

# Kentucky

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## Advocacy in Action: 2020 KFB Congressional Tour

**Broadband Funding**  
ReConnect dollars coming to Kentucky

**2020 Legislative Drive-In**  
KFB goes to Frankfort



MARCH 2020



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With more than 70,000 family farms in Kentucky, agriculture is a vital part of the Commonwealth's culture, values and economy. Every year, farm families work together at the grassroots level to identify shared challenges and achieve common goals. Kentucky Farm Bureau reflects these challenges and goals in our policies, and we're proud to advocate for farmers across the state in everything we do. Why Farm Bureau? Because Kentucky's success depends on improved farm income and better economic opportunities.



**KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU**

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Cover photo by Tim Thornberry  
A picture of the nation's Capitol Building at sunrise

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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Since the beginning of the year, Kentucky Farm Bureau members have been very active in their advocacy efforts during the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention, the annual Congressional Tour, and this year's Legislative Drive-In Day, just to name a few.

During this busiest of advocacy times, we are participating in events such as these in large, often record, numbers.

And I am so proud of those efforts by our volunteer members. We are at a point, in our agriculture industry, where we need big numbers and loud voices to relay our priority issues to leaders and legislators at all levels.

One of our top priorities remains adequate broadband service. Let me be clear, the time has come to reach the last mile with the kind of connectivity we need to run our farming operations, to service customers in our businesses, and to communicate in a way that only reliable broadband service will allow.

Rural Kentucky should not be left behind when it comes to getting the service we need and deserve. I have been passionate about many issues during my time at Kentucky Farm Bureau, and in the agriculture industry. There is no doubt, this one ranks at the top of the list.

The basic infrastructure needs that are required to get products to various markets and inputs to the farm have to include reliable broadband service. It's no different than having good roads, strong bridges, and public utilities.

Fortunately, we have seen some very positive movement at the state and federal levels from a legislative perspective. KFB is advocating for a bill currently making its way through this session of the General Assembly, House Bill 362, which would update a fund and create a grant cost-share program for providers to deploy broadband in under-served and unserved areas of Kentucky.

We have bipartisan support of this bill and feel it is imperative this legislation passes to further our efforts to make adequate broadband a reality.

At the federal level, broadband providers in Kentucky received \$55.3 million, from the first round of USDA ReConnect Pilot Program investments. This program furnishes loans and grants for various costs needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas.

As we move through this process of advocacy, I can't thank our volunteer members enough for their support and the many efforts they are making to ensure our voice is heard on this matter. I also want to thank our Congressional delegation, who met with our members during the recent Congressional Tour to discuss this, and many other issues facing agriculture and our rural communities.

We are fortunate to live in a state where agriculture is viewed in such a positive way. But make no doubt about it, not everyone understands the urgency we see in this and many other ag-related issues.

If we, as a collective statewide community of consumers, want to keep our farms in business, we must have broadband service. That's how important this issue is. It's as simple as this; we all have to eat!

**Mark Haney, President**  
Kentucky Farm Bureau



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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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## COMMENT COLUMN



We keep a heavy-duty chain around our house for multiple reasons; one of which is pulling the lawn mower out of the mud whenever I get it stuck, and I'm really good at getting it stuck.

Regardless of what the task is, the chain always serves the purpose. Each link connected to the other, accomplishing the job.

Those links serve as the perfect metaphor for the individuals and variety of groups that make up Kentucky Farm Bureau. As the chair of our state Women's Advisory Committee, I am proud to be a part of an organization that utilizes its many "links" to advocate for our agricultural industry.

Collectively, our members across this state, who serve on local women's committees, county boards, and young farmer committees, work together in so many ways to strengthen the voice of Kentucky agriculture on the local, state, and national levels. By working together with our common bond, we can accomplish so much more; in much the same way as the links on a chain pull together.

Individually, we can only do so much, but as a group, we bring together volunteer members with a variety of skill sets to participate in a number of projects that help sustain the many programs associated with Farm Bureau.

We work together, as do those chain links, to support the communities in which we live.

Throughout the year, Farm Bureau women can be found in local schools reading a book to children about agriculture and teaching them where their food comes from. They are instrumental in several educational efforts including our scholarship and grant programs. They administer a variety of youth programs, and they continue to serve in a number of leadership roles, at all levels.

Women's engagement is vital to the mission of Farm Bureau. Their many "links" make this organization stronger and expands our reach. They continue to help move us forward as we strive to make life better in our communities and foster a new generation for our organization and agricultural industry.

It is an honor for me to have an opportunity to represent our Farm Bureau women from across this state. I'm blessed to have a strong team of ladies to help serve Kentucky Farm Bureau and Kentucky agriculture. I'm grateful for the accomplishments and efforts of our ladies and would like to recognize our State Women's Advisory Committee and some very special counties for their outstanding contribution in 2019.

District 1: Bettie Bean; District 2: Judy Hayden (Chair); District 3: Tammy Cashman; District 4: Vickie Bryant; District 5: Debbie Rothenburger; District 6: Pam Stockdale; District 7: Carol Sullivan; District 8: Jennifer Newby; District 9: Mary Jayne Cannon (1st Vice Chair); District 10: Lisa Osborne (2nd Vice Chair); and District 11: Rhea Price.

I would also like to recognize our Top Women's Counties for 2019. The Top Women's County for 2019 was Mason County; with the runner-up Women's Counties being Boyle and Greenup.

As part of the entire Farm Bureau family, our women's committees across this state are important links to our success as an organization, and we appreciate the opportunity to serve Kentucky Farm Bureau and Kentucky agriculture.

**Judy Hayden, Chair**  
 KFB Women's State Advisory Committee

# ADVOCACY IN ACTION: THE 2020 KFB CONGRESSIONAL TOUR

Volunteer members show up in a big way to meet with the state's Congressional delegation

In keeping with their advocacy efforts in 2020, nearly 350 Kentucky Farm Bureau members made their way to Washington, D.C. as part of the organization's annual Congressional Tour.

Each year, KFB's Executive Committee leads this trip that includes updates on national agricultural issues, meetings with their Congressional members, and a question-and-answer session with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and U.S. Senator Rand Paul.

KFB President Mark Haney said he is never surprised at the level of involvement exhibited by members of the organization.

"KFB's members are known for being knowledgeable about the issues that affect their family farms and rural communities and are not shy at all when it comes to advocating for the very industry that is their livelihood," he said. "Our Congressional delegation knows this and knows that we will show up in a big way each year."

By bringing such a large group, KFB has earned a reputation of being one of the strongest Farm Bureaus in the country when it comes to being a voice for agriculture.

This year's tour included a meeting with American Farm Bureau Federation leadership and USDA officials to learn of federal ag issues and efforts to address these farm-related matters.

Paul Schlegel, AFBF's Vice President of Public Affairs, addressed attendees about some of the issues the organization is working on with Congressional leaders. He said having so many KFB members make the trip to Washington to meet with the Congressional leaders is important when it comes to the advocacy efforts of Farm Bureau.

"It underscores and amplifies the strength of Farm Bureau and there's nothing more powerful in a democracy than getting the people to stand up and say what they care about," said Schlegel. "And to have a group of this size, with this potential to have an impact on the processes, it's just terrific."

