

YF&R members shine at leadership conference

Farm Bureau members of Kansas attended the American Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference in Jacksonville, Fla., Feb. 11-12.

Meghan Mueseler, Sedgewick County, will begin serving on the AFBF YF&R committee in March. Meghan works as a technical training specialist for Cargill Meat Solutions in Wichita, Kans. She became involved with the YF&R program over seven years ago.

Sarah Sexton, collegiate member from Dickinson County, earned a spot in the Final 4 Collegiate Discussion Meet. Competing against 27 other college students



Mueseler (and Gunnar) Sexton

from across the country, Sexton took home a \$1,000 scholarship in addition to a \$250 scholarship from CHS Foundation. She is a senior in Agricultural Economics at K-State and currently an intern for the USDA in Washington, DC.

Members discuss current policy issues with Boyda

Key issues impacting agriculture were the focus of discussion when Rep. Nancy Boyda visited with nearly a dozen farmers and ranchers at KFB's state headquarters Feb. 19.



Rep. Boyda listens to Glenn Brunkow, Pottawatomie County, hay and forage advisory committee chair, during her visit with Farm Bureau members Feb. 19.

Farm bill reauthorization, FSA/NRCS county consolidation, disaster assistance, Comprehensive Environmental Recovery, Compensation and Liability Act, Immigration and Country of Origin Labeling were major topics talked about.

Women Managing the Farm

The third annual Women Managing the Farm conference was held Feb. 9-10 in Hutchinson, Kans., with more than 300 attending. KFB's Terry Arthur, general counsel, conducted a seminar on estate planning. The Farm Bureau Women provided a health trade show designed to provide information on sun protection.

"In many different facets, both directly and indirectly, agriculture and agribusiness contribute to the total economy of Kansas," Boyda told members.

KFB Calendar

March 4-10

Ag Safety Awareness Program Week

March 11-15

County Presidents Trip to Washington

March 18-24

Ag Week

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✓ KFB stands ready during FSA/NRCS restructuring

✓ KFB Legal Foundation wins landowner victory

✓ Kansas' newest member of Congress visits KFB

Farm Leader Letter is a publication of Kansas Farm Bureau and is published twice each month.

Kansas Farm Bureau represents grassroots agriculture. Established in 1919, this non-profit advocacy organization supports farm families who earn their living in a changing industry.

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Farm Leader Letter

A publication of Kansas Farm Bureau

KFB stands up for farmers in FSA/NRCS restructuring

The news that the USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources & Conservation Service intends to consolidate 11 county offices across Kansas is, by no means pleasant, but without KFB standing up for farmers and ranchers, it would have been much worse. Initially, FSA intended to close 29 county offices and NRCS planned to board up 26.

The FSA recently announced intentions to close their county FSA offices in Barber, Chase, Comanche, Elk, Geary, Gove, Johnson, Leavenworth, Morton, Wabaunsee and Woodson counties. One day later, the NRCS announced plans to consolidate its offices in the same 11 counties.

When the FSA consolidation discussions started more than a year ago, KFB began asking common-sense questions about how best to implement these tough changes with minimal impact on the customer/farmer (see *advocacy chronology on page 2*).

"No one feels the impact of declining rural populations more than the farm and ranch families who have made the conscious decision to stay here and earn our living," said KFB president Steve Baccus, a grain producer from Ottawa County. "Fewer people in rural areas means our government will be forced to make tough decisions about how best to allocate limited resources."

Farmers utilize the services offered by both agencies. For farmers in the 11 affected counties, it may well mean a longer drive and more time away from the farm.

"Our frustration from the beginning was that

government approached this problem from the standpoint of, 'what's easiest for us?' rather than 'what's best for the farmer?'" said Terry Holdren, KFB Nat'l Director of Governmental Relations. "Had we not pushed this, I'm not convinced FSA and NRCS would have ever gotten in the same room to even have this discussion."

Public hearings in the affected communities are scheduled in the coming days. Your KFB Governmental Relations staff stands ready to assist any County FB or individual member who wants to testify.

