

Kentucky

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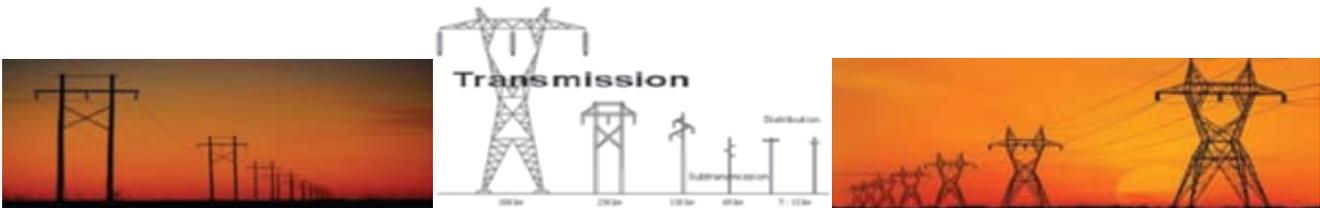
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contents

**Frank Penn and
Pennbrook Farm** 6

**Kentucky Pollinator
Protection Plan** 8

**Learning through
Gardening** 10

**Young Farmer and
Horse Enthusiast** 14

**Fiber
Optics** 18

Markets 20

**County
Corner** 22

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According to information from the USDA, nationally, farm sector profitability is forecast to decline for the third straight year with a net cash farm income forecast at \$90.9 billion, down about 2.5 percent from the 2015 forecast levels. Net farm income is forecast to be \$54.8 billion in 2016, down three percent.



This kind of news would lend itself to being slightly less than positive about the immediate future for farmers especially in these times of low commodity prices. But one thing that helps farmers in this state is the strong rural economy Kentucky enjoys.

Many of our producers today look to outside farm income to supplement their operations and with many investments made in our rural communities, this slower farm economy will not be as devastating as it could be because of that rural economic strength.

Another thing to point out is, we as farmers understand better than anyone the ups and downs in the market. We have dealt with those swings our entire lives and are well suited to handle these volatile market conditions.

When prices are good we never ride too high and we stay reserved. But when prices are low we never get our heads down. That is a part of our roots and who we are. We know that some years are better than others and we're lucky to have a rural economy that has strengthened over the years and serves as a support of sorts during a period of downturns.

Something else that helps our industry is the continued support from our state legislators. As this session of the General Assembly comes to a close, we have once again seen the support our lawmakers have given to agriculture. HB 529 is a perfect example of that as well as a great example of the advocacy efforts made by our Farm Bureau members.

In creating the Kentucky Water Resources Board, the Commonwealth is taking proactive steps to combat any water issues that could come along in the future. As sure as commodity prices rise and fall, so too will the weather conditions from year to year. In any given growing season weather conditions can dictate whether a year will be one of success or one difficulty.

We don't want to be caught trying to react once a problem has occurred nor do we want to pit urban water use against agriculture needs in the event we face a drought; and at some point we will.

This legislation becomes one more component in making our rural economy better. Our members understand that and really stepped to the plate to advocate for this legislation.

As our growing season progresses, I hope and pray for good weather conditions, better market prices and continued growth in our ag industry. But I know, in the event we don't get all we ask for, Kentucky agriculture will remain strong, sustainable and our most vital industry.

Mark Haney
President
Kentucky Farm Bureau



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C O L U M N

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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In all the years I've spent in our state's General Assembly, I have had the opportunity to see many great pieces of legislation go through the legislative process and become law. Many of those bills passed with ease while some took more discussion and debate. But in every instance, it was a privilege to be a part of that process in serving my constituents and the people of the Commonwealth.



This session has been no different. While much of the attention has been focused on the budget, there have been bills passed that will serve our citizens well. House Bill 529 is a good example of that.

In creating the Kentucky Water Resource Board, our state moves in a positive, proactive direction to combat any issues that will arise pertaining to water usage on the farm. And even though this legislation relates to agriculture, the benefits that will come from it will be for all of our citizens.

I was proud to be the primary sponsor of this bill and I'm happy to say it passed the General Assembly unanimously.

I think that just goes to show the overwhelming support for the bill shown by the entire legislative body and the importance of this legislation.

But it also demonstrates the power of advocacy. Farm Bureau members from across Kentucky contacted their legislators, came to Frankfort and made tremendous efforts to let their legislators know how much they supported this bill and encouraged each to do the same.

That's why we're here; to listen to the will of our constituents and act on their behalf. Farm Bureau members have a long history of being active advocates in our legislative system and those members played an equally important role in getting HB 529 passed. In short, with the passage of this bill, Kentucky can take the lead in making recommendations when it comes to water quantity issues.

Seeing this advocacy at work fortifies my belief in our governmental process and Kentucky Farm Bureau certainly stands as the "Voice of Agriculture." But more than that, the organization and its members continue to support one of our greatest and most important industries making this state the best it can be for our rural communities and our urban neighbors.

State Representative Rick Rand

Chair, House Appropriations and Revenue Committee

For Frank Penn, Horses and Tobacco have made a Great Combination on the Farm



Frank Penn and one of his thoroughbreds at Keeneland.

In the world of Kentucky agriculture, it doesn't get much more traditional than tobacco and horses. The state leads the nation in burley and dark tobacco production while the equine industry ranks number one in horse sales.

But more than that, the two have helped build the economy of Kentucky for many generations. The history of the state's agriculture industry is built on its storied equine and tobacco sectors.

Frank Penn knows this better than anyone and has been a part of both nearly all of his life. His Pennbrook Farm has served as a model of farm diversification before it became known as that, being a well-known thoroughbred boarding/breeding operation and once one of the largest tobacco farms in the burley belt.

In addition to his farm, Penn is Vice President of Penn Brothers Storage and Co-Owner of Penn Sales, LLC. He has served as Director of the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association/Kentucky Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders, Inc., Trustee of Georgetown College, Vice-Chair of Lexington Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) Rural Land Management Board, Director and



Pennbrook Farm has served as a well-known thoroughbred boarding/breeding operation as well as once being one of the largest tobacco farms in the burley belt.