He also noted the strength of Farm Bureau's



grassroots advocacy does not go unnoticed by other organizations.

"I've worked in Washington D.C. for a number of years and I can tell you if I'm talking to the (organizations such as) U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Petroleum Institute, the National Retail Federation; they all look at Farm Bureau and they envy our grassroots, our involvement, and our ability to weigh in on Capitol Hill," said Schlegel. "Whether you're talking (issues such as) climate change to farm labor, we are the key people and it's a great position to be in. We don't win every fight, but we know our members are engaged and involved, and I think everyone, even if they don't agree, respects the fact we're a key player."

KFB members also heard from Chad Rupe, USDA's Administrator for Rural Utilities who discussed rural broadband. He, too, noted the importance of grassroots advocacy when it comes to solving issues like rural broadband.

"I think local leadership is critical to be able to do these build-outs. If we don't have people applying for funding; if we don't have people engaging and figuring out how to solve the problem, and coming to find new solutions to old issues, then we're really at a disadvantage if we don't have that local leadership," he said.

Rupe noted, in looking specifically at the broadband issue, that it is as vital a part of infrastructure needs as any other.

"The needs of the roads and bridges and airports, all of those are critical because you've got to get your product to markets, but you have to have a market and you have to be able to sell your wares so, yes, the Internet and access to it is absolutely critical to further support economic viability for our rural citizens," he said.

Haney said one of the more exciting aspects of this year's event is

the fact that so many members were joining the Congressional Tour for the first time including the KFB Outstanding Youth winners and many Collegiate Farm Bureau members.

***"KFB's members are known for being knowledgeable about the issues that affect their family farms and rural communities and are not shy at all when it comes to advocating for the very industry that is their livelihood."***

***- Mark Haney***

"These young people, and those coming for the first time, got to see KFB in action as members talked to their Congressional delegation about the issues they are facing on their farms every day. And that really sets an example for them to become involved in their local communities and to become more involved in Farm Bureau," he said. "After all, it is this next generation who will take over as leaders, not only in their communities, but at KFB, as well. The more we can do to help them now, the better off all of us will be when their time comes."



*Nearly 350 Kentucky Farm Bureau Members made their way to Washington, D.C. to participate in the 2020 KFB Congressional Tour.*

# BROADBAND ADVOCACY EFFORTS GET MAJOR BOOST

USDA funds going toward  
four projects across the  
Commonwealth



*USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Donald "DJ" LaVoy*

One of Kentucky Farm Bureau's top priorities has been to get adequate broadband service to all rural communities. That effort got a recent boost, to the tune of \$55.3 million, thanks to a first round of USDA ReConnect Pilot Program investments.

ReConnect was created through revenue provided by Congress in March 2018 and furnishes loans and grants to provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas, according to information from the USDA.

Four projects will be funded in Kentucky during this first round of funding. Those include:

- Ballard Rural Telephone Cooperative Corporation will use a \$2.4 million ReConnect Program grant to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) network in rural McCracken County. The funded service areas include 578 households and a critical community facility spread over 20 square miles.
- Duo County Telephone Cooperative Corporation Inc. will use an

\$18.7 million ReConnect Program grant to deploy a FTTP network in rural Adair, Cumberland, and Russell counties. The funded service areas include almost 3,650 households spread over 45 square miles.

- Gibson Electric Membership Corporation will use a \$32 million ReConnect Program loan to deploy a FTTP network in rural Fulton, Graves and Hickman counties in Kentucky, and in Dyer, Lake, Obion, and Weakley counties in Tennessee. The funded service areas include almost 7,400 households spread over 1,056 square miles.

- Thacker-Grigsby Telephone Company Inc. will use a \$2.3 million ReConnect Program grant to deploy a FTTP network in rural Breathitt County. The funded service area includes 637 households spread over 109 square miles.

USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Donald "DJ" LaVoy made the announcement last month in Adair County, along with Hilda Legg, USDA Rural Development State Director for Kentucky.

LaVoy said there are many benefits to having broadband connectivity no matter where one might live.

“High-speed broadband internet connectivity, or e-Connectivity, is essential today to run a successful business or agricultural operation, access specialized health care or education, and connect with loved ones living far away,” he said. “When we have broadband and we have the ability to live and have a job wherever you so choose, particularly in small communities, it makes a tremendous difference.”

**“ When we have broadband and we have the ability to live and have a job wherever you so choose, particularly in small communities, it makes a tremendous difference.”**

**- Donald LaVoy  
USDA Deputy Under Secretary for  
Rural Development**

Legg said the ability to have connectivity in rural communities will help people stay in those areas.

“Whether it’s precision agriculture, whether it’s our children in their home doing homework, whether it’s the mom doing a home based business with her jams and jellies, our rural communities need this infrastructure in order to stay in those rural communities, in order to stay on those family farms, and for their children and their grandchildren,” she said.

KFB President Mark Haney said the need to get connectivity to all rural areas has become a necessity.

“We can no longer look at adequate broadband service as a luxury. Because of the advancement in agricultural equipment, the increased use of computer technology for educational and business purposes; because of the sheer need to be available on our phones and through email, we have got to get every last mile connected,” he said. “We can no longer ask if it is affordable, we have to understand we can no longer do without it.”

For more information, visit [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov).



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# 2020 KFB PRESIDENTS & VICE PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

Annual event offered learning opportunities for local leaders and a message from AFBF President Zippy Duvall

More than 300 county Farm Bureau (FB) leaders made their way to Louisville for the annual Kentucky Farm Bureau Presidents and Vice Presidents Conference held February 11 and 12. This annual event brings county volunteer leaders together each year to hear from KFB leadership and staff on a variety of topics; information related to everything from finances to legislative priorities, all given in an effort to help these local leaders better serve their members and communities.

KFB President Mark Haney said the conference offers a chance to network and learn from each other, as well gain information from the state office.

“We always strive to bring valuable information to our county presidents and vice presidents so they may further their efforts to make their local Farm Bureaus stronger and engaged,” he said. “But one of the most valuable aspects of this event is the opportunity these leaders have to work and learn together as we continue our long tradition of grassroots advocacy. We are much more effective as an organization when we move forward together.”

