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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS
Volume 19 | No. 6
August 2020

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Cover photo by Tim Thornberry
Winter wheat harvest in Hardin County.

Kentucky Farm Bureau News is published ten times per year. Combined issues for December-January and June-July are sent to all members. The remaining eight issues go to regular members. Bulk postage rate paid at Lebanon Junction, Ky. Changes in address should be mailed to KFB Communications Division, PO Box 20700, Louisville, Ky. 40250.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Whenever I have been asked to describe what Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) is about or how it operates, I always begin with one word: "grassroots."

If you have been around this organization as long as I have, that word comes up often and we never want to lose sight of how important it really is.

The foundation of this organization was built on the premise that county leaders and volunteers would serve as the catalyst that moves us forward as the Voice of Kentucky Agriculture.

And the priorities this organization advocates for each year start at this local level.

County Farm Bureaus are now beginning to have or schedule their local annual meetings. Doing so is in their by-laws and is something that must occur. But it is really more than just fulfilling an obligation. It's about coming together, as a local organization, to voice your opinions on policy matters, elect your local leadership, and continue a tradition that dates back generations.

But COVID-19 has made us all change our ways of doing things, especially when it comes to meetings of any kind.

I must admit, when this pandemic hit, forcing us to work remotely, I was a little worried about how it might go. But with the help of so many people who have assisted with our technological needs, and those who have been willing to step out of the box and do things differently, we haven't missed a beat. Our meetings have taken place virtually, our advocacy efforts have continued, and our desire to serve the agriculture industry and our membership has done nothing but grow.

It has taken some time to get into a rhythm of operating in this manner, along with quite a bit of patience, but we have moved forward in a very successful way.

The county annual meetings that are taking place now and throughout the next several weeks and months are critical to our mission as an organization.

We may have to conduct them in a different way, but don't let that diminish their importance. We encourage you to continue to hold your meetings in accordance to local, state and federal safety guidelines. However, just because the world around us is in a state of uncertainty, it doesn't lessen our desire and the need to serve an industry that is vital to every man, woman and child.

KFB is committed to our advocacy efforts. Through good times and tough situations, our local leaders have continued this long-standing tradition, and we are not about to stop now.

If you have already held your annual meeting, we commend you and thank you for moving forward. If you are still in the planning stage, we encourage you to be involved and see this time as one of opportunity to continue to build upon this organization's foundation.

Together we have done great things for agriculture, for our rural communities, and for this state. And we will continue to do so preserving our grassroots heritage as we look toward our future.

Mark Haney, President

Kentucky Farm Bureau

2020 County Annual Meetings

All times are local. COVID-19 rules apply. Please follow CDC guidelines.

All times, locations and dates are subject to change. Please contact your local Farm Bureau for more information.

Adair County

September 15, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Adair County Farm Bureau
North Agency
No food will be served

Allen County

September 22, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Location TBD
Business meeting only

Bath County

September 21, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Bath County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Bell County

September 24, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Bell County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Boone County

September 8, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Boone County Farm Bureau office,
Burlington
Business meeting only (regular
members only)
No food will be served
Members please RSVP

Boyd County

October 12, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Boyd County Fair Building

Breathitt County

August 27, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Breathitt County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Carter County

September 1, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Carter County Farm Bureau office
No food served and no door prizes

Calloway County

September 1, 2020, 7:30 p.m.
Calloway County Farm Bureau
Board Room
1702 Hwy 121 Bypass, Murray

Campbell County

September 1, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Campbell County Farm Bureau
Alexandria office
Business meeting only
No food will be served

Casey County

October 5, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Casey County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Christian County

September 14, 2020, 8:00 p.m.
Christian County Farm Bureau office
– South Location
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes
Drive thru from 8:00 a.m. till 8:00
p.m. to pick up ballot and vote for
Board of Directors, by-law changes,
and resolutions at 250 Burley Avenue

Clark County

September 3, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Clark County Farm Bureau office,
115 Highland Street, basement
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Clinton County

September 3, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Clinton County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Crittenden County

September 1, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Crittenden County Farm
Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Elliott County

August 18, 2020, 5:00 p.m.
Elliott County Farm Bureau office
No food served and no door prizes

Estill County

August 24, 2020, 2:00 p.m.
Estill County Farm Bureau office
parking lot
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Fleming County

August 10, 2020, 8:00 p.m.
Fleming County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food will be served

Garrard County

September 3, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Garrard County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no entertainment

Grant County

September 11, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Alpine Hills Dairy Farm

Hancock County

September 10, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Hancock County Fairgrounds
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Harlan County

September 19, 2020, noon
Pine Mountain Settlement School

Harrison County

September 10, 2020, 8:00 p.m.
McCauley Building HC Fairgrounds
Business meeting only
No food served

Hart County

September 10, 2020, 2:00 p.m.
Hart County Fair Grounds
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Henderson County

August 6, 2020, 6:00 p.m.,
(OUTDOORS) Farm Bureau office,
3351 Zion Road, Henderson
Business meeting only

Henry County

October 8, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Henry County Farm Bureau office

Hopkins County

August 3, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Hopkins County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Kenton County

September 15, 2020, 2:00 p.m.
Kenton County Farm Bureau office
Independence Agency
Business meeting only
No food served
CDC guidelines will be followed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Kentucky Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization dedicated to serving our membership family and their communities. As the Voice of Agriculture, we identify problems, develop solutions, promote economic success, and enhance the quality of life for all.

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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS

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EditorTim Thornberry

Creative Director.....Meredith Davis Woods
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AdvertisingCasey McNeal
..... Times-Citizen Communications
..... 800 798-2691 (ext. 334)

COMMENT COLUMN



During these times of uncertainty, with so many issues to think about, it seems as if many things are overlooked and pushed aside. But one issue that is constantly affecting rural Kentucky on a daily basis is access to dependable rural broadband internet.

Rural connectivity has been an ongoing struggle for many Kentuckians – limiting their access to the rest of the world.

As a young farmer in rural Kentucky, I have had to deal with this problem on countless occasions, from not being able to make or receive calls and text messages, to not having access to check markets or order parts in a pinch.

Without quality rural broadband, our farmers and rural businesses are held back from being the best they can be. Our farm families need to be able to market their goods, as well as order parts and supplies quickly, to keep their operations in motion.

Better rural connectivity would greatly benefit the many farmers using modern technology. In order to be more efficient and improve their operations, they need dependable rural broadband to keep up with the rest of the world.

Our rural businesses also need this access in order to have a reliable source of internet during these changing times.

Solid broadband access would allow those living in rural areas to connect with each other without having to worry about slow connections or internet speeds. Our Kentucky families deserve to be able to have access to quality internet so that they can keep up with what is going on in their own hometowns, our country, and around the world during these trying times.

Certainly, one of the most important reasons our state needs quality rural broadband is for our students and teachers. I have seen this problem firsthand through my wife, who is a high school teacher, when the schools were shut down due to COVID-19.

There are many students in our rural communities that don't have broadband service, making it virtually impossible for them to complete assigned work during this pandemic. This is a problem for all of Kentucky.

We need to do all we can to give these students the quality education they deserve. They will become our future doctors, farmers, lawyers, business leaders, and so much more. Without access to a dependable source of internet, these students are being held back from their full potential.

As a proud member of Kentucky Farm Bureau, I'm glad to know this is a priority for our organization. I am sure that many of us have run into troubles with this before. This is something that will unite us as a state and make it better.

Rural broadband will not only help agriculture and our rural businesses, but most importantly, it will greatly benefit our families and students. One thing that truly makes Kentucky the great place that it is, is our people. Once we are all able to connect as one, our possibilities are endless. As Kentuckians, I know that we can do this, and our future will be even brighter.