Past President of the Fayette County Farm Bureau, President of the Council for Burley Tobacco Agency and Director of the Lexington Chamber of Commerce.

He is also involved with the Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Equine Committee, the LFUCG Planning Commission and serves on the Ag Finance Corporation Board as well as the Kentucky Equine Education Project's board as the KFB

representative.

Penn inherited the love of the burley and equine sectors from his father and continued since taking the helm of the farm in 1968. He even tried his hand at auctioneering back in the day when tobacco auctions were the way to get the product to market.

While his voice wouldn't hold up under the strain of auctioneering, Penn has remained active in the tobacco industry even though he no longer produces it.

In speaking specifically to the horse business, Penn said he is in a high-risk, high-reward business and, for anyone who "has the stomach" for that, and truly loves the land and the animals, the equine industry could be for them.

Penn certainly loves the land and the animals remaining on the farm his father bought. He said it is those family farms that make up the majority of the horse farm network in the overall tapestry of Kentucky agriculture.

"We are still an agriculture state and I'm not afraid of the word 'farmer'; it adequately describes who I am. Being a horseman is part of it and I want equine to be a part of agriculture. I think that's extremely important," he said.

Penn added there are all types of breeds that make up the entire equine picture but the thoroughbreds are the recognized symbol of the state's horse industry and there is much that can be done to market that industry to the public.

"Tourism is just scratching the surface of what it can be and equine can be a big part of that," he said. "And I'm not just talking about thoroughbreds. I'm talking about trail riding, the horse park, show venues across the state for any breed you want to talk about; that's where Kentucky is missing the point."

In noting that thoroughbreds are the most recognized of the breeds by most people, Penn said all the breeds in the state are important to each other.

"I don't say thoroughbred industry very much; I say equine industry because we are to the point right now that we can't survive without each other," he said.

Penn doesn't shy away from being critical about equine issues or any concerns related to agriculture but always adds the caveat that it's because the industry means so much to him.

"Agriculture's job in the next generation will be to prove that it's true economic development," he said.

Many strides have been made to create more economic development opportunities over the last two decades with the investments made by way of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund and the Kentucky Proud marketing program.

Penn said he pushed hard to get state bred horses added to the Kentucky Proud list and it was a great move for both the program and for the equine industry.

In fact, the next step is to get the Kentucky Proud logo on every saddle of every stakes race in Kentucky.

"That publicity is unbelievable and were just as proud of our horses and take just as good of care of them as the rest of the agriculture products," he said.

It doesn't take a long conversation with Penn to realize how proud he is of his horses, his land, his family heritage and the state's agriculture industry as a whole.

"People have always been fans of the horses, but the horses come and go while the farms are still here," he said. "If they become fans of the farms, that's how you develop loyalty in this industry."

Penn will admit that the burley tobacco industry has seen better days and is "limping along." This growing season will mark the second in which he has not raised a crop. As contracts have shrunk, he said it's not worth raising just a few acres.

But the potential for the equine business is undoubtedly present in a state still known as the "Horse Capital of the World" as long as it doesn't go back to being the "Sport of Kings," he emphasized.

As for the combination of horses and tobacco on the same farm, Penn never saw it as an usual combination.

"I always thought the two did go together. We called it different streams of income!" he said.

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Kentucky Pollinator Protection Plan



In the world of agriculture, there are certain necessities that farmers can't do without such as ample water resources and fertile soil.

But a third ingredient that could be added to that list is pollinators. According to information from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, three-fourths of the world's flowering plants and about 35 percent of the world's food crops depend on animal pollinators to reproduce.

The Service also denotes that more than 3,500 species of native bees help increase crop yields, and some scientists estimate that one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of animal pollinators like bees, butterflies and moths, birds and bats, and beetles and other insects.

Unfortunately, declines in pollinator populations over the last decade have prompted many theories on what could

Kentucky's Pollinator Protection Plan addresses issues concerning declines in the state's pollinator population.

be causing these losses, including loss of habitat, use of pesticides, and hive disease, generating concern among environmentalists in and out of the agriculture sector.

Because of those concerns and the importance of pollinators, a Presidential Memorandum authorized a White House Task Force nearly two years ago to take a definitive look at the issue of pollinator health.

Many states, including Kentucky, are now creating their own voluntary Pollinator Protection Plan to research and make suggestions related to the matter.

Paul Schlegel, the American Farm Bureau Federation's Director of the Energy and Environment Team, said there is an interdependent relationship

between farmers and, in particular, managed honey bees producers that needs to be fostered as more attention goes toward the issues related to protecting pollinators.

Overwintering losses have been in the 30 percent range for many beekeepers with some larger, and commercial honey producers noting colony losses much higher than that. These kinds of losses are not something most beekeepers can tolerate for long, but they can't really pinpoint the exact causes.

"Nobody can really put a finger on one single thing. Some environmental activists like to blame pesticides, but if you talk with the beekeepers themselves, most of them will tell you that's not what they feel is going on," said Schlegel.

Kentucky State Apiarist Tammy Horn Potter said it is likely a combination of reasons, and in working on the state plan, the document defines a list of goals to help protect pollinators while at the same time still promoting agriculture.

"There are four major goals. One is to define best management practices for agricultural industries, beekeepers and chemical applicators, as well as other stakeholder groups; second is to increase pollinator habitat; third is to increase extension and outreach; and fourth is to increase communication between all points of contact," she said.

Potter added that, in working to achieve these goals, the hope is to slow the decline in pollinators and lower bee losses from above that 30 percent mark to a more reasonable 15 percent by the year 2020.

So far, Kentucky's plan has come together in a positive way, something Potter said has not been the case in other states.

"I'm really pleased with how well Kentucky has pulled together its plan," she said.

In addition to posting the plan on the KDA website, there are two public forums mandated to take place, one that occurred last February and another that will take place in July.

Potter said it's important to get this information out to the public to first keep them informed but also to counter any incorrect information as to what has been happening to cause so many

honey bee losses.

“At the top of my list for high mortality losses has been Varroa mites. I don’t care what else you want to throw on the table, all of which are factors, including lack of forage and irresponsible ag chemical use,” she said.

