

Kentucky

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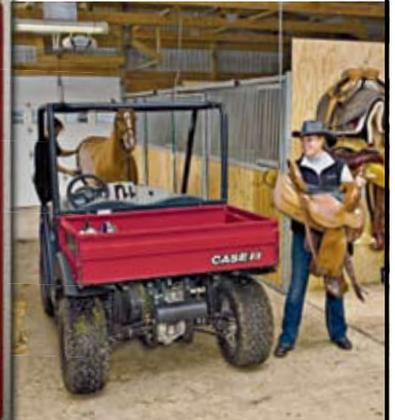
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A winter scene in Central Kentucky
Cover Photo by Jim Lane
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I can recall a few periods over the course of my many years of farming when I was hesitant to encourage a young person to pursue a farming career. High interest rates and low commodity prices will generate that line of thinking.



But today, there are a number of positive factors that when added up, amount to a very encouraging outlook for the future of agriculture and those who farm the land. I'm convinced there is a promising opportunity for young people to enter the business, as well as for existing young farmers to expand if they so desire.

The landscape of Kentucky agriculture has changed dramatically since the 2001 advent of our agricultural development initiative. Our farm economy no longer revolves around just two commodities (tobacco and cattle). We're now highly diversified in the production sector. And just as importantly, we've developed a sound infrastructure to help producers sell what they produce.

Kentucky farmers have more reasonable choices and available resources at their disposal than ever before. Throw in favorable interest rates and good market conditions for virtually every significant farm commodity common in Kentucky, we therefore have a highly favorable climate for beginning farmers. In addition, there are many signs pointing to long-term strength for American agriculture.

Agriculture certainly offers far more opportunities than when my father and grandfather farmed the land. Expanded world trade allows today's farmers to be more competitive. Technology allows them to be more productive and efficient. And unlike the old days, today's farmers aren't just producing food and fiber; they're also a significant source of energy.

Farm Bureau always has embraced the responsibility of nurturing and guiding young farmers. We strive to provide them with the necessary tools for success. Indeed, it is our duty to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed in our highly-competitive industry.

For veteran farmers like me, it's important to impart the lessons we have learned, remembering that someone once offered us a helping hand. So now is a great time to encourage young farmers to step forward, seize the opportunity and meet their potential. We need these young people to emerge as the lifeblood of our organization, and the future of our industry.

MARK HANEY

PRESIDENT
KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU

AG DEVELOPMENT FUND DWINDLING

Maintaining the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF) is a high KFB priority for this legislative session. Roger Thomas, who plays a key role in administering the fund in his role of Executive Director of the Governor's Office for Agricultural Policy (GOAP), says that's an issue warranting close attention because "the fund is at a critical point."

Thomas said the amount of money available for state and regional projects has dramatically declined in recent years because of two factors: (1) An increasing

KADF debt service obligation for infrastructure and other projects approved by the legislature in previous state budgets, and (2) declining Master Settlement Agreement money due to slumping cigarette sales in the U.S.

"The debt service obligations are diminishing the opportunities for state and regional investments. Moving debt service from the KADF to the General Fund may not be an option until state revenues improve," said Thomas. "The Budget challenges will be one that policy makers will deal with during this legislative session."

Thomas is optimistic concerning the continued support for the KADF local county investments. These are projects submitted by county agriculture development councils for approval by the state board. This amount has been approximately one third of the total dollars available in KADFs. Virtually every county in Kentucky has benefitted from these programs. Governor Steve Beshear and legislative leaders -- including Senator Ag Committee Chairman David Givens and House Ag Committee Chairman Tom McKee -- are among many in Frankfort who have vowed to continue their support for allocating 50 percent of the Master Settlement Agreement to the KADF. The challenge, said Thomas, is that the fund is dwindling down to a level that limits opportunities for projects with regional impact.

"We have to utilize the limited resources we have for the best possible impact," he said. As a result of eight regional stakeholder meetings and various other information gathering efforts in 2011 the KADB has identified priorities for future investments, said Thomas. The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board which is chaired by Governor Steve Beshear and, includes former KFB President Sam Moore, current KFB Director Pat Henderson and former KFB Director Jim Mahan, supports continuing the investments in statewide projects such as the Kentucky Proud Program, Kentucky Beef Network, Kentucky Horticulture Council and Kentucky Dairy Development Council. And during a planning meeting back in October the group expressed support for large-scale agribusiness projects.

Thomas noted additional interest in projects to boost exports of Kentucky farm commodities, as well as the on-farm energy efficiency program initiated by the Beshear administration.

2012 marks the 11th year of the Master Settlement Agreement between tobacco companies and state governments. Since its inception in 2001, Kentucky's agriculture development initiative has invested more than \$365 million to an array of state, regional and local projects affecting thousands of farm families and agribusinesses.

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The farm bill that Congress is working on now will certainly look different than any previous legislation. Times have changed. The U.S. economy, consumers' attitudes on food production and even farmers' opinions on how best to run their businesses are all different from the last go-round. So, as we head into creating the new legislation, it's important that Farm Bureau lead the discussion.



Earlier this year, after much thought and deliberation, the American Farm Bureau developed a plan to establish a catastrophic revenue loss program. This plan is unique in that it will help protect America's farmers from losses that truly endanger the very core of their farms. At the same time, it recognizes today's budget realities. It is also unique in that it can be applied to a broader range of commodities, like fruits and vegetables.

In past farm programs, the government simply wrote checks to farmers to help them sustain America's food supply. But times are changing. While the majority of Americans think farmers need help, they don't agree on just writing checks. We want to flip that around. Government should accept systemic risk, which would lower insurance premiums for farmers and allow them to choose their own coverage at a much lower cost. Our proposal is a new approach to farm policy.

Not only would the Farm Bureau's plan get rid of direct and counter-cyclical payments, it would eliminate the need for disaster assistance for crops, which, as we've experienced in the past, offers no assurance to farmers when catastrophe happens.

The Farm Bureau plan is the best possible solution for a new farm program. It's scalable depending on what the final budget is and could be utilized for all commodities as long as they are covered by crop insurance. But, most importantly, it offers farmers peace of mind.