John Henning, Chair

KFB Young Farmer Committee

2020 County Annual Meetings

All times are local. COVID-19 rules apply. Please follow CDC guidelines.

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Knox County

September 10, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Knox County Farm Bureau office
in Barbourville
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Laurel County

October 13, 2020, 5:45 p.m.
Laurel County Farm Bureau, London
Agency
No food served and no door prizes

Lawrence County

August 17, 2020, 12:30 p.m.
Lawrence County Extension office
Business meeting only

Lewis County

August 6, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Club Fairgrounds, Tollesboro
Business meeting only

Letcher County

August 24, 2020, 4:00 p.m.
Letcher County Farm Bureau office

Magoffin County

August 19, 2020, 4:30 p.m.
Magoffin County Farm Bureau office

Martin County

September 11, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Martin County Extension Office

Mason County

September 28, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Mason County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food will be served
CDC guidelines will be followed

McCreary County

September 10, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Sandhill 4-H Camp
Business meeting only

Meade County

August 17, 2020, 8:30 a.m.
Meade County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food will be served

Mercer County

September 14, 2020, 4:30 p.m.
Mercer County Farm Bureau Office
Business meeting only
No food served or door prizes

Ohio County

August 18, 2020, 10:00 a.m.
Ohio County Extension office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Oldham County

September 10, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom business meeting only

Perry County

August 15, 2020, noon
Perry County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Pike County

August 20, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Sal's Restaurant in Pikeville

Pulaski County

October 8, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Pulaski County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Rowan County

October 6, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Rowan County Farm Bureau
Federation Board Room
Election of Officers and Directors
No food served and no door prizes

Russell County

September 10, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Russell County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served or door prizes

Spencer County

September 28, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Spencer County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only

Trimble County

August 20, 2020 7:00 p.m.
Trimble County Cooperative
Extension office

Todd County

September 21, 2020, 6:30 p.m.
Todd County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served or giveaways

Union County

August 11, 2020 8:00 p.m.
Union County Farm Bureau office
Business Meeting only

No food served and no door prizes

Wayne County

September 14, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Wayne County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Webster County

August 6, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
Webster County Farm Bureau
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

Whitley County

September 1, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Whitley County Farm Bureau office
Business meeting only
No food served and no door prizes

McLean County

August 27, 2020,
5:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
Myer Creek Park Pavilion
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MOVING FORWARD WITH RURAL BROADBAND INITIATIVES

Kentucky Farm Bureau continues its push for adequate broadband service to the last mile

The need for adequate broadband service has perhaps never been more apparent than it is now, but that need pre-dates COVID-19, and will likely still be around once the virus is contained.

Initiatives are moving forward, however, and will continue to do so, as long as it takes, said Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) President Mark Haney.

"The demand for connectivity has increased to the point that it has become a necessity for most of us whether we are running the farm, operating a rural business, or going to school," he said. "We simply have to have broadband service available to everyone, no matter where they live but especially to those rural areas, many of which are underserved."

Haney recently participated in an online panel discussion dedicated to the subject. The Prichard Committee, a private, non-partisan education advocacy organization, hosted the meeting which included guests from several sectors including technology, economic development, as well as education.

He told the panel that advocating for rural broadband has been on KFB's legislative agenda for a decade and will continue to be a priority as the organization moves forward on this issue.

"One of the most important things to us at Kentucky Farm Bureau is rural development," he said. "We know that our rural communities have to have connectivity. We have to be able to grow those communities in order for our children and grandchildren to be educated and be connected to the world. We want them to have lifelong employment opportunities while continuing to be able to live in rural Kentucky. Access to broadband internet services is a key to making that possible."

Haney added that with the modern technology used in today's farm equipment, the connectivity issue should actually be of interest to everyone because of its direct link to a steady and dependable food supply.

"We have farmers in the field who depend on technology such as GPS to be able to operate their equipment to its maximum capacity," he said. "It is vital that they are able to connect to produce the food, fuel and fiber we all need."

Haney informed the group of a new initiative being launched by KFB that will provide some assistance in these rural areas and across the state. The organization is initiating a program that intends to make free, outdoor Wi-Fi available to anyone who comes to the parking lots of KFB's offices and agencies. And this service isn't just for members but is available for anyone in a community who needs the connectivity.

"I realize this is not a fix to the problem, but it is a step in the right direction when it comes to serving the communities in which we live and work," Haney said. "It will at least be an option for those who previously had no options."

Haney said it will take some time to get the many KFB offices

in the state ready to provide this service, but he sees it as a step in the right direction, even if it is a small step.

KFB's involvement in this project comes from a broader, national initiative started by farmer-owned co-op Land O' Lakes. The American Connection Project involves organizations in more than 19 states offering similar services as a way to keep users safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and offer the service to those who don't have it.

"If there were a time to band together with and for our rural neighbors -- many of whom are critical to feeding our nation -- now is that time," said Beth Ford, president & CEO of Land



New KFB Initiative will provide some broadband assistance throughout the state.

O'Lakes, Inc. "I encourage businesses with footprints in rural communities to join us in this small action to connect our rural communities; and I strongly urge state and federal policy makers to join us in fixing the problem by closing the digital divide in rural America."

Haney emphasized that with pre-existing rural electric lines already in place, an infrastructure of sorts already exists to get this service to all areas.

"Generations that came before us worked hard to make rural electricity a reality in all areas of this state and across rural America, and today, we would like to be able to tag on to those lines that already run to those homes," he said. "The connection is there, but we have to bring rural electric co-ops on board and providers to the table to be able to make this happen."

KFB has just begun the process of readying a few offices throughout the state with parking lot Wi-Fi access, but the goal is to eventually make it available at all of its locations in Kentucky.



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U.S.-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT TAKES EFFECT

Implementation will “have a positive effect on farms throughout the state and across the nation.”

There’s little doubt that most of us will be glad to move on from 2020, for many reasons. Good news, especially related to the agriculture economy, has been hard to come by this year.

However, July 1, 2020, was a day for good news as it marked the implementation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), and it’s coming at a time when the U.S. economy, and especially the ag economy, could use it the most. Kentucky’s farm families are especially glad to see this agreement finally go into effect after months of negotiations.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) praised the entry into force of the USMCA and its support for Kentucky’s more than \$300 million of agricultural exports to its neighbors.

“Virtually every Kentucky family and every industry are touched by the job-creating effects of exporting what we make here in the Bluegrass,” he said. “Kentucky’s farmers are ready to take advantage of the USMCA’s innovations to strengthen and expand markets for their crops. I’ve heard from many Kentucky farm families who are grateful for this major step toward new American competitiveness at a critical time. It was my privilege to shepherd the USMCA through the Senate as Majority Leader to support the farming community and open new avenues for your products. I’d like to once again congratulate President Trump for negotiating this deal. As the only congressional leader not from New York or California, I’m proud to work with the President to deliver for rural America and Kentucky in particular.”

“Our farm families depend on these export markets, and this agreement will help boost a farm economy that has seen its share of struggles over the past few years.”

- Mark Haney

Kentucky Farm Bureau President Mark Haney said to finally see the agreement take hold is welcome news at a time when it is urgently needed.

“As an organization, we spent many months advocating for the passage of this critical agreement and have long waited for it to go into effect,” he said. “Our farm families depend on these export markets, and this agreement will help boost a farm economy that has seen its share of struggles over the past few years.”

Haney also thanked McConnell and all of Kentucky’s Congressional delegation who supported the agreement.

“It takes so many people and organizations working together to make something like the USMCA a reality, and our Congressional

leaders continue to step up for our farm families in this state and around the country,” he said. “We couldn’t be more thankful for their efforts.”

Nationally, the agreement is expected to inject a \$2 billion increase in U.S. agricultural exports with an overall increase of \$65 billion in gross domestic product.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said the launch of the USMCA brings optimism to the country’s farmers and ranchers at a time when they need it the most.