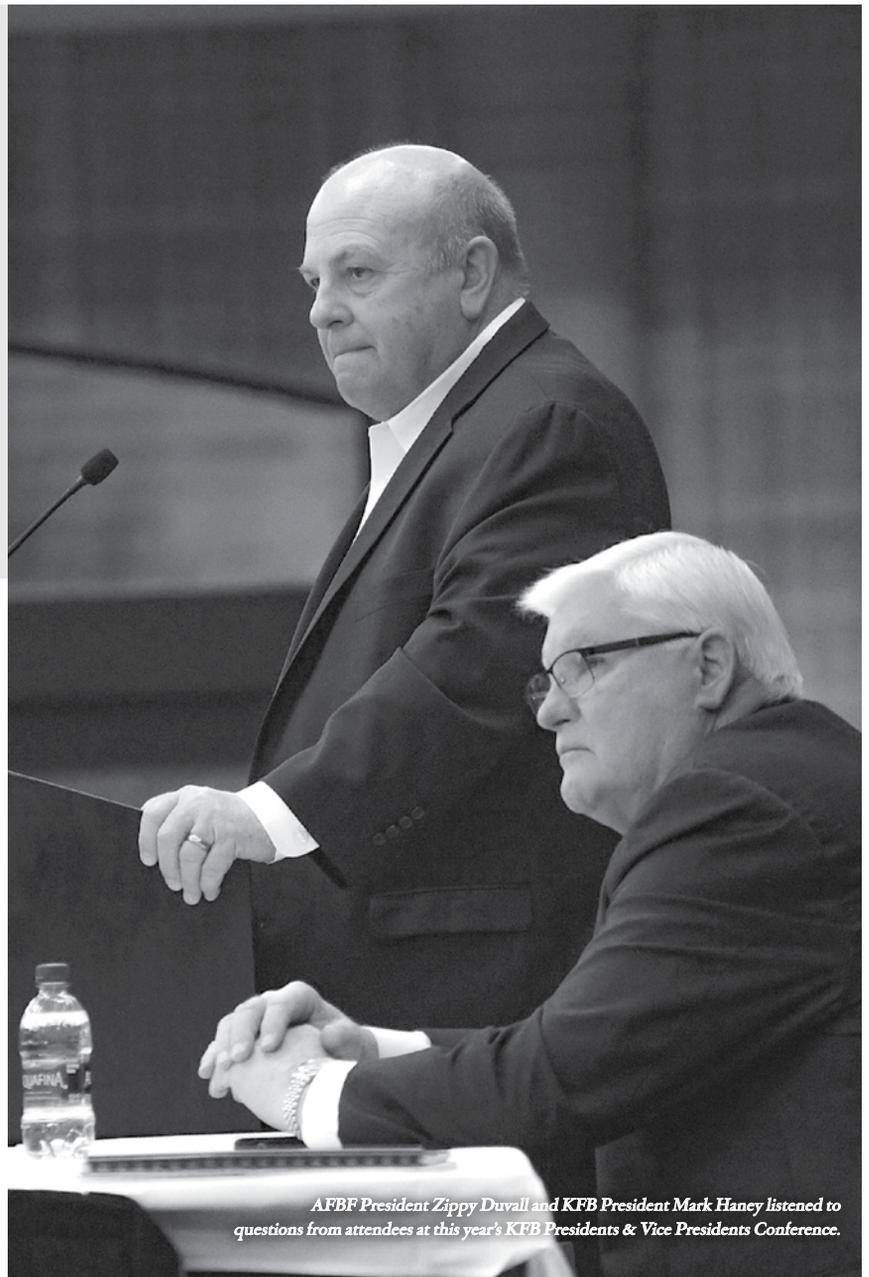
One of the highlights of this year’s conference came by way of the keynote address from American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall.

He touted the theme of “Stronger Together” saying how important it is to work together as an organization.

“Stronger Together’ is such an important phrase because what we get accomplished is because of the reputation of this organization and our policy, which comes from you,” he told attendees. “The attitude that we have at AFBF is that we work for you and everything we do, you are involved in.”

Duvall also discussed the many priorities of the organization and how important it is to remain strong advocates to build on success.

“With all the trials we’ve had over the last few years, on the agricultural policy side, we’ve had two consecutive years of unbelievable success,” he said. “And I am so proud of our state Farm Bureaus, of our



*AFBF President Zippy Duvall and KFB President Mark Haney listened to questions from attendees at this year’s KFB Presidents & Vice Presidents Conference.*

AFBF staff, and the grassroots of this organization for engaging and paving the road as we take your policy and lay this foundation.”

**“ One of the most valuable aspects of this event is the opportunity these leaders have to work and learn together as we continue our long tradition of grassroots advocacy. We are much more effective as an organization when we move forward together.”**

**- Mark Haney**

Haney also recognized local leaders for the many efforts they are making to keep the organization moving forward at all levels.

“We couldn’t be the strong, and trusted organization that we are without the tireless work our local leaders undertake in their communities, in our state capital, and at the federal level,” he said. “When KFB shows up, we show up in great numbers and that sends a strong message to our legislative leaders. And for that, I can’t thank these members enough.”

This year's KFB Presidents and Vice Presidents Conference was the first for Montgomery County Farm Bureau President Byron Amburgey, who said what an honor it is for him to be attending as a new county president.

"In 2006 I was asked to serve on the Montgomery County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, and I remember thinking what a honor and opportunity it was to be asked to serve on a board that does so much for our community," he said. "Little did I know that day would change my life the way it has over the last 14 years."

Amburgey recalled being named the Young Farmer Chair in that first year, and becoming involved in the KFB LEAD program, as well.

"Fast forward all these years and I found myself sitting in the New Presidents Orientation at this year's conference thinking who would have thought I would ever become president of our county farm bureau and what a honor it is," he said. "While listening to all the speakers during the event, I remember thinking of what a commitment that all these people in this room have made, not only at the county level, but at the state and national levels. KFB is Stronger Together for several different reason but the one that sticks out the most for me is our leadership."



AFBF President Zippy Duvall delivers the keynote speech at this year's conference.



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*KFB Women's State Advisory Committee Chair Judy Hayden presented Governor Andy Beshear with a food basket.*

## KFB LEGISLATIVE DRIVE-IN & FOOD CHECK-OUT DAY

Annual event brings volunteer members to the Capital for meetings with their legislators.

Nearly 300 Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) members, from across the state, made their way to Frankfort on February 5 to participate in the organization's annual Legislative Drive-In and Food Check-Out Day activities.

Both initiatives assist members in their advocacy efforts through visits with state lawmakers. KFB President Mark Haney said nothing is more important to the agriculture industry than keeping legislative members informed about issues affecting farm families.

"This is such an important day for our organization as our volunteer leaders meet with their legislators to discuss KFB priorities and to hear progress on pending legislation that will affect their family farms," he said. "And by showing up in big numbers, it leaves no doubt as to how involved they are as advocates and how interested they are in the legislative process."

Those attending first met with KFB leadership and the Public Affairs team to discuss ag-related legislation making its way through the General Assembly and to pick up food baskets which are handed out to lawmakers and constitutional officers, including the Governor, during this event.

KFB Women's State Advisory Committee Chair Judy Hayden said the food baskets not only showcase Kentucky produced goods but also helps legislative members understand how much of a person's income goes toward their food costs.

"Food Check-Out Day and Week is a national campaign in which many state Farm Bureaus participate each year commemorating the calendar day when the average American family will have earned enough

income to pay for the entire year's food supply," she said. "By delivering the food baskets we not only demonstrate how inexpensive our food supply is in this country, but it gives us a chance to offer some of the great food that is produced right here in the Commonwealth and to showcase the value of our farm families."

Representative Bart Rowland said he looks forward to this day each year to hear from members.

"It's always impressive when Farm Bureau comes to town. Some of the best friends I've got from back in my district are Farm Bureau members. They always welcome me to their local meetings, and I'm always glad to have them up here to hear about issues that are important to them and their organization," he said. "You always remember the groups that come year, after year, after year, and especially the groups that come out in large numbers like Farm Bureau. And it makes a difference when it comes to taking a side on these issues. The legislators always remember the folks that have visited and talked about those issues."

