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KENTUCKY

F A R M B U R E A U N E W S

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Ag projects survive legislative budget battle

Most of KFB's priorities for the 2008 legislative session were included in the state spending plan for the next two years. Despite an extremely tight budget situation, legislators approved the UK Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab (\$20 million bond with debt service paid from the Agricultural Development fund), the FFA Leadership Training Center (\$2 million bond with debt service from the fund), 10 additional veterinary student slots at the two Alabama universities that have an agreement with Kentucky (general fund), The Environmental Stewardship Cost-Share Program (\$9 million from the fund) and the Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center (\$10 million bond with debt service from the fund).

The UK/EKU Dairy Research Center also got the green light, providing that EKU comes up with its share.

Although KFB prefers that the general fund be used for servicing bonds, Public Affairs Director Laura Knoth said the budget crisis placed lawmakers in a unique and extremely difficult situation that prompted some unusual solutions.

"We're appreciative of the effort that was made in a year when budget

cuts had to be made," she said. "All special funds were swept; at least our special fund was used for agriculture."

The ADF also was tapped for servicing bonds for water and sewer projects throughout the state. While KFB consistently has opposed using the fund for infrastructure projects, it acknowledges the importance of those projects to rural communities. "We're certainly not opposed to expanding water and sewer lines in rural areas; we recognize the need and the benefit," said Ms. Knoth.

While the state portion of the ADF was reduced, the 35 percent county share remained intact.

Besides supporting the much-needed renovation of the FFA Leadership Center in Breckinridge County, the General Assembly also approved a \$2 million bond for renovating 4-H camps. The lawmakers, however, did not provide funds for the proposed upgrade of Murray State University's Breathitt Veterinary Center in Hopkinsville. KFB Executive Vice President David S. Beck said the organization was "extremely disappointed" and will readdress that issue in the 2009 session.

"Much work is still needed to create an understanding among the deci-

sion makers of the importance of the Breathitt Veterinary Center and the unique role it plays in animal agriculture, as well as in the public health community," Beck said. "It is much more than a regional project."

The BVC is a fully-accredited animal disease diagnostic lab serving the livestock, poultry and equine industries. It handles over 15,000 cases per year plus has research and homeland security functions. The current facility is more than 40 years old.

Another disappointment was cuts to the Department of Agriculture's budget. KFB policy calls for "an adequately financed" KDA budget, as well as a baseline increase to facilitate expansion of marketing and promotion programs.

In regard to agriculture-related bills, there were no major initiatives nor potentially harmful measures. On the defensive end, KFB succeeded in gaining an amendment to a bill that otherwise would have allowed school districts to impose the "growth nickel" property tax hike without citizen input. The KFB-supported amendment says a referendum must be held on any new "growth nickel" proposals.

That stance, of course, is in line with the provisions of the so-called "House Bill 44," a long-time staple of KFB policy that helps control the rate of property tax hikes.

Speaking of House Bill 44, the 2008 version also had KFB's support because it will help state government do a better job of monitoring the health insurance industry while providing useful information to the public. The bill, which passed, requires health insurers to submit quarterly reports on charges, quality and outcomes of health care services to a state advisory committee. The information must be posted on the internet.

"It sets up a data bank that can be of assistance to consumers," said Ms. Knoth.

Beck, who has been involved in legislative sessions for three decades, described the 2008 rendition as "difficult."

"Kentucky agriculture is fortunate we did not get hurt in any policy area, were able to pass some positive priorities and secure funding for important programs and projects," he said. "KFB members should express appreciation to those legislators who worked hard to address our legislative priorities."

*D*ISTRICT POLICY MEETINGS SET

July marks the beginning of the annual district policy development meetings. All members are urged to attend one of these meetings to review policy positions and proposals for consideration at this year's state convention.

District 1	July 21	7:00 p.m.	McCracken County FB
District 2	July 10	6:30 p.m.	Country Cupboard, Madisonville
District 3	July 15	6:30 p.m.	Rough River State Park
District 4	July 1	6:30 p.m.	Barren River State Park
District 5	July 17	7:00 p.m.	Mercer County Extension Office
District 6	July 21	7:00 p.m.	Owen County Extension Office
District 7	July 7	7:00 p.m.	Cumberland Falls DuPont Lodge
District 8	July 7	7:00 p.m.	Madison County Fairgrounds
District 9	July 8	6:30 p.m.	Blue Lick State Park
District 10	July 28	6:30 p.m.	Grayson Conference Center
District 11	July 10	6:30 p.m.	Hazard Country Club

“COMMENT”

It is May and Farm Bureau members are fully involved with the usual springtime work on the farm. Our staff and organization is focused on implementing our policy priorities in the Congress that were set in place by our delegates at our January annual meeting. Over the last four months we've come to you as grassroots leaders to ask for your help on issues such as the 2008 Farm Bill, agricultural labor, clean water regulation, passage of trade agreements to open up new markets for our exports, death tax repeal and numerous other issues. As grassroots members, you are the key to our success in the legislative and regulatory arena. Yet in the midst of all that work, I am asking for your attention to one more critical activity; It is time again to begin thinking about Policy Development.

