

Kentucky

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KFB

Priority Issue

Wildlife Populations and what can be done to better control them



AFBF

Annual Convention
Wrap up

KFB Candid Conversations:
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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS
Volume 16 | No. 1
February 2017

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As we return from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) annual convention, I can't tell you how proud I am to bring back the prestigious Pinnacle Award on behalf of our organization.

This award is the highest honor bestowed on a state Farm Bureau for recognition of member growth and achievement.

It takes KFB as a whole, working together, to reach this level of recognition and I think our organization exemplifies a kind of comradely which unifies us. There is so much that can be accomplished if we all stand with a common voice.

And we achieved great things last year and we have gotten off to a good start in 2017.

Our delegation to Phoenix was the second largest of any state as more than 350 members attended. With our 25 voting delegates, Kentucky was well-positioned to help shape the national policy AFBF will advocate for this year. In fact, many of the issues adopted on the national level, are similar to what our board approved during our annual meeting last December.

That just goes to show we, as farmers, have similar concerns no matter where we live or the nature of our farming operations and setting policy is one of the single most important things we do both at the state level and at the national convention.

As a new administration settles into Washington and with the change in leadership in Frankfort, we anticipate seeing many changes take place that could help with issues such as over-regulation, immigration reform, and new trade agreements.

But these issues will not be dealt with unless we stay the course with our advocacy efforts. Kentucky has a lot of influence when it comes to farm policy for many reasons. One being the diversity of agriculture in our state. Another is, we have some powerful influencers in Congress with the leader of the Senate and many House Committee Chairs who play an important role. Those things are recognized by AFBF and agriculture organizations here and throughout the nation.

As we move forward during this General Assembly session and the convening of a new Congress, I think we are going to see legislation introduced that will deal with such issues as deregulation, national farm policy, immigration, labor issues and the next Farm Bill.

Whether we're dealing with abnormally high populations of horses out west, over populations of wildlife in Kentucky, the lack of water we saw last year in many areas of the country, or the need for expanded trade for agriculture, Farm Bureau members from across the country made their way to the AFBF annual convention to have a voice in the issues that affect us all.

And no voice was more prevalent than that of Kentucky Farm Bureau.

Mark Haney
President
Kentucky Farm Bureau

Randa Morris and Jacob Patterson win Outstanding Farm Bureau Youth contest



Jacob Patterson of Pulaski County, second from right, received the 2016 Outstanding Farm Bureau Youth award from Betty Farris, left, past Chair of KFB's Women's Committee, and David S. Beck, right, KFB Executive Vice-President. Also pictured are the 2015 winners, Regan Miller, second from left and Ben Pinkston, center.



Randa Morris of Garrard County, second from right, received the 2016 Outstanding Farm Bureau Youth award from Betty Farris, left, past Chair of KFB's Women's Committee, and David S. Beck, right, KFB Executive Vice-President. Also pictured are the 2015 winners, Ben Pinkston, second from left and Regan Miller, center.

KFBF Named as a Best Place to Work in Kentucky

The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and the Kentucky Society for Human Resource Management recently announced that the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation has been named as one of the 2017 Best Places to Work in Kentucky in the small-sized employer category.

A total of 40 employers were given this honor statewide along with KFBF.

"I am extremely proud of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation being recognized as an organization that is a good place to work and takes care of its people," said David S. Beck, Executive Vice President of KFB Federation.

This is the 13th year for the program and winners are published in a magazine and will be celebrated at special event in Lexington on April 26.

The full list of winners was announced January 24 and can be viewed at bestplacetoworkinky.com.



The 2017 Farm Bureau Presidents Panel

Featuring:

Kentucky Farm Bureau President **Mark Haney**
Tennessee Farm Bureau President **Jeff Aiken**
Illinois Farm Bureau President **Richard Guebert**
Indiana Farm Bureau Vice-President **Kendell Culp**
February 17, 1:30 p.m. (Eastern time)
During the National Farm Machinery Show
South Wing of the Kentucky Expo Center, Room B-105
Mike Adams with AgriTalk will serve as moderator.

2017 District Meetings

(all times are local)

- District 1: March 20, 7:00 p.m., Calloway County Farm Bureau Office
- District 2: March 7, 6:30 p.m., Ballard Convention Center
- District 3: March 16, 6:30 p.m., Rough River Dam State Resort Park
- District 4: March 28, 6:30 p.m., Barren River State Park Lodge
- District 5: March 30, 7:00 p.m., Fayette County Extension Office
- District 6: March 27, 7:00 p.m. Gallatin County Extension Office
- District 7: March 27, 7:00 p.m. Russell County Auditorium/ Natatorium
- District 8: March 6, 7:00 p.m. Madison County Farm Bureau Office
- District 9: March 20, 6:30 p.m. Blue Licks State Park
- District 10: March 6, 6:30 p.m. Magoffin County Extension Office
- District 11: March 30, 6:00 p.m. Shiloh Steakhouse, London



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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comment COLUMN



I'm often asked what attracted me to Kentucky and my position as President and CEO of the Kentucky State Fair Board and my answer is opportunity; I see opportunity not only in this organization but in this state and in the city of Louisville.

Having grown up on a farm in Tennessee, I have always been very familiar with many of the events that take place here at the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) whether it was the National Farm Machinery Show or the North American International Livestock Expo for example. I know how important these events are to agriculture and how important agriculture is to Kentucky.

This venue alone has become known for its connection to the agriculture industry and recognized as such being home to some of the biggest and best ag-related events in the country. The primary source of revenue for KEC is connected to agriculture even though we do a lot of non-ag events.

I really wear two hats in overseeing KEC as well as the Kentucky International Convention Center and working with our tourism industry, ag-related or otherwise, to bring events to the Louisville area. Both facilities are vital to Kentucky in different ways but with one advantage, that being the opportunities that are available for both.

In realizing those prospects, relationships are indeed the key to success. I have spent most of my time here, so far, meeting people and becoming familiar with other organizations in order to build strong connections.

I saw how important that is at a young age. My grandfather was a state board member of the Tennessee Farm Bureau. I've been a part of Farm Bureau all of my life and I know how important relationships are to that organization and its members.

I told the Fair Board when they interviewed me, in the first 90 days I'm going to meet a lot of people, do a lot listening and build a lot of relationships. Any success that I've ever had in my career has been because of collaborating with people and building trust. That's how I do business and being new in this position, it will take those face-to-face interactions to create success.

There is so much growth potential here, the opportunities are unlimited and there is so much we can do with groups like Farm Bureau, FFA, 4-H and all of the ag community including Kentucky Proud and Commissioner Ryan Quarles and University of Kentucky Extension.

I welcome these new relationships and look forward to the opportunities ahead. We can truly create an agricultural hub in this area and I look forward to your help in making it happen.

Jason Rittenberry

President and CEO, Kentucky State Fair Board



KFB Board of Directors participated in the AFBF Business Session during the annual convention.

Kentucky delegates help set national agricultural policy at American Farm Bureau Federation annual convention

Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) made a strong showing at this year's American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) 98th annual convention. The organization came away with several awards and honors including the coveted Pinnacle Award as recognition for program and membership achievement.

KFB was also well represented by way of their 2016 annual meeting winners in Discussion Meet, Excellence in Agriculture (EIA) and Outstanding Young Farm Family contests, all vying for national recognition in their respective competitions.

Kirby Green of Daviess County finished in the top 16 of the AFBF Discussion Meet, while Ryan and Miranda Chaplin of Bourbon County, and Brad and Karen Hines of Hart County competed strongly in the EIA and Achievement in Agriculture events, respectively.