BOB STALLMAN

PRESIDENT, AFBF

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

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Advertising Asst.	Brittany Ogaldez
Creative Director	Donia Simmons
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KFB REAPS NATIONAL HONORS

More than 400 KFB members, including 26 voting delegates, participated in last month's AFBF annual meeting.

In addition to helping establish 2012's national priority issues, the KFB members were also able to take in a variety of industry-based seminars and support the state's representatives competing for national recognition in a variety of contests. Approximately 7,000 members from across the country attended.

Kentucky highlights included:

KFB was honored with five Awards of Excellence for demonstrating outstanding achievements in meeting its members' needs in the categories of: Agriculture Education and Promotion, Leadership Development, Member Services, Policy Implementation and Public Relations and Information.

KFB was specially recognized for accomplishing 50 consecutive years of membership growth, becoming only the second state Farm Bureau in the country to reach that milestone.

Michael and Nora McCain of Washington County represented Kentucky in the Young Farmer & Rancher Achievement Award competition, finishing in the top ten. This award recognizes young farmers and ranchers who have excelled in their farming or ranching operations and exhibited superior leadership abilities. Participants are evaluated on a combination of their agricultural operation's growth and financial progress, Farm Bureau leadership and leadership outside of Farm Bureau.

Adam Hinton of Fleming County was Kentucky's representative in the Young Farmer & Rancher Excellence in Agriculture



KFB Director Terry Gilbert accepted the Apex Award from AFBF President Bob Stallman at a breakfast fundraiser. KFB received the award for its support of the AFBF Foundation for Agriculture.

competition, also finishing in the top ten. This award recognizes young farmers and ranchers who do not derive the majority of their income from an agricultural operation, but who actively contribute and grow through their involvement in agriculture, their leadership ability and participation in Farm Bureau and other organizations.

Sierra Enlow of LaRue County was Kentucky's representative in the Young Farmer & Rancher Discussion Meet. This competition simulates a committee meeting in which active discussion and participation are expected. Participants are evaluated on their ability to exchange ideas and information on the topic: "How do we capitalize on the growing demand for agricultural products?"

Greenup and Taylor County Farm

Bureaus were among the 25 counties invited to share their creative programs as part of AFBF's County Activities of Excellence. The displays spotlight innovative programs by county Farm Bureaus in five categories: Education & Agriculture Promotion; Leadership Development; Member Services; Policy Implementation; and Public Relations & Information.

KFB was also awarded the AFBF Foundation for Agriculture's Apex Award, given to states who donated 10 percent more to the Foundation than the previous year. Donations to the AFBF Foundation for Agriculture are used to further the organization's mission to build awareness, understanding and a positive public perception of agriculture through education.

POLICY CALLS FOR NEW APPROACH TO FARM PROGRAM



KFB had 26 delegates at the annual meeting. Pictured at the business session, from left in the front row, are KFB Directors Eddie Melton, Fritz Giesecke, Terry Gilbert, Mary Kate Kordes, Kelly Thurman and Jay Coleman.

National farm policy should be rewritten this year to establish a program that protects farmers from catastrophic revenue losses by using a flexible combination of fiscally responsible tools, said voting delegates at AFBF's 93rd Annual Meeting. KFB had 26 delegates.

In approving policy for 2012, the farmers and ranchers endorsed a multi-pronged proposal, including a provision for catastrophic revenue loss protection that works with a flexible range of crop insurance products, as well as amending the current farm bill's marketing loan provisions to better reflect market values.

The adopted policy calls for a farm bill that "provides strong and effective safety net and risk management programs that do not guarantee a profit and minimizes the potential for farm programs affecting

production decisions."

"Our delegates approved a program to help farmers manage the many different types and levels of risk they face today, in particular catastrophic revenue losses that can threaten the viability of a farm or ranch," said AFBF President Bob Stallman. "That is consistent with what we believe is the core mission of the federal farm program."

Stallman was re-elected as AFBF president for a seventh two-year term. He is a cattle and rice producer from Columbus, Texas. In addition, Barry Bushue was re-elected to a third two-year term as AFBF vice president. Bushue produces berries and nursery plants in Boring, Ore., and also serves as Oregon FB president. KFB President Mark Haney continues to serve on the board as a representative from the southeast region.

The delegates defeated a proposal to retain the current farm bill's direct payments. In addition, by almost a two-to-one

margin, the delegates defeated an amendment that would have allowed a patchwork of support through multiple programs for different commodities and regions.

"Delegate action against the patchwork approach recognized that it is impossible to ensure equity between diverse programs for various commodities," Stallman said. "Without that assurance, one program would inevitably provide more government protection than the next program and we would inadvertently be encouraging producers to take their signals from government programs rather than the marketplace.

"Our delegates approved a policy that is flexible enough to work within the funding constraints we, as a nation, are facing, and the fiscal challenges we have a duty to address," Stallman said. "Our delegates recognize we need to move beyond the policies of the past and to move toward programs to help producers deal with risk."