One thing that is helping Potter collect more data to quantify any theories on bee losses is a USDA-APHIS Honey Bee Health Grant that enables her to sample bees from 24 volunteer beekeepers located across the state.

Through these samples, Potter gets a pathogen count and a virus report from the USDA’s bee lab.

“This is the first comprehensive data we have to know what is going on inside our hives,” she said. “We have to have this information, and we have not had this kind of baseline data that other agriculture industries have had.”

She noted the Presidential Memorandum issued in 2014 was basically the first federal initiative that directed an interagency task force to begin the process of coming up with goals to combat the issue from a national perspective.

“This year, Congress has allotted funding that will allow us to take pollen samples which will give us a truer reading of just what environmental elements those honey bees are bringing back into their hives,” she said. “The more data we can collect like this, I think the taking sides on the issue kind of thing will begin to ease a bit.”

Potter said that what the USDA is finding thus far has to do with viruses in the hive as much as anything, and this is new information.

But still, measures can be made to keep instances such as accidental exposure to ag chemicals from happening simply by having a communications plan in place. Beekeepers can keep farmers informed as to when their hives are near production fields, and producers can inform beekeepers when and where these chemical applications are being made.

With the data that is now available and the expanded efforts made in communications and educating the general public about pollinator health, Schlegel pointed out GMO technology, which has helped decrease the amount of chemicals being used in production agriculture, as being a good example of

how important it is to disseminate correct information.

“Here you have a technology which has helped agriculture be more productive with increased yields; helped farmers in their economic well-being; helped



Pollinators like bees, butterflies and moths, birds and bats, and beetles and other insects help pollinate flowers and certain food crops.

consumers by keeping costs down. Yet, you have a relatively small group of people who want to create and foster the

perception that there is something about that technology which is wrong, and we should abandon it,” he said. “That’s extremely unfortunate, and that’s an instance in which we want to educate the public. We want to underscore that there’s not a division between beekeeping and agriculture; we consider them one and the same.”

Schlegel also said that, given the fact more people are conscious of pollinator losses, and with the need for greater communication about the dependence we have on honey bees, all of that has stakeholders talking in a manner they hadn’t previously.

“We may also see in the next Farm Bill maybe some greater attention given to research money for honey bees and pollinators, so I think we are heading in the right direction,” he said.

Kentucky Farm Bureau, along with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and several other stakeholders have been involved in developing the state’s Pollinator Protection Plan.

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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU

Second Graders Learning the Fundamentals through Gardening



Rita Taulbee's second grade students are learning about science, math, writing and all the other fundamentals of education but she has found a way to make the experience a little different than what is normally found in the classroom.

Taulbee, a teacher at Lebanon Junction Elementary School implemented a garden project about five years ago that has taught students more than just how to grow vegetables and flowers.

"I am a gardener and an opportunity was presented to me to put in an outdoor garden in a space here at the school and it evolved from there," she said. "The students like it because many of them have never grown anything and they get this hands-on experience."

The process begins by planting seeds in the classroom, then transferring them

to the garden area.

Taulbee emphasized that after participating, students see that their food doesn't come from the local grocery but rather from the dirt in the garden and it's something they have to work for to achieve.

Many of the students got a start at this in kindergarten and still recall the activities including a pizza garden in which they grew ingredients for pizza sauce.

"We harvested the vegetables, I took them home and chopped it all up, brought it back, we made pizza dough, the ladies in the lunchroom cooked them for us and we ate them," said Taulbee. "They got to see how it goes from the seed to the dirt to growing and the harvest and finally to food."

It is this type of realistic learning that sticks with the students she added.

Taulbee ties in the activities in the garden to the instruction she delivers in the classroom.

"They learn better with the hands-on activities and they have fun," she said. "They talk to each other about the project and get more insight and weigh different opinions of why one thing may have worked and another didn't. It makes them do the thinking."

The students are also learning something about community service. This year's produce is being grown for the local food bank. Taulbee said she thought this would be a good way to pay back to the community since most of the necessities for the garden were donated including a rain barrel that is used to catch the water supply used for the plants.

Taulbee said the idea of urban gar-

Facing Page: Students get a chance to plant seeds outside in one area of the garden. The activity includes keeping a written journal.

Right: Rita Taulbee explains to her class how to plant seeds as part of the garden project's indoor activities.



dens is coming back and her students are learning something they can keep with them for use later in life whether they grow up to be farmers or not.

“If they use the things they’re learning now in 10 years, that’s fine, but if they don’t, these students are getting the opportunity to do things that most others don’t get to experience,” she said.

Case Samuels is the only participating student who actually lives on a farm but even he is learning something new about growing crops.

“There is a lot of different ways to grow food,” he said. “You can grow it in pots, in small gardens or inside. I think this is a good opportunity because we don’t have to sit in the classroom all day to study math, science and reading, we can do it outside.”

Olivia White, another of Taulbee’s students said her parents had already taught her some things about growing plants but she has also discovered something new from this project.

“I learned that you plant more than one seed in one spot in case one dies, and you can grow the plants inside, too,” she said. “I thought it was cool to see the plants grow from the seeds.”

White added that while she has learned math and science by working in the garden, she has also written about it in a journal the students keep about the experience.

Taulbee who was named the Kentucky Farm Bureau’s 2015 Excellence in Ag Literacy Award winner, plans to continue the project and is now working on adding a butterfly garden.

She will travel to the National Ag in the Classroom Conference June 20-24 in Litchfield Park, Arizona, where she will represent Kentucky in the national competition.