Also being recognized was Harlan County Farm Bureau as a County Activities of Excellence (CAE) award winner. CAE honorees are recognized for innovative program ideas. Harlan County FB initiated County Forestry Days in which young people learned about the forestry industry.

In addition to competitions and

award announcements, voting delegates from Kentucky and other Farm Bureaus around the country weighed in on the nation's top agricultural issues and identifying priority topics for 2017 advocacy efforts.

The KFB 25 voting delegates represented Bluegrass State farmers as national policy was considered.

According to information from AFBF, resolutions passed by delegates included important measures covering regulatory reform, crop insurance, the inclusion of food assistance in the upcoming farm bill, school nutrition, biotechnology, energy and more.

AFBF President Zippy Duvall said the actions taken by farmer and rancher delegates from across the nation represent the culmination of a year-long grassroots policy process.

"It also provides us a roadmap for actions AFBF will take to implement our policies throughout this year, and I am optimistic about those prospects," he said.

KFB board members approved national priority issues at their December annual meeting including: support of a thorough regulatory review to ensure regulations do not impose an undue economic burden on any segment of society and the regulatory process is

transparent and results achievable; supporting fair and open multilateral trade agreements that will open new markets and expand existing markets for U.S. agricultural products; and support of immigration reform that includes restructuring the H-2A program to streamline the process making it more reliable, economical and simple for farmers to participate.

"Setting policy is the number one priority at the AFBF annual convention each year," said KFB President Mark Haney, of Pulaski County, who led the delegation from Kentucky. "Through policy development sessions, we have the opportunity to shape and influence how agriculture will be viewed in Washington, D.C., in 2017. It is crucial for Kentucky's farming interests to be well-represented in those discussions, and extremely satisfying to return home knowing we have accomplished that goal."

In addition to the general and business sessions, over 350 KFB members traveled to Phoenix to participate in a variety of industry-based seminars held throughout the event. More than 5,000 Farm Bureau members from across the country attended the AFBF annual convention.

Kentucky Farm Bureau Recognized as Pinnacle Award Winner at AFBF Convention

Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) took home several organizational awards presented at this year's American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) 98th annual convention.

Each year state Farm Bureaus are presented awards in different categories related to a number of programs and initiatives.

KFB was honored with an array of honors including Awards of Excellence (AOE) in six categories that include: Education & Outreach, Leadership Development, Member Benefits, Member Initiatives, Policy Development & Implementation, and Public Relations and Communications.

The organization also received the President's Award presented to states for each membership-sized group that achieved quota and demonstrated superiority in the Awards for Excellence categories. KFB was recognized for Member Benefits, Member Initiatives and Policy Development and Implementation.

The Navigator Award for achieving membership growth at an accelerated pace and surpassing the established quota goal was also presented to KFB.

The most prestigious award received by KFB during the convention came by way of AFBF's Pinnacle Award given as the organization's top honor for program and membership achievement.

KFB President Mark Haney said he was proud of the efforts made by the organization.

"To be awarded these honors is a true testament to how hard our members and staff work in order to make Kentucky Farm Bureau the best it can be," he said. "It truly takes our grassroots approach to be a strong advocate as the Voice of Agriculture in Kentucky and by achieving success at the local level, the entire organization becomes stronger and more efficient in its efforts to continue that mission."

Haney, who led the 350-plus Kentucky member delegation to the convention, accepted the awards on behalf of KFB which were presented by AFBF President Zippy Duvall.



KFB President, Mark Haney accepted the American Farm Bureau Federation's Pinnacle Award from AFBF President Zippy Duvall.

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Statement from KFB President Mark Haney on International Trade

Agriculture exports are critical to growing ag-related and rural economies. A substantial amount of Kentucky's agricultural sales comes from exports, and while the majority of our farms in the Commonwealth are smaller, family-owned operations, each one has a role to play in providing these goods that are in demand around the world. Those operations also depend heavily on the income created by export markets. The

saying about the world being smaller is true when it comes to international trade.

During our last annual meeting, the KFB board approved national priorities including the support of fair and open multilateral trade agreements that will open new markets and expand existing markets for U.S. agricultural products.

Already we have seen much movement on the part of the new administration in Washington related to international trade. As these discussions

begin, it's important to reiterate our position on these trade agreements that benefit the American farmer.

We find ourselves living in an environment where the world depends on international trade and agriculture must play a significant role in any negotiations of current or future agreements.

We encourage our lawmakers and decision makers at all levels of government to make every effort possible to keep our ag export markets vibrant and growing for the benefit of our producers across this state and the nation.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said in a recent statement, the organization pledges to work with the administration to help ensure that U.S. agriculture can compete on a level playing field in markets around the world. But we need the administration's commitment to ensuring we do not lose the ground gained.

I agree and want to emphasize that while these markets are crucial to the success of our industry all the time, we are currently in the midst of declining net farm incomes. Now, more than ever, any unrealized or lost revenues can be devastating to our farms and our rural way of life.

We are always striving to create new markets both here and abroad for Kentucky products and look forward to new trade deals and fortified existing agreements. We offer our support in making that happen. But, as advocates, we must be diligent in our efforts to have our voices heard in all matters related to the sustainability of our American agriculture industry.

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service: Kentucky Agri-News

Soybean Production Breaks Record High Third Year in a Row

"This past crop year had its highs and lows, successes and disappointments," said David Knopf, director of the NASS Eastern Mountain Regional Office in Kentucky. "Soybean production was the highlight, setting both a record production and yield, while corn and tobacco failed to reach expectations."

Soybean production for Kentucky is estimated at 89 million bushels, down one percent from the November forecast and up slightly from 2015. Yield was estimated at 50 bushels per acre, unchanged from last month and up one bushel from a year ago. Acreage for harvest as beans was estimated at 1.78 million acres, down 30,000 acres from the previous year. U.S. soybean production is forecast at 4.31 billion bushels, down 1 percent from the November forecast and up 10 percent from last year. The average yield per acre is estimated at 52.1 bushels, down 0.4 bushels from last month and up 4.1 bushels from last year. Area harvested is up 1 percent from 2015 at 82.7 million acres.

Corn production in Kentucky is estimated at 223 million bushels, down one percent from the November forecast and down one percent from the previous crop. Yield was estimated at 159 bushels per acre, unchanged from the November forecast and down 13 bushels from the 2015 level. Acres for harvest as grain were estimated at 1.4 million acres, up 90,000 acres from 2015. The U.S. corn production is estimated at 15.1 billion bushels, down one percent from the November forecast and up 11 percent from the revised 2015 estimate. The average yield in the United States is estimated at 174.6 bushels per

acre. This is down 0.7 bushels from the November forecast and 6.2 bushels above the revised 2015 average yield. Area harvested for grain is estimated at 86.7 million acres, down slightly from the November forecast and up 7 percent

from the revised 2015 acreage.

"The corn crop started strong," Knopf noted, "but faded down the stretch. It had the potential to be a record crop, but pollination and grain fill issues left growers disappointed."

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Wildlife Issues High on the KFB Priority List

During Kentucky Farm Bureau’s recent annual meeting, one of the priority issues approved by its board related to wildlife populations. Specifically, the priority issue sought to, *“Seek effective wildlife management that will reduce the wildlife population in an effort to alleviate continued crop and livestock losses, automobile accidents, human injuries, and loss of life.”*

Farmers are no strangers to the damage and danger caused by populations of certain wildlife species to crops and property.