One of the fundamental reasons for Farm Bureau's longstanding success and reputation is that we are "the voice of agriculture." Public officials understand that our policies are adopted after months of discussion and debate beginning with the county Farm Bureau, progressing through the state and culminating at the American Farm Bureau delegate session. This grassroots process gives us credibility with our lawmakers that other organizations only wish they could have. Our policies are tested by time and rigorous debate by farmers and ranchers themselves and once adopted they don't change until next year's delegate session. That also gives assurances to our public officials that we won't cut and run or change our position during the heat of a legislative battle.

With our daily focus on implementing our policy, it is essential to have credible policy to begin with. We refer to our policy book continuously for guidance and direction on what our members are thinking. As issues mature, as the business and political climate change and as new issues and problems emerge that need to be addressed, a sound and reasoned policy position is essential to ensure that we are representing our members effectively and credibly.

Of course, the challenge and burden of ensuring that our policies meet that high standard falls upon you as producer members of Farm Bureau. Your work and attention to this activity is paramount. It is the foundation upon which all other policy-related activity is built on.

Thank you in advance for your good work and thoughtful recommendations.



Mark Maslyn
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC POLICY
AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

ON THE COVER:

A WETLANDS AREA ALONG THE MUD RIVER IN BUTLER COUNTY
PHOTO BY ROGER NESBITT

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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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Committee studying need for tobacco export program

A committee involving Farm Bureau leaders from nine tobacco states is studying the feasibility of a growers-supported organization to promote tobacco exports.

Co-chaired by KFB President Marshall Coyle and North Carolina FB President Larry Wooten, the 17-member group held its initial meeting last month at the KFB state office. After several hours of discussion about the need and potential interest, the group agreed to continue to study a checkoff program that could support export programs for all types of domestic tobacco.

Farm Bureaus from Kentucky and North Carolina – which produce the large majority of burley and flue-cured tobacco -- have policy supporting the pursuit of new marketing opportunities for tobacco. Joining the two production leaders on the committee are Farm Bureau officials from Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Indiana, Maryland and Missouri.

Besides Coyle, KFB is represented by First Vice President Mark Haney,

Second Vice President John Hendricks and Director David Chappell, who chairs the organization's Tobacco Advisory Committee.

The committee also has representatives from the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association, the Council for Burley Tobacco, Flue Cured Stabilization and the Eastern Dark-Fired Tobacco Growers Association.

With domestic use shrinking, about half of burley and flue-cured production is going to export markets. Flue cured growers currently pay a 20-cent-per-hundredweight checkoff to support an export promotion program administered by Tobacco Associates, a Raleigh-based company. Meanwhile, the Burley Co-op promotes sales of its stocks on a limited basis.

Wooten framed the purpose of the meeting by asking the group: "Do we need an export promotion program that is grower-funded?" He added: "I personally feel that tobacco should not be one of the few commodities that does not have a grower-funded checkoff program."

Representatives from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Missouri, Indiana and Maryland said they felt their state's growers would be interested in the program. Those from Tennessee and Georgia said they were unsure. Chappell, meanwhile, said he felt Kentucky burley growers would be receptive. "If it's explained right and promoted right; they'll realize that no one else is going to do it (marketing) for them," he said.

Concurring was Burley Co-op President Roger Quarles, who's a Farm Bureau leader in Scott County. He said "the time is right" for such a program because some growers are finding it difficult to get a production contract with the tobacco companies this year.

The committee now will examine options for conducting a producer referendum, structure of the export organization and the many other particulars that could be involved with the concept. The next meeting will be held in Raleigh, probably in June.

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LEAD group examines effective traits

Like most folks, the young men and women in this year's class for KFB's Leadership Enhancement for Agricultural Development (LEAD) program want to have successful careers, a happy family and plenty of good friends.

They also aspire to be wise, honest, hard-working, selfless, enthusiastic, approachable, sensible and a good listener – the traits they say are necessary to be an effective leader.

The LEAD class continued its two-year tenure with a meeting last month in Northern Kentucky to focus on communications skills and leadership principles. They began the two-day session by participating in mock TV interviews in which they were questioned on various farm issues. KFB Video Production Coordinator Bob Shrader taped the interviews and played them back for a group review.

After Area Program Director Larry Smith provided an overview of KFB's structure and the role of county boards, the group divided up into teams to conduct a mock press conference on selected state and national issues.

The following day, AFBF Leadership Development Director Matt DeMarco took over the program with sessions dealing with effective communications and leadership qualities.

When quizzed by DeMarco on traits of effective leaders, the group of 10 men and two women (four members were absent) were quick to reply with the aforementioned descriptions. Asked to name the "worst" traits, they replied with "rude, dishonest, selfish, arrogant and poor listener."