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ROCK SOLID VALUE

Retail food prices in Kentucky drop slightly during 1st Quarter of 2016 according to Kentucky Farm Bureau Marketbasket Survey

For the fifth quarter in a row, food prices in the Commonwealth have fallen, according to the latest Kentucky Farm Bureau Marketbasket Survey, albeit a very slight decline for the first three months of the year. The survey, taken quarterly and denotes the average total cost of 40 basic grocery items showed a drop of .4310 percent and continues the pattern seen throughout 2015. Overall the cost of the items totaled an average of \$118.92 as compared to the \$119.43 recorded during the last quarter of 2015. The largest drop, category wise, was attributed to poultry which fell by 14 percent followed by beef which experienced a 3.4 percent drop and a two percent drop in surveyed dairy products. The largest individual category increases came by way of grains which rose in price by 8.3 percent followed by fruits and vegetables with a 4.2 percent jump and pork which

rose by 2.3 percent. Kentucky food prices are, for the most part, in line with the latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) information which indicated a 0.2 percent decline in overall national food prices during March. The CPI also denoted a 0.5 percent drop in the food at home index, the largest decline since April 2009. According to information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Five of the six major grocery store food group indexes fell, with the fruits and vegetables index declining 1.9 percent, the largest decrease since January 2005." The national index for dairy and related products declined by 0.5 percent with the index for meats, poultry, fish, and eggs falling by 0.3 percent. Kentucky food price declines included a \$.64 per dozen drop in large and extra-large egg prices.

Jay Coleman, KFB Poultry Committee Chair said this decline is likely due to a

correction in the market after production levels dropped last year during an Avian Influenza outbreak that created large losses in some poultry producing states. "We saw egg prices climb last year because of that outbreak but with a return to more normal production levels now, we are seeing those prices come back down," he said. Jamie Guffey, executive director of the Kentucky Poultry Federation said as the layer populations continue to increase to per 2015 numbers, the price of eggs should level out.

Marketbasket Survey specifics:

Ribeye steak dropped \$.41 cents per pound, sirloin fell by \$.52 per pound, pork chops decreased by \$.18 per pound, two percent milk prices fell by \$.29 per gallon and lettuce dropped by \$.22 a head.

T-bone steak prices increased by \$.37 per pound, pork sausage increased by \$.27 per two pound package, wheat bread prices rose by \$.20 per loaf and pepper prices rose by \$.25.

Agricultural Economics in Food Prices

Whether or not U.S. grocery prices fluctuate from one quarterly survey to the next, Kentuckians and all Americans continue to enjoy some of the lowest food prices in the world. Shoppers in the U.S. spend only about 10 percent of their disposable income on food each year. Those costs remain far lower than any other country in the world thanks to many of the agricultural efficiencies utilized in America. Today the average U.S. farmer produces enough food and fiber to provide for about 154 people – a significant jump from an average of 19 people per farmer back in 1940.

Yet while more food is now being produced on less land, the farmer's share of the retail food dollar in America is down. According to the USDA's Food Dollar Series, a farmer earns less than 16 cents per dollar spent on food, down significantly from the 31 cents earned in 1980.

Kentucky National Dairy Show & Sale attracts buyers and consignors from throughout the U.S.

Buyers from Kentucky and several other states gave a total of \$425,915 for 206 head at the 54th Annual Kentucky National Dairy Show & Sale April 7-9 at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

"The Kentucky National Dairy Show & Sale remains a major event on the U.S. dairycalendar," Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles said. "Several Kentucky cattle did well, and Kentucky breeders bought top animals from other states to improve their herds. Congratulations to our Kentucky dairy farm families on another successful event."

The top-selling Kentucky animal was a Holstein consigned by Katie Yocum of Salvisa and sold to Down & Dirty Company of Minnesota for \$4,400. More than 50 Kentucky breeders had consignments in the show and sale.

The overall sale topper was a Brown Swiss consigned by Rich Hill of Cattaraugus, New York, and sold to

Carol Regusi of Modesto, California for \$7,500. A Jersey consigned by Dick and Rhea Miller and family of Osgood, Indiana, brought a high bid of \$6,800 from Jason Nagel and Carlson Cymberly of Panama, New York.

The Brown Swiss show saw 36 head bring an average of \$2,683 to lead all breeds. A total of six breeds were represented. The sale was broadcast over the internet.

Commissioner Quarles awarded \$4,000 checks to each of five Kentucky dairy breed associations during the show and sale.

The event was sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Farm Bureau, the Kentucky Dairy Development Council, the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, and the Southeast United Dairy Industry Association.

— Kentucky Department of Agriculture

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Young Farmer and Horse Enthusiast



Wears Many Hats for Agriculture

At the young age of 22, Danielle Milbern has worn many hats when it comes to her involvement in agriculture. She has been raised in a family of farmers on a hay and cow/calf operation located in Jessamine and Garrard Counties.

She is also a current student at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) studying agriculture education, the Fayette County Young Farmers Committee chair, a National FFA Ag Ambassador from 2014-2016, past president of the Locust Trace FFA chapter, member of the Jessamine County Beef Cattle Association, served on the Junior Board of Directors with the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, an ECU Ag Ambassador, and Kentucky Young Farmers Association's Bluegrass Regional Vice-President.

But it is her love of horses that keeps her busy much of the year showing her American Saddlebred named Mountjoy's Town Boy, more affectionately known to her as Rocky.

"When I was about four years old I actually started riding Tennessee Walkers. My grandparents owned a couple of horses and I started bugging my parents about wanting to ride," she said.

From there, her father discovered a Saddlebred farm near their home to help with riding lessons.

Milbern said she fell in love with the breed and, with the exception of a few years during middle school, she has been riding since. Today she trains and shows through Spring Hill Stable located in Georgetown.

"For me, it's been about doing something that I love. I love animals and getting to be a part of my horse's life; it always puts a smile on my face," said Milbern. "I also think horses can sense when something is going on with us. They know more than we think."

Milbern is typical of how agriculturalists feel about any of their animals regardless if they are for recreational purposes or are part of production agriculture.

"The majority of people are four generations removed from the farm so they don't realize everything we do and why



Facing Page and above: Danielle Milbern enjoys a workout and a quiet walk with "Rocky" at Spring Hill Stable in Georgetown.

we do it," she said. "But every farmer I know will tell you, their animals are taken care of and fed long before they sit down at the dinner table."

In looking to the future, Milbern said, along with the cattle operation, horses will be a part of her life once her career as an ag educator begins even though they can be more labor intensive than the cows.