The USDA notes that, *“Each year, wildlife cost property owners millions of dollars in damage, underscoring the need for responsible wildlife damage management.”*

While total numbers for crop damage are hard to quantify, producers have long felt losses to their budgets due to decreased yields and replanting costs.

David Appelman, the University of Kentucky (UK) College of Agriculture, Food and Environment’s Extension agent in Bracken County said it has been known for some time that certain wildlife populations in that area have gotten too large.

“Crop damage is on the increase and I get many calls from farmers wanting to know what to do about those crops,” he said. *“And gardens in many areas of our county are all but impossible to grow unless we build a fence around them.”*

With that said, Appelman worked with local Fish and Wildlife officials as

well as other leaders in the community to create a two-day doe harvest event to help alleviate some of the problem while drawing attention to the issue.

The Hunter’s Harvest deer donation station was set up at the extension office and served as a base of sorts to bring in the harvested animals. As long as deer are tagged properly, an unlimited number of doe can be taken in Bracken County during the regular deer hunting season.

Another component of establishing the project was to make sure the processed meat would go to help the needy in the county.

“We wanted to do this in a responsible, safe manner and after meeting with Gregg Rentfrow at the U.K. Meats Lab, who was willing to participate and help with this project, I felt confident regarding food safety. All the meat was donated to the local food pantries,” said Appelman.

According to information from UK, Webber Farms and the Kern family provided a refrigerated truck to deliver the meat to the UK Meats Lab, where Rentfrow’s staff ground and packaged the meat. Appelman said over 200 families were helped because of the donation.

As it turned out, the weather did not cooperate on the first day of the event but more than a dozen doe were taken anyway and the project has generated much interest.

“We’ve had tremendous, positive comments from many people including our land owners, the hunters and

county officials,” said Appelman. *“They were enthused about the efforts and are making bigger and better plans for next year.”*

Wildlife’s effect on farming

While Bracken County is not known for large grain producers, there are some larger grain farms in the area.

“Those larger farms have combines equipped with monitors and all of those farmers will tell you the outside 10 to 20 rows in many fields with corn, or 30 to 40 feet of soybeans, the reduction is half or more in yield as compared to the center of the field,” said Appelman. *“When you consider the outside perimeter of the field that gets to be a lot of acres.”*

And that equates into a lot of money. Appelman said farmers are good stewards and don’t mind to share a little with the wildlife populations but when it gets deep into a producer’s pocket it gets to be more than they can financially bear.

Losses due to wildlife are not new to farmers and issues surrounding these losses are not new to KFB. Two years ago, the Federation led an effort to allow farmers in Kentucky to obtain depredation permits to take black buzzards which were wreaking havoc on many livestock farms.

It is estimated that in 2014, Kentucky livestock producers lost nearly 200 calves and cows to black vultures attacks, a number that was nearly triple from the previous year.

The program is administered

by KFB Federation which is the only non-government entity that has been approved by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services (USFWS) for a black vulture depredation permit and has been viewed as a possible national model.

As with any project like the one in Bracken County, it takes multiple agencies to make it work. Appelman said local Fish and Wildlife Game Warden James Becket has been very supportive of reducing the deer herd and was very helpful in pushing this initiative.

While the deer population may be getting the attention now, Appelman said there are plenty of problems with the turkey population, as well. In fact, one-third of a UK silage trial conducted earlier last year in Bracken County was destroyed by this exploding turkey population.

“We appreciate the wildlife but we’ve got to keep them in balance and we applaud the hunters and those that assisted with this project,” he said.

Action from local communities

The policy process is a key component in understanding KFB as an organization and what issues are important to members. Each year, policy resolutions are channeled from county Farm Bureaus to the state office and reviewed by advisory committees and a Resolutions Committee comprised of members from the 11 districts that make up KFB across Kentucky.

Eddie Melton, KFB First Vice-President and chair of the Resolutions Committee said there were more

resolutions related to wildlife populations that came from county Farm Bureaus in 2016 than any other issue.

“Obviously over-populations of certain wildlife species is a concern to our members whether they’re on the farm or not and that was evident in the number of resolutions that were sent relating to this subject,” he said. *“In becoming a policy issue for 2017, KFB will advocate for sensible solutions to this problem in the coming year.”*

KFB President Mark Haney discussed the wildlife population issue during the 2016 KFB Ag Tour throughout Northern Kentucky and during his address to KFB members at the organization’s annual meeting last December. He said it is an issue to be taken on in 2017.

“Not only do farmers have to deal with lost revenue due to wildlife damage sustained in their crops, but nearly all of us have seen a variety of wildlife on the highways, especially deer,” he said. *“As these populations grow beyond what is considered normal, the hazards they present to those in agriculture, those behind the wheel of a car or truck, and even to themselves, grows and it is an issue we must face in order to do what is best for everyone, as well as for the wildlife.”*

Haney added that it is the work of local Farm Bureaus that has helped shed light on this issue and it will be through their advocacy efforts that solutions will be found.



Information from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

State, local and private groups all have a stake in helping manage the state’s deer population. The primary tool for deer management in Kentucky is hunting. Occasionally, however, farmers may need more aggressive assistance managing local deer populations.

Deer populations can grow to levels above what is socially acceptable. Once a threshold for damage has been reached, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) can be of assistance. Landowners may contact their local KDFWR biologist or conservation officer (CO) for deer management assistance (call 1-800-858-1549 or Find My County Contact at fw.ky.gov). The biologist or CO will schedule an on-site visit, document deer damage, and provide technical guidance on best solutions available. Technical guidance can be offered in many ways; however, the best damage mitigation strategy is a strong, long-term hunting regiment, focusing on doe harvest.

If the landowner allows hunting on property and hunters are unable to remove enough deer, [Deer Control Tags](#) can be issued to the landowner. These tags (for antlerless deer only), can only be used during the season and can be given to hunters to harvest additional deer beyond their statewide bag limit.

If [Deer Control Tags](#) are insufficient, [Deer Destruction Permits](#) may be requested. These permits allow the landowner the ability to remove deer outside the season framework. A landowner may designate individuals to act on their behalf and remove deer under these permits. In order for the landowner to designate someone, the landowner must submit the [Wildlife Damage Designee Form](#) to KDFWR staff. In most cases, destruction permits are not offered as first recourse unless there is a public safety or environmental threat.

KDFWR has a long partnership with Kentucky’s agricultural community. The result is Kentucky has the number one trophy deer herd in the U.S. The KDFWR is committed to assisting farmers with wildlife damage mitigation, science-based wildlife management, and providing memorable wildlife experiences for all Kentucky residents.



Learning More about Animal Agriculture: A critical component of the ag industry

In Kentucky, animal agriculture represents well over half of the ag economy when taking into account all livestock sectors.

Most of this can be attributed to tradition but because of the investments made in the whole industry much of which comes from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund, not only has livestock production grown but animal quality remains important and is exceptional in many cases.

What helps solidify this excellence of animals is the attention given by producers who know and understand the importance of making animal care paramount in their operations.

Drs. Flint and Patricia Harrelson also understand this practice and live it every day by teaching animal science at Morehead State University. The husband and wife team are assistant professors at MSU and lead students not only by way of books but through hands-on applications at the university's nearby farm facility, the Derrickson Agricultural Complex.

One of the first things the pair talks about with their students is career related and finding out what those new students want to do.

"One of the great things about

animal science but also scary, is there's a wide spectrum of what they can do with their degree. Explaining the different avenues that they can go down and making sure they make those connections is one of the critical parts that we try to establish, initially," said Patricia.