Senate Majority Floor Leader Damon Thayer spoke of the importance of agriculture and having Farm Bureau members come to Frankfort to meet with their respective legislators.

"I love Food Check-Out Week. It's a great way to remind legislators that it takes about six weeks of income to pay for our food and how fortunate we are here in the United States to be able to rely on our farmers to provide food on the table and to remind people that it just doesn't come from the grocery store," he said.

Thayer also mentioned that the one issue he hears from citizens the most deals with rural broadband.

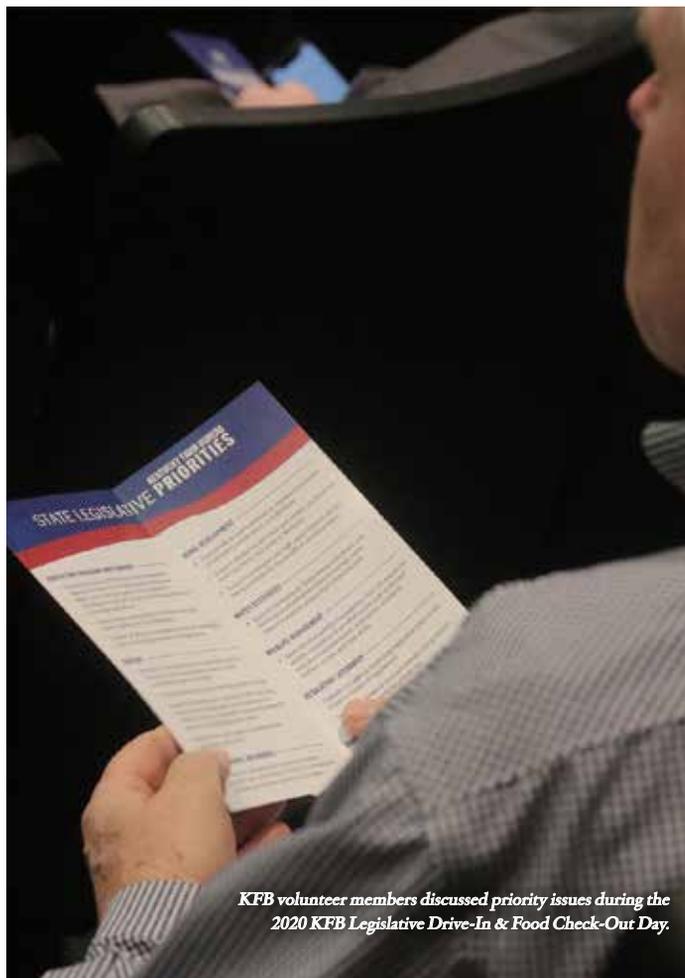
“Broadband is the number one issue that I hear from constituents about on a year-round basis, and especially getting it out into these rural areas and I hear about this a lot because it’s important for farmers and other small business owners, who are in the rural areas, to be able to have that level of connectivity.”

Haney offered his thanks to the hundreds of members who participated in the day’s event and reminded them to keep up the good work in advocating for the agriculture industry.

“The very farms we live and work on are invaluable to us and we must always remain vigilant in our efforts to ensure that way of life is preserved for us and generations to come,” he said. “I can’t thank our volunteer members enough for making the trip to Frankfort and speaking up for this industry that is so important to every citizen of this great state.”

**“ By delivering the food baskets we not only demonstrate how inexpensive our food supply is in this country, but it gives us a chance to offer some of the great food that is produced right here in the Commonwealth and to showcase the value of our farm families.”**

**- Judy Hayden**



*KFB volunteer members discussed priority issues during the 2020 KFB Legislative Drive-In & Food Check-Out Day.*



*KFB Women’s State Advisory Committee Chair Judy Hayden presented the Secretary of State Michael Adams with a food basket.*

# COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



## Boone County

KFB Legislative Drive in Day/Food Check-Out Day. Pictured from left are: Brad Schwenke, Boone County Young Farmer chair and LEAD participant; State Senator John Schickel; and KFB Area Program Director Mike Tobin.



## Boone & Pendleton Counties

KFB Legislative Drive in Day/Food Check-Out Day. Pictured from left: Brad Schwenke, Boone County Young Farmer chair; State Senator Wil Schroder; Rob McClanahan, Pendleton County Farm Bureau president; and Eli Mann, Pendleton County director.



## Carter County

Carter County Farm Bureau celebrated Food Check-Out week by making a donation to the local Food Pantry at First Church of Christ.



## Clark County

Clark County Farm Bureau Board & Women's Committee members cooked & served dinner for the Clark County Extension Office's Winter School: Industrial Hemp Night.



## Clark County

Clark County Farm Bureau Board Members & Clark County State Representative Les Yates attend the Legislative Drive-In in Frankfort. Pictured from left: Rick Mink, Terra Pigg, Les Yates, Jeremy Jones, and Kenneth Anderson.



## Grant County

Mark Kinsey, center, was awarded Farmer of the Year by the Directors of Grant County Farm Bureau.



## Greenup County

Greenup County partnered with Pure Country Ford of Grayson Kentucky, FFA and 4H to "Fill a Ford". All the food collected will be distributed in the county to organizations that help feed the people of the county.



## Henry County

The Henry County Legislative Appreciation Dinner was held recently. Pictured from left: State Representative Rick Rand, Henry County Farm Bureau President James Mobley, and State Senator Paul Hornback.



## Kenton County

KFB leaders from Kenton County met with Kentucky Senate Majority Leader Damon Thayer during the KFB Legislative Drive in Day/Food Check-Out Day. Pictured from left: Don Easybuck, Kenton County director; Art Darnell, Kenton County VP; Becky Darnell; Senator Thayer; and Ray Vaske, Kenton County director.

# COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



## Scott County

Scott County Farm Bureau President Stewart Hughes, left, and Kentucky Senate Majority Leader Damon Thayer at the KFB Legislative Drive in Day/Food Check-Out Day.



## Scott County

KFB State Director Stewart Hughes, left, and Donzetta Hughes, right, met with Congressman Andy Barr while attending this year's KFB Congressional Tour.



## Fleming, Robertson, Lewis Counties

Farm Bureau leaders from Fleming, Robertson, and Lewis Counties met with State Senator Stephen West during KFB's Legislative Drive in Day/Food Check-Out Day. Pictured from left: Jeremy McCloud, of Robertson County; Chris Mitchell, of Fleming County; Terry Vice, of Fleming County; Jennifer Meadows, of Lewis County; Jim Meadows of Lewis County; Senator West; Randall Wood, of Fleming County; Mary Jayne Cannon, of Fleming County; and KFB Area Program Director Mike Tobin.



## Russell County

The Russell County Farm Bureau and Russell County FFA officers gave grocery shoppers literature, recipes, and other useful info on February 5th for Food Check-Out Day. There was also had a drawing for a beautiful basket of Kentucky Proud items. It was won by Larry Norfleet of Russell Springs.



