

# Kentucky

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## Is Tobacco the Answer?

Kentucky company conducting COVID-19 vaccine research using tobacco plants

## KFB Insurance Giving to Hunger Initiative

Donation to help Kentucky families in need

## State Budget Includes Funding for Rural Mental Health Pilot Program

MAY 2020

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We also recognize many of our fellow Kentuckians need extra support to provide their families with basic food items during this pandemic. Together with our Clays for a Cause sponsors and participants, we've proudly lent a helping hand by donating \$500,000 to fight hunger and food insecurity in the Commonwealth.

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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS  
Volume 19 | No. 4  
May 2020

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Cover photo by Tim Thornberry  
Tobacco field in Harrison County

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

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# PRESIDENT’S COLUMN



As we make our way through the COVID-19 pandemic and all the change it has created, it is hard to ignore the discomfoting news we are hearing as it relates to the agriculture industry, and our economy in general.

Worries about the economy are valid, but the first thing any of us needs to do is take all the necessary steps to stay safe. Our health and safety, and the well-being of our families, friends, and neighbors trumps all.

I have been reminded daily, through this pandemic, of the words left to us from former Kentucky State Trooper Eric Chrisman, “Everyone is family.”

Keeping that thought as we move forward is paramount as we begin the task of getting back to some form of normalcy and doing so in the wake of the terrible economic storm damage COVID-19 has left us with.

I don’t have to make a list of all the challenges we face on the farm and in our rural communities. It seems to be all we hear or read about from various news sources. But farm families have faced tough times before. Facing the tough market situations we have been presented with however, is unnerving to say the least.

But, most of what is driving those markets has to do with speculation. There is so much we don’t know, yet the fear of that is helping to fuel an already volatile market and the buying habits of the public.

To say it’s going to be a tough road in front of us would be an understatement, but it is still a road worth taking. Farms are essential and always have been. We will prevail. I have no doubts about that.

In doing so, we must work together as a collective agricultural family. We have resources in this state that others don’t. We have strong partnerships between commodity groups and other ag organizations that most states can only dream about. We have government leaders who understand the importance of agriculture and are supportive of our efforts.

We need to pull together, help each other, share our ideas, utilize our resources, and kick this thing. It won’t be easy, but nothing worth doing or having is. If farming was easy, there would be a lot more of us.

To our consumers, despite what you hear or read, we will not run out of food. We could see some disruptions due to processing plant closures, and you may not find exactly what you’re looking for in the meat case on every trip to the grocery store.

But we need to practice patience and understand that the U.S. food chain is healthy and resilient. In looking at the big picture, these disruptions won’t last forever.

To our farmers, we have a job to do, so let’s do it. Kentucky Farm Bureau is still advocating on your behalf to get us through this.

In continuing with our commitment to the people of this state, KFB Insurance just made a monumental donation to the Hunger Initiative to help those in need of food get through this.

This organization is like no other and I am so proud to be a part of it. We will never stop fighting for those we call family and, “Everyone is family.”

**Mark Haney, President**  
Kentucky Farm Bureau

## Julia Sprague: *A Tribute*

*"She was the kind of person that if you met her, you never forgot her."*

For those familiar with the Kentucky Farm Bureau organization, they know it to be like one big family working every day to make life better in communities across the state. Julia Sprague was a long-time member of that family taking her love of the Lord, family, friends, and community to a whole new level.

The wife of former KFB President Bill Sprague stayed busy all of her life mostly helping other people, he said.

"I met her at a church youth rally and thought she was the prettiest girl I had ever seen, and a real personality to go with it" he recalled.

That first meeting turned into a lifetime together. The high school sweethearts would marry in 1962 beginning an adventure that would take them to many places, meeting many people along the way.

Julia was a schoolteacher by trade, spending her career dedicated to teaching young people. After retiring as a full-time teacher, she spent many years as a substitute teacher. In fact, it was by arranging overseas trips for students while teaching that she developed a love of traveling.

"She helped put together several trips to Europe for the students and developed such an interest in it, she would help other people plan trips, and she would do that the rest of her life," said Mr. Sprague.

But she also spent much of her time devoted to other causes including her time spent involved in Farm Bureau.

"After being in the Air Force, we came back home to farm while Julia was teaching school. It was then we became involved in the Young Farmer program," he said.

From there the couple would later serve together as the state Young Farmer Chairs as well as serving on the national Young Farmer Committee. Julia also served on the state KFB Women's Committee.

"She was at my side through all of that and really my top advisor, and of course later when I served as Kentucky Farm Bureau president, she was an excellent first lady," said Mr. Sprague. "She was the kind of person that if you met her, you never forgot her."

Julia would be involved in many ways through Farm Bureau at all levels, and as much as she was engaged in the organization, Julia was just as active in her church including being a Sunday School teacher, choir member, Bible study group leader, and member of many committees.

"She really enjoyed teaching the Bible and had a real knack for it," said Mr. Sprague. "She was also very active in missionary work."

Much of her later life was devoted to that missionary work. Mr.

Sprague said she had made 25 trips to Haiti over the last 17 years of her life.

"She had a trip planned the week before she passed, so she was still going strong even up to the very last," he said. "She loved the people of Haiti, especially the children."

Julia would often arrange for medical professionals to go on the trips to provide medical attention to many Haitians.

Julia Sprague meant a lot to so many; her two children, seven grandchildren, and multiple nieces and nephews; her church family and her Farm Bureau family; her students and the many people in Haiti she helped through the years. It is her husband however, that sums up Julia the best.

"It is a blessing knowing she lived a very full life," said Mr. Sprague. "She was very thoughtful, and she loved people, and that really guided her whole life."



Former KFB President Bill Sprague with wife Julia



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

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Editor .....Tim Thornberry  
 Creative Director.....Maredith Davis Woods  
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 Advertising ..... Casey McNeal  
 ..... Times-Citizen Communications  
 ..... 800 798-2691 (ext. 334)  
 Circulation ..... Kelley Parks  
 ..... (502) 495-5112

## COMMENT COLUMN

For most people, when they see a cow, they just see a cow. When they see a field of produce, they just see a field.

For farmers and ranchers, we see much, much more. We see nutrition. And we want that nutrition to get to people who need it.

We’re proud to be #StillFarming, providing nutrition for all who need it.

We see nothing less than a miracle—the miracle that seeds, rain, sun, animals, and the farmer’s care can turn an empty field or pasture into the source of human survival.

We see months of hard work by our farm families and employees—work that’s only meaningful if it results in feeding our fellow citizens.

It’s difficult to dispose of milk or plow under a crop because there’s no market for it. We think of all that nutrition going to waste instead of feeding people. Too many farmers and ranchers have had to experience that in the past few weeks as the market for what we produce has shrunk due to COVID-19.

Sure, grocery stores are as busy as ever as Americans cook more. But most of the food that was destined for restaurants and school cafeterias no longer has a home. Almost overnight, one-third of the country’s milk demand dried up. It’s costly and difficult to retool a processing plant for retail—a 5-pound wheel of cheese or a 10-gallon bag of milk can’t be sold at your local grocery store.

The near-closure of America’s \$800 billion-plus restaurant industry is hurting demand for beef, chicken, pork, farm-raised fish and seafood, and almost all fruits and vegetables. About 80 percent of the tomato crop in Florida alone usually goes to restaurants.

So, what can be done? We are seeing farmers’ and ranchers’ ingenuity go to work to get the nutrition we are proud to grow to people who need it. Drive-through farms and farmers markets are popping up. U-pick options have increased. And farmers and food banks are working together to feed the hungry.

Many farmers and ranchers already had great relationships with their local food banks. In fact, over the past few years through our Harvest for All program, Farm Bureau members have donated more than 306 million pounds of food, \$7.8 million, and 179,000 volunteer hours to groups fighting hunger in their local communities. Now, with the new challenges we all face, farmers and ranchers are ready to do even more. Food banks are reporting anywhere from a 40 percent to 100 percent increase in demand.