"My hat is off to the horse trainers, the breeders and the thoroughbred farmers because horses are a lot of work," she said.

But being an educator can also be a lot of work; something Milbern knows and looks forward to in the coming years.

"The average age of our farmers today is getting up there and they won't be here forever so we need to make sure

the generations to come know everything about agriculture to keep it sustainable and to feed our nation and world," she said.

As for her involvement in the many different ag-related organizations, she said it keeps her well-rounded and able to speak to farm issues that are current or that will arise.

While Milbern continues to wear all of those hats, horses may always be her favorite. She feels the industry will stay viable.

"We can never turn away from the equine industry. It is what we have grown up with and what our economy was founded on," she said. "It is the brand of the state and it needs continued growth and not only for tradition's sake. If we ever lost our horse industry, Kentucky would lose its identity."

UK Extension helps farmer implement bale grazing



An Adair County farmer is reporting promising results after his first winter using bale grazing to feed his cattle.

Bale grazing is a new concept for most Kentucky farmers. In bale grazing, the farmer sets out hay rolls in fields before winter feeding begins and restricts the cattle's access to them using polywire fencing. Once the winter feeding begins, the farmer removes sections of the fencing to make two to three bales available to the cattle at a time. Once they eat that, the farmer opens more sections. Besides feeding cattle, bale grazing can help farmers get some free fertilizer in the form of better manure distribution.

It has been heavily promoted as a winter feeding option in western states for years, but Kentucky's climate, geography and soil types are vastly different from those states.

Fred Thomas sought advice and assistance from Nick Roy, Adair County agent for agricultural and natural resources with the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, and Jeff Lehmkuhler, UK extension beef specialist, before his project began.

"What we want to see in this field is that we have increased the nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium levels in the regions that we fed the hay," Lehmkuhler

Besides feeding cattle, bale grazing can help farmers get some free fertilizer in the form of better manure distribution.

said. "Hopefully over time, because we have more organic matter in the soil, we'll also see an increase in soil health, more microbial activity increasing the organic matter and giving us a buildup of soil overtime."

Until this past winter, Thomas, like many Kentucky producers, sacrificed an area in one of his fields where he fed cattle during the winter.

"In the past, I'd been feeding down on the bottom, but it just wasn't a good situation," Thomas said. "Bale grazing worked perfectly for me, because I had some puny fields that were low in fertilizer and were needing some nutrients put back in them. So I was really taking care of two things: getting cattle off the bottom and getting more fertilizer and more organic matter in my fields."

Roy and Lehmkuhler helped him with background information, soil testing and site selection. Thomas lined the bales on ridgetops that were away from surface water. Thomas put in an alleyway so the cattle could access water.

"As we looked at where we might implement this, one of the things we wanted to do was to minimize the environmental impact and minimize nutri-

ent runoff into surface water," Lehmkuhler said. "We tried to keep a buffer on the steep hillsides so the grass could capture any runoff nutrients and actually benefit from those."

Thomas used bale grazing to feed around 36 head of cattle. Those cattle consumed about two-thirds of a roll per day. They consumed about 40 percent more hay during the winter of 2014-2015. He credits less hay needed this year to less waste from bale grazing.

"Last year, I used 125 rolls, and I'm not going to use near that this year," he said. "The cows look like they are in pretty good condition. Actually, I think my calves are a little too chubby. It certainly didn't hurt them."

Additional benefits Thomas reported included lower energy and fuel costs due to not having to use a tractor after initially placing the bales. In fact, Thomas didn't start a tractor at all to bring hay to his herd this year. He also had less rot in his hay.

While Thomas has found many benefits to bale grazing, it does have some potential downsides including the cost of purchasing additional polywire fencing, moving the fencing during the winter and then purchasing the seed and reseeding the field.

"We have gotten great distribution of nutrients from our hay, however we have caused a great bit of damage to our existing forage base. So there're tradeoffs," Roy said. "In this situation, our soils here were very low in phosphorus and potassium. We were able to greatly benefit from good nutrient distribution, and we were ok with having to reseed this area after the winter."

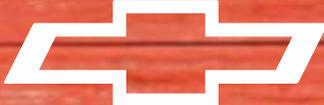
Thomas said he will try bale grazing again next winter but will move the location and space bales further apart to minimize the impact the cattle have on the existing forages.

UK extension personnel will continue to monitor the project for improvements in nutrients and soil health.

— UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

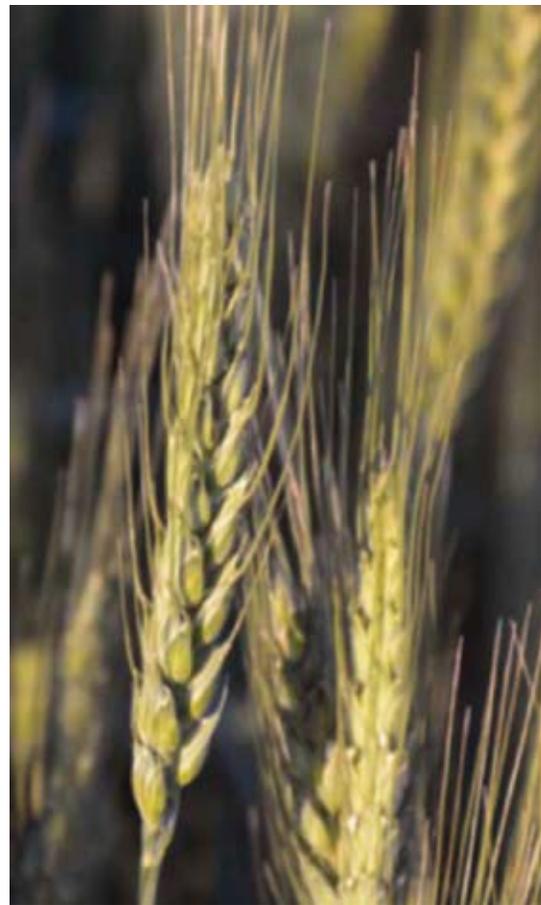


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Fiber Optics



By Ray Bowman

In the cabins of frontier Kentucky, a spinning wheel or a loom was not an uncommon sight. They were valuable tools, providing fabric for clothing and other household necessities required by frontier life.