## Kenton & Grant Counties

KFB leaders from Kenton and Grant counties met with Representative Savannah Maddox during the KFB Legislative Drive in Day/Food Check-Out Day. Pictured from left are: Don Easybuck, Kenton County director; Curt Webster, Grant Co LEAD participant; Mark Kinsey, Grant Co director and state board member; Rep. Savannah Maddox; Becky Darnell; Art Darnell, Kenton County VP; and Ray Vaske, Kenton County director.

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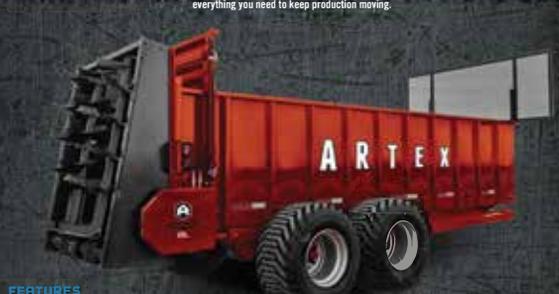


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## CANDID CONVERSATION



*Kirby Green accepts the AFBF Excellence in Agriculture Award.*

**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, Kirby Green, the American Farm Bureau's (AFBF) Excellence in Agriculture winner discusses the competition, her roles in Farm Bureau and the agriculture industry, as well as issues facing rural communities.

First, congratulations on your recent win at the AFBF annual convention. Tell us a little about yourself and how you became involved in the Excellence in Agriculture (EIA) competition.

Thank you to the entire Kentucky Farm Bureau organization for their support in this entire experience. Kentucky had the largest membership at the National Convention and this group comes to support its members. My dad is one of 14 siblings and the Kentucky Farm Bureau family reminds me of this group— they show up, and they show out, in large numbers! My husband and I felt the support of all of KFB in Austin.

I first learned about the Excellence in Ag Competition while competing in the Discussion Meet in 2016. My friends, Ryan and Miranda Chaplin, were competing in this contest nationally and being in their fan club, I loved learning about their work; their “why” through this contest. What a privilege to share your work and get to recognize the many people who invest in you each day. I am passionate about the work I do in agriculture and in my community and was delighted to be given the opportunity to share more about the “why”.

How did you come up with the theme of your EIA presentation “Roots, Shoots, and Fruits?”

As agriculturists we know that roots, shoots, and fruits are vital to growing a crop and the same is true of the story of our lives. We must be grounded in our identity, grow up in character, and then grow the fruit of these efforts. We can't stop there. We must be about growing good fruit on the trees of others to cultivate a next generation of leaders of character, focus, and progress. So with that framework, I was able to share more about growing up on my family's farm and in a rural community. Most of all, my faith in Christ is ultimate in my roots and identity. I was able to share some of the growing up experiences or those shoots as a Murray State student, FFA member, former agriculture teacher, and my early years with DeKalb and Asgrow. And then I had the chance to share about the delight of investing in people, farms, organizations, and platforms I am passionate about in agriculture and in my community. My life story has been full of being a benefactor of remarkable parents, family members, mentors, coaches, teachers, and peers who invested in me, and to be able to show honor to them in that moment, was really special.

As a young person involved in the agriculture industry, what do you see as some of the biggest challenges facing your generation when it comes to getting into or remaining in the industry?

Your question is spot on to ask about the challenges, yet it also highlights the person that desires to work in agriculture— we are up for challenge. Because while I have a lot to learn in my career, I have learned that the challenges and the “uncomfortable” are what grow us and teach us

more about humility, faith, and generosity than anything else.

I have witnessed a pretty cool turn in the tides around young people pursuing careers in agriculture. While in college, I would sometimes get questions around “Why aren’t there plenty of farmers and you aren’t going to farm, right?” I have more emails, phone calls, and Facebook messages today from young people who want to pursue careers in agriculture, both traditional and non-traditional, when it comes to a background in agriculture. This is super encouraging. The next-generation data is in and what it tells us is that our rising generation is more interested in doing work that is meaningful and gives them purpose— over anything else. I can’t think of a better industry than agriculture to live a purpose-driven life.

Challenges do exist— the pace of change in agriculture, the cost of entering into and sustaining a career in production agriculture, the rising cost of postsecondary education to study these new, innovative areas of agriculture, the need for rural access to internet, just to name a few. I am passionate about the power of mentorship specifically in agriculture. What I have been the benefactor of, is receiving mentorship from others that help in facing these kinds of challenges. If you are reading this and not currently mentoring in another generation, I highly encourage you to pursue intergenerational relationships in your life. This is a game changer for a young person trying to figure out how to get in, and stay in, agriculture and your wisdom has the ability to greatly impact a young person.

With challenges come opportunities. What opportunities do see for young farmers and young farm families?

We have access to digital systems that our grandparents could not have ever imagined, and in the next decade, imagine what is yet to come. We all know about the biotechnology revolution of Borlaug and the impact of that time frame; we are living in the digital revolution and get to be a part of shaping what this looks like, and will look like, in agriculture. This is very exciting. What I love about working in agriculture is that we always use the pressure cooker test of “common sense” with every new, innovative piece of technology.

The cool thing is, the technology that will create BIG opportunities for young farmers doesn’t even exist today. That’s why it’s so important for us to pursue a mentality of being a life-long learner.

What kind of misinformation about agriculture are you seeing from a public more and more removed from life on the farm?

Today’s consumer is constantly bombarded with data points, some scientifically backed and others not so much. This causes deep anxiety for many around the food they eat— and I get it. Social media can often appear as if many people are yelling for your attention to believe, do, and buy something. So, consumers fall into the camp of skeptics because they are overwhelmed with what information to believe. Everything from GMO’s, herbicide use, and the list goes on. But what I know from being a mom who connects with other moms on a daily basis and are often the primary representative for their homes when it comes to food purchases: common ground is key. Parents and guardians want to feed their families a nutritional meal and want to do so without that being the majority of their family’s income.

And here’s the great part of that story: that is our reality. Reminding our consumers that we live in a country with the safest, most abundant food supply— ever in history. What a gift.

In working with farmers on a day-to-day basis, what encouragement do you offer to them in the wake of some of this misinformation?

It is my role to bring information and value to the farms that I work

with to grow their crops and grow their profits. And in the same token, it is also my role to show them appreciation. They feed the world, clothe the world, serve in their communities, provide for their families, and they are stewards of the land. So, it often starts with “thank you for all you do.” We live in a world where many, no matter their industry, rarely hears someone recognize the good work they do. If you only take one thing from this read, please tell a farmer thank you.

That is the beauty of what Farm Bureau is about- providing opportunities for farmers to share their stories to their communities. We must continue to provide these connections for farm families to share their love of the land and their love of the people they are serving by their stewardship of this land. When I was teaching high school students, I knew they wouldn’t care about the content I was teaching unless first, a relationship was built and built authentically out of genuine care. We must continue to connect in spaces and spheres of influence where our consumers know first of our genuine care for our communities. Once we build a relationship, we will then be given access to share the information or content.