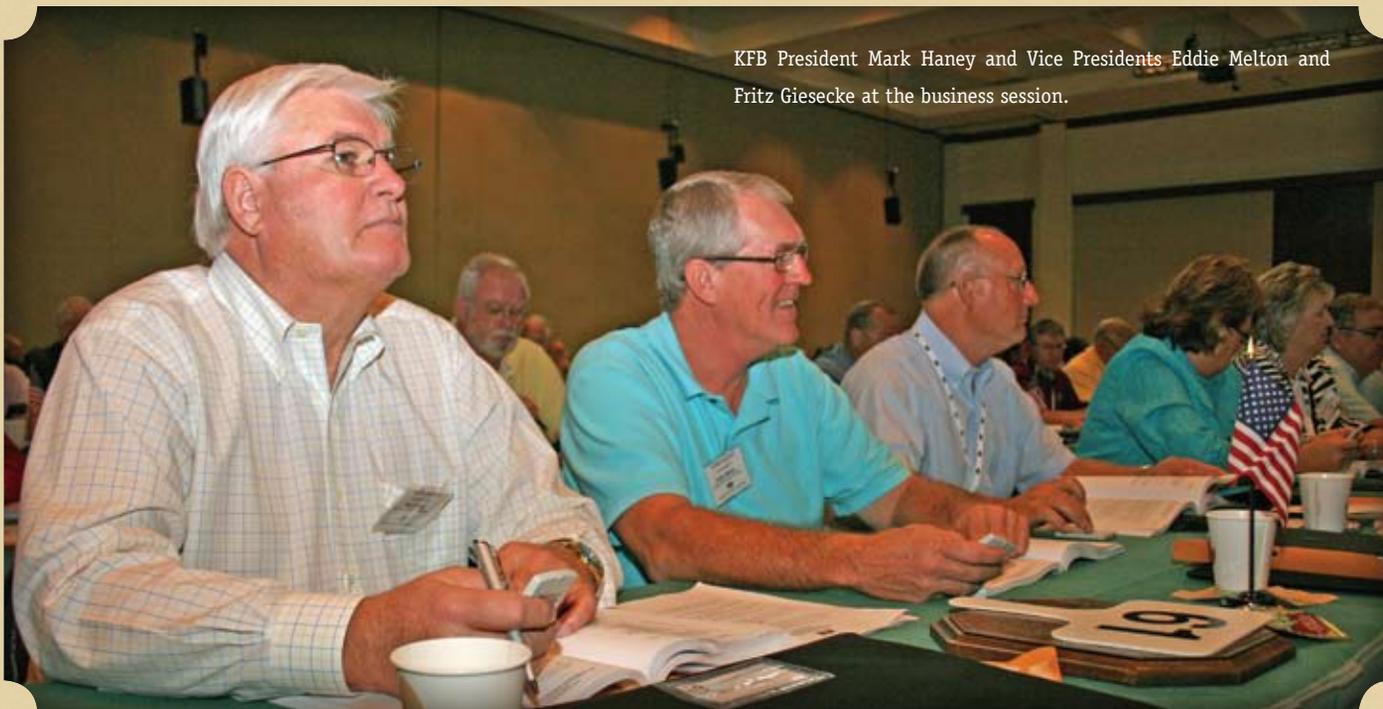
In a related discussion on dairy policy, delegates voted to move away from the current dairy price support and Milk Income Loss Contract programs and toward a program that bases risk protection on milk prices minus feed costs. This takes production costs into consideration, as well as recognizes the dairy industry's regional differences, according to Stallman.

On renewable fuels, the delegates reaffirmed support for the federal Renewable Fuels Standard by defeating an amendment to strike that support.

"The RFS remains critical to the viability of ethanol as an alternative to imported petroleum fuel," explained Stallman, "and the delegates felt that continuing to support production and use of domestic renewable fuels was a national security issue."

STALLMAN SAYS FARMERS PROVIDE “SOLID FOUNDATION”

KFB President Mark Haney and Vice Presidents Eddie Melton and Fritz Giesecke at the business session.



America’s farmers and ranchers are more productive than ever and are providing a solid economic foundation for the nation, AFBF President Bob Stallman said in his keynote address at the annual meeting.

Farm and ranch families are growing more food with fewer resources than ever before, Stallman said.

“Over a 20-year period, corn yields are up 41 percent. Per bushel soil loss has fallen by 70 percent. Water use per bushel of corn is down 27 percent. All major crops show similar trends,” said Stallman.

He also extolled the record-breaking growth in U.S. agricultural exports over the past year.

“We sold \$42.5 billion more in agricultural products than we imported in 2011,” he added. “That number will stay strong

into this year and, I am convinced, into the foreseeable future.”

American agriculture’s successes have come in the face of challenges, Stallman said, including droughts and doubts about the future of agricultural policy; floods, and a deluge of government regulatory actions; storms, and an often tempestuous public conversation about the farmer’s role in feeding our nation.

Stallman discussed Farm Bureau’s Systemic Risk Reduction Program proposal, which he said would help protect farmers from catastrophic losses while recognizing today’s budget realities. He called on delegates to put the organization on a solid footing.

Stallman said the cost of federal regulations falls the hardest on small businesses such as family-owned farms and ranches. He commended members for their grassroots engagement to push back

against government overreach.

Just as important as these policy concerns is the conversation with consumers, he said.

“We must engage directly with the consumer as an industry in ways we haven’t before,” Stallman said. “And while we must fully engage in this ongoing national dialogue about food and the devoted care we take when we grow it, we must also never ever forget to listen.”

He said the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, a group of 77 agricultural organizations and companies, including AFBF and KFB, is doing just that by listening to and answering Americans’ questions, as well as giving farmers and ranchers an opportunity to raise their voices.

“From the environment to the economy, trade and jobs, we have a great story to tell,” Stallman proclaimed.

AFBF WOMEN ADOPT “EMPOWERED” THEME

“**E**ngaged, Empowered, Strong” was announced as the 2012-2013 theme of the Women’s Leadership Program. Committee Chair Terry Gilbert, a KFB Director from Boyle County, explained the new theme of the program during the annual business meeting of the AFB Women.

“By engaged, I mean that our program provides opportunities for women to get involved in an organization that represents all of agriculture,” said Gilbert. “Empowered’ describes how Farm Bureau Women use their training and knowledge to tell their stories in authentic, dynamic ways – to consumers, lawmakers, teachers, students and others.”

Gilbert noted that Farm Bureau Women “really stepped up their social

media game in 2011, forging connections with consumers and responding to questions about what we do on our farms and ranches to produce food.” She urged members to continue consider using social media to help put a face on agriculture.

Elaborating on the final facet of the tri-part theme, Gilbert said, “Strong reflects how the AFB Women’s Leadership Committee helps women build on their strengths, as agricultural professionals and leaders. This refers especially to speaking up and speaking out about agricultural and legislative issues.”

A National Women’s Leadership Conference coordinated by the commit-

tee every two years is open to all Farm Bureau women and provides ample opportunities for professional development. More than 600 attendees participated in the 2011 conference; the next one is planned for 2013 in Las Vegas.