“We’re grateful for the opportunity to build on the success of the North American Free Trade Agreement*, and we’re eager to see the results on America’s farms,” he said. “It’s important that our neighbors uphold their end of the deal, so the agreement provides a stabilizing force amid the unpredictability of a pandemic in all three countries.”

According to information from AFBF, “Under USMCA, Canada will increase quotas on U.S. dairy products, benefitting American dairy farmers by \$242 million. Canada will also treat wheat imports the same as domestic wheat for grading purposes. Mexico has also agreed that all grading standards for ag products will be non-discriminatory. The agreement also enhances science-based trading standards among the three nations.”

While there are still some issues with Mexico over produce imports, Haney said having such an agreement in place will have a positive effect on farms throughout the state and across the nation.

“Canada and Mexico are two of our largest ag export markets, and Kentucky’s farm families rely on those dollars to remain sustainable,” he said. “But we must move forward in looking for other export markets and in our advocacy efforts to negotiate other trade agreements.”

KFB Farming Footnote*:

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was signed in October of 1992 and went into effect on January 1, 1994. NAFTA expanded on the free trade between the countries which began in 1989, creating one of the largest trade blocs in the world, at that time.

USMCA KEY POINTS

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION



Designed to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement, the USMCA builds on important trade relationships in North America.



The agreement is expected to increase U.S. ag exports by \$2 billion and result in a \$65 billion increase in gross domestic product.



The agreement will provide new market access for American dairy and poultry products while preserving the zero-tariff platform on all other ag products.



In particular, the agreement gives U.S. dairy products access to an additional 3.6 percent of Canada's dairy market – even better than what was proposed in the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement.



U.S. wheat will be treated more fairly, thanks to Canada's agreement to grade our wheat no less favorably than their own.



Mexico and the United States have also agreed that all grading standards for ag products will be non-discriminatory.



Additional provisions enhance science-based trading standards among the three nations as the basis for sanitary and phytosanitary measures for ag products, as well as progress in the area of geographic indications.



The agreement also includes measures that address cooperation, information sharing, and other trade rules among the three nations related to agricultural biotechnology and gene editing.

PARTNERS IN AG



Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) 2nd Vice President Sharon Furches recently discussed her appointment to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC) with KFB News editor Tim Thornberry.

For those readers who may not know, could you tell us a little about your agricultural family farming operation?

My family owns and operates Furches Farms Partnership in Calloway County. We raise white and yellow corn, soybeans, wheat, and canola. We also have a grain handling facility and do a small retail business with rock, lime, and erosion mat and supplies.

What exactly is the FRRCC and its purpose?

The Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee is a policy-oriented group that will provide policy advice, information, and recommendations to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler on a wide range of issues that are important to agriculture and rural communities.

Do you think that some people still don't see the close connection between the agriculture industry and its link to what the EPA does as an agency of the federal government?

I'm sure there are still folks that don't imagine our farms go beyond our own fencerows. Certainly, the pandemic has been eye-opening for many with some challenges of keeping our grocery stores stocked and knowing our food is produced safely and affordably. The EPA is a vital agency on many fronts, but agriculture is absolutely a major player in any conversation concerning environmental concerns. Farmers and ranchers have been addressing environmental issues on their own farms since they started farming.

How beneficial to agriculture is an entity such as the FRRCC?

It's always important to bring your key players to the table to discuss issues. Agriculture and the environment are inseparable so it's vital that we have open and honest discussion. It is exciting and gratifying that the rule-making process at the EPA will once again include farmers, ranchers, and ag leaders.

Do you mind sharing the process by which you were chosen to be on this committee?

A call for nominations came out late in 2019. I know there

were approximately 150 nomination packages submitted to fill 33 seats from across the United States. The nominations came from various commodity groups, state Farm Bureaus, and other ag-related entities. I went through an interview process in January, and we had hoped to know the committee and begin our work in March. Of course, that was delayed by the Covid virus and shutdowns. I was invited to join the group in late May, and the press release came out in June.

What does an appointment such as this mean to Kentucky's ag industry?

Kentucky is fortunate to have two seats on this committee, so we will be well represented. It is so very important to be having conversations that can influence policy at the highest level. I have always felt strongly that there should be active, full-time farmers addressing any issues related to agriculture and our industry. That is my livelihood and my life's work. I know what it means to actually plant, harvest, and market a crop. Those are the people who should be at the table, and I'm so thankful for this opportunity.

We have often said that KFB has a place at the table when it comes to national ag policy. How important is it to keep that status?

KFB has worked so hard to earn a reputation as the dependable, truthful, and consistent Voice of Kentucky Agriculture. We address policy from the county level up, and we've been fortunate to be included on the national level as well. It's gratifying that our organization has earned the trust of those occupying the highest offices in our country.

What are some of the issues you hope to be working on as a member of this committee?

I'm sure we will evaluate a wide range of issues impacting farmers and ranchers across the country concerning water, environmental pollutants, crop input use, and others. Whatever the issues are, I'm happy they will have voices around the table who know what the dirt feels like on the farm.

AFBF FARMER SURVEY

Americans support COVID-19 aid to farmers; trust remains high

Trust in America's farmers and ranchers remains high amid the devastating blow delivered by the COVID-19 pandemic. A new American Farm Bureau Federation poll shows 84% of Americans trust the nation's farmers and the same overwhelming majority support financial assistance from the government for farmers struggling to keep from going under because of the pandemic.

"The results of the survey indicate a growing understanding of how important a stable food supply is to the health and well-being of our nation," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. "Shortages at grocery stores and other food supply chain shockwaves caused by the pandemic gave many people a new understanding of the crucial role of America's farmers and ranchers and the importance of their survival through the COVID-19 economic storm. It is so heartening to know that through it all, the American people's trust in farmers is unwavering."

Many struggling farmers were left out of initial federal aid, and some who received assistance are still being hurt by COVID-19 losses. USDA estimates suggest the decline in commodity value alone for 2019, 2020 and 2021 production totals almost \$50 billion. This does not include all of agriculture's losses, which would be billions more.

When the pandemic prompted stay-at-home orders, the market for several crops disappeared almost overnight, causing prices paid to farmers to drop drastically. It came at a time when farmers were already facing economic challenges following two years of trade wars. Farm bankruptcies for the 12-month period ending March 2020 increased 23% from the previous year and are expected to climb higher as a result of the pandemic. Because the pandemic shockwaves continue to cause agricultural losses, the American Farm Bureau Federation is calling on lawmakers to address critical needs that still exist for farmers impacted by COVID-19.

More broadly, the poll also reveals that a majority of Americans, 59%, also believe the federal government should classify U.S. agriculture as a matter of national security to ensure a stable food supply. Addressing agricultural labor shortages, ensuring farm and food worker safety, and protecting trade partnerships to stabilize agricultural markets are all part of prioritizing U.S. agriculture.

Survey Specifics:

- A strong majority of adults (84%) trust farmers.
- Half of adults (53%) say COVID-19 has impacted farmers a lot financially and 3 in 4 (76%) recognize there has been some financial impact on farmers.
- A majority of adults (84%) support farmers receiving financial assistance from the federal government during COVID-19, including 52% who express strong support.
- More than four in five adults (85%) think COVID-19 has impacted the food supply chain.
- Three in five adults (59%) think the federal government should classify U.S. agriculture as a matter of national security to ensure a stable food supply in the U.S.

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THE NEED FOR A SOLID RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

There's more to it than just a good road

It's not hard to find different types of infrastructure if you take a moment to look around. There are the obvious and easily recognized examples, such as roads, bridges, railways, waterways, airways, and electrical grids. Though seldom seen, sewer lines, underground utilities, and water lines are also crucial components of healthy systems. But in this time of advanced technology, the telecommunications component of the overall infrastructure picture becomes just as necessary as the roads on which we drive.