**“The cool thing is, the technology that will create BIG opportunities for young farmers doesn’t even exist today. That’s why it’s so important for us to pursue a mentality of being a life-long learner.”**

**- Kirby Green**

Have we missed the boat in educating consumers on the goodness and safety of GMO technology, and how do we turn that negative trend around?

We, as farm families, are all about doing good work for good-work’s sake. We often work long hours and, during a break in the day or when you hang your hat up at nighttime, the thought process doesn’t go to taking an opportunity to share real-world applications of technology in agriculture with the public. There’s a tractor to fix, a baseball game to jet to, and a calf being born. But unfortunately, what happened over time is that technology like, GMOs, appeared without our consumers having ever heard of that acronym or what the heck it even means. So, we went on the defense and learned a lot as an industry. What has been great to see is the ag community is now more active than ever with blogs, podcasts, major news articles, and simply Instagram posts. We are on the offense of telling the public about what we do and creating spaces for questions and concerns.

How do you feel about the future of the agriculture industry as it relates to our small family farms?

I can’t even say the words “family farms” without smiling. What a heartbeat of our communities. When you place resources into a family farm, the harvest is multiplied. Farm families turn that into the good of families, schools, churches, and local businesses. So yes, I am encouraged, excited, and expectant when it comes to our Kentucky family farms.



*Young Farm Family members from 65 counties attended this year's Young Farmer Leadership Conference.*

## 2020 KFB YOUNG FARMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

**K**entucky Farm Bureau's (KFB) Young Farmer Leadership Conference has become one of the yearly highlights for the program and a favorite of farm families across the state; and the 2020 conference, once again, lived up to that billing.

With an attendance of 267 from 65 different counties, this year's conference had something for everyone. The always popular "Eggs and Issues" breakfast allowed attendees to hear from KFB Public Affairs Director Jeff Harper discussing the current General Assembly session and legislation related to the agriculture industry.

They also heard from Dale Dobson, Kentucky Department of Agriculture Farm and Home Safety Program administrator, during a breakout session entitled, "Farm and Grain Safety."

Other sessions included "Your Health Matters" led by the University of Kentucky's Dr. Deborah Reed; "Developing and Executing a Marketing Plan" and "Commodity Markets Outlook (Grain Focused)" led by Andrew Jackson; "25 Years of Adding Value: KFB Certified Farm Market Program" featuring Fran McCall, Director, KFB Certified Farm Market Programs and Commodity Specialist; and "Business Planning" and "Personal Finance" with Robert Alexander and Jennifer Ferris, Farm Credit Mid-America.

KDA's Mobile Science Lab was also on hand for everyone to experience, especially the younger attendees.

KFB's Executive Committee members were all in attendance, as well, to meet with members and show their support for the Young Farmer program.

KFB Second Vice President Sharon Furches said she and her husband got their start in the organization through the Young Farmer program.

"I went to my very first Young Farmer conference back in 1988 and oftentimes, now, I look around the board room and I think of all the people in that room who got their start in a Young Farmer activity," she said. "These young families will make lasting relationships during these types of conferences that will be like family, which we are; a farm family, a family organization, and I think that's the greatest aspect of KFB; it gives us our strength as an organization."

Furches also pointed out that one day, through their involvement in programs such as Young Farmers, some of these young people could be future leaders in KFB.

***"I just feel like every time I take a step, they're behind me, and they keep pushing me forward, helping me on my issues; helping me to better my farming practices. I get my strength from Farm Bureau."***

***- John Henning***

"One day, one of them could be the KFB president, or one of the vice presidents. Someone will step up and it's so important they

hopefully have that, perhaps, as a dream of theirs,” she said. “I would encourage them to work hard, remain a part of the organization, and find ways to develop their leadership skills. The Young Farmer program does that wonderfully.”

John Henning of Breckinridge County is the 2020 State Young Farmer Advisory Committee Chair. He said getting involved in Farm Bureau has helped him move forward in the agriculture industry.

“I’ve been involved for about ten years now and every time I’m at a Farm Bureau activity, I really regret not starting earlier,” he said. “From the first event I attended, I just fell in love with it, had a passion for it, and all the people who are involved. It’s been tremendously great for me, because of the support I get from everyone involved in the organization. We are able to bounce ideas off of each other, and I can talk to other people who have been in my shoes, as a young farmer.”

Henning added that he feels that Farm Bureau is always standing behind him through its policy development, agriculture advocacy and programs such as the Young Farmers.

“I just feel like every time I take a step, they’re behind me, and they keep pushing me forward, helping me on my issues; helping me to better my farming practices,” he said. “I get my strength from Farm Bureau.”



*Kentucky Farm Bureau President Mark Hancy (right) presented an award of appreciation to Tyler Ferguson for his service as 2019 State Young Farmer Advisory Committee Chair.*

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# MARKETS



## COUNTY CORN AND SOYBEAN YIELDS PUBLISHED

According to USDA NASS, Kentucky's 2019 average corn and soybean yields dropped significantly from 2018's average yields. The two crops are significant to Kentucky agriculture, together bringing in \$1.65 billion in cash receipts in 2018 (2019 not available). USDA recently published its 2019 county yield estimates. NASS relies on producers responding to periodic production surveys with accurate and timely data. For 2019, the top five counties – Christian, Henderson, Union, Logan and Daviess – accounted for 28 percent of Kentucky's corn production. Wayne County took the top corn yield spot in 2019, producing 200.0 bushels per acre (bu/ac); this is the third straight year a county average corn yield has equaled or exceeded 200 bushels. The record of 205.0 bu/ac was set by Wayne County in 2017. After Wayne County, the top counties for yield include Warren County – 196.0 bu/ac; Logan County – 190.0 bu/ac; Christian County – 188.0 bu/ac; and Union County – 188.0 bu/ac. The lowest corn yield reported was 110.0 bu/ac. For soybean production, the top five counties – Henderson, Daviess, Christian, Logan and Union – accounted for over 23 percent of the total. Clark County had the highest soybean yield at 58.0 bu/ac, followed by Union County – 56.5 bu/ac; Adair County and McLean County – 55.0 bu/ac; and Daviess County – 54.5 bu/ac. The lowest soybean yield reported was 25.0 bu/ac.