Today, a short trip to the shopping center or mall can provide, for a modest price, the fiber-related mainstays that pioneer men and women labored long hours to create. However, a segment of the population still finds great satisfaction in creating the handmade and the homespun treasures that were once an everyday fact of life.

When fiber artisans and crafters across the country seek the skills and supplies necessary to ply their trade, the focus once again falls on Kentucky – home to numerous guilds and organizations dedicated to the fiber arts as well as the country's largest supplier of fiber supplies and two festivals that celebrate the fiber arts.

"We've been here in Frankfort just over seven years," noted Nancy Reid, a fiber arts instructor for The Woolery. The company, which is the largest



source of internet, mail and phone-order fiber supplies in the country, began in upstate New York, then moved to North Carolina before settling in Frankfort, KY where they are now headquartered in the city's historic Market Square. Last June, Wave and Perri McFarland became the newest owners of the business, which maintains a warm and inviting showroom and educational annex where crafters come from across the nation to shop, learn and hone their skills.

"We've been growing phenomenally in the just over seven years the store has been here in Frankfort," Reid continues. "Surveys have consistently ranked us very high in customer service and that's what we need to keep a good market share and keep people coming back."

Reid personally handles many of the

Above: The Kentucky Sheep and Fiber Festival will celebrate its 7th anniversary this year.

Left: The loom display on Woolery's showroom floor.

technical inquiries the store receives regarding spinning and weaving problems. She also shares teaching duties with half a dozen other instructors. "We get students coming in from California, Nevada, Florida – all over the place," Reid beams. "They go on-line and find the schedule and say 'sounds like a road trip to me' and they show up." She says the small-town atmosphere of Kentucky's Capitol (second smallest state capitol in the country) adds to the experience for visiting students. Walk out the front door of the store and you can see the historic Capitol Theatre across the street and just a hundred yards or so to the left stands the iconic old Capitol.

Frankfort has easy access to the interstate, connecting it to major shipping hubs in Lexington and Louisville. "In terms of a place to site a business, we're less than 4 shipping days to 90 percent of the country," Reid says. "It's a really, really good place to have this business."

Location and ease of access also plays into the success of the Kentucky Sheep and Fiber Festival, celebrating its sev-

enth anniversary at Masterson Station Park in Lexington, KY on May 21 and 22, 2016.

“Last year, we planned to welcome about 3,500 through the gates,” said festival director Sarabeth Parido. “Even with bad weather, we exceeded our goal. We’ve asked for better weather this year!”

For those looking for fiber products, the festival hosts more than 100 vendors each year. A number of live animal exhibits, shearing demonstrations and food vendors make for a diverse showcase of Kentucky’s fiber community. A wide range of fiber workshops are held, beginning the Friday before and continuing each day of the festival.

The festival is timed to coincide with the Bluegrass Classic Stockdog Trials, running May 18-22 at Masterson Station Park as well. Marking 54 years of border collie trials in the Bluegrass, this competition is one of the longest-running, largest, and most prestigious trials in the country, drawing top handlers and dogs from across the USA and Canada.

“We have a shuttle that runs every 15 minutes between the two events,” Parido pointed out. “People who come specifically for the dog trials can take about a three-minute ride over to the festival, spend some time with us and then hop right back on the van to go back to the trials.”

Parido says the two events complement each other and provide an effective overview of what it takes to manage livestock and go “from sheep to shawl.”

In the fall, there’s the Kentucky Wool Festival which happens the first full weekend of October each year (October 7-9, 2016.)

Located just outside of Falmouth in Pendleton County, the event features performances by regional musicians along with vendors, fiber craft demonstrations and shearing exhibitions.

Nancy Reid and Sarabeth Parido both have experience caring for sheep and are quick to acknowledge the importance of sheep and wool to Kentucky’s culture and history.

“When a lot of the Irish and Scottish settlers came into the Appalachian region, it was because it reminded them so much of home, so it would make sense that they would bring the sheep with them,” Parido remarked. “This is a wonderful place to raise fiber animals and I really hope that more people begin to see and value those things.”

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U.S. wheat stocks/use ratio hits 50%

In its latest report, USDA lowered feed and residual wheat use by 10 million bushels, which raised the 2015/16 U.S. wheat ending stocks estimate to 976 million bushels. The current estimate is the highest since 1987/88 when carryout was estimated at 1.261 billion bushels. The higher stocks imply that fully one-third of total supplies from 2015/16 will be carried into 2016/17. Further, the revised ending stocks figure raises the stocks-to-use ratio to 50.1 percent -- significantly higher than the 5-year average of 32.2 percent and last year's ratio of 37.4 percent. By comparison, the ending stocks/use ratio for U.S. corn is 13.8 percent. USDA projects world ending wheat stocks for 2015/16 at a record-large 8.73 billion bushels; this year's production was 26.91 billion bushels, also the largest in history.

Kentucky county hay yields improve

The Kentucky Field Office of USDA-NASS released 2015 hay production data by county. In the "all other hay" category, Trigg had the highest average yield of 2.95 tons/acre; Hickman and Warren had 2.90 tons/acre; followed by Monroe with 2.80 tons/acre. These counties are part of the two highest yielding crop reporting districts. The Central district averaged 2.55 tons/acre and the Purchase district averaged 2.45 tons/acre. The lowest average county yield was 1.40 tons/acre. Of the counties reported, only three had average yields of 1.70 tons/acre or below; this compares to 23 counties in 2014. The state averaged 2.30 tons/acre, up 0.30 tons from 2014, and produced 5.06 million tons of "all other hay", a 20 percent increase over 2014. The top counties in total production were Barren, Pulaski and Madison.