One thing that is confusing about being animal scientists is, many people including some students think the Harrelsons are veterinarians.

"Making students aware that there are so many different things they can do besides being a vet or working in a veterinarian's office or even raising livestock. It is a broad scoping major and there are a lot of opportunities," said Flint.

While many of their students come from a farming background or have participated in organizations such as FFA or 4-H, many still don't realize all of the career opportunities available through an animal science degree.

Discovering these career avenues is but one of many steps involved in teaching these young people about animal agriculture and its importance in the overall ag industry.

Even students with backgrounds in livestock production, for instance, find out so much more about the animals

including improvement of genetics and understanding principles that make them more sustainable financially and within the environment.

With the entire livestock sector being so valuable to the state ag industry, animal agriculture is playing a bigger and more significant role.

"When you think about all of agriculture, you can't have one area without the others," said Patricia. "I teach animal anatomy and physiology from time to time and you can think of the industry as we would of body systems; maybe crops are the circulatory system and you have the animal side that is more of the digestive system. Without one or the other, you're not going to have a fully functional animal."

She pointed out that the different ag sectors depend on each other to make the industry as a whole work.

"I don't think you can have agriculture without animals and I don't think you can replace one area or take it out," said Flint. "The system really becomes a full circle even utilizing fecal material as fertilizer to reduce use of chemicals."

Educating more than just students
Ultimately most of what is produced agriculturally will go to consumers, one

way or another and often that is where many of the misconceptions related to animal agriculture originate or at least accumulate.

"One of the big things we do is making sure the students know the difference between animal rights and animal welfare because those are not the same thing," said Patricia. "Animal welfare is regarding the care and husbandry of the animal and making sure humane practices are being followed. Animal rights is where we see a lot of the advocacy groups that want to do away with animal agriculture and they try to give human feelings to animals. They think we shouldn't be raising animals for food."

She added that those differences have to be pointed out and emphasized that all those producing livestock and raising animals want to treat them with care.

"The animals will not be productive unless we take care of them. That means nutrition, bedding, shelter and keeping them healthy," said Patricia. "A farmer is not going to raise livestock and not take care of them because they won't be profitable. But more than that, farmers are passionate about what they do and I can't comprehend why people would think they would mistreat an animal."

Something else that adds to the misconceptions comes by way of marketing and labeling of foods in the marketplace.

"There is the mislabeling and the marketing aspects verses the truth. Hormone free for instance; there's no way an animal is hormone free because all animals have hormones just like humans do," said Flint. "Now, added hormones, we can have a discussion there. And in the event an antibiotic has to be used, that animal can't be put into food production until a withdrawal period has been realized. That's the law."

The Harrelsons said fighting these misconceptions is often tiring but noted that passing on correct information and the proper care of animals to their students will in turn see those students pass on the correct information, as well.

"It will hopefully create a chain reaction and we're hoping to reach more and more people through the students who will spread this information," said Patricia.



From left to right: MSU's Joe Fraley, Patricia Harrelson and Flint Harrelson.

In today's environment, advocacy becomes as much a part of animal agriculture and raising and caring for them along with discovering the right career choice.

Both Flint and Patricia see themselves as advocates for agriculture and find themselves more and more having to teach their students about being good advocates. But at the end of the day, the two care about the animals they are teaching their students about and they are passing that along in hopes of more and more people getting a better understanding about the animal side of agriculture.

A real farm experience

MSU Farm Manager Joe Fraley oversees the operations at both of the school's farming facilities; the Derrickson Agricultural Complex and Browning Orchard, which is near Flemingsburg.

He is involved on a daily basis with the students who are required to work on the farm a few hours each week as part of their degree program.

"This is a working farm which allows students to not only get the science side of agriculture but they also see the hands-on side that makes them more employable when they graduate," he said. "For some of the students, this is new to them but they are excited to learn new things."

Fraley added that by being there on the farm, these students are getting a better idea of what animal agriculture is all about working with the Angus cattle, cross bred hogs, cross-bred sheep and horses which are located at the facility.

"It's extremely important to educate our young people on how to handle these animals in a professional and appropriate manner," he said. "One of the goals we have with students, especially with those who have not been around farm animals, is to make sure they don't have any misconceptions about how livestock is raised and to raise the best product we can whether its plant or animal and taking care of it correctly is the most important part."

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• Weighs 105 lbs.

SAVE \$90

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

16 OZ. HAMMERS WITH FIBERGLASS HANDLE

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60715/60714

ITEM 47873 shown
69005/61262

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CENTRAL PNEUMATIC **SUPER COUPON**

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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61693/62803
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SAVE \$286

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29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED HIGH SPEED STEEL DRILL BIT SET

ITEM 62281
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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS **SUPER COUPON**

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ITEM 69606/61173
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SAVE \$130

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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ITEM 61888/68885 shown

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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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Customer Rating ★★★★★

ITEM 69594/69555
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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



BOURBON COUNTY

Congressman Barr and the Bourbon County co-directors pose at the Bourbon County Annual meeting. At left, Fritz Giesecke speaks at the Bourbon County Farm Bureau annual meeting.



BOYD COUNTY

Boyd County President Ray Sammons presented Boyd County FFA officers with a check to pay for the chapters student dues.



BOYLE COUNTY

Members of the Boyle County Farm Bureau Women's Committee purchased 22 Angel Tree Dinners for families in Boyle County. Members in the photo are, from left to right, Katie Tiller, Terry Gilbert, Teresa Goggin, Jennifer Little and Hannah Nunn



BREATHITT CO.

The Breathitt County Women's committee supported the Breathitt County High School FFA in their Halloween Farm Day. On October 26, the Breathitt Co FFA hosted a farm day for the 2nd and 3rd graders in the Breathitt Co. school district. The FFA students prepared presentations on various agriculture-related topics such as poultry, dairy, plants, seeds, and various farm animals with handouts and activities. They also dressed up in costumes related to their topics. The second and third graders got to go through a haunted house and have story time while at the farm day. Rhea Price, Breathitt Co. Women's Chair, helped throughout the day and donated farm-related coloring books with crayons. It was a great program for all the students involved. The Breathitt County Women's committee is committed to promoting agriculture activities in the schools for students of all ages.



CHRISTIAN COUNTY

Christian County Farm Bureau South Agent Brian Harton was able to check an item off his personal "bucket list" as he played in the HHS vs. CCHS alumni football game at the Stadium of Champions. A 1976 graduate of Hopkinsville High School, and one of the oldest players on the field at age 58, he was able to fulfill the dream of playing "just one more game" after 40 years. With several family members in attendance, an HHS victory, and no major injuries suffered, Mr. Harton called the game "one of the best experiences of my life."

The "Community Bowl," as the game was dubbed, benefitted two local high school football programs, with over \$3000 going to both the HHS and CCHS teams. The game also featured alumni cheerleading squads, a performance by the alumni bands, and a salute to our troops at Ft. Campbell.



GALLATIN COUNTY

Participants in the Gallatin County Membership Appreciation function held in October.

BOONE COUNTY

Boone County Farm Bureau awarded director emeritus status to three directors at their Christmas Meeting December 15. Those who received this status were Bill Graves, Clifford Scott (whose son, John, accepted), and Ben Grant. The awards were presented by president Bob Schwenke.