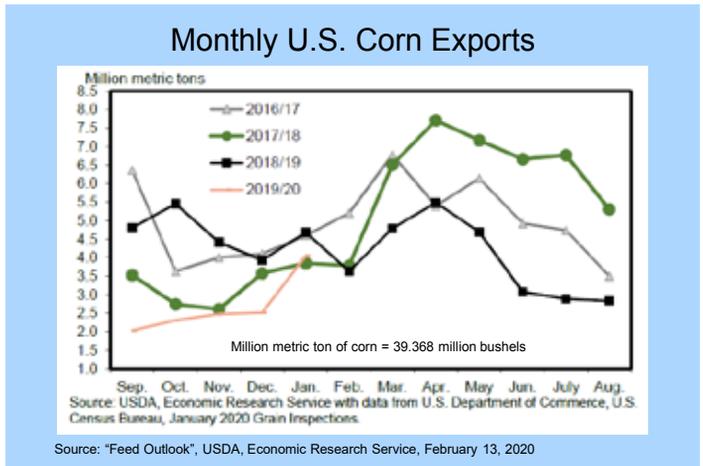
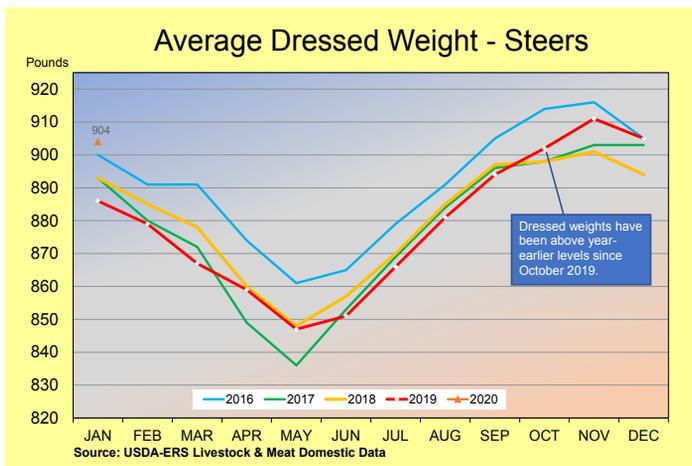
## BEEF AND PORK EXPORTS WERE VERY STRONG IN 2019

Using USDA statistics, the U.S... Meat Export Federation (USMEF) reported that U.S. beef exports remained strong in 2019 and U.S. pork exports were record large. After increasing by more than \$1 billion in 2018, beef export value eased by three percent to \$8.1 billion. Beef export value per head of fed slaughter was \$309.75, down four percent from 2018. 2019 exports accounted for 14.1 percent of total beef production and 11.4 percent for muscle cuts, down from the previous year's record-high percentages

(14.6% and 12.1%, respectively). The decline in U.S. beef exports from 2018 was partially attributable to lower shipments to our #1 customer, Japan, which were down six percent in both volume (311,146 mt) and value (\$1.95 billion). Exports improved in December and should make further gains in 2020 as Japan lowers its tariffs on U.S. beef. Beef exports to our #2 market, South Korea, grew seven percent in volume to a record 255,758 metric tons, which was valued at \$1.84 billion, up five percent from 2018. U.S. beef accounted for more than one-third of South Korea's total beef consumption. Mexico, with \$1.11 billion dollars of beef imports, was our third largest market. U.S. pork exports posted new volume (up 10%) and value records (up 9%) in 2019, reaching nearly \$7 billion. The 2020 outlook is supported by the U.S.-China trade agreement but clouded by the Coronavirus situation. For 2019, lamb export volume increased 22% from a year ago to 15,732 mt, valued at \$26.1 million (up 12%).

## BROILER PRODUCTION CONTINUES TO EXPAND

Total 2019 production amounted to 43.9 billion pounds, a year-over-year increase of three percent. Birds slaughtered totaled 9.2 billion (up two percent year-over-year), while aggregate average live weights reached 6.32 pounds. This one-percent increase in bird weights was due to an increasing share of heavy-bird (>6.25 lbs) production, which increased 2.4 percentage points in 2019. Data point to continued year-over-year increases in slaughter and average live weights in 2020. Additionally, eggs set and chick placements have been trending higher year over year, suggesting a larger-than-expected number of birds available for marketing in the coming months. Based on more birds available for slaughter YTD and an increasing broiler layer flock supporting rising broiler availability, the 2020 production forecast was increased to 45.8 billion pounds, more than four percent over 2019 production.





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# NEWS FROM AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

Farmers Join Forces for Sustainability and Responsible Climate Policy

**T**wenty-one farm and ranch groups representing millions of U.S. farmers and ranchers are launching Farmers for a Sustainable Future (FSF), a coalition committed to environmental and economic sustainability. This coalition will serve as a primary resource for lawmakers and policymakers as they consider climate policies.

The coalition will share with elected officials, media and the public U.S. agriculture's commitment to sustainability and the incredible strides already made to reduce agriculture's environmental footprint. As policy proposals are developed and considered, the goal is for the coalition and its guiding principles to serve as a foundation to ensure the adoption of meaningful and constructive policies and programs affecting agriculture.

Farmers and ranchers are committed stewards of the land, leading the way to climate-smart farming by promoting soil health, conserving water, enhancing wildlife, using nutrients efficiently, and caring for their animals. For decades, they have pushed past the boundaries of innovation thanks to investments in agricultural research and the adoption of practices that improve productivity, provide clean and renewable energy, enhance sustainability, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon.

FSF's guiding principles call for policies that support science-based research, voluntary incentive-based conservation programs, investment in infrastructure, and solutions that ensure vibrant rural communities and a healthy planet.

FSF members include American Farm Bureau Federation, American Pulse Association, American Sugar Alliance, American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Barley Growers Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council of America, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Farmers Union, National Sorghum Producers, National Milk Producers Federation, National Pork Producers Council, National Sunflower Association, Southern Peanut Farmers Association, United Egg Producers, U.S. Canola Association, U.S. Dry Bean Council, USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council, USA Rice.

More about the coalition members, guiding principles and sustainability achievements can be found at [www.SustainableFarming.us](http://www.SustainableFarming.us).

## The Zipline: Reply Hazy, Try Again

Remember the Magic 8-Ball? Inside the toy is an object that displays random answers to any question you might have. Will it rain tomorrow? "Without a doubt." Will it rain money? "My sources say no."

Looking over the various forecasts for the farm economy, I feel as if I'm looking at a Magic 8-Ball, because there are many possible answers.

Speaking at last week's USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum, the department's chief economist Rob Johansson said that farm exports

would go up this year as China increases its imports of farm products from the United States. China agreed to as much as \$40 billion in agricultural, forestry and seafood imports under the new Phase One trade deal with the U.S., but until more evidence presents itself Johansson and others are content to say the ag total will be closer to \$14.5 billion in 2020.

"Outlook good." That \$14.5 billion estimate is a slight improvement over the \$13.8 billion we've seen over the past year, but it's still below the almost \$20 billion in U.S. agricultural exports to China in 2017, before the trade war began. China's problems with African Swine Fever and, now, Coronavirus have dampened demand for soybeans and other agricultural products, but any increase is good news.

One prediction that's been consistent so far is that we'll have more farm goods to find markets for in 2020.

It's also important to realize that the United States' share of China's market has shrunk as China looked to our competitors to fill their market basket. In 2016, imports from the U.S. made up 22 percent of China's total agricultural imports by value. By 2018, our share had dropped to 12 percent. Now, with China's new Phase One commitments, we can expect our share to grow, but our competitors aren't walking away from such a huge market. We certainly have the potential to reach \$40 billion per year in agricultural exports to China, but U.S. agriculture will have to fight for market share to achieve that goal. "Cannot predict now."

One prediction that's been consistent so far is that we'll have more farm goods to find markets for in 2020. Most forecasts assume that farmers will plant and harvest more crops this year because they won't face the freezing, wet weather that kept many of them out of their fields last spring. "Signs point to yes." Of course, that's great news for farmers and ranchers. A good crop is what we work so hard to achieve. But it also puts pressure on our prices. "Outlook not so good."

