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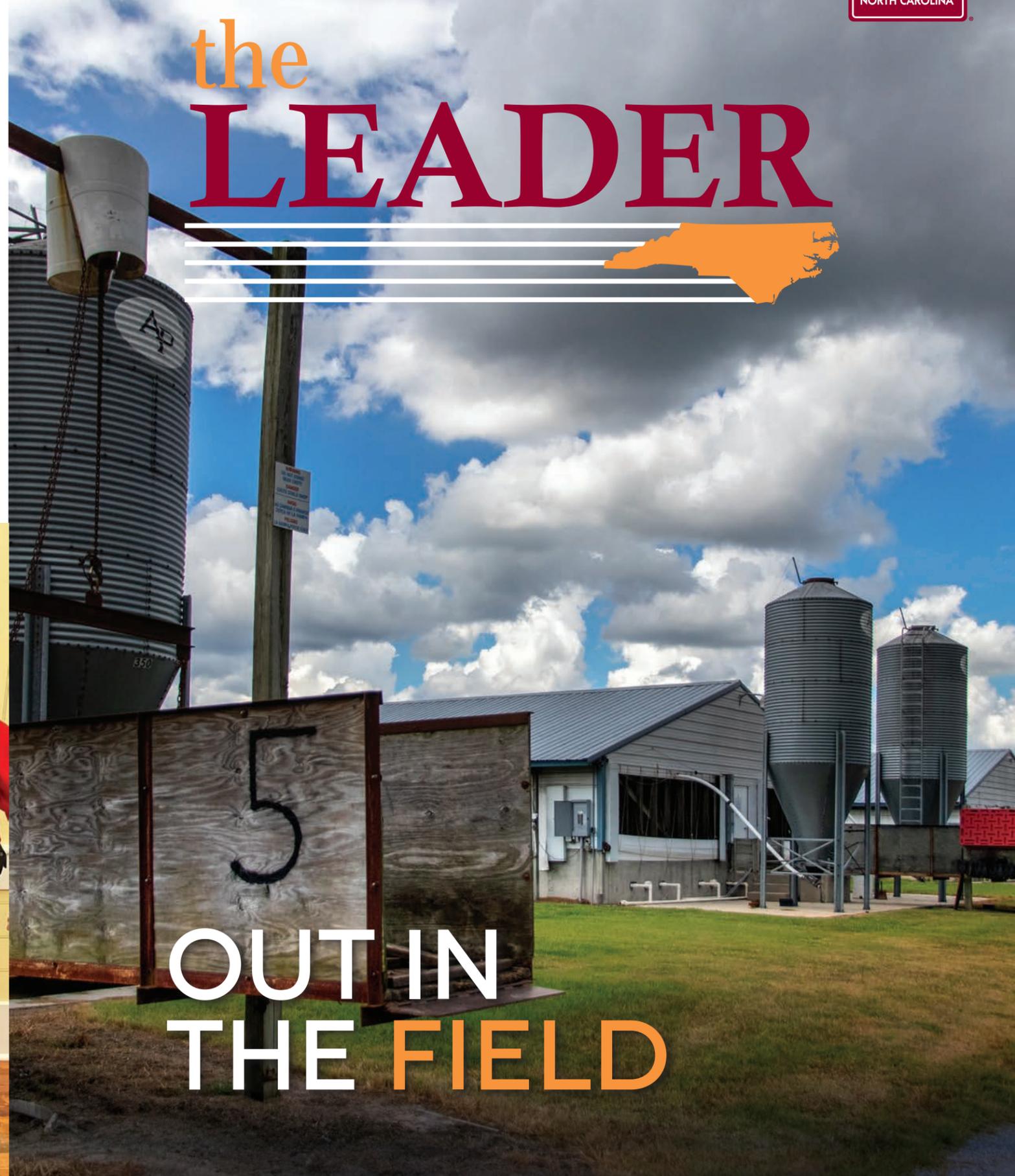
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# the **LEADER**



## **OUT IN THE FIELD**

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall (fifth from right) and North Carolina Farm Bureau President Shawn Harding (fourth from left) with members of Bladen County Farm Bureau.