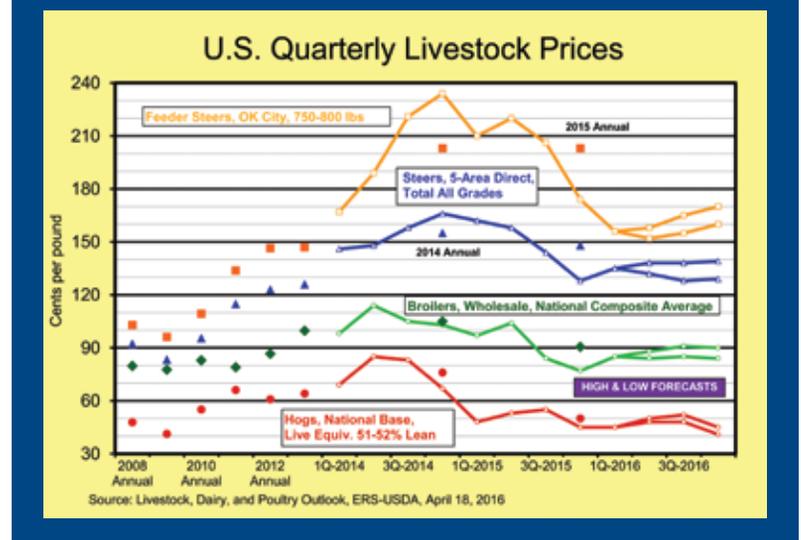
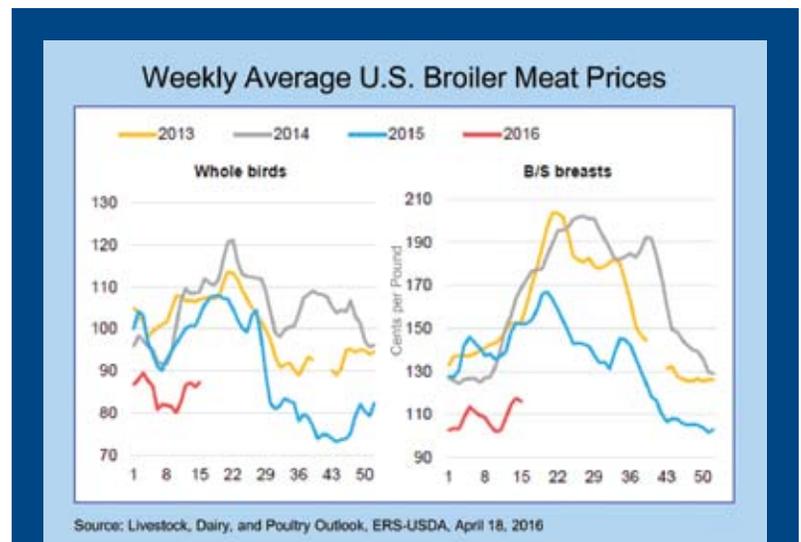
For alfalfa hay, only 17 counties have published yield and production data for 2015. The remaining counties are combined by crop reporting district. The top three yielding counties include Hart and Meade with 4.25 tons/acre and Casey with 4.20 tons/acre. The lowest alfalfa yield among the 17 counties reported was 2.85 tons/acre. The state average yield was 3.70 tons/acre, up 0.30 tons from 2014, resulting in production of 629,000 tons of alfalfa, up 12 percent from 2014. Mason County was the state's biggest alfalfa producer, harvesting 25,300 tons, ahead of Hart County with 20,300 tons.

Honey production and price fell in 2015

Kentucky honey production in 2015 from producers with five or more colonies totaled 230,000 pounds, down two percent from 2014. There were 5000 colonies, unchanged from 2014. Honey har-

vested per colony averaged 46.0 pounds, down from 47.0 pounds in 2014. Producer honey stocks on December 15, 2015, were 55,000 pounds, down two percent from a year earlier. U.S. honey production in 2015 from producers with five or more colonies totaled 157 million pounds, down 12 percent from 2014. Honey was harvested from 2.66 million colonies in 2015, down three percent from 2014. Honey harvested per colony averaged 58.9 pounds, down 10 percent from the 65.1 pounds in 2014. U.S. honey production from producers with 1-4 colonies totaled 720,000 pounds. There were 23,000 colonies with an average yield of 31.3 pounds.

Kentucky honey prices decreased during 2015 to 386.0 cents per pound, down three percent from 396.0 cents per pound in 2014. U.S. honey prices decreased during 2015 to 209.0 cents per pound, down four percent from a record high of 217.3 cents per pound in 2014. Prices reflect honey sold through cooperatives, private, and retail channels. Average retail prices varied by color class: white, 354.2 cents; extra light amber, 411.8 cents; light amber to dark amber, 398.4 cents; and other honey (specialties), 647.0 cents. Prices for the 2014 crop reflect honey sold in 2014 and 2015. Price data was not collected for operations with less than five colonies.



Farms face increased financial pressure, Farm Bureau president tells agriculture subcommittee

Farmers are feeling the pain of the continued slump in commodity prices, American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall told Congress recently. Lower prices will affect income for all farmers and ranchers, but will have an even greater impact on new and young farm-

ers who have not built up equity, are renting a significant portion of their land or are paying off equipment.

“The bottom line is that farmers and ranchers are being forced to tighten their belts and pay much closer attention to their financial situation,” Duvall told the House Subcommittee on

General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. “They will be in greater need of safety net and risk management programs than has been the case for some time-for some, since they started farming.”

USDA Prospective Plantings Report Bearish for Many Row-Crop Farmers

The Agriculture Department’s Prospective Plantings Report suggests low prices for corn and rice will continue, extending the current, two-year farm downturn through the end of 2016, if not beyond.

“The report really highlights how challenging the market is right now for major crops,” said John Anderson, deputy chief economist of the American Farm Bureau Federation. “We currently have adequate supplies both in the U.S. and globally in these commodities. It doesn’t look as though that will change. If we have normal yields, that supply side pressure will not ease up much.”

The 93.6 million acre prospective plantings figure for corn is up from 88.6 million acres planted last year, or close to three times the expected increase of 2 million acres.

The soybean prospective plantings figure came in at 82.236 million acres - on the low side of expectations, but still above some forecasts that had predicted just under 82 million acres. Wheat acreage was also smaller than expectations.