The final session had selected members reviewing chapters from a popular book on leadership principles.

Talking about "responsibility," Erin Jury of Campbell County remarked: "If you won't carry the ball you can't lead the team."

On the topic of "courage," Stephen DeBord of Pulaski County said he learned: "A person's true opinion is

worth more than telling people what they want to hear."

In regard to "security," Nathan Courtney of Harrison County said the book advises to "give credit to others."

Relating to "self-discipline," Brian Clark of Fleming County told the

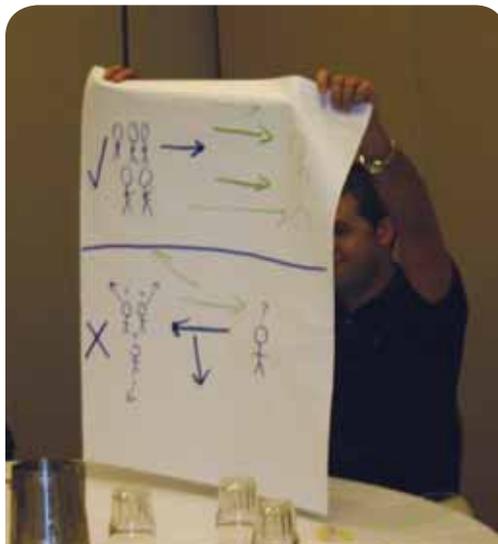
group: "The first person you need to lead is yourself."

The popular LEAD program was initiated several years ago to surface potential young leaders for Kentucky agriculture, as well as for KFB. Erin Jury, who teaches agriculture at Campbell County High school and was raised on a dairy farm in Nelson County, said the curriculum actually has helped her become a better teacher.



ABOVE: AFBF'S MATT DEMARCO OUTLINES COMMUNICATIONS PRINCIPLES FOR THE LEAD GROUP.

BELOW: IN A VISUAL EXERCISE FOR COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS, NATHAN COURTNEY OF HARRISON COUNTY DREW A SIGN ILLUSTRATING THE MESSAGE "GETTING PEOPLE TO GO IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION."



"It has helped me find better ways to communicate with students," she explained. "I really feel these experiences have helped me become a better communicator. And the experiences are very beneficial."

Joel David Cook, a dairy, row crop and tobacco farmer who serves on the board of Simpson County FB, said the program has given him a good perspective on Farm Bureau and its role with the ag industry.

"I've learned so much about Farm Bureau and what it does for agriculture – I had no idea there were so many activities," Cook said. "I'm learning how I can become more active in the community and help make a difference in solving problems."

Of the Northern Kentucky meeting, Cook said he enjoyed the "mock" news conference, in which he addressed farm labor issues.

Next up is a July 23-27 tour of farms and agribusinesses in Missouri, Illinois and Iowa. The group "graduates" in December.

AFBF women's conference has *Kentucky (Derby) Flair*



CHURCHILL DOWNS' BUGLER
STEVE BUTTMAN GAVE "THE
CALL TO THE POST."



One week prior to the Kentucky Derby, about 650 farm women from 38 states answered “the call to the post” by coming to Louisville for AFBF’s Women’s Leadership Conference. By all accounts, the event was a winner in the Derby City.

KFB Director Terry Gilbert of Boyle County is chairman of AFBF’s Women’s Leadership Committee and worked hard to bring the event to Kentucky. The national conference completed a “double,” as they say in race betting, as KFB held its annual women’s leadership conference the day before the national began its three-day run. The state conference attracted about 190 local leaders, most of whom also attended the national.

Mrs. Gilbert said all the pre-Derby hoopla made Louisville a good choice for an exciting venue for the national conference. But the primary order of business, she said, was “to provide an opportunity to learn more about leadership, our role and to meet with colleagues from around the nation.”

A series of workshops focused on such topics as public policy advocacy, animal agriculture issues, leadership development, communications skills, health issues and marketing farm products. The conference kicked off with a keynote address from AFBF President Bob Stallman, who quickly commended the members for their service.

Stallman said if Farm Bureau was to remain viable, “each one of us has to shore up our leadership strengths.” Keeping in tune with the conference theme “Growing Stronger, Reaching Higher,” Stallman added: “As you strengthen your leadership skills I’m confident you will find yourselves reaching higher.”

The Texas cattle and rice producer candidly acknowledged that Farm Bureau, in some circles, is unfairly characterized as “a good ole boy network” when in fact, women have been emerging in leadership positions. “I can’t tell you how proud I am that women are bringing in new leaders,” he said. “I encourage you to step up to the plate and use your talents and energy to fill in the leadership gaps. Farming and ranching today demands a total team approach.”

KFB President Marshall Coyle preceded Stallman at the podium, welcoming the ladies to Kentucky and providing an overview of the state’s agriculture industry. “We hope our hospitality shines through,” he said.