# OUT IN THE **FIELD**



When is the last time you really thought about how Farm Bureau works? There are about 75,000 farmers in North Carolina working on more than 40,000 farms, and most of those are Farm Bureau members. We're an extremely diverse agricultural state: there are large farms and small farms; conventional farms and organic farms; farms in the mountains, piedmont, and at the coast; we've got everything from row crops to animal ag, fruits and vegetables to nursery and greenhouse; there are farms that have been around only a few years and farms that are older than our own nation. And that's just in one state – American Farm Bureau has 49 other states to think about too! One might think that farmers can't agree on anything given all these differences, yet time after time we come together to find commonality, identify our shared goals, and support one another. It's this grassroots tradition that makes Farm Bureau work.

It's true enough that at a basic level, grassroots advocacy is pretty simple – ideas and direction come from the organization's members rather than from the organization's leaders. But a lot of things have to be right for grassroots to be successful: you need engaged and passionate members; you need well-established processes for making decisions; you need capable leaders who know how to listen; and you need platforms that allow for and encourage an open and

active dialogue among leaders at all levels. At Farm Bureau, we constantly try to foster these interactions, whether through our communications, our policy development process, our leadership programs, or through meetings and events. These opportunities to share information, talk about problems, and develop solutions are vital to our success.

Just last month North Carolina Farm Bureau had the privilege of hosting American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall for a quick tour through eastern North Carolina. President Duvall kicked off his three days in the Tarheel state with a tour of the Nutrien Mining Operation in Aurora, where he met with Nutrien officials and county Farm Bureau leaders from the area. From there he headed to Wayne County for a Meet, Eat and Greet with county Farm Bureau board members, agribusinesses, elected officials and other local leaders. The next morning President Duvall headed south to Burgaw to meet with county Farm Bureau leaders in Pender County before turning back up Interstate 40 to Wallace for lunch with the North Carolina Pork Council Board of Directors and other local farmers. That afternoon he visited a hog farm biogas reclaim project and stopped by the farm of Joey and Matthew Carter, whose farm has been the target of ongoing nuisance lawsuits, to show his support for

family farmers. After heading back to Raleigh, President Duvall met with NC State CALS Dean Richard Linton and State Extension Director Rich Bonanno. Before his flight back to DC, President Duvall also took the time to meet with the participants in the state's Executive Farm Management Program.

"We are extremely honored and grateful that President Duvall took the time to visit our state, meet our farmers, and hear what they have to say. It was only a few days, but those days were packed with tours, meet and greets, working lunches and dinners, and hours in a car crisscrossing eastern North Carolina," said North Carolina Farm Bureau President Shawn Harding. "We talk a lot about grassroots advocacy and how powerful a tool it is for an organization like Farm Bureau. These face-to-face discussions are an integral part of that grassroots tradition. There's just no substitute for hearing directly from farmers about the challenges they are facing and seeing with your own eyes all the great things that are happening right in our own backyard. Whether here in Raleigh or up in DC, these experiences give color to the big picture policy issues we see play out on a state and national stage."

Reflecting on his time in North Carolina, President Duvall said, "Seeing the biogas technology on the hog

farm we visited was just a great example of farmers and ranchers turning a negative into a positive, and a reminder of how American agriculture is becoming more sustainable. It was also eye-opening to see that if farms as well-managed and pristine as the Carter farm are susceptible to lawsuits, then really no farm is safe. The cherry on top was the executive farm management program, which helps attendees with information on succession planning, marketing and telling their story or, as I like to say, getting outside our fencerows. That was a great event, and I left there so impressed with what North Carolina Farm Bureau is doing to prepare the next generation of farmers and ranchers to succeed."

Duvall added, "While I have to be in Washington sometimes, my favorite part of the job of American Farm Bureau president is getting out to farms and talking face-to-face with our members. That's when you learn about what's happening in agriculture, whether it's labor challenges, regulations, weather or just the mental stress that some of our farmers are going through. You don't get that unless you get out of Washington. And hearing those stories firsthand helps me to share them with policy makers when I get back to Washington. So trips like this are extremely important, and I'm grateful for the opportunity I had to visit North Carolina."