Nowhere is the need for a solid infrastructure system more evident than in rural areas of the country and this state, said Kentucky Farm Bureau President Mark Haney.

"If you compare our state or the country to a human body, the critical infrastructure system is much like the network of blood vessels in our bodies which keeps us alive," he said. "We have to have a solid system to get our agricultural goods to consumers. They are depending on it."

Haney emphasized that while maintaining a strong rural infrastructure allows farmers to get their products into the hands of customers, there are many more advantages of having a healthy system in place.

"This issue is equally important to rural development efforts as we work to support local businesses and the communities in which they reside," he said. "As rural economies thrive, so does the overall economy."

Gerry Hayden, a farmer from Calhoun, Ky., sees the need for a strong rural infrastructure every time he sends crops from his farm to surrounding grain elevators.

"You cannot put a value on the importance of our rural infrastructure because it is ever so important for us to get our crop to the market," he said. "We currently have a bridge out on the main road between our community and Owensboro. With all the grain we have ready to go to the elevator there, we will have to travel an addition 1,500 miles in the 75 trips it will take to move our corn and soybeans."

That adds a huge fuel cost increase to Hayden's operation. And with the volatility in grain prices, any added production costs could have a substantial impact on profitability.

American Farm Bureau Federation Chief Economist John Newton said the margin between profit and loss is so thin these days that any disruptions which increase costs on the farm could be the difference in making or losing money.

"With commodity price variability and uncertainty increasing for the new crop due to trade headwinds and COVID-19 demand uncertainty, managing costs and effective marketing are critical to farm profitability," he said. "Farms cannot afford to absorb higher and unexpected costs associated with a poor and aging infrastructure."



Nowhere is the need for a solid infrastructure system more evident than in rural areas of the country and this state.

Looking at Infrastructure in a Different Way

Hayden has seen and addressed the problems facing adequate rural infrastructure needs as a board member of the American Soybean Association (ASA) where he has served as chair on the ASA Transportation and Infrastructure Advocacy Team and the Soybean Transportation Coalition.

He said the importance of a solid infrastructure goes beyond good roads, strong bridges, and access to rail and waterways.

"We operate in a global economy today, more so than when much of our existing infrastructure was built," he said. "Our system of locks and dams on our waterways is a prime example. Most were built to last for 50 years, but some are as old as 85 years. And with about 60 percent of our grains being produced in the country sent to ports in New Orleans and bound for destinations all over the world, our waterways are extremely important because we depend so much on the export markets."

Hayden added to that point, noting the need to keep all areas of the nation's infrastructure in good working order.

"Our neighbors in South America are big agricultural producers, and they're investing heavily in their infrastructure needs," he said. "Our system currently is superior to theirs, and that has kept us number one agriculturally. If we don't get on board from an infrastructure perspective, these countries could take over first place, and we'll be sitting here with broken bridges and roads, and waterways that are shut down."

The Broadband Component

The talk of adequate broadband service, as an infrastructure need, has perhaps never been louder since COVID-19 caused so many people, including millions of students, to work from home or remotely.

Farm families, however, were already familiar with the need for broadband from an operational standpoint.

KFB Young Farmer Committee Chair John Henning said that the advanced equipment used to maintain production needs on farms today requires adequate connectivity.

"With the right equipment, I can do the job it once took several people to do, which is good for my bottom line," he said. "But this equipment depends on connectivity, and some rural areas just don't have what it takes to allow farmers do the job efficiently and operate their equipment at its optimum level."

Henning emphasized how critical it is for young farmers

to have good broadband; just as critical as any other infrastructure need.

"My generation has grown up in the midst of advanced technology, and we fully understand its value to our jobs on and off the farm," he said. "If we are going to keep this newer generation, and generations to come on the farm, we have to add sound broadband service to the long list of infrastructure needs. The information highway is just as important to us as the asphalt highway."

A National Issue

A recent report from TRIP, a national transportation research group, examined America's rural transportation system. The news from their "Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland" was not good, denoting, "The nation's rural transportation system is in need of immediate improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity."

Breaking down the numbers, the report went on to explain that, "Thirteen percent of U.S. rural roads are rated in poor condition, while 21 percent are in mediocre condition. Sixteen percent of the nation's rural roads are in fair condition and the remaining 50 percent are in good condition. Eight percent of the nation's rural bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge."

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said farmers and ranchers depend on rural roads, highways, and bridges to move their products to market, as does the integrity of our nation's food supply chain.

“Investment in rural infrastructure going forward is paramount”
- Zippy Duvall

"Unfortunately, due primarily to lack of investment over several decades, America's infrastructure is in a dire state of rapid deterioration, and recent events show even more the importance of guaranteeing that food arrives where it needs to be," he said. "Investment in rural infrastructure going forward is paramount to



Rural roads are often used for recreational purposes.



Road closures like this on the Anderson/Spencer County line often take months to reopen. A bridge in need of repairs caused this closure.

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ensure farmers and ranchers can continue to reliably supply the safe and wholesome food Americans need into the future."

Not Just an Agriculture Issue

While the rural areas in Kentucky and across the country are often associated with farmland, many non-farm activities take place there. New tourism ventures have been popping up across the state, and an increasing number of people have migrated to these rural areas over the past several years.

According to information from the USDA, "In 2016-17, the rural population increased by 0.1 percent, adding 33,000 people. This small overall increase continues an upturn in rural population since 2011-12, which stems from increasing rates of net migration from urban (metro) areas. Since 2011, fewer people have been moving out of rural areas and more people have been moving in."

Shoring up rural roads, bridges, waterways, and other infrastructure needs goes beyond ag concerns for many different reasons.

Harrison County Judge Executive and KFB State Director Alex Barnett said his area of the state is mostly rural in nature, so a solid infrastructure system is critical to all citizens there.

"The need for safe roads and bridges has always been an issue, and as people move to rural areas, they expect all the conveniences of town living," he said. "Folks anticipate wide, straight roads on which they can drive, not knowing that many of these roadways began as no more than narrow and curvy cow paths. Improving rural infrastructure is vital to the future of these communities."

Barnett also pointed out the need for improved broadband connectivity as part of the overall infrastructure picture.

"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for reliable and fast internet has become a primary interest to all citizens," he said. "Adequate broadband service is one of the top priorities when a person or industry is looking to relocate to our county or any other. And as schools require more learning from home and businesses are asking employees to work from home, the need has increased tremendously and must be included whenever we discuss infrastructure."

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NEWS FROM THE KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commissioner Quarles sounds alarm on unsolicited foreign seeds

Agriculture Commissioner Dr. Ryan Quarles is sounding the alarm about reports of foreign seeds being shipped unsolicited to Kentuckians across the Commonwealth. Kentucky is the fourth state known to receive suspicious packages of seeds that appear to have originated from China.

"It is incredibly important that if you receive a package of foreign or unfamiliar seeds, you report it to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture immediately," Commissioner Quarles said. "At this point in time, we don't have enough information to know if this is a hoax, a prank, an internet scam, or an act of agricultural bio-terrorism. Unsolicited seeds could be invasive and introduce unknown diseases to local plants, harm livestock or threaten our environment. If you have received such a package, do not plant the seeds and immediately contact the Kentucky Department of Agriculture."

Over the weekend, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) was notified of several Kentucky residents who had received unsolicited seed packets that appear to have originated by China. The types of seeds are unknown and may be harmful. The packages were sent by mail.

"I want to reiterate: do not plant the seeds," Commissioner Quarles said. "We don't know what they are, and we cannot risk any harm whatsoever to agricultural production in the United States. We have the safest, most abundant food supply in the world and we need to keep it that way."