The KFB leader quipped that he occasionally brags to Stallman that Kentucky has the best state Farm Bureau. In beginning his remarks, a smiling Stallman replied that he tells Coyle “Kentucky absolutely has ONE of the best state Farm Bureaus.”

The opening session concluded in winning form as Churchill Downs’ bugler, Steve Buttleman, came to the stage to play “My Old Kentucky Home” followed by “The Call to the Post,” sending the ladies on their way to the workshops.

Another big hit were tours of notable tourist and agricultural attractions, including Churchill Downs, My Old Kentucky Home, Maker’s Mark Distillery, Anderson Circle Farm, Boyd Orchards, Old Friends Farm, George Gagel Truck Farm, etc.

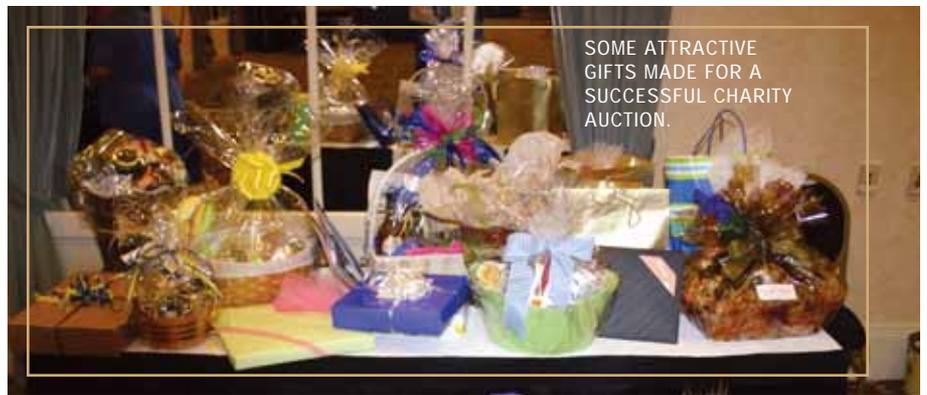
An enjoyable time notwithstanding, Mrs. Gilbert said the greatest benefit to the women’s leaders was “a lot of good ideas are shared that enable us to do a better job.”



ABOUT 190 ATTENDED THE KFB CONFERENCE.



KFB WOMEN’S COMMITTEE CHAIR FRIEDA HEATH PRESIDED AT THE MEETING WITH VICE CHAIRS MARGARET HENSLEY AND MICHELLE ARMSTRONG.



SOME ATTRACTIVE GIFTS MADE FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHARITY AUCTION.



AFBF WOMEN’S COMMITTEE CHAIR TERRY GILBERT OF KENTUCKY PRESENTED AFBF PRESIDENT BOB STALLMAN WITH A GIFT OF STATE PRODUCTS FOLLOWING HIS OPENING ADDRESS.



NATIVE GRASSES CAN TAKE THE HEAT

BY BILL LYNCH
PRIVATE LANDS WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST
DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE
RESOURCES

When settlers moved through the region over 200 years ago, Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) were present over most of our open land. Over the last two centuries our NWSG species have been replaced by European cool season grasses, predominately KY 31 Tall Fescue. In recent years, a combination of both research and hands-on experience using

NWSG as forage for cattle has demonstrated one of the many benefits of native grasses.

Summertime in Kentucky generally equals hot and dry conditions. The drought of 2007 proved to be no different and many farmers felt the negative effects brought on by the lack of rainfall. In Monroe County during July and August one producer's cattle averaged 2.0 lbs./day weight gain grazing Eastern Gama Grass without supplemental feeding. In Todd County, a dairy operator's herd averaged 0.5 percent increase in cream content while

grazing gama grass. Additionally, the same operator's rolled hay averaged eight tons per acre.

Many farmers relying solely on cool season grasses did not experience the same positive results. NWSG pastures in south central Kentucky provided a much-needed safety net for producers. Where the Eastern Gama Grass was part of a rotational grazing system, some producers were able to graze with minimal supplemental feeding during the drought.

In addition to Eastern Gama Grass there are several other NWSG that are beneficial as livestock forage; Big Bluestem, Indiangrass and Switchgrass. Throughout the southeast region switchgrass is the most used native warm season forage grass. However, in south central Kentucky, Eastern Gama grass is the top choice. All four grasses should be planted at 10 lbs per acre when utilized as forage. Experimental plantings have shown that six to eight pounds per acre can work but germination is much slower.

A quick outline of the grasses:

- **Switch grass** — plant with any drill or broadcast seeder. This grass prefers well drained soil but can tolerate seasonally wet conditions.
- **Eastern Gama Grass** — plant with a corn planter. This grass can take flooding and will do better in wet conditions than the other NWSG.
- **Indian grass** — plant with a NWSG drill. Indian grass matures the latest of these grasses.
- **Big Bluestem** — plant with a NWSG drill. Research shows Big Bluestem produces the highest weight gain in cattle, averaging 2.6 lbs./day.

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service offices or KDFWR private lands biologists can be contacted for further assistance regarding establishing NWSG forages. Ask about the EQIP program.