However, the reality is it costs money to harvest, pack and transport food—money that many farmers and ranchers simply don’t have in the wake of a trade war, weather disasters and back-to-back years of prices below the cost of production. We need help in order to help others.

A couple of weeks ago, the American Farm Bureau Federation and Feeding America, the nation’s largest network of food banks, sent a joint letter to the Agriculture Department, suggesting a program to help offset the cost of getting fresh foods—nutrition—to people in need. And our timing could not have been better, as we learned that USDA was thinking of and working on the same issue. It’s gratifying that USDA’s initial plan includes \$3 billion to empower the food system to find solutions, which was the heart of our request. We will also need regulatory flexibility to ensure that packaging, storage and transportation requirements don’t get in the way of getting nutrition where it is needed.

We know USDA is committed to helping us help food banks. It fits Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue’s philosophy of doing good and feeding everyone. And we are grateful to our partner, Feeding America, for helping us start this very constructive conversation with USDA. Quick action is needed. Every day that passes, fresh milk, vegetables and other produce are lost. The Farm Bureau family is committed to doing whatever we can to help ensure no one goes hungry, just as we’ve been doing for years. We’re proud to be #StillFarming, providing nutrition for all who need it.”

**Zippy Duvall, President**  
 American Farm Bureau Federation



## Kentucky Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company donates \$500,000 to Kentucky Hunger Initiative

Historic donation will prove to be a “game-changer” for organizations providing food assistance

Recognizing the growing need to address food insecurity across the Commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic, Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Mutual Insurance Company and the Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance Foundation donated a total of \$500,000 as part of Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles’ Kentucky Hunger Initiative. The donation is the largest single private donation made as part of the Kentucky Hunger Initiative since it was launched in 2016.

The six-figure donation came in advance of the company’s postponed, second annual Clays for a Cause fundraising event, originally scheduled for April 22-23. Last year, the sporting clays event, which took place at Elk Creek Hunt Club in Owenton, Ky., was attended by 191 participants, supported by 37 sponsoring companies, and raised \$115,950 in support of local hunger relief efforts in Kentucky.

In response to Governor Andy Beshear’s call for proper social distancing, KFB Insurance’s Clays for a Cause event was postponed, but the charitable giving was decidedly amplified.

“The coronavirus pandemic is impacting people of every socioeconomic status, but we know those who were already living in food-insecure conditions are at an even greater risk right now. We couldn’t turn our backs on our fellow Kentuckians simply because our fundraising event was postponed. If anything, it encouraged us to do more,” said Mark Haney, President of KFB.

Although more than a month remained for planning and fundraising when COVID-19 began making its negative impact in the Bluegrass State, KFB Insurance had already received tremendous support from partnering sponsors and participants. Financial commitments of \$125,000 were made, but the company had even loftier goals for 2020’s charitable donation.

“We experienced such an overwhelmingly positive response to last year’s inaugural event that we quickly established bigger plans for 2020. We wanted Clays for a Cause to be a real difference maker,” said John

Sparrow, Executive Vice President and CEO of KFB Insurance. “Little did we know that we would not only be fighting food insecurity this year, but also a global pandemic. Event or no event, we clearly understood that too many of our fellow Kentuckians were in a position of need and we were in a position to help.”

Haney, Sparrow and the leadership of KFB Insurance didn’t let COVID-19 and social distancing requirements sway the desire to make a big donation this year. Starting with the KFB Insurance Foundation’s funds of \$125,000 committed to Clays for a Cause by sponsors and participants, and tripling that amount with resources from KFB Insurance for an additional \$375,000, a total of \$500,000 was divided into sizable donations to three local non-profit organizations – Feeding Kentucky, Glean Kentucky and Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry – as part of the Kentucky Hunger Initiative.

**“When we started the Kentucky Hunger Initiative, I knew the ag community would step up to fight hunger like we never had before, but I could not have imagined a half-million-dollar donation from Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance.”**

**- Ryan Quarles**

“When we started the Kentucky Hunger Initiative, I knew the ag community would step up to fight hunger like we never had before, but I could not have imagined a half-million-dollar donation from Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance,” said Commissioner Quarles. “This

donation, in this time, demonstrates how Kentucky agriculture is not only committed to growing food and fiber during a pandemic, but also to marshalling funds to feed vulnerable Kentuckians affected by it. I cannot thank Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance enough, and I look forward to thanking them in person once our time of social distancing has passed.”

Roger LaPointe, executive director of Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry said the donation represents a game-changer for that organization.

“Our members are responsible sportsmen and women; conservationists dedicated to providing a healthy source of protein to needy Kentuckians,” he said. “These funds will expand the reach of our organization in a time when we feared donations would dry up. We are grateful to Kentucky Farm Bureau and Commissioner Ryan Quarles for including us in this remarkable donation.”

Stephanie Wooten, executive director of Glean Kentucky said much of the last several weeks has been spent expanding to meet the need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We decided to act first and worry about money later. Thanks to Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance and Commissioner Ryan Quarles, now we don’t have to worry,” she said. “This significant contribution will allow us to expand our gleaning and distribution capacity so that more hungry Kentuckians can enjoy fresh Kentucky fruits and vegetables all year long.”

Feeding Kentucky’s executive director Tamara Sandberg said during the coronavirus pandemic, food banks have seen a forty percent increase in need for food assistance.

“Feeding Kentucky is thrilled by this historic announcement from Kentucky Farm Bureau Insurance. I wish to express my gratitude to Farm Bureau and Commissioner Ryan Quarles, whose visionary leadership on hunger-relief has ignited Kentucky’s agriculture community to take action in amazing ways,” she said. “This incredible donation from Farm Bureau will enable our organization to reach more Kentuckians at a critical time.”

KFB Insurance will reschedule Clays for a Cause to a later date and continue to host the charitable fundraising event on an annual basis.



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## General Assembly Includes Budget Dollars for Rural Mental Health

**The Rural Mental Health Pilot Program will focus on the needs of rural and farm families**

As rural mental health issues receive more and more attention these days, the desire to bring awareness to and help for those dealing with emotional stress is growing, as well. A variety of programs are being initiated at the local, state, and national levels to address the problems many rural Americans are encountering.

Kentucky lawmakers are also taking note of the issue. During the recent General Assembly Session, \$500,000 was included in the shortened one-year budget plan to fund the Kentucky Rural Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Pilot Program.

State Representative Brandon Reed spearheaded the initiative and said it's time to recognize these types of issues facing Kentucky's rural communities.

"Farming is difficult and stressful work that can leave you physically and mentally exhausted," said Reed. "We want to bring awareness to the challenges that face this profession, as well as the resources available to help those in need. These funds will go a long way to providing that support."

Setting up the pilot program is a first step in the process of being able to access federal funding included in the 2018 Farm Bill.

"This appropriation will help the state access federal grant money. The funding would go toward existing programs that provide counselors and resources to address rural mental health initiatives and promote

awareness about farmer suicide prevention," he said.

The state funding comes on the heels of House Bill 59, which was introduced during the recent legislative session by Reed, and designates the Wednesday of National Farm Safety Week, which is the third week of September, as "Farmer Suicide Prevention Day".

"It is essential that we educate all generations on the impact and pressures that this industry can have on folks," he said. "Most importantly, we need to go beyond the statistics and give these people a name and a face. It is our job to make sure local farmers know they are not alone and that they are valued in our communities."

***“ It is our job to make sure local farmers know they are not alone and that they are valued in our communities.”***

***- Brandon Reed***

Reed, a fifth-generation farmer, said one of the most important parts of the program would be a phone bank staffed by counselors familiar with agriculture to help with concerns or questions from callers.