The committee annually sponsors the Women’s Communications Boot Camp, an intensive training seminar that is open to all Farm Bureau women. Coming up in February, the committee and Farm Bureaus around the nation will hold consumer outreach events during Food Check-Out Week while also supporting Ronald McDonald Houses and other charities with food and monetary donations.

WOMEN’S “BOOT CAMP” IS IN JULY

AFBF’s Women’s Leadership Committee is hosting its sixth annual Women’s Communication Boot Camp, July 17-20 in Washington, D.C., and invites all Farm Bureau women to apply. The Boot Camp is a unique leadership training opportunity for women who want to beef up their ability to speak, use social media, work with the news media and talk with elected officials on behalf of agriculture and Farm Bureau. All women who are Farm Bureau members may apply.”



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WORKSHOP REPORTS . . .

Following are highlights from various workshops conducted at the AFBF annual meeting:

Farm bill needed this year

Farmers will be better off if Congress can agree on a new farm bill this year, AFBF farm policy specialist Mary Kay Thatcher said.

With Congress unable to agree on much these days and with a shrinking budget to work with, passing a new farm bill could be an uphill climb and get pushed to next year.

"There is no upside to that," Thatcher said. "There will be even more budget cuts if that happens. There's every reason to push it through this year if we can."

Thatcher outlined the political situation surrounding the farm bill, including growing support in Congress for limiting eligibility by capping farmers' income and increasing use of food stamps and other nutrition programs as the U.S. economy remains sluggish.

"The economy will be a tremendous issue going forward," said Thatcher, "and one of the reasons it will be difficult to finish a farm bill in 2012."

Nutrition programs already account for about 76 percent of the farm bill's total \$911 billion in spending over 10 years.

In addition, the growing cost of crop insurance premium subsidies, which grew from \$4.7 billion in 2010 to \$7 billion in 2011, could make them more of a target for cuts.

Thatcher also provided an analysis of how other farm groups' "shallow-loss" proposals could leave a lot of farmers in dire straits in years of catastrophic farm revenue losses. Most of those proposals would provide support more often but only cover

five percent to 10 percent of a farmer's losses.

AFBF economist John Anderson provided an explanation of Farm Bureau's Systemic Risk Reduction Program farm bill proposal, which is designed to protect farmers from catastrophic revenue losses. Proposed SRRP coverage levels would be in the 70 percent to 80 percent range. It would be administered by the Agriculture Department's Risk Management Agency and operate as a core program with farmers buying crop insurance as "wrap-around" revenue risk protection.

One of the most attractive features of the SRRP proposal, according to Anderson, is the impact it would have on lowering farmers' crop insurance premiums.

Risk management is vital

Solid risk management "has never been more important" for producers of the nation's major commodities, given a range of volatility factors, North Carolina State University Extension specialist Nicholas Piggott told producers during a session on the outlook for corn, soybeans, wheat and cotton. The agricultural economist said that he anticipates "another fierce acreage-bidding war" this season. "This is fantastic for you farmers out there," Piggott argued, citing producer reaction to strong market signals.

However, "acreage is not limited," and tight corn stocks and continued high prices should translate to a significant boost in nationwide corn acreage, likely at the expense of cotton, and possibly soybean, production. Piggott noted 2011 was a "great year" for corn, cotton, and wheat but only a "moderate year" for soybeans, and this season's U.S. bean market outcome may depend largely on South American weather and its impact on for-

eign supply.

"Unless the corn price comes down, which I doubt it will with the tight corn stocks, we're going to need soybean prices to rally significantly to beat those (soybean-to-corn) acres back," Piggott advised. "I think the balance sheets will look stronger for corn."

Continued ethanol profitability also weighs in favor of increased corn plantings, he said, especially if the biofuels industry can overcome current regulatory and logistical obstacles and opposition from the small equipment sector to new 15 percent ethanol/gasoline blends. Hearty retail "E15" adoption could mean a 50 percent boost in ethanol market growth, Piggott projected.

Given a significant increase in cotton ending stocks for 2011 and concurrently healthy crops out of Australia, Pakistan and India, corn or wheat likely will grab more southern cotton acres in 2012.

Piggott sees growers weathering 2012 in good stead if they can manage anticipated high price volatility, particularly if they can sell crops in the top third of the market. That suggests reliance on crop insurance to provide a "base," informed use of options, and aggressive forward contracting of "small parcels" -- ideally, crop increments of no more than five percent.

Cattle numbers continue to drop

Consumers should expect little relief in the price of beef as cattle producers continue to decrease their herds because of soaring feed prices and a weak economy, said Dr. James Mintert, professor of Ag Economics and assistant director of Extension at Purdue University.

High demand for ethanol has forced the price of corn to nearly double in the past few years, driving livestock produc-

tion costs up and putting cattle producers in the red. They've responded by raising fewer cattle, according to Mintert.

"Beef producers are recouping production costs by putting less meat on consumers' plates," Mintert said. "Fewer pounds of meat mean higher prices throughout the system."

From 1925 to 1975 the beef industry was relatively healthy, Mintert explained, as demand and production grew with the population and income growth. The span from 1975 to 2011 looks a lot different, as the number of cattle dropped from 132 million head to 90 million in 2011.

"That's the picture of an industry shrinking because of a lack of profitability," Mintert said. "This is an industry that has struggled to make money for a long time."

A saving grace for the beef industry is the export market, which has rebounded from the lows in 2004 when a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy was discovered in a U.S. cow. The United States is now a net beef exporter.

"That has really helped hold down the number of pounds we put in front of consumers," Mintert said.

The pork industry, on the other hand, is much healthier, as production has increased 30 percent during the last 20 years in the United States and Canada. Pork producers face the same challenges as beef concerning feed costs, and like beef producers, are putting fewer pounds of pork on consumer plates. The difference is pork exports. Today, almost one pound of pork in four goes to the export market.

"Export growth has helped pork see steady increases over a long period of time," Mintert said. "Pork exports were up 15 percent this year over last year. They are up 54 percent compared to 2007."

Federal regs present a threat

Farmers need to commit their time,

energy, money and best thinking if they want to stop the proliferation of federal regulations that threaten their businesses, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce official said.

