

Outtakes from the AFBF Meeting

Farmers and ranchers learn about business, policy at American Farm Bureau Federation Convention.

Agriculturists representing the spectrum of farming and ranching in the United States gathered in Orlando, Fla., Jan. 8-13 for the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF's) 97th Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show. Highlights follow.

Investing in a new generation of rural entrepreneurs

Equity investment infrastructure for rural entrepreneurs is well below the level needed for the Millennial generation, Steve Dauphin, a partner at MeritusKirchner RBIC (Rural Business Investment Co.) said at a workshop during the convention. Despite this shortfall, Dauphin said the overall outlook for young entrepreneurs is positive.

Dauphin said he was hopeful for the future of the Millennial generation and the steps being taken to fund their visions.

"We are at an absolutely unique moment, what I call 'millennial trends,'" Dauphin explained. "For about 80,000 generations humans were hunters and gatherers. For about 2,000 we've had farms and industrial activity. For one generation — ubiquitous access to all information that's ever been known and complete global connectivity."

Millennials have a high potential for creating new businesses, but these businesses will likely be a form of what Dauphin calls "evolved capitalism." This form of mission-based capitalism strives to treat customers, employees and suppliers with great respect, along with maintaining excellent transparency. Dauphin maintains that this is the way rural businesses have been operated for years and that the "millennial way" of doing businesses is very close to the "rural way" of business.

"What millennials seem to understand incredibly well is that they do not want to be a part of a business that tries to gain some unfair political gain, is about exploiting people, polluting and they certainly don't want to be a part of a business that is overcome with rampant greed," Dauphin said.

To get these types of businesses off the ground in rural America, Dauphin says investment needs to be increased at every stage. He praised AFBF's Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge and the USDA's attempts to grow rural business investment companies, but stressed additional opportunities will need to arise to handle the demand.

Balance sought for landowners dealing with environmental regulations

The breadth, vagueness and punitive nature of many environmental laws

provide challenges and uncertainty for farmers, ranchers and other property owners when it comes to navigating today's environmental landscape in their farming and ranching activities.

"Environmental law can be harsh, especially for everyday people," said Jonathan Wood, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation. "The statutes are very broad, vague and punitive. Pacific Legal Foundation and Farm Bureau are advocating for more sensible policies to protect landowners."

During an AFBF workshop, Wood echoed the chorus of voices from farmers and ranchers from around the country in advocating for a balanced approach to enforcement of environmental laws.

Having grown up on a small ranch in Texas, he learned the importance that water plays in agriculture. This has influenced his and the Pacific Legal Foundation's work in cases dealing with the *Clean Water Act* and the ambiguities and uncertainties related to the selective interpretation of the act by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Despite assurances of exemptions for agriculture, farmers and ranchers have

repeatedly been intimidated by the punitive nature of large fines and potential prison sentences for actions involving water — even when such projects have beneficial impacts for wildlife and the environment. Such is the current situation for Andy Johnson, a rancher from Wyoming who created a stock pond to provide water for his livestock.

"We are challenging an outrageous example of EPA overreach against a private citizen who has done nothing wrong," Wood said. "Andy Johnson constructed a pond for his livestock by damming a stream on his private property with no connection to any navigable water. Under the plain terms of the *Clean Water Act*, he was entirely within his rights, and didn't need federal bureaucrats' permission.

"EPA regulators have decided they know better than the law," Wood continued. "By trying to seize control of Andy Johnson's land — and threatening him with financial ruin — they are imposing their will where they have no authority. Ironically, EPA is attempting to destroy a scenic environmental asset that provides habitat for fish and wildlife, and cleans water that passes through it, all in the name of enforcing the *Clean Water Act*."

In addition to the threat posed by fines and the breadth of impacts environmental rules can have, the vagueness of these rules

and their interpretations by agencies will continue to pose a challenge to agriculture until the courts or Congress provide further guidance. This is why recent decisions — such as the Sackett case in Idaho — have been beneficial to farmers and ranchers, because the court ruled that private landowners have a right to direct judicial review regarding EPA decisions on land use.

"Agencies like the EPA or Fish and Wildlife Service ... are motivated by single-minded and very aggressive views of their role in the world, which is to stop things that change the environment — even if those changes might be positive," said Ellen Steen, AFBF's general counsel. "When you have people like that populating agencies, we'll always have agencies pushing the boundaries ... and this is where the courts come in."

Recent court decisions have provided landowners with remedies against agency actions, but landowners have continued to be the ones pushing for relief. Wood is hopeful that current and future cases will continue to balance the scale with landowners and agency actions.

Farm Bureau urges House support for resolution disapproving EPA's WOTUS Rule

The AFBF urged members of the U.S. House of Representatives to support S.7. Res. 22, a resolution to disapprove the



Johanns, Chambliss Honored

Farm Bureau bestows Distinguished Service Awards to Mike Johanns and Saxby Chambliss.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) presented its highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award, to former Sens. Mike Johanns and Saxby Chambliss during the 97th AFBF Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show.