For 2020, cash receipts from crop and livestock sales are projected at \$384.4 billion, up 2.7 percent from 2019. However, the higher cash receipts will not fully offset the loss of Market Facilitation Program payments. If you take away trade support and other federal support, net cash income will be down 2 percent this year. Agricultural markets aren't like a water faucet; it will take time to go from a trickle to a steady stream. In the meantime, farmers and ranchers still have to buy inputs, pay interest and, for quite a few, pay rent. That could make this year difficult, even if exports and cash receipts are on an upward trend. So, have we turned the corner in the farm economy? "Ask again later."

Shortly before the Agricultural Outlook Forum, USDA released its long-term projections for agriculture—all the way out to 2029. USDA is careful to emphasize that projections are not a forecast. The projections are based on assumptions that the state of play at the time the report is written are continued for the entire projection period. For this report, that meant



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that China's retaliatory tariffs of 25 percent or more would remain on U.S. agricultural exports. "Very doubtful," as China already is reducing tariffs on some agricultural products under the Phase One agreement. Still, the long-term projection is for prices for most crops (except soybeans) to rise slowly over the next decade. That's good news, because if you then take away the assumption about retaliatory tariffs remaining in place, prices should fare even better than projected.

The report also says relatively low feed costs will benefit livestock-sector returns. Meanwhile, population in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, where the U.S. currently is seeking new trade deals, is expected to grow modestly. Even where population growth rates are slowing down, they're doing so because of rising incomes and higher life expectancy, both of which, "without a doubt," benefit demand for higher-value farm goods.

Finally, the report projects the value of the dollar will decline slightly as the currencies of major trading partners appreciate or remain steady. That also will benefit demand for U.S. agricultural exports. "Signs point to yes."

When it comes to any economic outlook and, especially, long-term projections, the answer is bound to be "reply hazy, try again." But it sure is good to see a few good forecasts and projections to pin our hopes on as many of us prepare to plant spring crops and welcome spring flocks, calves, lambs and piglets.

One thing I know is the American farmer and rancher will keep doing what we do best — being highly efficient and productive, and meeting global demand for our high-value farm goods. "It is decidedly so!"

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

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# KFB HELPING TEACHERS HELPING STUDENTS

Crittenden County Farm Bureau professional development event gets praise from teachers and local superintendent.

Supporting education at all levels has always been an important part of the mission of Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) from both a state and local perspective. In addition to the countless scholarships awarded to students throughout Kentucky each year, KFB has been on the forefront of offering valuable professional development (PD) opportunities to teachers in every region of the state.

One of the most recent, and unique PD opportunities, came thanks to the efforts of Crittenden County Farm Bureau working in conjunction with Crittenden County Schools and KFB to organize a district-wide professional development for all teachers.

Nearly 100 educators took part in the event where each teacher received two hours of PD credit. PD hours. The program was designed to better enable educators to more effectively teach the core content through the real-life application of agriculture, according to Scott Christmas, Director of KFB Women, Ag Education and Member Benefits.

“Whether it’s Math, Science, English or social studies, agriculture is the perfect tool to help students learn by doing,” he said. “It’s innate for individuals to gain satisfaction and inspiration from watching and caring for plants and animals.”

Stephen Hill, president of Crittenden County Farm Bureau said he is hopeful the program will ultimately enable students to better understand the impact American agriculture has on their communities, the economy and their overall wellbeing.

“You don’t have to actually work the soil or plant to be a part of the agriculture industry and with this type of PD for teachers, perhaps they can take back to the classroom ideas about other types of opportunities in

agriculture,” he said.

Hill noted that many of the students are already familiar with agriculture because of the strong ag industry that exists in that county.

“This is a very natural fit for our teachers and the resources KFB brought to this event were tremendous, including the many informative materials given to take back to their classrooms,” he said.

**“This is a very natural fit for our teachers and the resources KFB brought to this event were tremendous, including the many informative materials given to take back to their classrooms.”  
- Stephen Hill**

Vince Clark, Crittenden County Schools Superintendent said partnerships with community members and organizations are very important to local educational endeavors.

“One of the things that I’ve tried to do is promote more collaboration, more teamwork, and just getting folks around the table who can impact our mission of empowering and engaging every student, every day,” he said. “It was just a great day of learning around literacy and agriculture, and the resources that Kentucky Farm Bureau gave our staff were amazing. There was a lot of hands-on activities and demonstrations; a lot of ‘minds-on’ activities, that really engaged the learner. I had some of the



At left: Author and illustrator Mitchell Tolle addresses attendees of the Crittenden County teacher professional development event.



Vince Clark, Mitchell Tolle, and Stephen Hill

staff members tell me it was the best PD event they had ever experienced.”

In addition to the many activities, Mitchell Tolle, author and illustrator of “The Most Wonderful Dream,” an ag-accurate book published by KFB, served as the keynote speaker. Tolle shared stories of the many wonderful teachers he had as a child in school.

Both Hill and Clark feel this event was such a success and look to the future of how they can continue to collaborate on projects to help teachers and students in Crittenden County.

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## DOWN THE BACKROADS

By Tim Thornberry

Anyone who knows me well, knows how much of a stock-car racing fan I am. It seems I have been for as long as I can remember, and I'm not sure how it all began. My dad was not a racing fan. I discovered that when I learned to drive.

As a teenager, my close friends weren't really into racing. I suppose it could have come from seeing a dirt-track race at a nearby county fair when I was very young; still riding bikes as opposed to driving a car.

I remember how exciting it was to watch those cars go round-and-round that track kicking up dust and bumping into to each other. It made such an impression. I remember getting on my bicycle after that experience and peddling down our long rock driveway thinking I was in the middle of one of those races. That bike had the high handlebars and banana seat and a wide back tire. It was so cool and my most prized possession at the time.

I remember riding through the fields around the house thinking how exhilarating it would be to drive in the Daytona 500.

That passion has stayed with me, although many of my friends, including my wife, think stock-car racing is nothing more than a bunch of left turns.

And while they have a point about the left turns, there is a lot of value in a little continuity. I think a lot of life-lessons can be learned on the ole oval track.

While it's true, you might keep that wheel moving to the left, you are doing it at 200 miles per hour where decisions must be made quickly and efficiently while surrounded by others traveling at the same speed often wanting to get into the same space you are occupying.

While you must concentrate on the road in front of you, knowing what's behind you and where you have been on that track can teach you a lot about going through those turns the next time.

And though it may seem like stock-car racing is an individual sport, one must rely on a whole team to be successful. The engineers and maintenance folks have to be keenly aware of everything that gives that engine its top performance.

The pit crew works extremely fast and accurately to provide the upkeep each driver needs to continually move forward.

The all-important spotters keep watch from high above the speedway to give directions to their drivers as to where all the obstacles are on the track. They are another set of eyes for an otherwise very occupied person behind the wheel.

At the end of each race day, everyone wants to be in the winner's circle but sometimes, just getting through each event with your car intact, and having crossed the finish line at all, is a victory.

I don't recommend that anyone tries to make their everyday commute in life a race, but I do think the sport of stock-car racing offers valuable lessons, which have nothing to do with stock-cars, and a lot to do with how we travel down the backroads...observing the speed limit, of course.

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