"This isn't academic folks," said Reed Rubinstein, senior counsel for the Chamber of Commerce. "When the federal government exercises its authority, it can send you to jail. We are all one regulation away from being out of business."

Most of the "hyper regulation" currently affecting farmers stems from expansion of environmental law, he said, but new health care regulations and financial reform will add to their regulatory burden in the next five to 10 years.

Increasingly, the Environmental Protection Agency is emphasizing ecological sustainability of agriculture in its regulatory programs, based on what it says are public concerns, Rubinstein said. "Translation: 'You need somebody to tell you how to run your business because you're not doing it in the right way,'" he said. "But who's going to decide what 'sustainable' means?"

EPA also is having internal discussions about moving away from place-based regulations supported by science to a holistic approach, which includes concern for social issues in writing regulations, he said.

Farmers need to get engaged in these issues, Rubinstein said, and comment on proposed regulations at every level of government.

Hyper regulation is also a state and local issue, he emphasized. Farmers need to be willing to serve on federal and local advisory panels that draft and review regulations, and file lawsuits if necessary.

"If you're not in there punching, you don't have a chance," he said.

In addition to responding, farmers and ranchers need to be proactive in addressing issues, he said. "We all want clean water, clean air," he said. "We need to ask, 'how do we work together to

achieve it'" in a way that doesn't handicap farmers' ability to grow food.

Rubinstein also encouraged farmers and ranchers to support legislation that would regulate how EPA settles lawsuits filed against it. Often environmental groups sue the agency to advance their agenda and EPA settles the lawsuits in a manner that establishes the regulatory control the groups wanted. Farmers can find coalition partners in other groups that feel as strongly as they do about private property rights, he suggested.

There also is value in publicizing excessive regulations, Rubinstein said, such as EPA's plan to regulate spilled milk under the Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures program. The agency backed off when the plan was brought to the attention of the general public.

Asian markets are booming

As global demand for U.S. agricultural products continues to grow, American farmers can expect to see an increasing number of opportunities in China and other Asian markets in 2012, according to William Westman, Vice President for International Trade at the Meat Institute.

"There are tremendous opportunities in China," said Westman. "You have four times the population of the United States on two-thirds the size of the land and 225 cities anticipated to have populations of at least one million people by 2025. And just like us, they want what is best for their families. They want safe food and, with their emerging middle class, they now want more proteins and higher quality food."

China also has more than \$3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves and is starting to use it. The country's agricultural production isn't adequately keeping pace with its rapidly growing population, even in areas where farmers are producing multiple crops per year on intensively utilized land.

Tracking the Trends

UK's Will Snell is widely respected for steering growers straight during tobacco's twists and turns

BY WALT REICHERT

When tobacco auction warehouses made way for contract buying stations, he was there, offering growers numbers, information and perspective.

When the decades-old tobacco program was sinking and farmers were fighting for a quota buyout, he was there to help guide them through a tenuous time.

Through billion-dollar sales seasons, poor crop years, volatile market conditions and political challenges, Will Snell was at the forefront of the tobacco scene, serving as the numbers guru, economic go-to guy and media superstar.

The mild-mannered University of Kentucky Agricultural Economist emerged as one of the best-known and most-respected officials in Kentucky agriculture after working through the highs and lows in the state's tobacco economy that has seen as much change in the last 15 years as the previous 200 years combined.

When the state's large and community newspapers wrote any story on tobacco, Snell was the man to track down for a quote. When tobacco farmers needed information about manufacturers' plans during the move to contracting, Snell fanned out across the state for county and regional tobacco meetings where he offered farmers objective information about markets and company intentions. When growers wondered how the tobacco buyout would affect them, Snell was the man they looked to for answers.

And year after year, growers have looked to Snell to assess market conditions and outlooks. And they listen reverently.

Snell, who grew up on a typical tobacco and beef cattle farm near Paris, never intended to study tobacco policy and markets when he entered the University of Kentucky in 1979. But his work with noted tobacco economist and ag economics professor Milt Shuffett moved him to study tobacco economics and earn all three of his degrees from UK. He started his teaching and extension work in 1989, just as the world of the tobacco farmers was changing politically, economically and socially. That put Snell, with his objective numbers and ability to communicate with growers, company officials and politicians alike, at the center of the whirlwind.

"I just happened to be in the right place at the right time," Snell said.

Shelby County tobacco farmer and state Senator Paul Hornback said Snell's assistance to growers was invaluable during those tumultuous times.

"You can't measure the contribution he gave to farmers, especially during the buyout," Hornback said. "If we wanted to know anything about the worldwide markets, Will was



WILL SNELL

the one to go to for the true numbers."

Roger Thomas, executive director of the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, also praised Snell's efforts on behalf of Kentucky tobacco growers during the uncertain days surrounding the tobacco buyout.

"Dr. Snell has been instrumental in working with policy makers, tobacco farmers and agricultural leaders to provide them with the most up-to-date information as it relates to tobacco economics across the state," Thomas said. "He was a true leader in the policy analysis of the tobacco buyout legislation."

Changing focus

Snell still lives in Bourbon County with his wife, Amy. They have two daughters, Lucy Ann and Caroline.

While Snell's knowledge of tobacco policy and markets, domestic and international, put him in the spotlight for almost a decade – from the late 90s to the mid-2000s – that period also marked the beginning of the end of tobacco's domination of the state's agricultural economy. In 1997, tobacco peaked in value, accounting for \$900 million in receipts and garnering 25 percent of the state's ag revenue. In the 1990s, 60,000 farm families in Kentucky grew tobacco. During the post-buyout years 2005-2010, tobacco receipts averaged \$340 million per year, and Snell predicts tobacco may struggle to hit \$300 million in receipts in the next several years. Once king of ag commodities, tobacco likely ended 2011 in sixth place, behind poultry, horses,

corn, soybeans, and beef cattle, according to UK estimates. And the next ag census will probably reveal that the state is down to about 5,000 tobacco farmers, Snell said.

Snell said he foresaw the decline in tobacco revenue but didn't expect the other commodities to grow as rapidly.