Voice your concerns

Elk County - March 6

West Elk High School Auditorium, Howard

Woodson County - March 7

4-H Community Building, Yates Center

Johnson County - March 8

Johnson County Fairgrounds, Gardner

Leavenworth County - March 9

4-H Building, Lansing

Barber County - March 13

Heritage Center, Medicine Lodge

Comanche County - March 14

South Central HS Gymnasium, Coldwater

Morton County - March 15

Elkhart City Hall, Elkhart

Gove County - March 16

Gove County Office Building, Gove

Chase County - March 19

Chase Co. Community Bldg, C. Falls

All meetings will begin at 2 p.m.

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Turnaround week has come and gone in the 2007 Kansas legislative session. All bills not worked or forwarded to

an exempt committee will no longer receive legislative consideration.

LANDOWNERS' RIGHTS: Hearings and debate will likely begin on eminent domain and "urban" blight. In addition, two constitutional amendments were introduced that limit the ability to take private property from one individual and transfer it to another private entity.

ENERGY: The House Energy and Utilities Committee tabled bills that would have implemented siting guidelines for wind energy development. KFB supports statewide siting guidelines, but continues to have serious concerns about these bills restricting local governments and potentially discouraging the development of wind energy in Kansas.

TRANSPORTATION: The Senate passed SB 294, which enacts a graduated drivers' licensing structure in Kansas. As requested by KFB, the farm permit will remain unchanged under this provision.

NATURAL RESOURCES: House Bill 2184, which establishes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, remains in the House Ag and Natural Resources Committee.

House Bill 2437 was passed out of committee and the full House. This bill extends the sunset date for landowner transferable deer permits by one year. On the Senate side, substitute for SB 266 extends the date two years. KFB will continue to support these two bills, and work with KDWP and stakeholders on overhauling the deer permit system.

Senate Bill 15 creates the dam rehabilitation program under the State Conservation Commission. KFB will continue to work to get this bill passed.

KFB Advocacy Chronology

NOVEMBER 2005

FSA announces plan to close 29 Kansas offices. KFB strenuously objects, works with Congressional delegation. FSA plan withdrawn.

A proviso added to USDA's budget stipulating no offices will be closed without public input process and internal review.

EARLY 2006

Kansas FSA announces review process and intent to close offices after review.

MARCH 2006

KFB comments at one of three public forums and initiates discussion among commodity groups to develop a unified strategy.

JUNE 2006

KFB contacts Kansas FSA Director requesting transparent process and a closure criteria discussion before closure plan is released.

SEPTEMBER 2006

KFB GR staff meets with agriculture legislative aides from Kansas Congressional delegation to reiterate our position.

OCTOBER 2006

KFB and other farm groups attend briefing session with FSA leadership.

NOVEMBER 2006

KFB engages Congressional delegation again after NRCS announces plan to close 26 offices, insisting on transparency and urging NRCS and FSA to work together.

FEBRUARY 15, 2007

Kansas FSA releases plan to close 11 Kansas county offices.

FEBRUARY 16, 2007

Kansas NRCS releases plan to close 11 Kansas county offices in same locations as FSA.

KFB expresses disappointment, while acknowledging budget constraints. KFB GR staff gears up to work with County FB's and other interested members at public hearings.

Farm flashes

Ag Safety Awareness Week

Farm Bureau's across the state will celebrate Ag Safety Awareness Week March 4-10. Baseball legend, Texas rancher and Farm Bureau member Nolan Ryan is teaming up with Farm Bureau to deliver some key messages about the need



to focus on farm and ranch safety during this time of year. For more information, visit www.agsafetynow.com.

Farm profitability seminars

Throughout the month of March, KFB-sponsored farm profitability seminars will feature a number of timely issues including the 2007 farm bill, private property rights, weather forecasts and a look at '07 grain markets. For more information go to www.kfb.org/news/seminars.

County Presidents head to D.C.