"Farmers are often more willing to speak to a stranger on the phone as opposed to a family member about problems they are having. So,

it's important to have someone they can talk to who can put them in touch with the right resources," he said.

Reed credits much of his efforts in helping to ensure the safety of Kentucky farm families comes from his relationship with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's (KDA) Farm and Home Safety Program Coordinator Dale Dobson.

"The number one person who has helped me spearhead this is Dale Dobson. This is his passion and he has been incorporating information about mental health issues into his farm safety program," said Reed. "He is a true asset to KDA and very helpful in getting this conversation started.

Reed noted how important it is to get those types of conversations started and is often the first critical step to take.

"The more we talk about this and the more attention we bring to this issue, the better chance someone will go out and get the help they need, and if we can save one life at a time, it is well worth it," he said.

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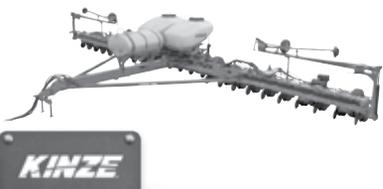
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# Moving agriculture forward, no matter which way the wind blows.

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From farm fields to the legislative chambers of the state and nation, it takes leadership at all levels to meet the challenges of Kentucky's agricultural communities. Kentucky Farm Bureau will continue to support that leadership — as an advocate, a service provider and an organization — by giving leaders the tools, encouragement and voice they need to succeed in an ever-changing world. Why Farm Bureau? Because effective leadership makes life better for all Kentuckians.



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## Kentucky Company Hoping to Turn Traditional Crop into a Life Saver

**Tobacco could prove to be helpful in the fight against COVID-19**

It is no secret that tobacco production has been on the decline for several years and for a number of reasons, including waning consumer use of tobacco products. As more and more tobacco users turn away from its usage, one Kentucky company is looking at this very traditional crop for use in a very non-traditional way – as a possible means to combat the COVID-19 virus. When the Ebola outbreak swept through West Africa beginning in 2014, Kentucky Bio-Processing, (KBP) Inc. played a major role in developing a drug treatment for the disease. And now, with the coronavirus pandemic spreading throughout the U.S. and the rest of the world, KBP is working to create a potential vaccine for this disease.

*Photo courtesy of KBP*



Photo courtesy of KBP



Photo courtesy of KBP

According to information from Reynolds America, Inc., KBP's parent company, the Owensboro based bio-tech company is in the process of developing a vaccine candidate and has recently begun pre-clinical testing.

KBP Chief Executive Officer Hugh Haydon said developing a vaccine is a marathon, not a sprint, and is a complex and challenging process.

"But we're proud of our progress so far. As many health authorities have acknowledged, there is a shared goal among hundreds of research organizations working to solve for the Coronavirus challenge, and we are hopeful that our tobacco research can contribute in some way to that answer," he said.

KBP's current research in looking for a potential vaccine for COVID-19 using tobacco plants is part of its vaccine platform, developed in recent years. But KBP research is diverse in many ways.

"KBP is a world leader in using tobacco and other plants to produce pharmaceuticals and other high value products," said Haydon. "While much of our work is aimed at using this technology for vaccines and pharmaceutical applications, our processes, technologies and know-how also have the potential to yield products for many other commercial applications."

Haydon noted that the company's technologies and the processes developed there make it possible to use the biochemical processes of tobacco plants to produce specific proteins more efficiently and effectively than can be produced using other biological systems.

"Today, we are focused on developing a standardized template to produce highly effective vaccines that target a wide variety of diseases, while meeting regulatory requirements for process and production control," he said.

Haydon noted that based on the COVID-19 genetic sequence, their research efforts have isolated two separate antigens they believe might be able to neutralize the virus, and have now expressed and purified sufficient quantities of each to allow for pre-clinical testing.

"A critical part of developing any vaccine is understanding the structure of the pathogen or disease you're trying to treat," he said. "For the coronavirus, once Chinese authorities released the genetic sequence of COVID-19, KBP scientists began to examine its structure and make a hypothesis about a vaccine that could be structured to neutralize it."

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the research is how valuable the tobacco plant has proven to be in moving forward in the efforts being made to come up with a vaccine.

"The technologies and processes that KBP developed make it possible to harness the biochemical processes of tobacco plants to produce specific complex proteins (antigens) much more rapidly and effectively than they can be produced using other more traditional methods," said Haydon.

Haydon added that after a reasonable hypothesis regarding how the infection works was known, KBP created an antigen that is genetically similar to a portion of the virus. That antigen is designed to trigger an

immune response, which initiates the creation of antibodies that would fight the virus.

"The genetic sequence for this antigen design is then inserted into tobacco plants. As the plant recognizes the new genetic code it reproduces the antigen," he said. "Following several days of incubation where the plant continues to reproduce the targeted antigen, plants are harvested, and the target antigen is extracted and purified. All of this occurs under strict quality parameters designed to meet FDA and other regulatory standards."

Chris Dixon, Vice President of Leaf Operations at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company said tobacco has always been central to Kentucky agriculture, and Reynolds American's operating companies have always been at the center of tobacco science and technology, and continue to invest and believe in the American tobacco farmer.

"As our affiliate, KBP leads the way on developing bio-pharmaceutical applications for this remarkable plant, and R.J. Reynolds continues its long-standing support for agricultural research and development through partnerships with the University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, and other academic institutions," he said. "Their discoveries continue to lead to increased quality and yields and help keep tobacco farmers in Kentucky and other states going strong in a competitive market."

**“ The research they are conducting using tobacco plants to produce life-saving drugs is truly remarkable and we are hopeful for their continued success in the fight against COVID-19.”**

**- Mark Haney**

Kentucky Farm Bureau President Mark Haney said the research being conducted by KBP using tobacco is nothing short of amazing and couldn't come at a better time.

"With so many depending on the efforts of companies like Kentucky BioProcessing, we are appreciative of the work they do and are proud to see such promising breakthroughs being discovered by a Kentucky-based company," he said. "The research they are conducting using tobacco plants to produce life-saving drugs is truly remarkable and we are hopeful for their continued success in the fight against COVID-19."



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wku.edu/hilltoppercreamery

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hintonsorchard.com

### **JACKSON'S ORCHARD & NURSERY, INC.**

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jacksonsorchard.com

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**MOONLIGHT MEAT PROCESSING INC.**

Whitley County | Williamsburg | 606-515-8813  
moonlight-meat-processing.business.site

**PENNINGTON FARM AND GARDEN**

Casey County | Liberty | 606-706-5314

**POTS AND PETALS**

Simpson County | Franklin | 270-792-2252  
potsandpetalsfranklinky.com

**ROBERTS FAMILY FARM**

Meade County | Guston | 270-422-2361  
robertsfamilyfarmky.com

**RUBY BRANCH FARMS**

Simpson County | Franklin | 270-776-4672  
rubybranchfarms.com

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Laurel County | East Bernstadt | 606-344-2882  
wildcatmountaincheese.com

**WOODSTOCK LAVENDER COMPANY**

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woodstocklavender.com

## North Central Kentucky

**ALPINE HILLS DAIRY TOUR & COUNTRY PUMPKINS**

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**ANTIOCH DAYLILY GARDEN**

Bourbon County | Lexington | 859-806-5458  
antiochdaylilygarden.com

**B & E FARMS  
SLATE CREEK FARMS**

Bath County | Owings | 606-336-2335

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**BI-WATER FARM & GREENHOUSE, LLC**

Scott County | Georgetown | 502-863-3676  
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Trimble County | Bedford | 502-255-7296

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eckerts.com/versailles

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FarmersWife.Farm

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finkmeats.com

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Boone County | Burlington | 859-689-2682  
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neltnersfarm.com