Individuals who have received suspicious packages with seeds should put them in an airtight bag and ship them to the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's division of Plant Protection Quarantine at USDA-APHIS PPQ, P.O. Box 475, Hebron, Kentucky 41048.

Individuals are also encouraged to contact the Kentucky Department of Agriculture at (502) 573-0282 or e-mail ag.web@ky.gov.

KFB Farming Footnote:*

Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) has been working closely with KDA in monitoring this issue. KFB President Mark Haney said it is important to get a handle on this before any possible negative outcomes occur.

"In these times of uncertainty, it's important to pay attention to such occurrences as unsolicited foreign seeds being sent to U.S. citizens," he said. "This discovery has been made in several states, but the full extent of these mailings is yet to be determined. We are waiting to hear more as to the exact content of these seeds. But it's important to adhere to recommendations made by local, state, and federal officials when something like this takes place. KFB applauds Commissioner Quarles and KDA for quickly recognizing the problem and getting the word out about the possible dangers that could be associated with these seeds. This is one more example of our valued ag-related partners working together, and the continued efforts being made for the betterment of our agriculture industry and well-being of our citizens."



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MARKETS



RED MEAT PRODUCTION RECOVERED IN JUNE

According to USDA-NASS's July monthly Livestock Slaughter report, commercial red meat production in June was 4.79 billion pounds, 9.6 percent higher than a year ago. Cattle and hog slaughter both rebounded from the COVID-19 reduced levels of April and May. Commercial cattle slaughter totaled 2.88 million head, up 2.4 percent from June 2019 and over 26 percent above May 2020 slaughter. The recovery in packing plant operations led to 2.374 million pounds of beef production, a 6.6% increase from June 2019 and the highest for the month of June since 2011. Much of the gain in beef production was due to abnormally high cattle weights resulting from the backup of cattle in feedlots. In June, the average federally inspected dressed weight was 830 pounds, 34 pounds, or 4.3%, above the same month last year. This includes steers, heifers, cows and bulls. First-half 2020 commercial cattle slaughter and beef production was 4.4 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively, below that estimated for first-half 2019. For Kentucky, June's commercial slaughter totaled 4,900 head, up 2,000 head from last June. With the average live weight up six percent to 1,118 pounds (U.S. average, 1,365 pounds), the total live weight of cattle harvested was 5.48 million pounds, or 84 percent above a year ago.

Commercial hog slaughter for June was 11.9 percent higher than last June at 11.2 million head, the highest slaughter amount on record for the month of June. This resulted in record June pork production of 2.4 billion pounds, 12.8 percent above last June and soaring 27.7 percent above May 2020's production. Federally inspected hog dressed weights dropped four pounds from May to June; at 215 pounds, the average weight was still two pounds above the June 2019 average. Sow slaughter continues to run well ahead of the year-earlier pace, so breeding herd liquidation may be occurring.

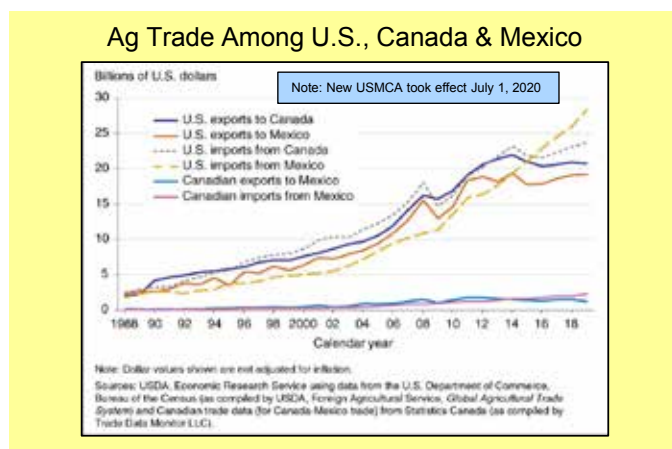
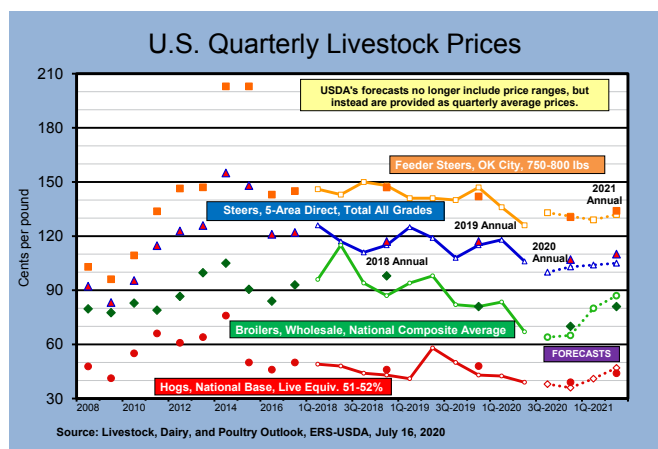
U.S. HAY ACREAGE LOWEST SINCE 1908

USDA projects U.S. hay harvested acreage at 52.4 million acres in 2020. This is down only slightly from the 2019 harvested acreage but is the lowest harvested acreage since 1908. While

total hay acreage is down just 44,000 acres, there is a notable move in acreage from alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures to all other hay types. Harvested acreage of all other hay is forecast at 36.03 million acres, up 347,000 acres; alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures acreage is forecast at 16.35 million acres, down 391,000 from 2019. It's interesting that alfalfa acreage would have dropped substantially more if not for North Dakota adding 230,000 acres, Washington adding 70,000, Illinois adding 40,000 and Iowa adding 30,000 acres. Reductions of 100,000 acres or more are forecast in Wisconsin, California, Montana, and Kansas. Kentucky producers plan to harvest 140,000 acres of alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures, down 5,000 from 2019. All other hay acreage is forecast unchanged at 1.80 million acres.

RED MEAT EXPORTS ADD VALUE TO CORN AND SOYBEAN CROPS

Indirect exports of corn and soybeans through beef and pork exports deliver critical returns for corn and soybean farmers. Corn and soybean checkoff dollars are invested in market development efforts conducted by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). USMEF released an updated version of an independent study aimed at quantifying the value red meat exports provide to U.S. corn and soybean producers. Here are key findings from the latest version. In 2019, the cattle and hogs used for beef and pork exports consumed 480 million bushels of corn, valued at \$1.8 billion (average price of \$3.75/bushel). Beef and pork exports contributed more than 12 percent, or \$0.46, of the per bushel price of corn, or \$6.26 billion in crop value. U.S. pork exports used 2.12 million tons of soybean meal, the equivalent of 89.2 million bushels of soybeans, valued at \$751.7 million (average price of \$8.43/bushel). Pork exports contributed 9 percent, or \$0.76, of the per bushel price of soybeans, or \$2.7 billion in crop value. Red meat exports also used about 3 million tons of distiller's dried grains with solubles (DDGS) in 2019, generating \$411.8 million in revenue for ethanol mills' co-products, or about four cents per gallon of ethanol.





KENTUCKY'S LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD NOMINEES

Finalists exemplified the true meaning of "Stewards of the Land."

Every year, three Kentucky farmers are nominated for the Leopold Conservation Award® honoring the efforts they have made in caring for the land, water, and natural resources that sustain their farms and the environment around them.

The award, named in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, is given in 21 states by the Sand County Foundation and sponsored by a host of organizations, including Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB).

This year, F.L. Sipes Farm of Ekron in Meade County, JRS Angus Farm of Lawrenceburg in Anderson County, and Graskop Farm of Nonesuch in Woodford County, received the Kentucky nomination honors.

"The farmers being honored this year represent some of the best when it comes to being true caretakers of their land," said KFB President Mark Haney. "Those of us involved in agriculture know of the efforts our farm families make daily to care for the land that takes care of them. Through this annual award, the rest of the world is discovering this, as well."