Sixty-five counties will be represented by 118 farmers and ranchers during the 2007 Kansas Farm Bureau County Presidents Trip to Washington, D.C. March 11-15. Key issues addressed by legislative, regulatory and industry experts include the 2007 farm bill, trade and transportation.

ARMS survey continues this month

The USDA's Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) will continue this month. The survey provides key economic indicators about agriculture, and is the major source of information on production practices, resource use and financial conditions of U.S. farms. Individually reported data is strictly confidential.

PAL Class 4 applications

AFBF is taking applications for its fourth Partners in Agricultural Leadership class to enhance leadership skills. Applications are due March 15. For more information, contact Jeff Sutton, KFB YF&R coordinator, at suttonj@kfb.org or (785) 587-6148.

Workshops for cattle managers

KFB and others will host nine K-State Cattle Risk Management Workshops during the month of March. Participants will gain hands-on experience in using Livestock Risk Protection Insurance, forward cash contracts, futures contracts and options on futures. Go to www.agmanager.info for more information.

Ag Foundation awards grants

The KFB Foundation for Agriculture approved 159 grant requests totaling \$71,769 for the first half of 2007. The foundation's goal is to enhance agriculture education and leadership development. For more information, see www.kfb.org/foundationforagriculture.htm



Avian Influenza hotline established

A toll-free hotline to report concerns or ask questions regarding avian influenza, also known as "bird flu" has been established by K-State's College of Vet Med and Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment. The hotline number is (800) 566-4518.

YF&R committee filled

Shanon Schwartz, Lane County, will represent the 8th District on KFB's State Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee. YF&R members are actively involved in leadership, agriculture advocacy, promotion and education.



Landowner victory

A recent ruling by the Miami County District Court is a victory for landowners and local governments. In February, the district court judge ruled the Kansas Recreational Trails Act is constitutional.

Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy (trail sponsor) had challenged the legality of the Trails Act. Kanza refused to negotiate with the Miami County Commission regarding a financial bond that was conditioned on its ability to take care of maintenance of the trail including fencing, noxious weeds, trash, etc.

"This allows our state statutes to be enforced," says George Pretz, Miami County farmer and KFB board member. "The KFB Legal Foundation played an integral role in ensuring the people and landowners of Miami County were protected."

The court ordered the parties into mediation to resolve their issues regarding their differences. If they are unable to agree, the court will resolve any remaining disputes including the reasonableness of the bond.

The KFB Legal Foundation advocates for farmers and ranchers. The foundation is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations, and is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. You may reach the Foundation at (785) 587-6621.

More on prairie dogs

KFB remains engaged on behalf of northwest Kansas farmers who are fighting prairie dogs, environmental groups and the federal government, in their effort to maintain decades-old land management practices. The KFB Legal Foundation's *friend of the court* brief, supporting the Logan County Commission's position to follow existing law to eradicate the pest was postponed until April which amounts to a setback for farmers since the chemical treatment cannot be applied after March 15. In another development, the Forest Guardians and three other activist groups filed suit in federal court in Denver asking the government to list the Black-tailed Prairie Dog as a "threatened species" under the Endangered Species Act. KFB will remain active on various fronts, supporting the farmers' ability to earn a living.

Your "voice" on the radio

Heard twice daily, six days a week on 40 radio stations statewide, KFB's 2-minute *Voice of Agriculture* radio program features the voices of FB members who share the importance, meaning and deeply-held emotional connection they feel with agriculture and rural living. FB members heard recently on the *Voice of Agriculture* include:

- **Oren Dirks and Cameron Edwards, Logan County**, explaining how prairie dogs depress land values
- **Norm Pilger, Wallace County and Rick Wheeler, Gove County**, on neighbor helping neighbor during the paralyzing Dec./Jan. ice and snow storm
- **Gary Morgan, Kearny County and Carol Deaver, Finney County**, on County FB altruism

Visit www.kfb.org for a complete list of radio stations which air the *Voice of Agriculture*.