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Oldham County | LaGrange | 502-222-4326  
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Jefferson County | Jeffersontown | 502-727-9536  
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**THE FARM AT LANDWORKS**

Bourbon County | Paris | 859-987-1266  
thefarmatlandworks.com

**THE GREENHOUSE IN GERTRUDE**

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**TRIPLE J FARM**

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triplejfarm.org

**VICE'S CORNER MARKET**

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**APPLETREE**

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**COUNTRY GARDEN GREENHOUSE**

Lee County | Beattyville | 606-424-9379

**GOLDEN APPLE FRUIT MARKET - ERMINE**

Letcher County | Ermine | 606-633-4994

**GOLDEN APPLE FRUIT MARKET - HINDMAN**

Knott County | Hindman | 606-785-4891

**GRIFFITH FAMILY FARM - THE FARM STORE**

Johnson County | Swamp Branch | 606-297-3239

**IMEL'S GREENHOUSE**

Greenup County | Greenup | 606-473-1708

**KENTUCKY ROOTS**

Lawrence County | Louisa | 606-686-3276

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Clay County | Beverly | 1-800-898-2709  
rbmission.org

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Lawrence County | Louisa | 606-922-0762

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SouthDownKy.com

**WALKER'S FAMILY FARMS**

Pike County | Hardy | 606-333-7333

**DOWNLOAD THE KYFB APP TO FIND YOUR NEAREST MARKET**

# COVID-19

## Best Practices for Certified Farm Market Members



### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPERATIONS:

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- Communicate that customers should not come to the farm if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has been ill
- Provide hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes for visitors
- Postpone any events or gatherings
- Maintain a safe “social distance” of six feet or more
- Limit the number of customers in the market at one time
- Create opportunities for customers to order online, by phone or via text
- Offer curbside pickup at the farm market or delivery
- Provide product preview areas for customers and have trained employees to “pick” products from displays
- Do not provide samples or have sampling stations
- Require employees to wash hands frequently
- Designate an employee to disinfect frequently touched areas
- Use gloves when handling money and encourage using credit cards
- Adopt policies and procedures for employee health and wellness
- Communicate that sick employees will not work if they have symptoms or were exposed
- Keep the local Health Department informed if an employee tests positive for COVID-19
- Use of cloth face coverings to help slow the spread

### IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN A FARMERS MARKET:

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- Limit the number of customers in the farmers market at one time
- Do not congregate in groups and maintain a safe “social distance” of six feet or more
- Practice appropriate sanitation steps including hand-washing and sanitization of surfaces
- Designate one employee to wear sanitary gloves to handle money and one to handle food

### IF YOU OFFER U-PICK:

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- Provide handwashing stations and/or hand sanitizer to all guests and request that they wash their hands before entering the field and upon exiting
- Employees should use hand sanitizer after every transaction and should wear gloves
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces on a regular basis (reusable bins and buckets, railings, doorknobs, tables, etc)

For more information, call **502-495-5000 ext. 7238** or email [certified@kyfb.com](mailto:certified@kyfb.com)

# Farming During a Pandemic

Farm families are still on the job despite the hardships created by COVID-19



Life on the farm today looks much like it did a year ago, or two years ago, or 10 years ago. Grain producers are spending countless hours planting crops. Produce growers are checking their early season vegetables. Orchard owners are looking for spring frost damage. Livestock producers are ending a spring calving season. And dairy farmers are still working long hours ensuring consumer dairy needs are met.

While it all sounds very familiar, the agriculture industry is enduring some very unfamiliar conditions as COVID-19 continues to rear its ugly head across the globe, wreaking havoc from both health and economic perspectives.

“I have grown up on our family farm and I can honestly say, we have never seen anything like this before,” said Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President Drew Graham. “But, I have also never seen the kind of coming together we are seeing now between people and organizations and government leaders, all in an effort to get through this pandemic together. I have no doubts, we can be better than before when we get past all this.”

## #StillFarming

Kentucky’s agriculture community has a long history of prevailing through adversity and most farms are operating as “normal,” although normal may look a little different in the coming weeks and months.

Hardin County farmer Ray Allan Mackey spent much of his time last month in a tractor planting crops, as he usually does this time of year. He said while prices are below the profit margin, he thinks most grain producers are planting anyway, hoping for a better market sooner rather than later.

“We’re planning on growing a crop because that’s what we do. Our farms have to be productive. And we have to find a way to be more efficient while managing our inputs, especially at a time like this, when profits are hard to come by,” he said. “Our problem right now is that we have lost a considerable amount of our market demand for our grains and there is little opportunity to price this year’s crop at profitable levels. But we’re going to produce and harvest with hopes of selling at some type of a profit, or at least attempt to cover our expenses.”

And while nothing can replace growing a crop for a profit, Mackey said the current market situations, much of which have been caused by COVID-19, make a great case for the need of support for the crop insurance program.

“I think this is a good time to remind the public or Congress of the need for crop insurance and risk management tools. Crop revenue protection, which the majority of farmers in America have, is the way to guarantee up to 80 percent of our expected revenue based on our history, our yield history, and springtime prices,” he said. “And we should emphasize that the government is subsidizing the premium, trying to make it somewhat more affordable. They’re not having to make up huge losses of income.”

Mackey, who also serves as a KFB State Director, Chair of KFB’s Swine Advisory Committee and current Chair of the Kentucky Corn Promotion Council, said while grain producers are moving forward cautiously, it is the pork industry that is getting much of the national attention due to some closures of major processing facilities.

“Swine farmers plan months in advance when it comes to the

numbers they will have ready for processing and the country was looking at a very large supply of hogs going to market in the fourth quarter of this year,” he said. “The scary thing is, can the slaughter facilities handle the numbers that will be coming to market from October to the end of the year?”

Mackey said he believes those companies that have closed facilities or scaled back production will want to come back online as soon as possible. However, some producers are facing difficulties when it comes to getting their animals to other processors.