Along with the honor comes a \$10,000 check to the winner, who will be announced later in August.

F.L. Sipes Farm of Ekron in Meade County

Fred Sipes raises tobacco, soybeans, corn, wheat, hay, produce, and beef cattle on the family farm that once belonged to his grandparents.

"It was primarily a cattle and tobacco farm then, and I started out, in 1994, as a tobacco farmer, transitioned into cattle and

then into row crops as we diversified the farm," he said. "I think that's a key to success, not having everything just in one basket."

As part of his diversification efforts, Sipes said conservation plays a very important role in making the farm sustainable for generations to come.

"We hear a lot about leaving the land better than we found it, and that's the way I think about it," he said. "And it's so much more important to me now with having two-year-old twin boys here. Hopefully one day they'll want to take it over and do what we're doing and take it to the next level."

Utilizing good conservation measures will play an important role in those plans, Sipes added.

"I have a good working relationship with our local Natural Resource Conservation office where I sit on the board as a supervisor," he said. "Being involved in this way has helped open my eyes to what needs to be done or what can be done on the livestock side and on the row crop side."

From a conservation practices standpoint, Sipes has reduced soil erosion and improved water quality by installing grassed waterways, planting cover crops, and implementing crop rotations and no-till practices on his land. He uses rotational grazing practices to feed his cattle. These conservation practices have improved soil health and wildlife habitat found on the farm.

"So many conservation practices are important to us, and we just want to keep implementing them on our farm, as well as those farms we rent," he said. "We try to protect other people's farms as if they were our own. That's important to us."

Continued on pages 22-23

Another important part of the farming operation is the family's involvement in local and state organizations and activities. Sipes serves as president of the local Farm Bureau, is active in the local 4-H program, and is involved with the Kentucky Soybean Association.

Sipes' wife Stacy is also very active locally and being involved in these organizations plays a huge role in their lives.

"We absolutely see the value in being a part of local and state organizations, and what they can do for us, not only what we can do for them," she said. "As an employee of Farm Bureau, as an area program director, and covering 12 counties, I get the golden opportunity to work with some of the best people you will find anywhere. They're on their farms full time every day, just like Fred is, so I get to stay up on the issues. I get to hear the problems they're having on their farms and what we need to do to help solve those problems."

JRS Angus Farm of Lawrenceburg in Anderson County

JRS Angus Farm of Lawrenceburg in Anderson County is owned by James R. "Buddy" and Sandie Smith. They grow cover crops and use rotational grazing to feed their herd of beef cattle. They also raise pumpkins and plant areas in vegetation that attract wildlife and insect pollinators.

"We raise registered Angus cattle, we're a seed stock producer, and we sell bulls and heifers," Smith said. "We sell probably 30 to 35 bulls a year and have regular customers who have bought from us for years. We also raise and sell alfalfa hay."

In addition, the Smith's also sell freezer beef from the farm at their local farmers' market and have seen an increase in the

interest of locally grown food during this time of the coronavirus.

Conservation practices have been implemented across the farm's pastures, hay fields, and forests to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality. Smith raises corn and sorghum-sudangrass for silage and has also installed a concrete feed pad for his cattle which was recently covered, for his cattle."

Smith also credits his family as being very instrumental in the success of the farm.

"We've got three daughters and three great son-in-laws, and if anything needs to be done or we need more help, they're always there," Sandie said.

The Smith's grandson, Austin Goodpaster, has come to the farm fulltime and represents a new generation to the farming operation.

"Being on the farm with my grandfather has been a real learning experience and I learn something new every day," Goodpaster said. "It's really all about tradition and passing that down to another generation."

Smith said it has been a real blessing having his grandson on the farm.

"I've been truly blessed that Austin has come back, going into farming with me," he said. "Otherwise, at my age, I'd have to be cutting back, but I don't have to tell him to do anything. He knows enough now to see what needs to be done, which is great."

In addition to his family being such a big help on the farm, Smith is also active with many local ag organizations, including the local Farm Bureau, Cattlemen's Association, and the Anderson County Soil Conservation District. He said these types



James R. "Buddy" and Sandie Smith, front, with grandson Austin Goodpaster.



Geri and Steve Isaacs, front, with their son, Ben.

of relationships help the ag industry overall and provide great networking opportunities.

"It's good to talk to other producers and see what their problems are and how they're solving them," he said. "And of course, I've been active in Farm Bureau for years, too. And they're a big help; about the only voice in government that we have is Farm Bureau."

This year marks the third in a row that JRS Angus Farm has been chosen as one of the three finalists for the Leopold Conservation Award®.

Graskop Farm of Nonesuch in Woodford County

Graskop Farm of Nonesuch in Woodford County is owned by Geri and Steve Isaacs and their son, Ben. They raise beef cattle, hay, and table grapes on cropland, pasture, and woodlands that overlook the Kentucky River.

Utilizing no-tillage practices, crop rotations, grassed waterways, and rotational grazing has allowed them to reduce erosion and improve soil and water quality. Planting trees and plants best suited for the topography has created a habitat favorable to birds and wildlife.

“One of the things that I like about agriculture in Kentucky is its sense of community, and that means people are welcome here and I feel welcome on their farms.”

- Steve Isaacs

Steve Isaacs said that when making the decision to buy the farm many years ago, soil maps were one of the first things he looked at.

"There was some good soil potential here, and we liked the natural lay of the land," he said. "And while we saw a lot of potential, we also saw a lot of work, and we've been working at it for 28 years and we've still got a lot to do. But that's farming, so we'll never run out of anything to do."

Through the years, the family has added to their to-do lists, not only in their improvements of the land, but in what they produce. Steve Isaacs refers to the farm as a "grass farm" and makes major efforts to ensure the hay is quality hay and the pastures in which the cattle graze are quality pastures.

But they may be most proud of their quarter-acre of table grapes, which are also the most difficult crop to grow.

"We started with the grapes after we moved to the farm, and I wanted to see what kind would grow best here," Geri Isaacs said. "So, we built a little arbor of our own and tried wine grapes, we tried table grapes, we tried seedless, we tried seeded grapes all in an effort just to see what would go."

The table grapes won out and the family provides those to area customers through farmers' markets and restaurants.

"We're one of the few folks in Kentucky who raise table grapes," said Steve Isaacs. "There are wine vineyards, but we've been able to sell table grapes, something that came out of a project

idea from one of my students at the University of Kentucky (UK)." (Steve Isaacs is an extension professor with the UK College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment).

The Isaacs admit that producing table grapes is very labor intensive, perhaps more so than the tobacco crop they produced for many years. But the end result is unique and gratifying. It is Ben who likely has the broadest perspective on the grape crop due to the fact that he has worked in local restaurants that feature their grapes.

"I get to see the grapes from the planting, growing, harvesting, distribution, preparing, and serving stages," he said. "That gives me an advantage in knowing what a quality product we grow, sell, and serve."

Steve Isaacs noted the sense of community that exists in Kentucky agriculture from its farmers, to its ag organizations, and how beneficial that is to farms all across the state.

"I've often said that there's no more than two degrees of separation between any two people in agriculture, and whether you're working with commodity organizations or general farm organizations, or educational institutions, or the community, I think that's important," he said. "One of the things that I like about agriculture in Kentucky its sense of community, and that means people are welcome here and I feel welcome on their farms."

KFB Farming Footnote*:

The Kentucky Leopold Conservation Award is made possible thanks to the generous support and partnership of Kentucky Agricultural Council, Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts, Sand County Foundation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, AgriBusiness Association of Kentucky, Farm Credit Mid-America, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, Kentucky Corn Growers Association, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, Kentucky Pork Producers, Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board, Kentucky State University, Kentucky Tree Farm Committee, Kentucky Woodland Owner's Association, and the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.