"I don't think anybody can say they saw \$6 corn and \$13 soybeans, and those prices won't likely last," Snell said. "But what we didn't see is that the size of the pie would get bigger."

But he said tobacco will likely continue to have a place in the state's agricultural lineup and predicts that, in the short-term at least, growers may enjoy higher prices as companies may struggle to ensure supply security.

"The big questions will be what will happen with FDA oversight and the labor problems," Snell said. "Those are two issues we don't have a lot of control over. But it's still a viable and sustainable industry."

Snell also predicts that while fewer tobacco farmers will grow larger crops, there will still be room for the smaller growers.

"Small to medium-sized farms may show better yields and the quality that the companies want," Snell said.

For Snell, the change in tobacco's share of the state's agriculture pie has also meant a change in job focus; tobacco no longer consumes his agenda. He said tobacco now accounts for about 20 percent of his work for UK. Teaching a class in food and agricultural marketing takes up another 20 percent, as does studying and reporting on macro economics.

But the lion's share of Snell's time now is devoted to his co-directorship of the Kentucky Agricultural Leadership Program (KALP). Formerly known as the Philip Morris Agricultural Leadership Development Program, KALP participants meet three days every month for two years where they discuss agriculture trade, finance, markets, legislation and other issues. The group takes two tours, one in the U. S. and one abroad. The 2010 class took a trip to study agriculture in New Zealand.

The ag leadership program has graduated nearly 250 members and Snell currently is at work on setting the program for the next class.

"I think I am most proud of my work with the leadership program," Snell said. "But I enjoy the mix of my work now. I grew up on the UK campus, never left and never intend to leave. I love my job."



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Built in 1852, Mount Pleasant Church sits on a knoll overlooking pastureland a few miles west of Harrodsburg. It has about 100 members.



H

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YOUNG MERCER COUNTY FARMER MIXES FARMING WITH A MINISTRY

Derek Baker guided his pickup truck down the winding country lane and into the parking lot of Mount Pleasant Church. Stepping out of the truck he glanced across the narrow road at a field where a herd of feeder cattle were grazing; a scene similar to one on his nearby farm.

Sporting a “Farm Credit Services” camouflage cap, plaid shirt, denim jacket, jeans and workboots, Baker had the look of the enterprising young farmer that he is. Hard to imagine that this young man is not only a fulltime farmer, but is pastor of that little church on a knoll overlooking pastureland in Mercer County, just west of Harrodsburg.

Even the 29-year-old Baker acknowledges that his ministry is a bit surprising.

“I hate public speaking,” he explained. “I didn’t have any intentions whatsoever to be a minister. This came about during a very difficult time in my life. It was a

result of a time when my life was chaos.”

Since embracing religion and focusing on a farming partnership with his father, Baker says he’s living a fulfilling life with his wife Becky and daughters Alyssa (10) and Emma (7). And Farm Bureau fits in the mix of his exhausting lifestyle: He serves as a Director of Mercer County FB. Last year that organization presented him with its annual “outstanding young farmer of the year” award.

At a recent meeting several Mercer County FB leaders described Baker as “hard working,” “humble,” and “focused.”

Baker’s childhood on a farm and within a religious family certainly prepared him for his role. His father, Charles, has raised cattle and tobacco for many years in western Mercer County and was a deacon and songleader at Bohon Christian Church.

Derek was very active with FFA at Mercer County High School and had every intention of farming fulltime when he graduated. But when he and Becky had



RIGHT: Derek Baker was selected by Mercer County FB for its annual award to an outstanding young farmer.

their first child, he took a factory job because of the stable income it provided.

“But I didn’t like that all,” he recalled.

He got re-involved with the family farming operation which now encompasses feeder cattle, a 75-head cow-calf operation, 15 acres of tobacco plus corn and hay to feed the herd. But during that period of young adulthood, Baker says he was dissatisfied with life. That became worse, he recalled, when a close friend was killed in an accident.

“I felt then that God really wanted me to do something special with my life,” he said. “I was feeling very empty. At that time (2003) Lewis Walter, who had retired as minister at Bohon (Christian Church), was serving as interim minister here at Mount Pleasant. He was a mentor to me. We talked, and I decided to pursue the ministry here.”

Founded in 1852 by Presbyterians, the Mount Pleasant Community Church currently has around 100 members, according to Baker, who performs a Sunday service, teaches adult Sunday School and Wednesday night bible study. Then there are the other responsibilities that come with leading a congregation – hospital visits, weddings, funerals, counseling, etc.

And as if farming, ministry and fatherhood aren’t enough, Baker also has a tree service business (a partnership).

“I’m looking to sell out my part of that,” he said, grinning. “I don’t need to be tied to all these things. It has gotten to be difficult to handle all of it.”

Baker says his sermons are hand-written, usually at night. “Sometimes I don’t know what I will talk about until Saturday night,” he said. “I usually go with that I feel in my heart at the time. I like speaking in a teaching style; like just having a conversation with a friend. I think the most important thing of the ministry is keeping reality in mind. They (the congregation) want to know that the bible is written for them. So I try to keep it real, to relate how the bible relates to their lives.”

He went to Bible College and was ordained through the church.

Although he maintains a “crazy” schedule and rarely finds time for his favorite hobbies (hunting and fishing), Baker is content.

“Farming was my dream. Ministry was my calling. I like what I do. I feel fortunate.”

“Farming was my dream. Ministry was my calling. I like what I do. I feel fortunate.”



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KCARD LAUNCHES AGRIBUSINESS GRANTS

The Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (KCARD) is launching an Agribusiness Grants program to assist farmers and rural businesses. Funded in part by the Kentucky Ag Development Board, the Agribusiness Grant Facilitation Program is designed to help guide applicants through the grants process.

In working with Kentucky's entrepreneurs, KCARD staff identified a need for greater information about grant opportunities to be provided to their small business clients. Prospective applicants were finding out about funding opportunities too late in the process to be able to put together a competitive application, and the process for applying is complicated, deterring many.

KCARD has named Aleta Botts as coordinator for the new Agribusiness Grant Facilitation Program. Botts has almost ten years of experience working on agriculture issues at the federal level, most recently as a policy staffer for the US House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture.

