Public Affairs Director Jeff Harper and a national issues briefing from L. Joe Cain, KFB's Director of National Affairs and Political Education. Cain touched on how local leaders can be more involved and more

effective in political activism. He urged the KFB women to establish good working relationships with their respective lawmakers and offered tips for doing so.

The closing luncheon featured Jane Herlong, a humorist and award-winning singer. She combined humor, inspirational stories and a great voice to send the ladies home with a good feeling about their experience at the conference.



Award-winning teacher Janet Gray conducted a presentation on ways to incorporate agriculture into educational curriculums.



Members of the Women's Advisory Committee posed with a display for the "Farmers Feed the World" initiative to assist charities. From left are Sue Litkenhus, Mary Jayne Cannon, Sharon Furches, Terry Gilbert, Carol Sullivan, Pam Chappell, Phyllis Amyx, Cathy Pleasants, Frieda Heath, Betty Farris, Margaret Hensley and Vickie Bryant.



John Torres of AFBF spoke about effective strategies for local leaders.

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APPLICANTS INVITED FOR AG LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program is accepting applications for its next group. Housed in the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, KALP is an intensive two-year program designed for young agricultural producers and agribusiness individuals. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, residents of Kentucky or Tennessee, and be involved in some phase of agriculture. The Kentucky Agriculture Development Board requires at least 25 percent of the participants to be tobacco-dependent, defined as having received a Phase II or a tobacco-buyout check. There are no specific educational requirements.

The program dates back to the mid-

1980s and was originally called the Philip Morris Agricultural Leadership Program, though it was never commodity specific. Philip Morris fully funded the first seven classes. Now more than 100 financial supporters, including KFB, the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, Kentucky agribusinesses, farm organizations, program alumni and participant fees, provide funding.

The program consists of ten domestic seminars devoted to important agricultural issues. Sessions also focus on improving participants' communication, leadership and management skills. Class members will visit a variety of Kentucky agribusinesses, Frankfort and Washington D.C., and will travel to other states and nations to explore agriculture in different

settings. The previous nine classes have yielded 245 graduates. Several KFB staff members and volunteer leaders have been through this program, including Executive Vice President David S. Beck, who was in the Class of 1989.

Candidates may be nominated by county extension agents, farm organizations, trade associations, alumni of previous leadership programs, other interested individuals or be self-nominated. The nomination form link and additional details can be at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/KALP>. Nominations are due June 1, 2012. All nominees will receive information about the program and procedures for submitting the required application, which will be due July 15, 2012.

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Beef herd expansion delayed

Although weather patterns seem to be improving for the drought-stricken southern Plains, USDA reports there is anecdotal evidence that Southern and Southwestern cattlemen are hedging their bets by buying stockers rather than cows to graze this summer. By restocking with stockers rather than cows, cattlemen are effectively delaying the rebuilding of the national cow herd. The heavy rate of cow slaughter in the first quarter of 2012 will also shrink this year's calf crop and could also adversely affect the January 1, 2013, total cow inventory. A smaller calf crop in 2012 would likely result in fewer feeder cattle placed on feed in 2013 and subsequently lower beef production in 2013 and early 2014. This will be exacerbated by heifer retention for herd replacements or herd rebuilding.