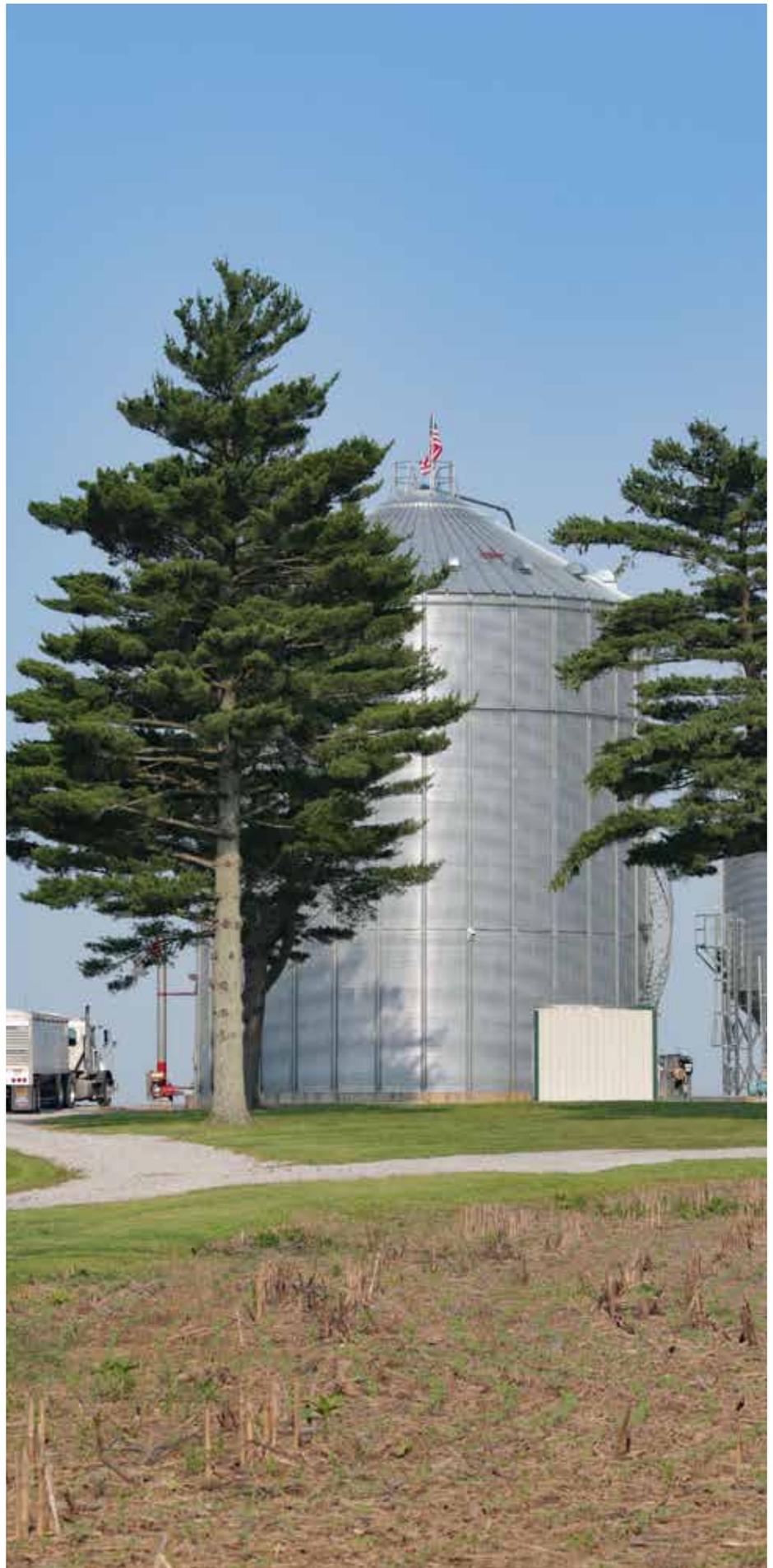
“I believe it’s reasonable that we can get some of those animals moved to other processing plants. But that does cause hardships on producers in those areas where there are closures,” he said. “Our hope is that these closed facilities will be operational soon and our pork producers won’t be faced with any difficult decisions regarding their animals. I think the meat supply continues to keep going down the food chain. It may be slower than what we want but moving, at least to some extent.”

Shane Wiseman is a cattle producer from Clark County, KFB State Director and chair of the KFB Beef Cattle Advisory Committee. He said cattle producers are like others, still in a financial bind, but with better pasture conditions they may be able to hang on to their animals longer than normal. But at some point, those animals will need to make their way through the food chain.

“As far as I’m concerned, there is no issue with supply on the producer end. With processing plant closures, some disruptions may well occur, but it’s not as though we are going to run out of beef. My biggest concern comes at the meat packing level as it relates to the prices we’re getting,” he said. “Supply is not the issue from the farm side as much as prices are.”

Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles has taken note of those types of issues. In a letter he sent to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, Quarles addressed several concerns including those connected to the state’s cattle industry.

“Seeing as Kentucky is the largest beef cattle state east of the Mississippi River, my state stands to suffer significant losses because of this pandemic,” he said. “I also share the concerns raised by Kentucky producers regarding suspect disparities in the price of beef on the farm level and at the grocery store. I encourage the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to continue keeping a watchful eye on the price of meat at retail and losses suffered on the farm level.”



### Direct sales from the farm are growing in popularity

Farmers across all sectors are generally seeing very low prices; low enough at this point in time, to cause farm families to be looking at a time of little or no profitability.

With that said, Wiseman said attention to direct sales from the farm is something more and more consumers are turning to and more producers are considering. Mackey echoed those sentiments saying many producers are seeing some hope on the farm through direct sales.

Stewart Hughes, a beef producer in Scott County has been marketing directly to consumers for some time and said his family is seeing new customers and increased interest in the

***“ I have grown up on our family farm and I can honestly say, we have never seen anything like this before. I have also never seen the kind of coming together we are seeing now between people and organizations and government leaders, all in an effort to get through this pandemic together. I have no doubts, we can be better than before when we get past all this.”***

***- Drew Graham***

buy-direct method.

“We have been remarkably busy, with freezer beef sales, selling packages and retail cuts and we are filling orders and almost selling out once we bring beef back from the processor,” he said. “Our CSA for our produce has filled up faster than years past, and we have had to start a waitlist for our CSA. With that said, we are adapting to the current situation by taking preorders, curbside at the farm, and soon an online store in late May. Training and protocols are being put in place to keep ourselves and customers safe during this time with resources from KFB, KDA, and the University of Kentucky.”

Hughes added that while business is brisk, once some semblance of “normal” comes back and consumers’ lives get more hectic, they may return to their old habits of buying.

“I can see that they will return to the convenience of going to the grocery store, therefore, it’s important for producers to try to make buying local more convenient for our customers to keep them supporting local farms for the long run,” he said.

Hughes said he is hesitant to call anything happening during this pandemic a silver lining but he noted consumers are seeking out options to support local farms and other local businesses during the pandemic, something he sees as being positive.

Kenny Imel and his family have operated Imel’s Greenhouse in Greenup County since 1976 so local marketing is nothing new to him. The operation consists of a covered open-air market with an on-site store that contains a wide variety of local foods.

“We also have nursery stock, fertilizers, seeds and soils, in addition to the store. This year we added pots and we do a big business in succulents,” he said. “I think if you’re going to make agriculture work best for you, you have to have diversification.”

Having a diversified operation has been a good move for Imel, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Business has been good even with the regulations we have to follow because of the coronavirus, so we’ve been blessed,” he said. “Probably our biggest obstacle has been the ups and downs in the weather.

Imel has been in business long enough to have experienced most of the swings that occur in the agricultural economy, and while nothing really compares to the current situation, he said many customers are touting local goods at a time when it is difficult for many of them to get away from their homes.

“Our facility allows customers to stay far apart, which has worked to our advantage, and we have had many people say they like coming to the local markets,” he said. “I think we are seeing a resurgence of local buying. Whether it continues after this pandemic is behind us, I don’t know, but I think more people will realize how much their local providers are putting back into the local economy.”

Imel said a big concern he has is how long the virus will be around and the restrictions that go with it.

“We do a lot connected with agritourism, so this situation obviously concerns us. But we don’t have a crystal ball and we will keep going like all other farm families do and hope and pray we all stay safe and get through to a better time,” he said.

As difficult as the pandemic has been for everyone, farm families are still hard at work doing what they do best for many reasons. They continue to feel a sense of duty and tradition when it comes to farming, no matter the conditions.

Quarles said the dedication of Kentucky’s farm families can never be underestimated.

“Our farmers are some of the most dedicated people you will find anywhere, not just because they farm for a living, but because they are truly good people,” he said. “They feel such an obligation to continue to produce our food supply, they do so under any conditions you can throw at them. I liken this pandemic to a war, and our farm families are patriots fighting with all they have to make sure we have food on the table, fuel in our vehicles, and clothes on our backs.”



# MARKETS



## BROILER EXPORTS TO WEAKEN IN COMING MONTHS

U.S. broiler exports totaled 582 million pounds in February, up six percent from last February. Shipments increased year over year to several key markets, including Mexico (+22.6 million pounds), Vietnam (+14.6 million pounds), China (+15.9 million pounds), the Philippines (+11.3 million pounds), and Georgia (+10.1 million pounds) and are expected to remain strong in March. However, despite strong expectations for broiler exports in the first quarter, export demand is expected to weaken for the remainder of 2020 as importing countries endure weakening economic conditions and currencies. While shipments to China have been steadily increasing, it is uncertain whether the Chinese market will be able to make up for decreased exports in other markets. Based on expectations for challenging global economic conditions, the 2020 export forecast was decreased to 7.230 billion pounds, about two percent higher than 2019 exports. In addition, the U.S. turkey export forecast for 2020 has been revised downward by 70 million pounds to 580 million pounds, or nine percent below 2019.