GREENUP COUNTY

Greenup County's 2016 Farmers Wife of the Year Elizabeth Mann poses with past Farmer Wife Pam



HARLAN COUNTY

The Kentucky Farm Bureau District II Outstanding Youth Contest and Variety Show was held at the Perry County Library in Hazard, Ky. Harlan High School seniors Xio-mei Zheng and Ethan Morton took first place in speech portions of the contest, while Harlan County High School sophomore Brooklyn Collins captured first place in the Variety Show field.



JOHNSON COUNTY

Johnson County Farm Bureau's member sign up event.



HENRY COUNTY

Henry County FB meeting with Congressman Thomas Massie at the Henry County Extension Office.



KENTON COUNTY

Kenton County FB Board hosted Senator Damon Thayer at their annual meeting. Pictured in the front row from left to right are Chris Back, president, Sen. Thayer, and Clyde Cunningham agency manager.



SHELBY COUNTY

President Williams is seen with the Young, Young Farmers Committee. We have a bright future for the next 50 years!

LEWIS COUNTY

Lewis County FB Board Member Billy Simpson celebrated his 90th birthday with an engraved U.K. watch presented by the board on which he has served for 68 years. He returned from service in the U.S. Navy in 1946 and became a board member in 1948.



MARTIN CO.

Martin County Farm Bureau participated in the local community Trunk or Treat event. Around 1,200 children and parents attended.



MERCER COUNTY

Mercer County Farm Bureau donated \$3,000 to the Kendyl & Friends Playground. This playground, for special needs children, is named after Kendyl Claycomb who contracted meningitis when she was less than 1 month old. Her mother Crimson wanted her to be able to play just like all other children but the closest special needs playground is in Pikeville, K. Crimson applied for a grant for playground equipment and was awarded over \$36,000 in playground equipment, but the stipulation was that she had to have the money for the rest of it which was almost \$250,000 by the end of 2016 or the grant would be rescinded and the price would go up for the rest of the equipment. The city of Harrodsburg along with local businesses and people came together and either donated money or had chili suppers, yard sales etc. to raise the rest of the money.



MERCER COUNTY

Mercer County Farm Bureau Women's Committee grew and sold pinkish pumpkins to raise funds for the Freear's Hope Foundation at the Commonwealth Cancer Center in Danville. This foundation helps patients with rent, food, lodging, utilities, etc. They donated over \$1,850. Pictured from left to right are Joni Horn, Women's Chair, Amber Ashford, Director of the Freear's Hope Foundation and Cheryl Bolling, Director of Education and Resources, Commonwealth Cancer Center.



OWEN COUNTY

Kyle Kelly from the Owen County Farm Bureau poses with Congressman Thomas Massie at the Henry County Extension Office.



PULASHI COUNTY

KY Farm Bureau Insurance employees at the John Van-Hook Agency in Somerset decorated the office Christmas tree in Farm Bureau blue.

Markets

BEEF PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS TO INCREASE

Commercial beef production for 2016 is estimated by USDA at 25.225 billion pounds, up about six percent from 2015. This is due to a combination of increased slaughter and slightly higher dressed weights. Federally inspected cattle dressed weights averaged 843 pounds in November. Average dressed weights have increased every year for the last five years, and since 2011, have been up more than nine percent. USDA forecasts 2017 beef production at 25.955 billion pounds, up 2.9 percent from last year.

Given increased production of beef, and its main competitors, pork (+5%) and broilers (+3%), it's no surprise that USDA forecasts lower 2017 cattle prices. For the 5-area Direct Choice Steer price, USDA expects an average between \$106 and \$113 per cwt, down from the 2016 average price of \$120.86. Compared to an average \$142.82 per cwt in 2016, USDA forecasts Oklahoma City Feeder Steers to average \$134-141 per cwt this year. Cutter cow prices have fallen sharply since 2015, averaging only \$70.07 per cwt in 2016. USDA forecasts cutter cow prices to average \$62-69 in 2017.

Bigger domestic supplies and lower prices encourage exports and can slow imports. Beef exports for 2016

are expected at 2.519 billion pounds, up about 11 percent from 2015; exports for 2017 are forecast at 2.64 billion pounds, up another five percent. U.S. beef imports dropped 12 percent in 2016 and are forecast to decline another ten percent this year to 2.70 billion pounds. If forecasts are realized, the beef balance of trade is nearly zero – in terms of volume, not value, since the U.S. exports higher-valued product.

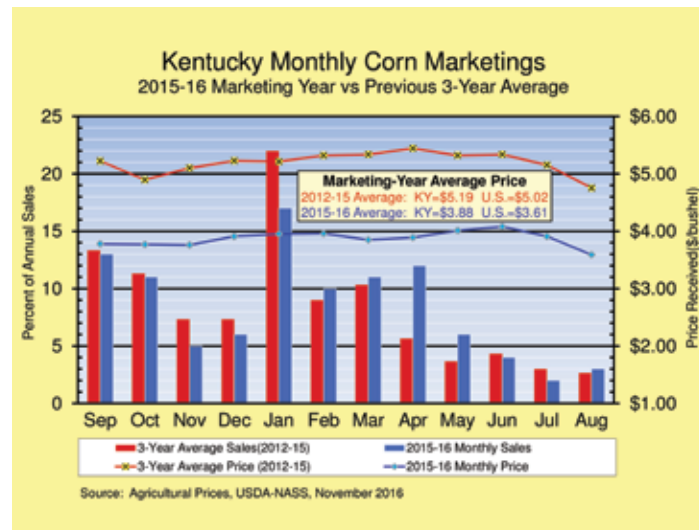
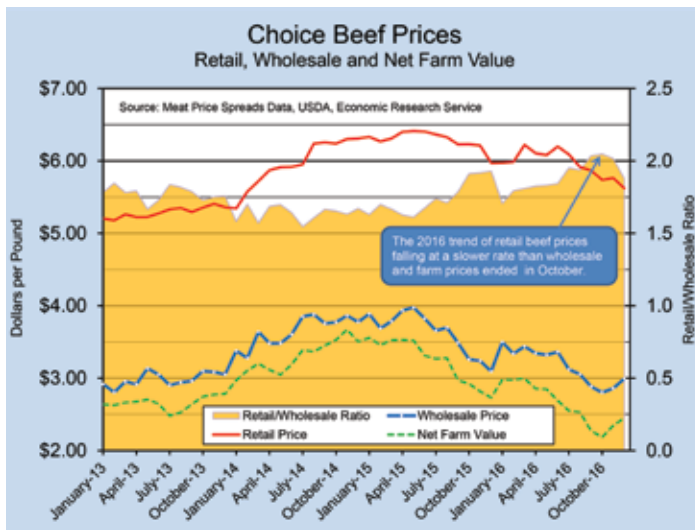
KENTUCKY LOCAL FOOD SALES TOTALED \$65 MILLION

In its first-ever nationwide Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) found that in 2015, Kentucky had 3,227 farms with direct farm sales of food, including value-added products, bring in a combined \$65,430,475. The survey was designed to collect data related to the marketing of foods directly from farms and produce official benchmark data on the local food sector in the United States. Direct farm sales of food (crops and livestock raised on Kentucky farms) included \$45.0 million of value-added products and \$20.4 million of fresh products. Of the total direct sales, \$35.0 million, or 53.5 percent, was sold directly to consumers; this includes farmers markets, onsite farm stores, online sales, CSA arrangements, pick-

your-own operations, mobile markets and roadside stands. Kentucky Farm Bureau's Certified Roadside Farm Market Program helps members sell food and products to local consumers.