Produce growers use variety of marketing practices

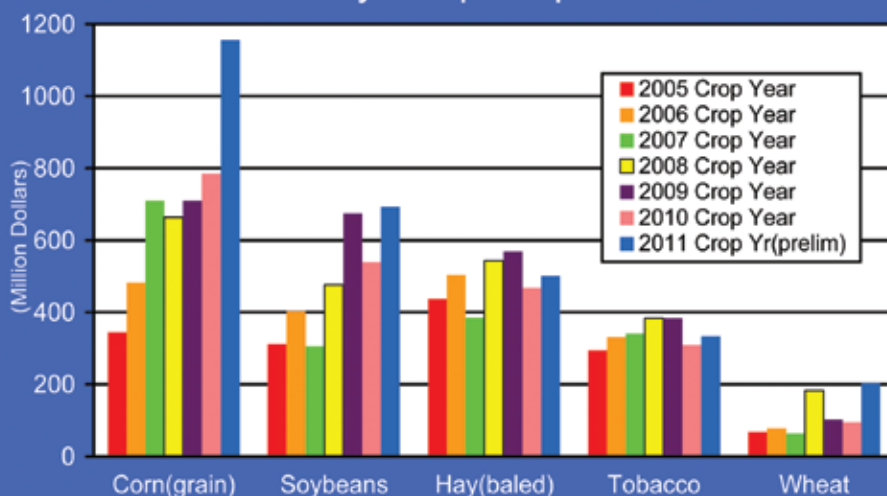
The UK College of Agriculture has published preliminary results of its Produce Marketing & Planting Intentions Survey which is a study of the marketing practices and planting intentions of Kentucky fruit and vegetable growers. Conducted since 2002, the survey has identified different market channel trends. A table of market channel data for 2002, 2007 and 2012 can be found in the April issue of Economic and Policy Update, available at www.ca.uky.edu/agecon in the extension section.

Of the ten market channels identified where at least ten percent of a producer's product is marketed, direct markets ranked the highest, at 79 percent. The direct markets category represents local farmers markets and on-farm retail markets. Within the direct markets category, 44 percent use farmers markets and 39 percent use on-farm markets.

Honey production stung by 2011 weather

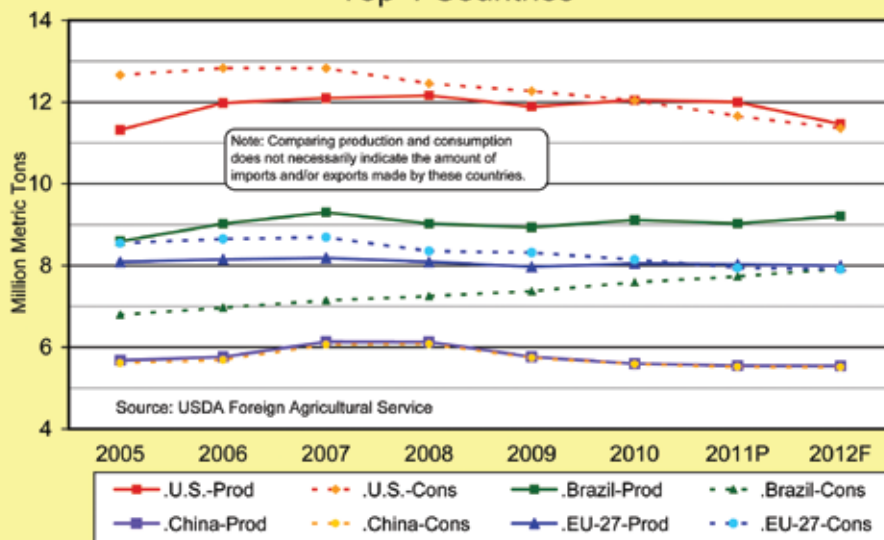
The 2011 U.S. honey crop was down due to drought in the South and heavy rainfall in many northern States. As a result, domestic honey production dropped 16 percent in 2011 to 148 million pounds. The number of bee colonies fell 7.5 percent to 2.49 million and yield per colony declined nine percent to 59.6 pounds. U.S. honey prices received by domestic producers averaged \$1.73 per pound, up seven percent from 2010. Overall, the value of U.S. honey production declined by \$29.2 million in 2011. Domestic use equaled a record 433 million pounds, which translates to 1.4 pounds per capita in 2011. Honey imports totaled 288.3 million pounds in 2011, a record high 66.6 percent of consumption. U.S. honey exports climbed to 12 million pounds, valued at \$18.7 million, or \$1.56 per pound in 2011.

Kentucky's Top Crop Values



Source: Kentucky Agri-News, USDA-NASS, Kentucky Field Office

Beef Production & Domestic Consumption Top 4 Countries



Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

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Farmers Market grants available

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan announced that the Agriculture Department is seeking grant applicants for the 2012 Farmers Market Promotion Program.