KENTUCKY'S WHEAT CROP ADDS VALUE TO THE FARM IN MANY WAYS

Despite a tough growing season, winter wheat holds its own in the Commonwealth

Despite a tough growing season, winter wheat holds its own in the Commonwealth

Many Kentucky farmers would agree that 2020's winter wheat crop was a disappointing one, but from a long-term perspective, this versatile crop has proven to be valuable, in a lot of ways.

According to information from the USDA, wheat ranks third among U.S. field crops in planted acreage, production, and gross farm receipts, behind corn and soybeans.

In Kentucky, winter wheat seeded acreage was estimated at 530,000 acres, 70,000 acres above last year's crop, noted the Kentucky National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS.)

But a late spring freeze hurt much of a promising state wheat crop this year. However, the overall value of planting wheat is apparent to most producers, despite this year's weather-related damage.

University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment Extension Professor for Grain Crops Chad Lee said previous studies show that when winter wheat is put into a crop rotation, the results are better soil structure, typically a little better water infiltration, and overall soil improvement; all factors that benefit other crops.

"With wheat in the rotation, historically, that's been our most economical crop rotation for grain crops," he said. "You're talking corn, soybeans and wheat. Putting all three together, those three crops in two years become our most economical cropping system, as well, when we can do it successfully."

Any success on the economic side is welcome news for farm families, especially during these uncertain times.

Lee said in addition to the benefits a wheat crop provides environmentally, there's also the cash flow benefit.

"If you're primarily a grain producer, wheat provides a bit of cash flow in the middle of the summer, when usually the budget is getting kind of lean on a row crop farmer," he said. "I know some

people have told me that winter wheat allows them to cashflow some equipment a little bit better, and it also allows them to keep employees employed all year long. The value of the crop helping to keep those jobs may be just as important as anything."

A multi-purpose crop

Like most grain crops, wheat is valuable on many fronts. Obviously, its use in foods goes without saying and is one of the most used grains for food in the world. But wheat straw is widely used for animal bedding and some feed and the grain is utilized in the distillery industry.

Its use as a cover crop has great benefits to the soil, as well, and Lee said there is about 100,000 acres or so of wheat planted as a cover crop and wheat forage.

"That number mostly reflects what's going into tobacco, or what came out of tobacco the year before," he said. "So, a lot of (total planted acres) tends to be the cover crop acres. There's also some wheat that gets cut for hay or haylage."

A year marred by a late spring freeze

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the Crop Production report for July, the data revealed that the yield forecast for Kentucky wheat was 63 bushels per acre, down 13 bushels from last year.

"This is the lowest yield since 2012," said David Knopf, director of the NASS Eastern Mountain Regional Office in Kentucky. "Growers knew the spring frosts had limited yield potential, but harvest revealed that it was worse than expected."

Knopf also noted that the amount of yield loss was dependent on the maturity of the crop at the time and individual field impact ranged from no damage, to a total loss.

According to the latest information from NASS, Kentucky farmers expect to harvest 23.6 million bushels of wheat during 2020. This year's expected crop would be down six percent from

the previous year, based on the forecast of crop conditions as of July 1.

Nationally, winter wheat production was forecast at 1.22 billion bushels, down four percent from the June 1 forecast and down seven percent from 2019.

From a farmer's perspective

Larry Thomas is a grain producer in Hardin County, as well as a Kentucky Farm Bureau State Director. His luck with the winter wheat crop wasn't good this year due to those late spring freeze events, but he sees a growing market for the crop and benefits to overall crop rotations.

"We actually grew a crop this year because the merchandiser we go through, who buys our corn for the distilleries, was looking for some wheat," he said. "We hadn't grown any wheat in probably five or six years, but I've been selling corn to the same guy for five years, and it's the first time he's mentioned needing it, so there is a growing market for it."

Thomas said that normally he would have been looking for potential yields in the 70 to 100 bushel per-acre range, but that did not happen this year for him and many other producers.

"We averaged about 30 to 32 bushels, but we did take some straw off, so that gave us a chance to get a little bit of our money back," he said. "That helps a little income-wise, plus that gets a lot of that cover off and out of the way for double-crop beans."

Thomas added that his last wheat crop yielded near the 100 bushels per acre mark, and he will make the decision later as to whether he will try again this fall.

"When you have a bad crop, you look back and you question yourself about what you could have done differently, so we'll have to just reconsider this fall, look at the price and the local market and make a decision then as far as a wheat crop for next year."

Wheat producers in the more western side of the state, where most of the state's winter wheat is grown, had their share of disappointments, as well. Lee said present indications are that the wheat in that area was hurt a little more than what was first thought.

"I'm hearing pretty extreme ranges from lows in the 20 bushel per acre range, to highs in the 120 bushel per acre range," he said. "And so those 120-bushel yields are probably what we had potential-wise before the freeze came in."

Still worth a look

Despite the issues faced this year due to weather-related events, winter wheat can still provide another valuable tool in

the toolbox for farmers wishing to grow the crop and who are in more favorable locations. Lee said while there have been late spring freezes in the past, the benefits the crop provides is worth the effort to plant if that is what farmers choose as part of their operations.

"First, it's not my place to tell a farmer what to do in terms of what she or he chooses to do, but in terms of trying to build soil structure, and in terms of long-term viability, winter wheat is a perfect crop to include in the rotation," he said.

With that said, location can still play a part in deciding to get on the winter wheat bandwagon.

"I would say almost no matter where you are in the state, winter wheat is a good option on soils that can handle it," Lee said. "For example, wet natured soils; soils that dry out very slowly or tend to stay saturated in the wintertime, those are not good places for winter wheat to grow. That's a good place to put a cover crop in, not a grain crop."

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AUGUST 2020

KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS - 25

COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



Boyd County

Erin Borders, daughter of Donald and Alisa Borders of Catlettsburg, has been awarded a \$1,500 Boyd County Farm Bureau Scholarship. She is a 2020 graduate of Boyd County High School and will major in Mechanical Engineering at Marshall University this fall.



Clark County

Clark County Farm Bureau President, Thadd Taylor, and Agency Manager, Rick Mink delivered lunch to the Clark County Fire Department to show appreciation for their dedication to the community during this pandemic. This was one of many lunch donations made to county first responders since the pandemic began.



Graves County

Graves County Farm Bureau presented a check to the Mayfield/Graves County Chamber of Commerce for \$2,000. These funds will be distributed to local businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak. Pictured from left: Ryan Drane, GCFB Vice President Keith Lowry, GCFB President Jed Clark, and Agent Chris Mathis.



Trimble County

Pictured are recipients of this year's Trimble County Farm Bureau Scholarships. From left are: Barbara Costellow, Agency Manager, with Destiny Goff, recipient of the Jason Jenkins Memorial Scholarship named in memory of Costellow's son; Beau Turner, Alexis Solis-Rodriguez, Broady Fugate, who received Farm Bureau Federation Scholarships, and Jerry Oak, President, Trimble County Farm Bureau. Not pictured is Haley Snelling.



Greenup County

Many community volunteers brought in food donations for Helping Hands to the Greenup County Extension Office. There were several partnering agencies including Greenup County Extension Service and Greenup County Farm Bureau Women's Committee which donated 70lbs of food.



Metcalfe County

Metcalfe County Farm Bureau was the first County in the State to reach membership quota. They made quota on May 22. Pictured from left to right are: Agent - Luke Wilson, President- Forrest Wilson, Agency Manager - Tareena Horton, Director- Ella Wilson, Director- Greg Wilson, Director- Jennie Gray, First Vice President- Randall Gray, Director- Jean Minor, and Director- Bobby Minor. Not pictured are CSR Beth Owens and Receptionist Sydne Whitley.



Knox County

Knox County Farm Bureau President Cloyce Hinkle presented two Knox County students, sisters Savannah and Sadie Hoffman, with awards for winning Knox County's Conservation essay and poster contests.