AFBF established the Distinguished Service Award to honor individuals who have devoted their careers to serving agriculture.

For more than three decades, Johanns served America's farmers and ranchers tirelessly as Nebraska governor, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, and U.S. senator. Johanns' unfailing dedication to the interests of farmers and ranchers has protected and enhanced the cause of agriculture across the country.

Johanns' humble upbringing and work on a dairy farm in Iowa gave him solid training for serving others in his career. In his roles as secretary of agriculture and as senator, Johanns met with farmers and ranchers, listened to their concerns and put their input directly into developing the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills. Johanns also stood up to regulatory overreach and promoted innovative solutions to reducing dependence on foreign oil. His commitment to opening the marketplace for U.S. agriculture helped expand trade and create a more level playing field for America's farmers and ranchers.

"Senator Johanns' humility, hard work and discipline, along with his genuine interest in hearing from and working with those he served, set him apart from many other politi-

cians," then AFBF President Bob Stallman said. "He's stood side-by-side with America's farmers and ranchers, putting a stop to overregulation and expanding market opportunities to keep the business of agriculture moving forward."

Chambliss has time and again proven himself to be a true friend and champion of agriculture. As chairman and ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, he was a key author on four farm bills, crafting market-oriented programs and securing a valid safety net for farmers and ranchers through updated commodity titles and federal crop insurance.

Chambliss has been working closely with farmers since the early days of his career as a lawyer from Moultrie, Ga. Those relationships gave him a deep appreciation for agriculture, and he kept the needs and interests of rural America at the forefront when he came to Capitol Hill.

In addition to his critical efforts on farm bill programs, Chambliss worked to reform the nation's immigration laws to provide a legal and stable workforce for agriculture. He served on key congressional committees dealing with national security and intelligence gathering.

"Saxby Chambliss has led the way on some of the most pressing and complex issues facing agriculture with his courage and straight talk," Stallman said. "For 20 years, he was one of the best friends that farmers and ranchers had in Washington, D.C."

Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule finalized by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers.

“The EPA rule poses a serious threat to farmers, ranchers and private landowners by permitting EPA to regulate well beyond limits authorized by Congress and affirmed by the Supreme Court,” then AFBF President Bob Stallman wrote in a letter to House members.

“Simply put,” Stallman continued, “EPA’s rule significantly expands the scope of ‘navigable water’ subject to *Clean Water Act* jurisdiction. With that expansion comes the threat of citizen lawsuits. As a practical matter, EPA’s proposal will mean increased enforcement against farmers, greater expenses for permitting, potential delays in managing agricultural operations and the unquestioned exposure of legal liability attendant with lawsuits from activists.”

Stallman also pointed out that EPA unlawfully manipulated the rulemaking process through an unprecedented marketing campaign designed to generate public support and discredit anyone who had serious concerns, as well as hoping to influence Congress.

“GAO’s (Government Accountability Office’s) recently issued opinion states unequivocally that EPA violated the law,” Stallman wrote. The GAO opinion came on the heels of a judgment by the Small Business Office of Advocacy that the agency had violated its obligations under the *Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act*.

The letter can be found at www.fb.org/issues/docs/clean-water-rule-response.pdf.

Lower costs expected for livestock, poultry

Lower costs and higher production are on the horizon for the livestock and poultry sectors, Steve Meyer, vice president of pork analysis for EMI Analytics, told attendees of an AFBF workshop.

Sparked by lower fuel prices, consumers have more disposable income to spend on protein.

“We have seen fundamental changes on the perception of animal fats, and there’s more interest in incorporating protein in diets,” Meyer said. “And consumers have been willing to pay for meat.”

That consumer demand, coupled with lower production due to drought has led to increased prices for meat products.

The meat sector was significantly impacted by disease — avian influenza and porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv) — during the last few years, but the industry has rebounded.

“We’re better at managing disease, and it shows,” Meyer said.

Although a stronger U.S. dollar has negatively affected impacted trade, mandatory country-of-origin-labeling (COOL) repeal averted retaliatory tariffs, which will help agricultural exports.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

could be a major development for all species, especially beef and pork, in the coming years.

“TPP is a game changer,” Meyer said. “It’s going to open up the Japanese market for lower-value products that we haven’t been able to ship before.”

Lower input costs have also helped the livestock and poultry sectors, and those costs are forecast to remain low in 2016,

leading to expected production growth for beef, pork and poultry.

Meyer also cautioned that several risks — trade disruptions, world economy and demand — could change the outlook for 2016.

Farm Bureau Patriot Project serves those who served

How mentorship can help beginning

farmer veterans develop professional networking and business-planning skills was highlighted at a workshop at the AFBF’s 97th Annual Convention. The role that Farm Bureau can play in connecting military veterans to the agriculture community also was featured.

Military veterans in production agriculture are finding that the farming
(Continued on page 90)

Outtakes from the AFBF Meeting *(from page 89)*

and ranching lifestyle provides therapeutic and financial support for their transition to civilian life, but for many, an important piece is missing — an experienced mentor to coach them through the start-up stages of agribusiness development.