Approximately \$10 million is available for marketing operations such as farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and road-side stands. The grants, which are administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, are available through a competitive application process on www.grants.gov. The grants aim to increase the availability of local agricultural products in communities throughout the county. They will also help strengthen farmer-to-consumer marketing efforts.

Projects that expand healthy food choices in food deserts or low-income areas (where the percentage of the population living in poverty is 20 percent or above) will receive additional consideration.

Participate in 2012 Ag Census

USDA is calling on the nation's farmers and ranchers to sign up for the 2012 Census of Agriculture, ensuring that they will be counted among their peers. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service conducts the census every five years. The 2012 form will be mailed to agricultural producers in December.

NASS sent out its National Agricultural Classification Survey earlier this year to identify potential agricultural activities and determine who should receive the census form. Producers who did not fill out the survey can sign up for the census and get more information about it online at <http://agcensus.usda.gov>.

Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the census. The same law also requires NASS to keep all census information confidential. The agency safeguards the privacy of all respondents so no individual operation or producer can be identified.

AgriScience Center dedicated in Lexington

A grand opening ceremony was held for Lexington's new \$18 million Locust Trace AgriScience Farm off Leestown Road. Fayette County FB had strongly supported the innovative project as a unique learning place for agriculture students.

Agriculture Commissioner James Comer was among a number of officials on hand for the event. "This is a facility that I think we'll see a great return from for many years to come," he said.

About 200 students attend Locust Trace, which began operations last fall. The youngsters study a range of subjects there that include veterinary science and biotechnology.

Locust Trace began as a modest idea to house a few agriculture classes for the Fayette County Public School system but expanded when the school system received 82 acres of surplus federal land. The property now houses a classroom-administration building, a veterinary clinic, an arena for livestock shows, pastures and a high-tech environmental system featuring solar electric. The farm has roughly tripled the capacity for ag students.

AFBF voices objections on health care law

AFBF filed comments with the House Ways and Means Committee expressing opposition to the individual and employer health insurance mandates in the health care reform law enacted last year. The committee's Subcommittee on Health held a hearing on the mandate's impact on small businesses.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act penalizes farm and ranch businesses with 50 or more "full-time equivalent" employees if they do not provide government-prescribed health insurance, or if certain employees receive a tax credit and purchase insurance through state-regulated health insurance exchanges.

"Farm Bureau is opposed to mandates that require individuals to have health insurance and that require employers to provide it for their workers," AFBF said in its written comments. "Most farmers and ranchers are self-employed and buy health insurance for themselves and their workers through individual and small group markets. Coverage mandates accompanied by penalties for noncompliance will only make a difficult situation worse for people already unable to afford coverage."

There is also uncertainty about whether affordable, short-term coverage will be available for temporary or seasonal agricultural workers, AFBF said. AFBF also was one of several organizations that sent a letter in late March to the Ways and Means Committee chairman and ranking member in support of the American Job Protection Act (H.R. 1744), which would repeal the employer mandate.

The subcommittee's hearing may inform a debate later this year over rewriting the health care law, in the event that the U.S. Supreme Court overturns the health insurance mandates. The court in late March heard oral arguments in a legal challenge brought by several states against the mandates. The court will render its decision this summer.



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Eagle Bend Alpacas Fiber
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Georgetown · (502) 863-2255

Foxhollow Farm Store
Crestwood · (502) 243-4323

Gallrein Farms
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George Gagel Farm Market
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Gregory Farms
Turners Station · (502) 947-5469

Golden Apple Fruit Market
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Julie's Pumpkins
Paris · (859) 987-4498

Kelley Farms
Lexington · (859) 948-8700

Kentucky Green Market
Lexington · (859) 265-0445

McLean's Aerofresh Fruit
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Michels Family Farm
Sparta · (859) 643-2511

Morrison's Greenhouses
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Mulberry Orchard
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Redman's Farm
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Reed Valley Orchard
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Sweet Home Spun
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The Greenhouse in Gertrude
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Thieneman's Herbs & Perennials
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Tower View Farm & Nursery
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EAST

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Fannin's Vegetables
West Liberty · (606) 743-3343

Feathered Wing Farm Market
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