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SOYBEANS ARE A HOT COMMODITY

U.S. farmers are expected to plant about 18 percent more soybeans this year while their corn acreage could decline by about eight percent from a year ago, according to a key government report.

The planting numbers provide a first look at farmers' plans for this crop year and they reflect the first official USDA report for the 2008 crop growing year. A follow-up survey of farmers' planting intentions will occur June 1, with subsequent reports later in the summer.

The prospective plantings report suggests U.S. farmers intend to plant 86 million acres of corn this year, which is eight percent fewer acres than in 2007. Farmers also expect to plant less cotton this year, with the report indicating 9.4 million acres of that crop will be planted, a 13 percent decrease from 2007.

Farmers are turning to soybeans and wheat as they reduce corn and cotton acres. Soybean acreage will increase 18 percent, to 74.8 million acres, and wheat acreage will grow by six percent, to 63.8 million acres.

"The corn number is about 1.4 million acres less than pre-report estimates," said Terry Francl, AFBF senior economist, "and it appears there will be more acres devoted to beans than predicted. A whopping 3.1 million acres more than expected will be planted to beans if this survey is correct."

The Kentucky Agricultural Statistics Service reported that planting intentions in the state indicated 1.23 million acres of corn, down by 220,000 acres from 2007, and 1.33 million acres of soybeans, up 230,000 acres. The burley tobacco estimate was for 71,000 acres, down 6,000 acres from 2007. Meanwhile, dark tobacco acreage appears to be on the rise, with an approximate 2,000-acre increase for both fired and air-cured.

Record high wheat prices brought

the expected result, a four percent increase in winter wheat seeded acreage nationally and a 120,000-acre hike in Kentucky, according to KASS.

The cotton and wheat numbers are close to the pre-report, mid-point acreage estimates, Francl said. When the acreage numbers for the seven major crops (corn, beans, wheat, cotton, sorghum, barley and oats) and hay ground are considered, farmers intend to plant about four million more acres in 2008. About half the new acres will come from ground that was in the Conservation Reserve Program, and the rest will be ground devoted to farming

for the first time due to higher crop prices.

In addition, the latest grain stocks report showed an unanticipated surprise with March 1 corn stocks coming in at just under 6.9 billion bushels, more than 200 million bushels less than the mid-point of analysts' pre-report estimates, and 90 million bushels below the low end of the range of pre-report estimates.

The soybean stocks number showed about 75 million more bushels of beans in stock.

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★ There are advertisements for "roping" cattle . . .

★ Feedlots are so large they require on-site mills . . .

That, and much more, was part of the landscape for KFB's Spring Beef Tour last month through Texas cattle country. About 75 members from 28 counties took the four-day tour of ranches and cattle-related businesses west and north of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

Among many things, the Kentucky contingent saw some sizeable cow-calf and stocker operations, a feed lot, replacement heifers, feed mills, hay production, a cutting horse training center, a "wind farm," the aforementioned processing plant plus a global business that manufactures and distributes animal identification materials.

KFB added the tour to its annual agenda in response to the heightened interest in beef cattle production in Kentucky. Kenton County FB President Jim Kannady, who hauls cattle for dozens of producers, described the tour as "a great experience."

"I came back with some very use-

ful information," said Kannady, who serves on KFB's Beef Cattle Advisory Committee and also participated in last year's tour to Colorado and Wyoming. "The most striking thing was a 20,000-acre ranch with 15,000 feeder calves grazing on spring wheat. That's quite a sight."

Kannady and KFB Second Vice President John Hendricks said the group was wowed by a wind farm that is a subsidiary business of a large cow-calf ranch. They were told that each windmill generated enough power to serve 10,000 homes, required average wind speeds of at least 17 miles per hour and cost about \$1 million, which could be returned to an investor within six or seven years.

Hundreds of the windmills were scattered throughout the countryside, encompassing thousands of acres. Each windmill had a generator "as big as a school bus," said Hendricks, a Clark County cattleman and chairman of the Beef Advisory Committee.

The two men also had compliments for Allflex, a Dallas company that's a world leader in design, technology, manufacturing and delivery of animal identification materials. Said Hendricks: "They cleared up some information we needed on the cost of animal ID. We've heard talk that tags could cost up to \$60 a head; they said it would be about \$2.50." He said the tour's value "is an opportunity for our members to see new types of operations and get some ideas of what they could do in their operations."

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A GROUP OF 33 YOUNG FARMERS FROM 21 COUNTIES PARTICIPATED IN KFB'S ANNUAL TOUR OF COMMODITY MARKETS IN CHICAGO. HERE, PART OF THE GROUP POSES AT THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CHICAGO WITH A BRIEFCASE FILLED WITH A MILLION BUCKS. THE TOUR ALSO INCLUDED THE CHICAGO BOARD OF TRADE, THE CHICAGO MERCANTILE EXCHANGE AND SESSIONS ON LIVESTOCK HEDGING AND GRAIN HEDGING.