SOYBEANS SET RECORD YIELD, PRODUCTION AND 1ST-QTR USE

Although USDA trimmed its average yield and production estimates in the January Crop Production –2016 Summary Report, the 2016 U.S. soybean crop is still a record-large 4.307 billion bushels with a record average yield of 52.1 bushels per acre on a record-setting 82.7 million harvested acres. In USDA's latest Grain Stocks report, U.S. soybean stocks on December 1, 2016 totaled 2.895 billion bushels -- an all-time high for December which tops last year's former record of 2.714 billion. The 2016/17 marketing year began with total supplies of 4.533 billion bushels, or 393 million more than 2015/16. December soybean stocks increased only 181 million bushels year/year thanks to record use of 1.614 billion bushels of soybeans in the first quarter of 2016/17. For September-November 2016, cumulative soybean exports totaled a record 932.5 million bushels -- 141 million ahead of last season's pace. Similarly, the domestic soybean crush for the first quarter totaled an all-time high 484.9 million bushels.



Down the Backroads

By Carilynn Coombs

For anyone who thinks wintertime is the off-season for farming, they are likely one of the 98 percent of the population who does not farm. Granted, most crops, with the exception of winter wheat and winter cover crops, are obviously not grown but for livestock producers, there is probably not a busier time than during these long winter months.

As dairy farmers, for instance, we don't have an off-season and the cold months come with their own supply of problems, namely keeping the farmer warm, cows comfortable and water running. That is a challenge at 5:00 a.m. when temperatures can be well below freezing.

Other livestock producers are in the same boat in trying to keep water supplies unfrozen and plenty of hay out for food. Our animals are the source of our livelihood, however, we have been given the duty to treat them with the respect they deserve. We spend countless nights checking on calving cows, keeping sick calves warm, and ensuring every animal on our farm is safe from the elements.

For horse owners, keeping ample shelter available along with blankets for certain breeds during those extra cold spells is something they must be diligent in supplying to assure their animals are safe throughout the winter season. Many cattle producers also provide available shelter for their animals, especially their calves.

Even if you don't have livestock, winter can still be very busy. Most farmers use this time to make sure their equipment is in top shape for the coming planting season. It's also a time when meetings and educational seminars are going on. The agriculture industry changes like everything else, especially when it comes to technology so keeping up on the latest and greatest is essential.

And winter wouldn't be the same without the National Farm Machinery Show; a place farmer can see the newest in farm equipment, sit in on

various informative sessions and see the best tractor pull in the world! Hey, we have to have a little relaxation.

Winter can also be a beautiful time on the farm with scenic snowfalls and frosty morning sunrises. The air is cleaner, the sky is bluer and there is a calmness that can only be felt on a clear winter's morning on the farm. Not to mention, the longer the ground is frozen the longer we can keep from tracking in the mud!

For farmers, our work is never truly finished, no matter the time of year, and each season brings its share of hardships as well as its times of successes and contentment. I can't imagine living in a place that had no changes in the seasons.

That's just one more reason Kentucky is unique as we travel *down the backroads*.

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Understanding the Farm Bill:

And why it's important to everyone

A healthy export market is highly important to all U.S. industries and agriculture is no exception. Agricultural exports from this country are expected to be in the \$127 billion range for 2016 and higher in 2017 at a projected \$133 billion. These dollars are critical to the operations of producers across the country including Kentucky farmers who benefit greatly from their export markets.

University of Kentucky Agricultural Economist Will Snell said while state ag exports are generally around the middle of the pack, Kentucky is one of the most ag trade dependent states in the U.S. given the unique combination of export products which includes not only horses, tobacco, grains, and

livestock products, but also value-added items such as bourbon, timber, and ethanol.

"In recent years, ag exports from Kentucky have accounted for more than 40 percent of the Commonwealth's agricultural sales," he said. "In addition, several Kentucky agribusinesses are involved in international marketing. The USDA claims that 17,400 Kentucky jobs are related to agricultural exports."

Snell added that, similar to U.S. ag export trends, Kentucky agriculture exports have more than doubled since 2000, reaching a record high of \$2.5 billion in 2014. That number has decline slightly since then but still USDA data indicates that Kentucky ag exports totaled \$2.1 billion in 2015.

Much of the trade discussions that have been taking place in Washington are connected to multi-national agreements between several countries that basically write the rules for trade between the participants.

As discussions related to the Farm Bill begin and continue, the Trade Title contained within the legislation holds importance to producers, as well, even though it represents less than one percent of the bill's total funding and is completely different than trade agreements.

To put it simplistically, a trade agreement would write the rules while the Trade Title would help move the products along through the export pipeline according to current or future regulations.

"In recent years, ag exports from Kentucky have accounted for more than 40 percent of the Commonwealth's agricultural sales,"

-Will Snell
University of Kentucky Agricultural Economist

Much of the Farm Bill Trade Title is primarily devoted to international food aid, and ag export promotion and credit programs. But Snell contends that utilization of some of the trade promotion programs within the Farm Bill continue to benefit not only the state's farmers, but also its rural communities.

"Kentucky agriculture has had great success with selling our farm products with the Kentucky Proud program. But a much greater opportunity is present internationally," he said. "World consumers view many of our Kentucky ag products (such as) our horses, bourbon and tobacco as the best worldwide."

The broader public purpose

David Salmonsens, Senior Director of Congressional Relations with the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) said the Trade Title contains provisions to help move agriculture products from the U.S. to other parts of the world through several programs such as the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development Program (FMDP).

"Those programs really help to promote U.S. agriculture into overseas markets," he said. "And the programs operate basically through grants that are distributed to a variety of companies and ag trade associations, state departments of agriculture and markets that run export programs to help get ag and food products exported."

There is also a program in this title known as the Export Credit Guarantee Program which is run by the USDA and provides credit guarantees to help encourage financing of commercial exports of U.S. products such as bulk commodities like grains mainly to developing countries.

"They're low cost loans to help other countries buy U.S. agricultural products," said Salmonsens.

He noted that these programs contained in the Trade Title are constant and always re-authorized in each of the farm bills helping to move these ag products all the time.

"These are some of the bedrock programs for agricultural exporters and export promotion," said Salmonsens.

For those outside of the agriculture industry, the importance of exporting agricultural goods affects other industries here including trucking, railroad and shipping port industries.

"There are all those jobs and jobs associated with processing, packaging and other businesses we don't associate with agriculture like insurance and banking," he said. "There is a whole group of associated jobs and industries that are dependent on moving goods around with agriculture being a part of that."

In essence, the Trade Title programs support many parts of the economy beyond the farm, concluded Salmonsens.

Kentucky Farm Bureau President Mark Haney, who also serves on the AFBF's Executive Committee, said international trade is critical to agriculture from the local family farm level up.

"While we move closer to discussions on a new Farm Bill and we continue to support international trade, it's important to remember how significant continued foreign market growth is to our rural communities, the backbone of our economy," he said. "And while trade is vital for most other industries, agriculture is the one that directly affects everyone, everywhere, without exception."

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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU

The 2017 Young Farmer Winter Leadership Conference

This year's Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Young Farmer (YF) Winter Leadership Conference brought nearly 400 participants from a record 67 counties to Northern Kentucky for two days of learning and listening opportunities offered as part of this annual outing.

The conference is designed to better enable young farmers to effectively advocate for Kentucky agriculture as they expand county Farm Bureau programs and activities. Attendees also benefitted from a series of informative and interactive workshops including farm business management,

farm safety, estate planning, agricultural advocacy and industry updates.

There were several speakers who presented a variety of subjects to help young farmers navigate through the issues facing the industry and to gain inspiration including an update on state and national matters.