Farm Bureau asks Senate subcommittee to rein in out-of-control EPA

Congress should hold the Environmental Protection Agency accountable for its repeated violations of open government laws, American Farm Bureau Federation board member and Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Tom Buchanan told a Senate subcommittee last month

Buchanan testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management and Regulatory Oversight nearly a year after the conclusion of the EPA’s flawed Waters of the United States rulemaking process. The agency came under fire then for acting as a vocal and highly politicized advocate for its proposal, rather than as a fair broker that would weigh all public comments impartially. The Government Accountability Office ultimately found

EPA had violated the law by pushing “covert propaganda” on an unsuspecting public to gin up support for its own actions.

Buchanan highlighted EPA’s anti-farmer war of words: “That campaign consisted almost entirely of non-substantive platitudes about the importance of clean water - which no one disputes. It used simplistic blogs, tweets and YouTube videos to generate purported ‘support’ for the rule among well-intended people who have absolutely no idea of what the rule would actually do or what it will cost,” Buchanan said. “Regardless of whether you supported, opposed or never heard of the waters rule, I hope many of you would agree that this is not how rulemaking should be conducted.”

County Corner

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities

LAWRENCE COUNTY

Lawrence County Women's Chair Sherry Compton reads to 2nd graders to celebrate National Ag Week.



PIKE COUNTY

Pike County women's chairs read to students for National Ag week.



HARRISON COUNTY

Boyd County President David Horn presented books to 4th grade students during AG Literacy week.



GARRARD COUNTY

Garrard County Farm Bureau members attended the Women's Conference at the Embassy Suites in Lexington. Back to Front: Lisa Bryant, Erika Cyphers, Tracey Edgington, Donna Davis and Sherry Newman.



LARUE COUNTY

Larue County Farm Bureau hosted a Share the Road forum in April. Dale Dobson, Kentucky Department of Ag, led a group of panel experts who discussed the importance of road courtesy while operating farm equipment on the highway.



BOYD COUNTY

Boyd County President David Horn presented books to 4th grade students during AG Literacy week.



BRECKINRIDGE COUNTY

Breckinridge County Farm Bureau held their annual Beef, Egg and Agriculture Issues Breakfast on April 9. The county enjoyed locally grown and prepared foods and discussion with Mr. Warren Beeler, GOAP.



BREATHITT COUNTY

Breathitt Co Women's Chair, Rhea Price reads to students during National Ag Week.



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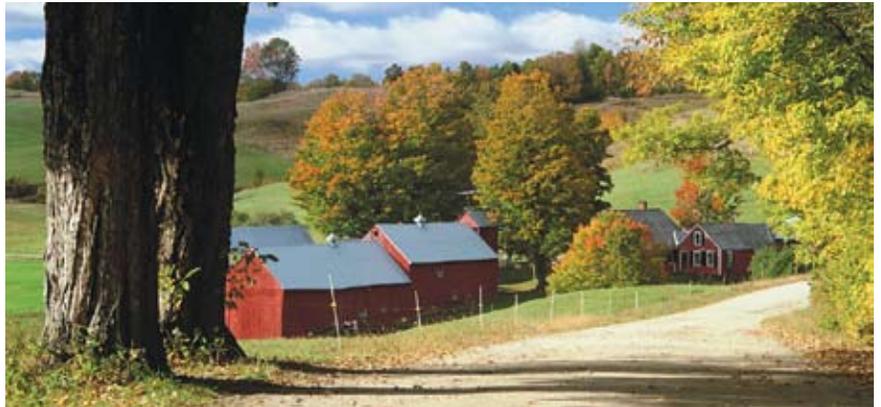


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Pulaski County “Farmer” Making the Most Out of Greenhouse Business



If you ask Lyndsey Todd what she does for a living, she will say “Farmer.” She plants, grows and harvests her crops like any other producer; she just does it within the confines of a greenhouse.

Todd’s Greenhouse got its start in the 1980’s so it’s something the 26 year old entrepreneur/farmer has grown up with, but with recently buying the wholesale/retail business from her parents, it has been a learning experience but an exciting one.

“This is my little two-acre farm and no matter whether I’m putting the seeds in the ground or in a pot, I’m still growing,” she said. “I’m a young woman in agriculture and I think that’s really important.”

Obviously her customers do, too. Todd has seen the business grow from the one greenhouse her parents started to the 12 she now operates, all of which are full of flowering and vegetables plants of all sorts. She has also expanded her sales venue with the availability of several popular garden-type products.



Top: Lyndsey Todd holds up a tray of lettuce plants grown in one of her greenhouses.

Above: Todd’s Greenhouse has been around since the 1980’s and was one of the first venues to join the KFB Roadside Market program.

“I went to the University of Kentucky and started in horticulture but I switched my major to business and I think that has helped me more,” she said.

She also studied marketing while in school which has helped to diversify the business. But she notes that being in business is a lot different than just studying about it and credits her parents for teaching her the basics about

growing plants.

Being a member of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Roadside Market Program has been a big help to Todd in getting the word out about the business to new and existing customers while offering valuable marketing information for her.

“I had always planned to take over the business although I didn’t think it would happen this soon so the program has moved us along farther than if I had not been involved,” she said. “It has really increased our business. In the time that I have been involved with the program I can see that it has grown and if we keep working together, it’s just going to keep getting larger and larger.”

Todd emphasized that one aspect of the program that has really created awareness of her market, as well as others is the social media used to promote the program.

She also takes her KFB Roadside Market program brochures with her to see customers or for industry shows saying those promotional materials really help not only for her but all of the market members.

“I love to go to other markets, especially in the fall to orchards, and I encourage people to check out all of the Roadside Markets,” she said.

Todd added, when it comes to working with her customers, she also has a really good staff on hand including two master gardeners who help customers with question they may have about their plants.

“We try to give every customer a personal experience from helping with landscaping to designing flower pots; we make suggestions and do all we can possibly do to help,” she said.

Todd said she begins planting in January and officially opens in March. By June, work with mums begins and she closes in October taking November and December to prep the store and order new items all in an effort to begin once again in January.

While there is always work to be done, Todd said there is no place she’d rather be than down on the farm.

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