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WHEAT FLOUR USE WAS UP IN '07

Per capita wheat flour use for calendar year 2007 is estimated at 137.5 pounds, up three pounds from a year earlier, but still down 8.8 pounds from the recent high in 2000. The April Wheat Outlook report provides the following history of flour use.

For nearly 100 years, per capita wheat use had declined in the United States, as strenuous physical labor became less common as labor-saving devices proliferated and diets diversified. Wheat use dropped from over 225 pounds per person in 1879 to a low of 110 pounds in 1972. By 1996, use had rebounded to 146.8 pounds per capita. The overall growth in per capita use that occurred between 1973 and 1997 reflected changes that included the boom in away-from-home eating, the desire of consumers for greater variety and more convenience in food products, promotion of wheat flour and pasta products by industry organizations, and wider recognition of health benefits stemming from eating high-fiber, grain-based foods.

Growth in per capita wheat-based products ended temporarily in 1997 due to changing consumer preferences, including diets with fewer carbohydrates. Consumer interest in these diets apparently spiked in 2000 and has since declined as per capita wheat use has been on the rise from a low of 134.2 pounds in 2005.

DAIRIES SHIPPING MORE MILK

Kentucky milk production for March 2008 totaled 115 million pounds, up 12 percent from February but down two percent from March 2007. The average number of milk cows, at 91,000 head, was unchanged from February but down two percent from March 2007. Milk per cow averaged 1,260 pounds, up 130 pounds from February but unchanged from last year.

Milk production in the 23 major states during March totaled 15.1 billion pounds, up 2.4 percent from March 2007. February revised production, at 13.9 billion pounds, was up 6.2 percent from February 2007. The number of milk cows on farms in the 23 states was 8.44 million head.

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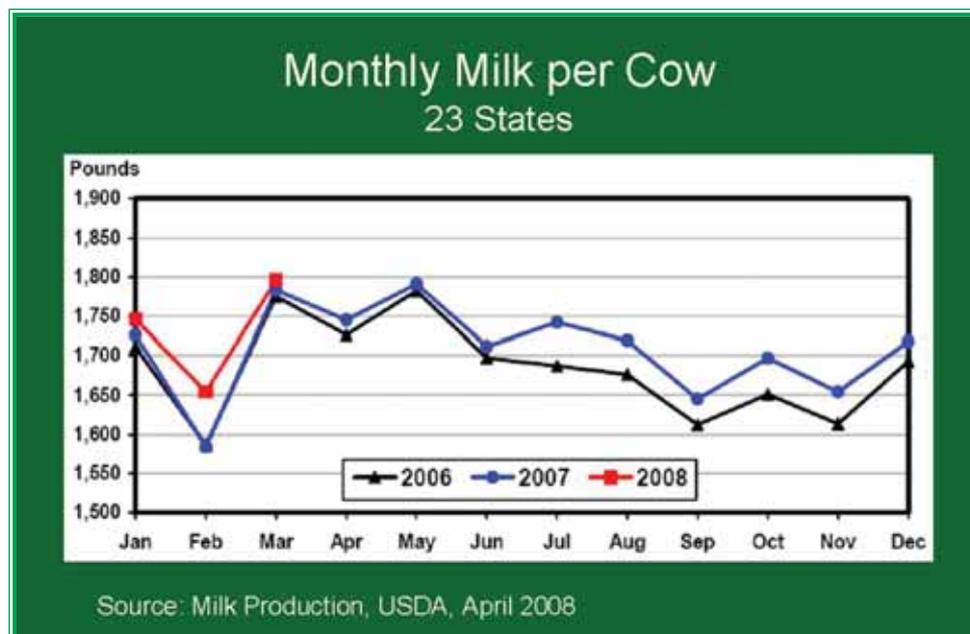
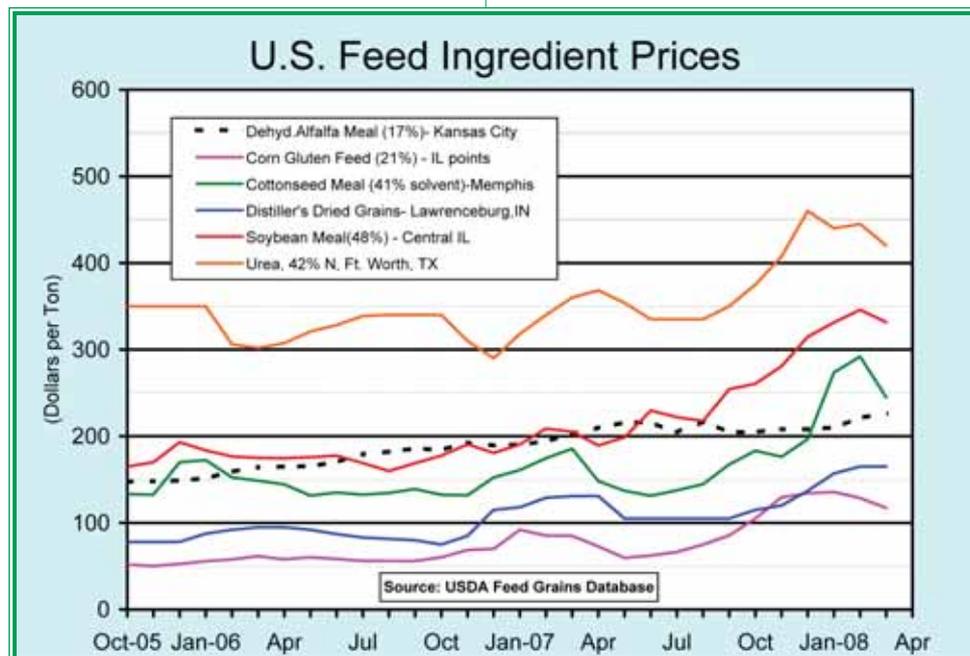
TOP CROP COUNTIES REVEALED