"Kentucky is blessed with so many great entrepreneurs doing innovative

projects. Unfortunately, many deserving projects do not receive funds from rural development programs simply because a lot of prospective applicants do not know about the programs or do not think they have the time to navigate the process," explained Botts. "Through this Grant Facilitation Program, we can help people stay informed on funding opportunities and walk them through the maze for filling out good applications."

Botts will first be focusing on identifying available grant and loan resources, bringing these resources to the attention of applicants in Kentucky, and helping applicants better understand the programs' requirements. She also looks forward to working with grant writers in the state to help them connect with interested applicants.

One of the first tasks undertaken for the program was the development of a website that would show up-to-date information about funding opportunities and help people understand for what programs they are eligible. Growkentuckyag.com will provide farmers and businesses facts about programs and serve as a central clearinghouse for information that might be helpful for entities looking for such funding opportunities.

KCARD provides a range of services, including strategic planning, business management, operations analysis, record-keeping development, cost analysis and on-site business consultations.

BROADBAND SURVEY

The Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts is conducting a survey to help state officials gain a better understanding of where broadband is available, where it is needed, and how Kentucky farms are using or could use high-speed Internet access services. KFB urges participation in this 10-minute survey conducted during the month of February. To take the survey go to www.broadband.ky.gov.

DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

District 1	March 27	7 p.m.	McCracken County FB
District 2	March 6	6:30 p.m.	Ballard Conv. Center, Madisonville
District 3	March 22	6:00 p.m.	Rough River State Park Lodge
District 4	March 26	6:30 p.m.	Barren River State Park Lodge
District 5	March 15	7 p.m.	KFB State Office, Louisville
District 6	March 5	7 p.m.	Grant County FB
District 7	March 15	7 p.m.	Pulaski County Public Library
District 8	March 5	7 p.m.	Madison County Fairgrounds
District 9	March 19	6:30 p.m.	Blue Licks State Park Lodge
District 10	March 19	6:30 p.m.	Ramada Inn, Paintsville
District 11	March 27	6:30 p.m.	Senior Citizens Center, Hazard

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Drought reduces hay supply

USDA estimated U.S. all hay production at 131 million tons for 2011, down ten percent from 2010. The average yield at 2.36 tons per acre is down 0.07 tons. Production of alfalfa hay and mixtures is down four percent from 2010 to 65.3 million tons; this is the lowest U.S. production level since 1959. The yield of 3.40 tons/acre equaled 2010's yield. The 19.2 million acres harvested is the smallest area since 1949. Drought conditions in the Plains and the Southwest are to blame. Other hay production totaled 65.8 million tons, down 15 percent from 2010. The 36.4 million acres harvested is down nine percent.

Stocks of all hay stored on farms December 1, 2011, totaled 91 million tons, down 11 percent from a year earlier.

Kentucky alfalfa production was 714,000 tons, up 11 percent from 2010. The average yield increased 0.60 tons to 3.40 tons/acre. Other hay production of 4.62 million tons was down nine percent. Combined acreage cut for all hay totaled 2.31 million acres, down 220,000 from 2010.

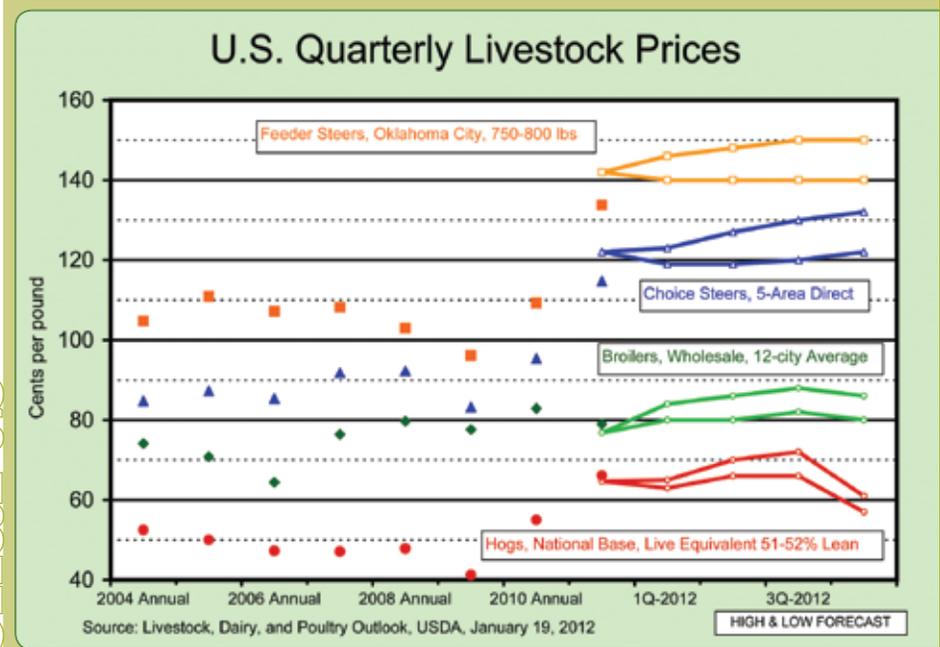
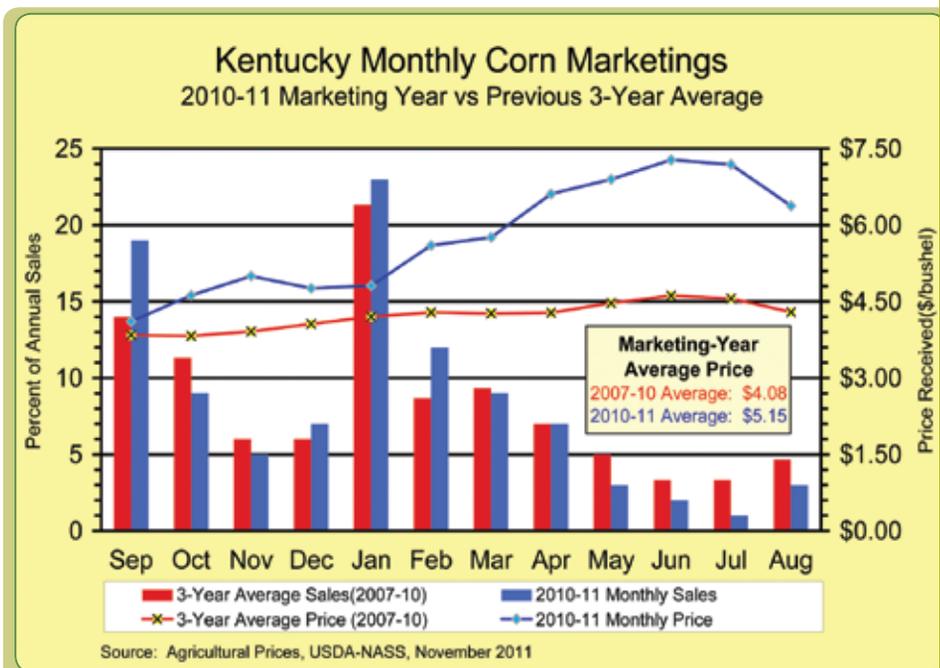
Soybean demand is falling