## STATE'S TOTAL CROP VALUE DOWN IN 2019

The five principal crops produced in Kentucky during 2019 had an estimated value of \$2.73 billion, down \$128 million, or 4.5 percent, from 2018's revised estimate, according to USDA data. The most valuable crop was corn which was valued at \$1.005 billion; this is 23 percent above 2018's crop value. The increase in value was due to a 15 percent increase in production and a 26-cent higher corn price. The second most valuable crop in Kentucky was soybeans at \$707.4 million, an 18 percent decrease from 2018. Value decreased primarily from a 21 percent decrease in production. The average price increased 31 cents per bushel over 2018's \$8.79. The third most valuable crop in Kentucky was All Hay (baled) at \$616.2 million, down \$154.4 million, or 20 percent from 2018. This resulted from a combined 13 percent decrease in production and a 5.7 percent lower

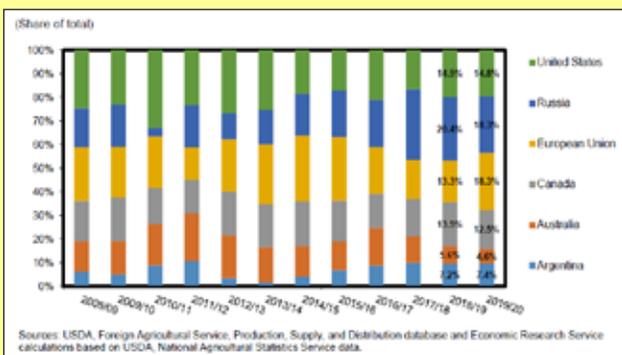
average hay price of \$150 per ton. In its distant fourth-place position, 2019 tobacco production was only valued at \$268.6 million, down ten percent from 2018's \$298.2 million. The preliminary average price for 2019 is \$2.176 per pound, down 4.3 cents from the prior year. Wheat remained in fifth place at \$131.7 million, up 28 percent from 2018. Compared to the 2018 crop, 2019 wheat production was up 27 percent with an average price one percent higher.

## SOYBEAN CRUSH FORECAST RECORD HIGH

Due to strong demand for soybean meal, USDA raised its forecast of the 2019/20 soybean crush by 20 million bushels to a record 2.125 billion. Although soybean oil prices have declined sharply since January, crushing margins have remained steady. A simultaneous plunge in the average soybean

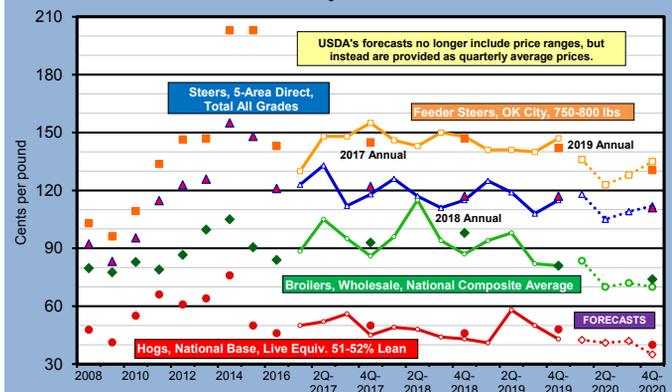
cash price paid by processors has sustained the profitability of crushing. Support for the domestic use of soybean meal derives from robust year-to-year gains in livestock production, especially for hogs. Another factor contributing to higher soybean meal demand is a contraction of protein substitutes, such as the corn byproduct feeds produced at ethanol plants. Thus, domestic soybean meal disappearance for 2019/20 is forecast 300,000 short tons higher this month to 37.1 million. U.S. exports of soybean meal in 2019/20 are being buoyed, as well, by a current shortfall in Argentine shipments. The U.S. export forecast is up 250,000 short tons this month to 13.45 million tons. The brighter demand outlook for soybean meal leaves the forecast of its 2019/20 average price unchanged at \$305 per short ton. (Note: COVID-19 related disruptions at U.S. meat processing facilities are lowering producer prices and backing up inventory on the farm, both of which encourage reduced livestock and poultry production and less feed demand.)

Global Wheat Export Market Share



Source: Wheat Outlook, April 13, 2020, USDA, Economic Research Service

U.S. Quarterly Livestock Prices



Source: Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Outlook, ERS-USDA, April 15, 2020

## COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



### Clay County

Clay County Farm Bureau's Women's Committee Chair Margaret Hensley presented John Edd Goins with a food check-out basket earlier this year.



### Calloway County

Calloway County Farm Bureau recently held its first virtual monthly board meeting. Twenty county board members and officers joined the meeting. Pictured is Calloway County Farm Bureau President Michael Burchett conducting the meeting from his computer.



### Graves County

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

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# “ CANDID CONVERSATION

**K**FB Candid Conversation presents a discussion about the topical issues facing the agricultural industry and rural communities in a question and answer format. In this column, Kenny Burdine, an Associate Extension Professor in livestock economics at the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment discusses the state's cattle industry the current state of the industry, and his role on a national team which came together to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the sector.

How did this national team come together and what was its purpose?

Colin Woodall at the National Cattleman's Beef Association reached out to Oklahoma State University's Darrell Peel, who is an extension economist at OSU, in an effort to put together a team that could try and estimate the losses to the cattle sector, because of COVID-19. In doing so, a group of people with diverse backgrounds from all over the U.S. came together to speak to all aspects of the industry. In putting together the nine-member team, there was a real effort to get people who understood all aspects of the cattle business. NCBA wanted some estimates to use as the industry interacted with USDA, with respect to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

The numbers the team came up with look very daunting, to say the least. The total impact to the industry could be as much as \$13.6 billion with a per head total of at least \$111.91. How did the team come up with those totals?

We estimated losses in total by using changes in price forecasts and changes in futures prices, before and after COVID-19. We needed estimates of cattle inventories at all levels of the system to do this, and then were able to express those estimated losses on a "per head" basis. So, at the cow-calf level, we tried to do it based on mature breeding animals; cows and bulls. And then, of course, for stocker/backgrounding and for feedlots, we did it based on the number of cattle that were in a stocker or backgrounding program, or on feed, when this happened.

Did any of these estimates surprise you in any way?

We had a relatively small amount of time to make estimates that were based on expectations in the future. So, we had to make our estimates based on the best information available. In terms of the per head losses, I really wasn't all that surprised. When I step back and look at them, they make sense. But that total number will really grab your attention.

Where did we stand with the cow herd before COVID-19 happened?

The beef cow herd hit a low in terms of numbers in 2014. And of course, we also had really high prices. Starting then, we grew the cowherd for 5 straight years. On January 1, 2020 however, we actually saw the beef cow herd smaller than a year ago. So, from January 1/19-January 1/20, there was an estimated one percent decrease in beef numbers, nationwide. We had begun the process of reducing



Kenny Burdine, an Associate Extension Professor in livestock economics at the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

the size of the cow herd, which, frankly, is exactly what the market needed. That should have started the process of seeing prices improve. But we have to remember that the 2020 beef production level is really a function of the 2019 calf crop. In reality, beef production was actually going to be higher this year. It really wouldn't be until next year when we saw the smaller calf crop lead to lower beef production. So, there's always a lag in terms of cow numbers and beef production. The economic hit from the virus actually came when production was pretty high across all meats; beef, pork and chicken, which, I think, compounded the price problem quite a bit.

With all the discussion around fears of meat shortages due to processing facility closings, do cattle producers, especially cow/calf operators have more flexibility than other types of livestock producers?