The 2007 drought caused a wide variation in average yields for corn and soybeans. The extent of this variation is evident in county production data released last month by the Kentucky Agricultural Statistics Service.

Kentucky's average corn yield was 129 bushels per acre. The three top-yielding counties were Butler, Ballard, and Ohio, with corn yields of 173, 169 and 167 bushels, respectively. In contrast,

Nicholas County's corn crop averaged only 45 bushels. In terms of total volume produced, Union County led the way with 14.82 million bushels, followed by Henderson County, 12.77 million bushels, and Daviess County, 11.99 million bushels.

Butler County also led the state with the top average soybean yield of 43 bushels. Taylor County was second with 42, followed by Pendleton County at 40. The state average soybean yield was estimated at 26.



H-2A program is critical

Revisions to the H-2A temporary worker program will be a critical component to the success of farmers keeping food production in America. According to AFBF, labor challenges will force more and more farmers to use the program in spite of well-documented pitfalls, while other farmers who face labor shortages continue to be unable to use the program at all.

In comments submitted to the Department of Labor, AFBF recommended a number of revisions to the H-2A program to help alleviate a serious shortage in the number of available agricultural workers. AFBF encouraged DOL's efforts to move toward a market-based wage in the H-2A program and said the existing method for setting wages has "outlived its usefulness."

The H-2A program currently mandates an "adverse effect wage rate" that

forces growers to pay wages higher than the market – on top of housing and transportation costs, according to AFBF. In some cases, those requirements make the program impossible to use from an economic standpoint.

"Growers have been clamoring for years for a more sensible, market-based wage," said AFBF President Bob Stallman. "We are hopeful the Labor Department can implement this reform in an open, transparent manner that makes it easier for farmers and ranchers to use the program."

Other reforms AFBF supported in its comments were: eliminating the 50 percent rule regarding domestic recruitment; providing a housing voucher for program users and including packing

and processing employees, as well as the dairy sector, as part of the program.

Farm Bureau also asked the department to change some of its proposals. AFBF said the 120-day recruitment requirement was far too long and should be cut to no more than 60 days. AFBF also called for fundamental due-process reforms in the department's proposed debarment process, and it strongly urged the department to scale back the enormous increase in fees it was proposing for program participants.

In comments to a companion rule proposed by the Department of Homeland Security, AFBF urged DHS not to change its existing treatment of sheepherders and how it treats them under its visa provisions.

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- ◆ 100 Acre development tract at Owensboro, KY \$2,730,000
- ◆ 15 Acre broiler farm with six houses near Sebree, KY \$895,000
- ◆ Home and 115 acres selling in 8 tracts near Horse Branch, KY Date 6/07/08

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FARM FILE



GOAP announces two appointments

Roger Thomas, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy (GOAP), announced two new appointments: Michael Judge, Director of Operations; and Jennifer Mobbs, Compliance Specialist.

Judge previously served as the Executive Director of the Office of Agriculture Marketing and Product Promotion at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. His background includes production agriculture, agriculture economics and marketing. He was Assistant Professor at Eastern Kentucky University from 1981-2004 where he also served as the Director of University Farms. He currently resides in Richmond with his wife.

Ms. Mobbs was promoted to GOAP Compliance Specialist. She will be working with the Senior Compliance Coordinator in implementing the compliance efforts of the Agricultural Development Fund.

pork producers seek help

AFBF asked the Agriculture Department to make additional Section 32 purchases of pork to help provide some stability for the sector, as well as supply the healthy protein source to users of the nation's nutrition programs.

"Additional Section 32 purchases would help the pork industry at this critical time," said AFBF President Bob Stallman in a letter to Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer. "We request that you evaluate such a purchase for the benefits that it would provide both producers and consumers."

Section 32 is a permanent appropriation USDA uses to support non-farm program commodities while enhancing nutrition programs. The purchases could help the pork industry during a crucial time, said Stallman.