Scott Christmas, director of KFB's Young Farmer and Women's Programs

said inspiring and encouraging a new generation of farm families is vital to the industry and the organization.

"These farm families are carrying on a tradition in agriculture that dates back to the founding of our country and are in charge of feeding the world for decades to come," he said. "Their significance cannot be overstated and doing all we can to help them succeed

is very important at Farm Bureau."

KFB leadership was on hand during the meeting, all addressing the group and emphasizing the benefits of being strong advocates and taking the initiative to try new things and "think outside of the box."

KFB President Mark Haney said he would like for these young farmers to think of ways to increase participation in their counties and districts.

"If we are going to be effective in the Young Farmer program, we're going to do it at the county level," he said. "I challenged the committee members to be active locally and it will increase participation in the program and in these statewide meetings."

The 2017 State Young Farmer Committee Chair Zack Ison, of Mercer County, said his involvement in the program has helped introduce him to people and ideas that may not have happened had he not been involved.

"The Young Farmer program has helped me to learn and grow as a person. There are many opportunities

that enable us to take skills learned in areas such as finances and leadership back to the farm," he said.

Ison, who serves as his county Farm Bureau president, added that workshops like the ones held during this year's winter gathering also help young farmers acquire ideas about diversification and advocacy for agriculture.

"I hope these meetings give young farmers a little spark to try something new as they return to their farming operations; something that may encourage them and help their farms continue to be successful," he said.

Today's young farm families are looking at many challenges ahead such as financial issues, a volatile market environment and a public misinformed about farming.

The YF program is working to help this generation build and utilize the skills they need to combat these issues and keep agriculture a vibrant industry for generations to come through events like their winter meeting and other learning opportunities offered throughout the year.



Nearly 400 participants came to Covington to take part in this year's YF Winter Leadership Conference



Conference attendees filled many of the breakout session rooms to hear about a variety of subjects.



State Young Farmer Committee Chair Zack Ison

CANDID CONVERSATIONS

The growing concern over farm labor

KFB Candid Conversations presents a discussion about the topical issues facing the agricultural industry in a question and answer format with a member of Kentucky's agricultural community. In this column, the issue of farm labor and the current guest worker program is discussed with Larry Clark, a farmer from Green County and Kentucky Farm Bureau Director. He grows about 165 acres of burley tobacco each year. Kentucky, as is the case in most states, relies heavily on immigrant labor to ensure adequate and timely production for many different crops.

In addition to Clark, American Farm Bureau Federation's Kristi Boswell, Director of Congressional Relations discusses farm labor issues from a national perspective.

Larry Clark

From your experiences, how important is the migrant worker to agriculture in this state?

The migrant worker is one of, if not the most important asset to Kentucky agriculture. Migrant workers fill a void in the agriculture workforce and without them, many forms of agriculture in Kentucky would be handicapped as we have no access to local workers willing to do the task. I have had H2A workers for about 10 years and I don't know if I would try a crop without them. But I've always raised it and it doesn't feel right if we don't have a tobacco crop.

What are your thoughts about the current H2A Guest Worker program used to gain access to an adequate workforce?

H2A is the only way we have to access a workforce in agriculture however, changes need to be made to the program. H2A has been around for years but has always presented a problem to farmers because of the complicated paper work and



requirements of the program. It is so complex that many producers have stayed away and taken their chances on finding enough local labor during times when they need them the most. Some of these regulations, which don't make common sense, just need to go away. For instance, in many cases we need more workers for a shorter period of time than what is allowed. And we are required by law to advertise these jobs to our domestic workforce first but they never apply.

What are some of the problems or successes, you're familiar with, that have been experienced by those using the current system regulating guest workers?

In addition to the paperwork being too burdensome, many producers have

not been getting workers in a timely manner. This is critical to those who grow fruits and vegetables, for instance, where timing is especially important at harvest time. Another issue is the Adverse Effect Wage Rate that is an artificially high wage rate for the jobs being performed that workers are not asking for. This rate, which differs from state to state and often from county to county, is adjusted by the Department of Labor and is based on wages paid in the area for similar work, not by any request made from a worker. This, in my opinion is partly due to the regulations being policed by an agency that has unrealistic expectations of employers. But I will say this about the program, it allows farmers access to a workforce that they would not have otherwise and that is really the bottom line. The H2A program not only



fills the jobs with workers, but reliable workers who will tackle the task at hand working alongside us and our families on Kentucky family farms. We usually have the same workers each year. The guys I started out with, I still have some of them come each year. They are hard workers and do a good job.

Do you think the USDA is a better agency to regulate agriculture worker programs as opposed to the Labor Cabinet which currently oversees the H2A program?

I think the H2A program would be better out of the Department of Labor's control. The USDA, which is familiar with individual farmers and their needs, is a better choice for regulation of the H2A program. I also think that employers of H2A workers need to be part of an oversight committee allowing the program the ability to grow while looking after the best interest of employees and employers alike.

Kristi Boswell

In previous immigration legislation proposals, migrant agriculture worker regulations were included. Do you think any future immigration bill will contain such regulations?

Immigration reform has been on the forefront of discussions not only in agriculture but in the political sphere for years. The system is broken and farmers deal with that day-in and day-out in trying to find access to a legal and stable workforce. We at Farm Bureau advocate to members of Congress the

need for agricultural labor reform in any responsible immigration package. Whether that is one piece of legislation or multiple pieces of legislation, one of the elements of any broad immigration reform must include agricultural labor.

What, do you think, are the chances an immigration bill will be introduced with a new administration?

I think there will be a window of interest in addressing immigration reform. We're doing all we can to build the case substantively with the work I am doing with the members of Congress but also using our grass roots and explaining our need for immigration reform and problems farmers are having with the H2A program so we're ready when the window opens.

Is there a possibility of moving agency oversight of the H2A program from the Labor Cabinet to the USDA?

Farm Bureau policy calls for a new visa program. The H2A program is such

a cumbersome program; it is costly and farmers are turning to it because there is no domestic workforce that is available. It is such a bureaucratic nightmare, frankly, for those that are using it and we need a more flexible option. One thing that Farm Bureau policy calls for in that regard is the administration of any new visa program be administered by the Department of Agriculture. This is something that has broad support and has actually existed in different pieces of legislation that have been drafted. So I'm comfortable and confident that it will be an element of any new program.

What would you say to farmers who have become frustrated with the current guest worker program?

There is instability throughout the country and those who are not using the H2A program can't find their local workers. They have turned to H2A and the result is spike of H2A usage. Right under 10 percent of our workforce is within the H2A program and the Department of Labor just doesn't have the bandwidth to address that need. So we see a lot of delays. We have had growers in at least 25 states contact AFBF when their workers were delayed usually for one to two days and up to five weeks or longer. Those delays with perishable commodities cause significant crop loss. Farmers just want to operate their business and do the right thing. The best advice I can give them is to continue to advocate and get their members of Congress on their farm. We need to impress upon legislators how critical this is to the success of the industry overall but more importantly to these individual farms.

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Fourth Quarter Marketbasket Survey Shows a Slight Decline in Food Prices

Fourth quarter results of the latest Kentucky Farm Bureau Marketbasket Survey indicated a slight decrease in surveyed food prices and marked declines in three of the four quarters of 2016. With the exception of last year's second quarter, price declines indicated by the survey have been realized over the last two years.

These prices, which represent the average total cost of 40 basic grocery items included in the survey, declined by .87 percent or \$1.02. The total cost of the 40 items was \$117.49. During this same period last year, the total price for these same items stood at \$119.43.