The answer is yes, they have some flexibility. For example, if I have a fall calving operation, I might be weaning calves in April and I do have the option of weaning those calves and growing them for a period of time or keeping them on the cow a bit longer. Still not all producers will have the ability to do that. And, the further downstream I get, the less flexibility I have. If I'm a stocker operator or a backgrounder, and I've got heavy feeder steers ready to sell now, I don't have as much flexibility. And certainly, if I operate a feed lot, then I've even got even less flexibility. Those cattle that are ready to go, I can only drag them out so long. And if I do delay marketing cattle, I may actually make the situation worse, by letting cattle back up in the system.

To say we have an unsteady market at this point is likely a big understatement. What are your thoughts on the current beef cattle market?

We were largely on pace to see big beef production numbers during the first half of 2020. But now the markets are largely focused on the potential

impact from processing plants that have temporarily shut down or are operating at a lower capacity. So, we're in a strange place right now. We've got what seems to be pretty strong demand at the retail level from consumers who were kind of "buying ahead", but on the negative side, we've lost a large chunk of our food service market and shifted that towards at-home consumption. That creates some challenges for the system. And, all the uncertainty in the market is creating a lot of price volatility.

**We are hearing a lot about the losses incurred from the food service market. Is that market much larger than many of us thought?**

It's a very significant market, probably more so for the beef sector than for other commodities. The food service market also tends to be a market for higher-end cuts, whereas at-home consumption tends to be more lower value beef cuts. With that being the case, I think we're also learning that it's difficult for our supply chain to just automatically divert processing that was geared towards food service and automatically shift it towards retail. There's a difference in packaging, a difference in quantity, and a difference in the types of meat products those markets want. For example, restaurants are used to buying huge quantities at one time. Imagine a restaurant-oriented package versus a retail package and a retail grocery store. They're very different. So, that's the type of challenges we are having to work through.

**If there is such a thing, do you see a silver lining especially for smaller operations who are marketing their beef directly?**

I do. You know, this is strictly anecdotal, but a lot of people that I've talked to who direct market beef off the farm or sell through a farmer's market, are telling me they are getting more calls from people interested in buying directly from them. And I do think that may be something that consumers really consider here; buying some product in bulk locally and having a freezer full of beef, and that really applies to all species. Generally speaking, we're composed of mostly small farms in Kentucky that are probably better able to do things like direct market. We've also got a fairly large number of small meat processing plants. And a lot of those do provide a custom service for farmers who want to direct market or for consumers that want to buy directly from the producer. I do think there's an increase in interest in doing that, which may carry forward.

**“ One thing we know for sure is the cattle industry in Kentucky, and nationwide, is very resilient. I'm confident the industry will come through this. We will have huge challenges. But, in the end, I'm certain we're going to have a strong cattle sector.”**

**- Kenny Burdine**

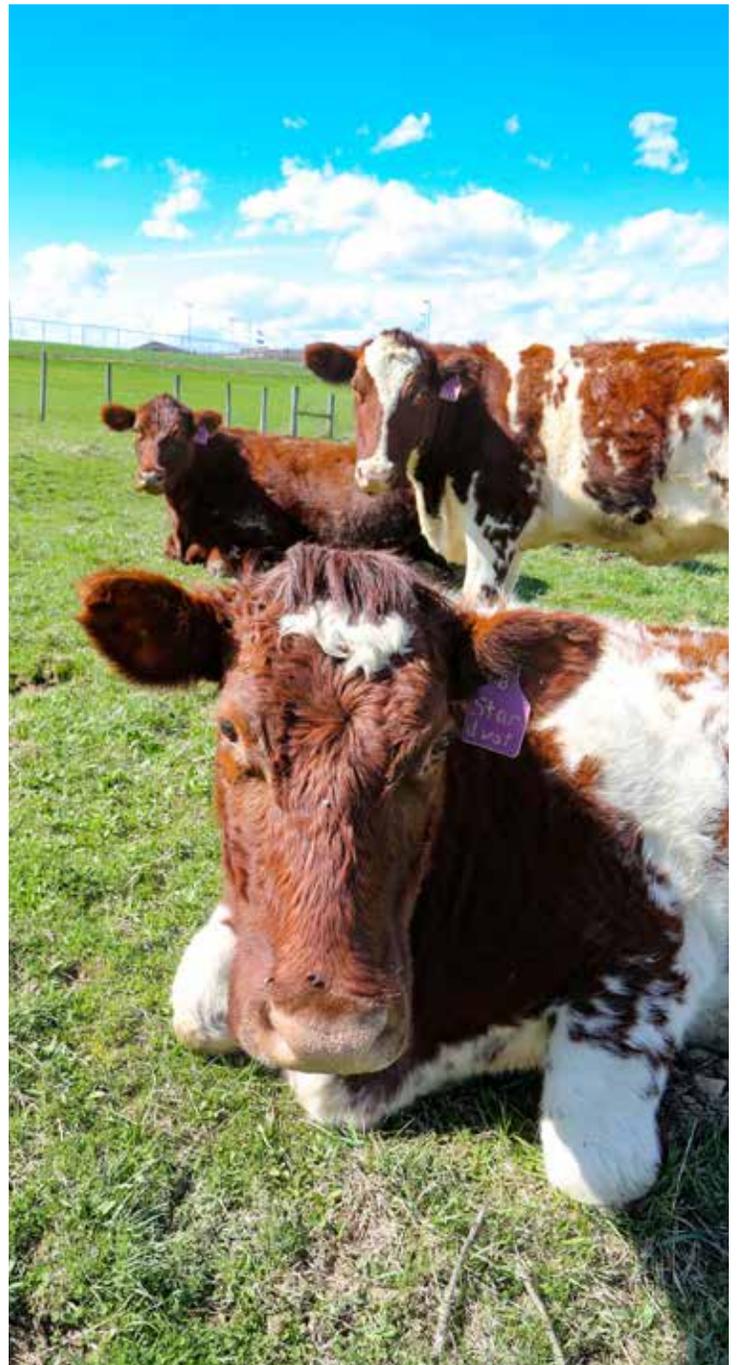
**Do you think we will get to a point of some kind of normalcy and stability in the markets as we move through this pandemic?**

Yes, but I do think it will take some time. Even if the supply chain does stabilize, and plant shut downs become less of an issue, I think we're still going to have some pretty serious impacts from reduced economic activity. That's probably going to impact these markets through the balance of 2020, at least. But, direct marketing will help producers in some cases. And the one thing we know for sure is the cattle industry in Kentucky, and nationwide, is very resilient. I'm confident the industry

will come through this. We will have huge challenges. But, in the end, I'm certain we're going to have a strong cattle sector.

**We have many resources in place in this state that can certainly lend a hand if it's nothing more than advice as we get through this. For what we're dealing with, are we in a good place?**

I think you hit the nail on the head. There's a lot of groups that are serving the agriculture industry here, and I think they all do a very good job and bring a lot to the table. One thing I think we can be very proud of in Kentucky, is not just that we have those groups serving agriculture, but all those groups work together extremely well because they have a common goal. That makes us even stronger in this state because we have all those groups working together to serve agriculture in the Commonwealth.





# THE BUSINESS OF FARMING

**Developing solid business relationships can be a key ingredient in the recipe of success**

**W**hile it may be difficult to see opportunities during the COVID-19 outbreak, especially in rural communities, the farm families who live in those areas are known for their resiliency and are carrying on despite some of the hardships this global pandemic is causing.

Now, more than ever, utilizing existing ag-related resources and partnerships is key to helping agricultural businesses, including farms, stay afloat, said KFB First Vice President Eddie Melton.

“In the best of times, farm families depend on many different business resources to help guide them from one season to the next,” he said. “But during this time of great uncertainty, it’s more important than ever to seek these resources and build relationships that will be needed to get past the economic hardships being created by the coronavirus pandemic.”