According to AFBF, prices for live market hogs have plunged to levels not seen in nearly a decade.

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Acreage reporting deadlines set

Farm Service Agency is reminding farmers of the acreage reporting requirements that must be met prior to receiving program benefits. The final date to certify small grains is May 31 and July 15 is the date for all other crops except small grain and value loss crops (ornamental nursery, Christmas trees, aquaculture, turfgrass

sod, ginseng).

Producers must report acreages to maintain eligibility for price support programs, noninsured crop assistance program and conservation reserve program. All cropland on all farms must be certified to remain eligible for these programs.

AFBF praises Korean trade development

AFBF is praising the announcement that Korea will fully open its market to U.S. beef consistent with World Animal Health Organization (OIE) standards.

"This agreement with Korea has been a long time coming," said AFBF President Bob Stallman. "Farm Bureau has been steadfast in its support for fully reopening foreign markets for U.S. beef in compliance with OIE standards. It is important that all ranchers are able to ship their beef based on sound and pre-

dictable rules."

Korea was one of U.S. beef's top export markets before being closed to the United States in 2003 due to a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Beef exports to Korea prior to the market closure were valued at more than \$772 million.

AFBF estimates the FTA will increase U.S. agricultural exports to Korea by \$1.5 billion per year after full implementation.

News report focuses on farm labor crisis

A shortage of reliable workers in the U.S. forced Steve Scaroni to move some of his farming operations to the Mexican state of Guanajuato, CBS News correspondent John Blackstone reported on the "CBS Evening News."

"It's a very sad situation that, you know, at 50 years old, I've had to come down here in a sense, start over, to be able to complete my American dream," Scaroni said. He now has 2,000 acres and 500 employees in Mexico, and he ships more than two million pounds of lettuce to the U.S. each week.

Blackstone reported, "Scaroni now divides his time between Mexico and big farms he still runs in the United States.

He says he was forced to start moving to Mexico because an immigration crackdown made it increasingly difficult to get workers in Arizona and California."

According to Scaroni, "We just can't get enough labor, every day, on a consistent basis to meet our production demands."

"The lettuce processed and packed today will be across the U.S. border by tomorrow morning," Blackstone reported. "With the food crossing the border, the workers don't have to — as American companies provide jobs in Mexico."

The CBS report also stated that U.S. farmers have moved more than 46,000 acres of production to Mexico.

Hardwood industry has troubles

There's a significant downturn in the market for lumber from hardwood trees. A range of factors are causing problems for small sawmills and logging companies that make up much of the nation's hardwood lumber industry. Many large furniture makers have left the U.S., more raw logs are being shipped overseas for processing and changing tastes in hardwoods mixed with the slowdown in new housing starts have cut demand for many types of

hardwoods that are used in flooring, cabinets and other housing components.

As a result, there is rising unemployment for forestry workers and a decline in hardwood production nationwide. Production has dropped from 12.6 billion board feet in 1999 to about 10.7 billion board feet last year, statistics show.

A Forest Service economist predicts this year's production to dip to 10.5 billion board feet or less.

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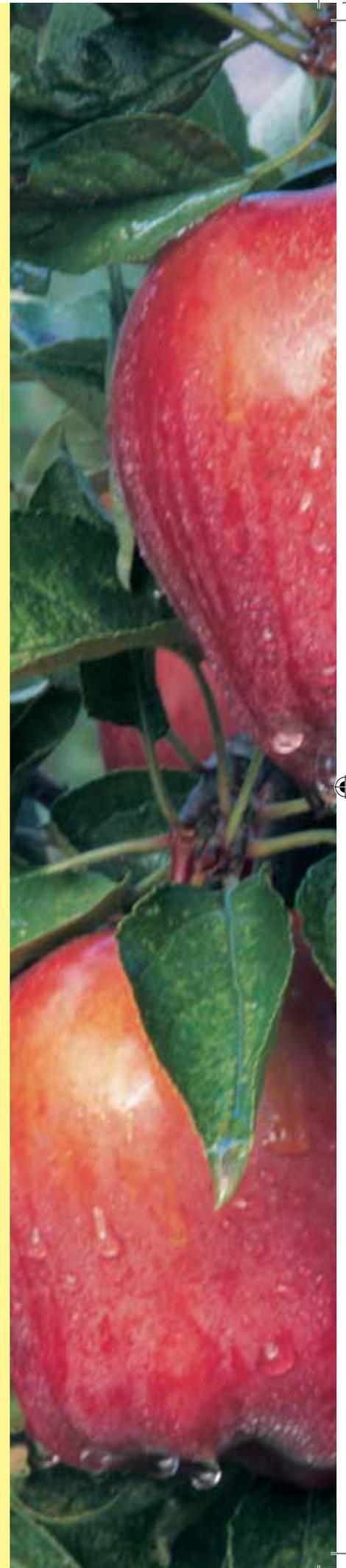
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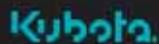
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