The largest decline, percentage wise, came by way of the grains category which dropped by 5.52 percent; followed by fruits and vegetables, which declined

by 4.89 percent; poultry, which dropped by 3.02 percent; and dairy, which saw prices fall by 2.14 percent.

Beef products increased slightly by .45 percent while pork prices increased by 6.41 percent, the largest percentage change in all of the food categories.

The fall in prices mirrors what is happening nationally to food prices, although most of the declines are relatively small.

According to the latest information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index noted, "The food at home index declined 2.2 percent over the past year, (unchanged from last month's figures) with all six of the major grocery store food group indexes falling. The index for meats, poultry, fish, and eggs posted the largest decline over the

span, decreasing 6.0 percent."

Shoppers in the U.S. spend only about 10 percent of their disposable income on food each year. Those costs remain far lower than any other country in the world thanks to many of the agricultural efficiencies utilized in America. Today the average U.S. farmer produces enough food and fiber to provide for about 154 people – a significant jump from an average of 19 people per farmer back in 1940.

Yet while more food is now being produced on less land, the farmer's share of the retail food dollar in America is down. According to the USDA's Food Dollar Series, a farmer earns less than 17 cents per dollar spent on food, down significantly from the 31 cents earned in 1980.

KFB's Advocacy for Improved Water Resource Management Moves Forward

In a year that went from wetter-than-normal conditions for most of the spring and summer to a very dry period in the fall, state farmers got a lesson in meteorology in 2016 seeing how quickly the weather can change. That trend seems to be continuing into 2017 and with a wet start to the New Year, close attention will need to be paid to the forecasts for the coming planting season.

These shifting conditions come at a time when the subject of water has been at the top of many discussions. The creation of a water resource management program was one of the priority issues adopted by the Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Board of Directors for 2016.

The advocacy for such a program turned to reality during the 2016 General Assembly Session with passage of HB 529 creating the Kentucky Water Resources Board (KWRB) which is administered by the Energy and Environment Cabinet. The board will assist the cabinet in conducting research and developing recommendations to enhance the quality and quantity of water resources accessible for agricultural production in the state.

KFB's Water Management Working Group (WMWG) played a major role in getting that legislation recommended and passed, doing so with no opposition in either chamber of the state legislature.

Steve Coleman, chair of the WMWG, retired Director of the Kentucky Division of Conservation and KWRB member said the drought conditions experienced last fall are a good example of why handling water resource issues in a proactive way will be good for all Kentuckians.

"The last fall was not the worst time

for a drought to occur for our farmers and thankfully, our growing season was over, with the exception of winter wheat and cover crops. But conditions can change quickly and being in front of issues is much better than trying to react to a tough situation related to water needs," he said.

Coleman added that the KWRB will be involved with multiple agencies and tracking any water situations to the point of making recommendations to the Governor's Office, when necessary.

"Verses being reactive to a situation, we've now had a number of months of planning and there are a number of recommendations of how farmers can implement water harvesting practices," Coleman said regarding the creation of the KWRB. "Those things are beginning to take shape and as we talk about issues such as a drought mitigation plan, people are around the table with good ideas and a network ready to help out and jump into action."

KFB President Mark Haney said while the issue of water is ever-present on the minds of farmers, it is also a subject that can bring together the agriculture community and their urban neighbors.

"Just like agriculture, water is something that affects all of us in one way or another. We need both to survive and being proactive about issues related to our water supplies helps to alleviate any differences that might

occur in times of a drought or another type of water crisis," he said. "The work of the WMWG has been invaluable in helping Kentucky lead the way in water resources development and I can't say enough about the support this issue has received from our General Assembly members who recognized the need to

"Just like agriculture, water is something that affects all of us in one way or another. We need both to survive and being proactive about issues related to our water supplies helps to alleviate any differences that might occur in times of a drought or another type of water crisis

-Mark Haney
KFB President

pass water resources legislation. We thank them all."

Navigating weather events

In addition to all the proactive steps being taken in this state to help combat any issues caused by drought or other water related situations, some help from Mother Nature is always welcome.

Matt Dixon, an agriculture meteorologist at the University of Kentucky (UK) College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, said while the state experienced below normal levels of moisture last fall, the longer term forecasts did indicate some help was on the way. Those forecasts have proved to be accurate.

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Executive Director
Working for Kentucky's Dairy Farmers

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According to information from the Kentucky Mesonet, since the beginning of last December, Kentucky has received approximately 7.5 to eight inches of precipitation depending on location.

The Mesonet is a collection of automated weather and climate monitoring stations developed and overseen by the Kentucky Climate Center (KCC) at Western Kentucky University and located across the state.

KCC Director Stuart Foster said the swings in weather over the past year could possibly be described as unprecedented.

“Last summer was one of the wettest summers on record. Statewide, July and August were the wettest July and August on record,” he said. *“Then we went from a very wet summer into one of the driest falls on record. Either one is a noteworthy event but to go from one of wettest to one of the driest is truly remarkable.”*

Some of the driest areas of the state last fall were located in the southeastern and southcentral portions of Kentucky which were designated at that time to be at extreme drought levels.

The current U.S. Drought Monitor information however shows that Kentucky is completely out of any dry conditions with the exception of a couple of small areas in the southwestern and south eastern portions of the state.

Sudden drought affected the economy

When weather conditions change quickly, be it too wet or too dry, impacts can be long-lasting. Perhaps the biggest problem faced last fall was associated with forest fires not only in Kentucky but throughout much of the Southeast.

According to information from the UK, the Kentucky Division of Forestry estimates that, as of Nov. 22, more than 46,000 acres of woodlands had burned in southeastern Kentucky since Oct. 27. These burned-over areas will also be susceptible to higher erosion rates as a result of the loss of vegetative cover to protect the soil.

These losses are not only having an impact from an ecological standpoint but economically, as well.

Jeff Stringer, extension professor of silviculture in the UK Department of

Forestry said wildfires have resulted in a \$1.1 million loss in timber potential in Eastern Kentucky, and this figure is mounting.

“Unfortunately, this loss stays with us, as new timber does not grow overnight. It can take 50 to 70 years, at the very best, to regrow the volume and quality lost on these acres,” he said.

Stringer noted that in 2015, revenues from timber harvests, primary industries such as logging and milling and secondary industries that use lumber and other primary products in manufacturing added \$14.6 billion in direct, indirect and induced revenue to the state’s economy.

KFB advocacy at national level

In looking toward improving Kentucky’s water resources, the work of the WMWG has proven to be productive. KFB’s Executive Committee visited Washington, D. C. last December to meet with the state’s Congressional delegation and update them on the efforts being made in Kentucky on behalf of water development issues.

KFB Executive Vice-President

David S. Beck said the meetings with Congressional members presented an opportunity to inform them individually of the progress being made in Kentucky regarding water management and emphasize the importance of federal support in moving forward.

“In dealing with water issues, it really is a partnership at both the state and federal levels. The timing is right to be proactive in doing things collectively and to establish projects enabling farmers to see firsthand the opportunities in capturing water to use on the farm and alleviate some of the pressures between rural and urban communities on water demands,” he said.

Beck also pointed out that good water management can mean the opportunity to grow the economy in that decisions made by other businesses and industries to stay or relocate to the state could often depend on the availability of ample water supplies.

The Washington trip also gave KFB leadership the chance to present to each of the Kentucky lawmakers a copy of the organization’s priority issues for 2017, which includes water resources.




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