Melton added, from an economic development perspective, it’s important to recognize the network of family farms as being part of the total business climate in rural Kentucky.

“These individual farms are an integral part of the overall economic development picture in this state and help drive the economy,” he said.

One of the resources helping to maintain that sustainability is Farm Credit Mid-America (FCMA). Keith Lane, FCMA Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer recently discussed the organization, and its involvement in the Kentucky agriculture community, with KFB News.

**FCMA is more than just a place to get a loan, what are some of the services offered?**

*Crop Insurance and the revenue protection it provides is important. We have invested in proprietary technology that allows our nine-person*

*Kentucky Crop Insurance team help producers decide which product is best for their situation. We are proud of our Growing Forward program that assists young, beginning and small farmers with cost savings on loan products and provides financial education opportunities. Growing Forward often partners with Kentucky Farm Bureau’s Young Farmer program.*

*Farm Credit Mid-America also helps secure Kentucky agriculture’s future by supporting youth with college scholarships and support for 4-H and FFA. Farm Credit Mid-America works with Commissioner of Agriculture Ryan Quarles’ Kentucky Hunger Initiative to address food insecurity in the Commonwealth.*

**Talk about the importance of partnerships in the agriculture industry.**

*Agriculture is a unique industry and each agricultural operation, while similar, is independent and distinctive. In agriculture, it is important to work with people and businesses that understand not just agriculture, but how each producer approaches production, financial planning and marketing so that solutions are tailored to fit. One size fits all does not work well with hats and it really does not work well in agriculture. Kentucky agriculture needs trusted partners that have an agenda that is consistent and beneficial. As a member-driven organization and producer-owned cooperative respectively, Kentucky Farm Bureau and Farm Credit Mid-America meet that test.*

**Do you think that the idea of farms being considered rural businesses isn’t recognized by some in or out of the industry?**

*Agriculture has not done a good job telling its story. Others have*

and are telling it for us. That leads to all sorts of misconceptions about all sorts of issues. We are beginning to close this gap, but we still have a considerable amount of bridging to do. Farming is special in that it almost always has a rural lifestyle attached. While this is a unique business situation, it does not make agriculture less of a business.

**Is it a fair statement to say FCMA is a partner with farm families and rural businesses?**

Farm Credit Mid-America's mission is to secure the future of rural communities and agriculture one home, one farm, one business at a time. This individualized approach allows us to understand a producer's needs and to provide information that is required to make informed decisions and then the capital needed to facilitate making those decisions become reality.

**During this time of uncertainty, what advice would you give to farm families looking to you for help?**

The most important thing is to ask. Farm Credit Mid-America is strong financially and has the tools and expertise to help Kentucky agriculture through the existing situation. The sooner we can begin a plan with a producer, the more likely it is that the plan will be successful. Don't wait, call soon.

Recognizing the stress in the current situation, Farm Credit Mid-America has made Lifeworks Resource Program available to our members free of charge. Lifeworks Resource Program provides confidential support services to our members and their dependents to help resolve work, family or life-related concerns. Again, the most important first step is to call if you need help.

From a business standpoint, much of what has transpired in the last month is out of anyone's control. It is important to focus on what can be controlled to mitigate the downside. Production expenses and family living costs remain within our control. So do certain production choices. Small savings will matter in the long run.

**Is there anything special you are doing during this pandemic?**

Not special, but certainly different. Farm Credit Mid-America is designated as an essential business both as a financial institution and because we support agriculture. Our retail offices are open for business, but by appointment only and are being operated by fewer employees than pre COVID-19. Our

teams are rotating to keep the offices open. I am following a similar rotation, working at home and at the office when it makes sense. I am washing my hands more, using hand sanitizer and maintaining social distance. I also am much more appreciative of the simple things I once did that I can't do now. I hope we can all begin to gather again soon.

**With challenges usually come opportunities. What opportunities does FCMA see in Kentucky's rural communities and on the farms?**

The opportunity to appreciate simple things and each other. As an example, I knew Farm Credit Mid-America had great employees, however, the way they have stepped up to serve agriculture under difficult circumstance is amazing. You will find that type of effort all over rural Kentucky. We should appreciate our rural communities and the people who live there. The production of food and fiber continues.

From a business standpoint, most operations want to improve and look for ways to identify soft spots in strategic and operational issues. When things are going great, it is hard to find the soft spots and it takes considerable discipline to make change. During a crisis, the soft spots become evident and there is motivation to make difficult choices. Kentucky's rural communities and agricultural producers can emerge from this situation more efficient and proficient.

**Could you talk about the relationship FCMA and Kentucky Farm Bureau share?**

We appreciate the Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) and our long, continuing partnership. Farm Credit Mid-America works with KFB annually supporting programs like the KFB Young Farmer Leadership Conference, KFB Beef Tour, Clays for a Cause, KFB Roadside Market and we finish each year with our sponsorship of the Excellence in AG Award presented at the KFB Annual Meeting. We not only serve many of the same customers as KFB but we also share in a passion and dedication to promoting agriculture together, all across the Commonwealth.



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## DOWN THE BACKROADS

By Tim Thornberry

### Finding Comfort During Uncomfortable Times

For those of you who regularly read this column, let me first say thank you for taking the time each month to allow me to share some of my experiences with you. As you may have noticed, I often take this time to speak of my family, especially my father.

In keeping with that theme, I would like to share a very personal story with you. As I write this, it has been almost 15 years to the day since my father passed away from this life to his heavenly home.

In those last few days, I anguished over the fact that I would soon lose him. He had been my dad, my friend, my mentor, my protector, and so many other things. How could I face each day without him?

My father was a grizzly bear when it came to protecting his home and family, and I have tried so hard to emulate that passion he possessed when it came to taking care of his family.

In being a great protector, he was also a great provider. He taught me a work ethic that I carry with me to this day. He taught me to hunt and fish and love the outdoors as much as he did. If ever there was a person who could have gone off the grid and lived off the land, it was my dad.

On the morning of his passing, I stood outside the door of his nursing home room looking at the beautiful countryside that surrounded the facility. I notice a deer crossing the entrance way and directly above it was a goose that almost seemed to be following the deer. I knew these things in nature, that he so loved, were guiding him from this life to the next.

My father left this world just minutes later and I couldn't help but think that what I had witnessed outside that window was a clear sign from God above. It was comforting to me at a time when I was so uncomfortable.

Fifteen years later, as I'm standing on my back porch trying to come to terms with a

terrible disease that is sweeping the world, I noticed two wild geese flying overhead, making a circle and passing by a couple of times.

It's not unusual to see geese in my neck of the woods, but this was different. I took it to be another sign from God that He indeed is watching over us and that my father's spirit is ever-present with me.

A few days later, I picked up the Bible that was given to my father in 1960. My mother made it a Christmas gift from my brother and me and it is one of my most prized possessions.

I have opened this book many times before but for the first time I notice a couple of pages in the very front of the book that were stuck together. I gently separated them and found, in my father's hand writing, several verses written down with page numbers. As I looked up each verse, I found he had drawn a box around each of those noted verses. I read about unconditional love, and the power of faith, and the comfort that only comes from our Heavenly Father.

I knew in my heart that my dad had left me one last message; teaching me, guiding me, and still protecting me. And I know he will be with me all the days of my life, as I travel down the backroads.

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# Service means going the extra mile. Even if it's a country mile.

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Service is the foundation of everything we do at Kentucky Farm Bureau. Whether it's sponsoring a Little League baseball team, helping legislative leaders meet the needs of Kentucky farmers, serving as the voice of Kentucky agriculture or helping policy holders recover from a loss, we are committed to serving Kentuckians. Why Farm Bureau? Because together, we will make Kentucky a better place to live and work.



**KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU**

EST. 1919