That is why “a good mentoring relationship should really look like an investment,” explained Lindsay Hastings of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Veteran farmer Damon Helton of Arkansas has found it valuable to connect with his mentor, Jeremy Allen, through

AFBF’s Patriot Project, a pilot program that will fully launch later this year.

“This program has opened my eyes to the business side of agriculture,” Helton said. Ross Dunn, assistant director of public policy, local affairs and rural development at Arkansas Farm Bureau,

helped pair up Helton and Allen for the project.

“The structure of the program makes it easy to fit the needs of the participants,” Dunn said.

Dale Bullock, director of field operations at Texas Farm Bureau, was enthusiastic about participating in the Patriot Project pilot.

“Farm Bureau and veterans have a lot in common,” Bullock said. “The flexibility of the program is great for us because we face some challenges due to the diversity of agriculture in our state.”

First Peas to the Table named Foundation for Agriculture’s Book of the Year

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture presented its ninth annual Book of the Year award to Susan Grigsby for *First Peas to the Table*. In this lighthearted story, a little girl, Maya, and her classmates learn about gardens and peas, as well as Thomas Jefferson’s garden at Monticello.

Grigsby, who lives in Saint Louis, Mo., is the author of three picture books, as well as poetry. She teaches creative writing in schools, museums and nature centers, often integrating the lessons with science, social studies and art.

“I am so happy that, thanks to this recognition from the American Farm Bureau Foundation For Agriculture, more children will have access to *First Peas to the Table*,” said Grigsby. “I sometimes help students set up their own school gardens and am always inspired by the sense of wonder that develops as the children discover the infinite number of variables involved in

Coxbill of Wyoming elected YF&R chair

Members of the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee elected Cole Coxbill of Goshen County, Wyo., as the committee’s chairman for 2016. He will take over as chairman in February, at the end of the committee’s leadership conference, and serve for one year. He will also serve a one-year term on the AFBF board of directors.

Coxbill and his father raise corn, alfalfa, sugar beets, dry edible beans and wheat, and they have a cow-calf operation and a feedlot. Coxbill also owns a commercial spraying and trucking business. He and his wife, Sammie, have three children: Emmett, Connor and Carlee.

According to Coxbill, connecting with people outside of farming and ranching continues to be a top priority — and the next generation of farmers

turning one tiny seed into a plant that can feed a family.”

“After reading the agricultural-related correspondence and journals of Thomas Jefferson, I was struck by the passion that he and others had in regard to experimenting to figure out which plants, previously grown on other continents, would grow best in each of the diverse environments spread across the country,” she continued. “I wrote the book to celebrate how every gardener, young and old, learns through experimentation, through failures and success and with a joy for the wonders of nature.”

The Book of the Year award springs from the Foundation’s effort to identify accurate ag books, a collection of nearly 500 books for children, teenagers and adults that accurately cover agricultural topics. Book of the Year selections are educational, help to create positive public perceptions about agriculture, inspire readers to learn more and touch their readers’ lives, as well as tell the farmer’s story. The accurate ag books database is available at:

www.agfoundation.org/recommended-pubs.

To accompany the *First Peas to the Table* book, the Foundation has created an educator’s guide and a School Garden Ag Mag. Again this year, the Foundation is offering a Spanish text version of the Ag Mag.

Women in agriculture are a big deal

Women in agriculture are a big deal, in part because consumers are eager to get to know them and how they produce food, according to Sherry Saylor, chair of the AFB Women’s Leadership Committee (WLC). Saylor, a crop farmer from Arizona, gave her first annual address at the business meeting of the AFB Women.

The WLC is continuing to engage women by offering programs to help them develop their communication and leadership skills, empowering them to continue as strong, effective leaders in agriculture, Saylor said. During her remarks she highlighted program successes such as the popular Women’s Communications Boot Camp, successful collaboration with other groups to achieve

common goals related to promoting farming and ranching, and advocating for issues important to Farm Bureau members.

In recognition of the conviction held by many in agriculture that remaining indifferent or uninformed about connecting with consumers is no longer an option for farmers and ranchers, Saylor issued a challenge to attendees for the coming year.

“Stretch and think outside the box — get out of your comfort zones and impact others for the good of our industry,” she said. “You each have a sphere of influence that is unique to your situation,” she added.



Editor’s Note: This article was compiled from news releases provided by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

and ranchers is in a unique position to share agriculture’s story.

“We’re going to college, making connections and returning to the farm or ranch by choice, because we’re so passionate about agriculture. But back at home, we’re still maintaining and growing those networks we established in college,” Coxbill said.

He also noted that young farmers’ enthusiasm for new technology can be a real asset in reaching out to consumers. “It’s our nature to adapt faster, so when there’s a new social media tool we embrace it,” Coxbill said.

The YF&R program includes men and women between the ages of 18 and 35. The program’s goals are to help younger Farm Bureau members learn more about agriculture, network with other farmers and realize their full potential as leaders in agriculture and Farm Bureau.