Greenup County

Maddy Mae Potter with the first set of twin boy calves born this year. She is the granddaughter of Terry & Lisa Osborne with Greenup County Farm Bureau.



Montgomery County

Montgomery County Farm had the pleasure of preparing and serving lunch with the Mt. Sterling-Montgomery Co Chamber of Commerce during the Public Service Cookout to honor hometown heroes.



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CANDID CONVERSATION



Dr. Kirk Pomper, right, and a KSU student conduct work at the University's farm in Franklin County.

KFB Candid Conversation presents a discussion about the topical issues facing the agricultural industry and rural communities in a question and answer format. In this column, Dr. Kirk Pomper, Kentucky State University's (KSU) Interim Dean for the College of Agriculture, Communities, and the Environment and Director of Land Grant Programs, discusses agriculture programs at KSU and the university's long history of working with Kentucky farm families.

First, could you give us a little background on yourself and your duties at KSU?

In addition to being the interim dean for the College of Agriculture, Communities, and the Environment and Director of Land Grant Programs here at the university, I have served in various roles in my 20 years at KSU. I've actually served as a professor of horticulture for quite a while, too. But in my current role, I'm responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations and all the research and extension that goes on at KSU under the land grant programs, as well as supervising the academic programs in agriculture.

KSU is one of two land grant universities in the state. Can you talk to me for a minute about the importance of that and how it works into the role of the College of Agriculture?

There are two land grant universities in Kentucky, and we are the 1890 land grant institution. As a historically black land-grant university, our mission is to support underserved populations,

including those involved in agriculture. We have a strong commitment to working with small farmers and limited-resource farmers across Kentucky—including smaller entrepreneurs—as we try to find ways for them to achieve greater economic opportunities.

Most of the farms in Kentucky are small farms and, of course, with the tough ag economy that we've seen lately, there's a sort of a perfect correlation, if you will, between KSU's efforts with agriculture and the needs of those small farm families in Kentucky.

Absolutely. And if you look at Kentucky, there are over 70,000 farms in our state, and almost three-quarters of them are small farms. And so, while we work with all kinds of folks involved in ag, our emphasis is to work with small farms where there are greater opportunities, because there are a lot of high value crops and products that can be produced by those small farmers that can give them supplemental income to help them thrive. It also provides a great opportunity for KSU to work with a lot of our partners, including the University of Kentucky (UK), Kentucky Farm Bureau, and the Kentucky Ag Development Board—all of whom are trying to do everything possible to help those small farmers.

I know that KSU is recognized both nationally and internationally for its research and in a lot of areas, including aquaculture and pawpaw production, to name a few. Would you elaborate a little bit on those areas of research and their importance to our agriculture industry?

Our program of distinction is the aquaculture program here at KSU. There is a lot of interest right now in aquaponics, and we're one of the leaders in aquaponics across the nation. We also have an outstanding organic and sustainable agricultural program. We work with organic vegetable production and organic hemp production for organic fiber, grain, and CBD. And of course, we have a number of horticultural crops, such as pawpaws and blackberries and nut crops. But we also work in animal science, including poultry science and our work with goats, which is one of our major animal science projects as we try to find the best grazing practices and ways to deal with parasite control. So, these are just a few of the programs that we work with directly to benefit Kentucky ag and small farmers in Kentucky.

Can we touch a bit on KSU's role in extension?

We have one Kentucky extension service in the state, so both UK and KSU partner as that one extension service. We work very well together trying to make sure that we meet the needs of folks across Kentucky. Many times, you're going to find KSU and UK extension agents in the same office, and you're going to see us working together on various projects. It's a wonderful partnership that we value greatly because we want to help Kentuckians as much as we can.

Partnerships are so critical in working hand-in-hand with other organizations. How important are these types of relationships to KSU?

They're vital; extremely vital and valuable. We can do so much more together than we could do individually, and we've really tried to form as many partnerships as possible, including working with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, UK, Alltech, and Farm Bureau, to name a few. The private and public partnerships that we've formed to help with our research and extension initiatives all work to benefit the Commonwealth.

We probably couldn't have a conversation right now without bringing up where we are with the COVID-19 pandemic and all the challenges that it has presented. How has KSU adapted to all the regulations pertaining to the coronavirus?

As has been the case with many other universities and companies, it has been a challenge. I think it has forced us to adapt quickly to technology so our extension efforts could continue, but through different channels, whether that's Zoom or other technologies and social media. We continue to do some field research at our farm, but obviously this has definitely curtailed our ability to do research for this year, and I'm hoping that it will end in the foreseeable future. At this point, we're still trying to do what needs to be done for Kentuckians, especially from an extension

aspect. We've had to adapt, and adapt quickly, and we've been able to do that. With teaching, we've been able to migrate online for important classes. But we all hope to get back into the classroom. We all are hopeful for some normalcy in the fall, but at this point we're still looking at several different plans and trying to weigh our options. The main thing is we want to provide great educational opportunities for the students. Whether that takes place online or in person, we're going to do the best we can to offer those classes to our students.

What opportunities do you see in the future for KSU and its agricultural programs?

Kentucky has a great tradition of small family farms, and we want to do everything we can to support them. I think there are a lot of opportunities out there for people who are interested in farming. We may be changing crops, we may be changing the way we do things, or we may be using value-added products or creating more value-added products from some of those crops. But there are opportunities out there, and we're excited to work with those small farmers and define those new processes, crops, or cultural practices that we're going to need to keep the small family farm viable. We're committed to doing that.



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DOWN THE BACKROADS

By Tim Thornberry

A Big Talker

Anyone who knows me has surely figured out that I like to talk. My wife refers to me as having a big mouth, but we'll save that story for another day.

I'm not sure where my need for conversation came from, but it has served me well, on many occasions, and landed me in hot water on others.

Either way, I doubt the desire to talk will ever leave me. My schoolteachers would have preferred I did it less, my football coach encouraged team members to do it more, and my co-workers, through the years, have simply tolerated me, I suppose.

I must say, the gift of gab wasn't always on my plate of abilities. In fact, as a child I was quite shy and rarely spoke to anyone outside of my family. I was more of an observer until I hit my early teens.

Something happened then that drew me away from my shyness and into a whole new world of communicating. I don't know what it was, but I'm glad it happened, at least on most days.

Once the talking began, I discovered I could carry on a conversation with just about anyone who would listen – especially on the telephone. I remember running through the house whenever our phone rang eager to say “hello” to whomever was on the over end. I would even strike up a discussion when it was a wrong number.

And when I discovered I could turn my spoken words into the written form, well, the game was on.

As a journalist, my early columns were more like dissertations, much to the dismay of many of my editors. (I'm told that is still an issue with me!) But it always seemed like I had a lot to say, whether I was writing it or saying it.

It was, however, with the onset of mobile phones, that my world really transformed. I no longer had to carry on conversations with myself in the car! I no longer had to wait until a landline was nearby. I no longer had to wait to relay a message to someone. I could now do it instantly.

I could talk to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Wow, it was like Christmas every day! My cell phone was a connection to the world and soon became a tool I thought I could not live without.

While many of us would like to unplug from technology, such as the cell phone, for short periods of time, my mobile ability has served me well, especially in this time of remote workplaces.

With these newer phones, I have a built-in camera and voice recorder, always at the ready. I can Zoom, or Facetime, or text or email 24/7. And yes, I can even talk if the opportunity presents itself.

Modern technology is great, and I admit, the cell phone has been a blessing to me. But lately, I have longed for in-person conversations. I hope those return soon. I realize my cell phone will continue to be a valuable tool, however, if all this virus stuff has made me realize anything, it is that nothing beats a face-to-face conversation, as we walk down the backroads.

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