Domestic and export demand for U.S. soybeans are down this crop year. USDA forecasts 2011/12 ending stocks to grow from 215 million bushels on August 31, 2011, to 275 million bushels a year later. Export inspections for September-December 2011 fell to a three-year low and were 29 percent behind the record pace seen in 2010/11. This year's total exports are forecast at 1.275 billion bushels, down 226 million from last year. South American crop losses could boost U.S. exports. The amount of U.S. soybeans processed is expected to be down two percent this year. Fewer U.S. livestock and weaker export demand, especially from Asia, are responsible. USDA expects U.S. soybean oil exports to total only 1.2 billion pounds in 2011/12, down from 3.2 billion last year, as China returns to its normal supplier, Argentina.

Grain storage expands in Kentucky

USDA statistics show that Kentucky producers added five million bushels of on-farm grain storage capacity during the twelve months ending December 1, 2011. At 195 million bushels, this is the largest on-farm estimate since storage reached a low of 150 million bushels in 2002. Commercial off-farm storage totaled 70 million bushels, up two million from December 1, 2010.

U.S. producers have 12.8 billion bushels of on-farm storage, up two percent from December 1, 2010. The six top states account for 60 percent of the total. Commercial off-farm storage totaled 10.1 billion bushels in December, up four percent from a year ago. The top five states account for 52 percent of the capacity.



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Crop production down in 2011

Hindered by unfavorable planting and growing conditions during 2011, U.S. farmers produced a smaller crop than the previous year according to the Crop Production 2011 Summary released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Corn production totaled 12.4 billion bushels, down one percent from 2010. Corn yield in 2011 is estimated at 147.2 bushels per acre, 5.6 bushels below last year's average yield. Area harvested, at 84.0 million acres, is up three percent from 2010. Soybean production for 2011 totaled 3.06 billion bushels, down eight percent 2010. The average soybean yield is estimated at 41.5 bushels per acre, 2.0 bushels below last year's yield. Harvested area for soybeans in 2011, at 73.6 million acres, is down four percent from 2010.

NASS estimates the 2011 all wheat production at 2.00 billion bushels, down nine percent from 2010. The all wheat yield is estimated at 43.7 bushels per acre, down 2.6 bushels from last year. Harvested area, at 45.7 million acres, is down four percent from the 2010 crop.

Kentucky's crop production, meanwhile, climbed from 2010 levels for corn, soybeans, alfalfa and dark tobacco. Corn was estimated at 180.7 million bushels, up 18 percent from 2010. Soybean production was estimated at 57.7 million bushels, up 22 percent. Burley tobacco production was placed at 128 million pounds, which was nine percent below the 2010 crop. U.S. burley production was eight percent below a year earlier.

Kentucky production of both dark fired and dark air-cured tobacco was up by seven percent in 2011. Alfalfa showed an 11 percent increase, to an estimated 714,000 tons.

The full Crop Production 2011 Summary is available online at www.nass.usda.gov.

Deadline for horse industry survey is Feb. 17

The Kentucky Horse Council is asking Kentucky horsemen to participate in a full, statewide survey of all breeds and disciplines of horse, ponies, mules, and donkeys, the first such survey in Kentucky in 35 years. This survey is being done by the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville, in partnership with the Kentucky Horse Council and the National Agricultural Statistics Service. To read more about the study, go to <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/equine/kyequinesurvey>. The deadline is February 17.

Horsemen who wish to send their names to NASS for the survey may fill in the form at <http://www.kentuckyhorse.org/KES-names/>.

Crop insurance payments at record level

With only an estimated 81 percent of expected claims finalized, crop insurance companies have already paid out a record \$9.1 billion in indemnity payments to America's farmers in 2011. This has already surpassed the former record of \$8.67 billion in indemnities paid in 2008, according to USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA).

"Working as designed since 2008, more than \$27 billion in private-backed crop insurance payouts over the past four years have helped farmers pick up the pieces after natural disasters or market drops," said Keith Collins, former USDA Chief Economist. "Without crop insurance in place, those billions in damages would have fallen onto the laps of lenders, input suppliers, marketers, land owners and farm families, just as the economy was spiraling downward and unemployment was soaring."

AFBF concerned about trade office plan

A White House plan to shrink the government could end up downsizing U.S. trade efforts, says AFBF trade specialist Dave Salmonsén.

President Barack Obama has asked Congress to grant him "fast-track" authority to reorganize and consolidate the trade functions of a number of government agencies. Obama's proposal would consolidate under one entity the work of five agencies –the Small Business Administration, the United States Trade Representative, the Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Trade and Development Agency – as well as the business and trade functions of the Commerce Department.

Salmonsén said farmers and ranchers are most worried about the proposed changes to USTR.

"We are concerned that taking them out of the White House staff, putting them inside a large government agency will dilute their effectiveness and will basically hurt their voice and hurt their ability to act as the sharp end of the spear for U.S. trade policy," Salmonsén explained.



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- D&F Farms**
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