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the **LEADER**

FARMERS FLOCK TO RALEIGH FOR 2019 AG AWARENESS DAY

North Carolina Farm Bureau was well represented among the 750 farmers from all over the state who traveled to Raleigh on March 20th for NC Ag Awareness Day at the North Carolina General Assembly. Explaining why the trip to Raleigh to meet their legislators was time well-spent, NCFB President Larry Wooten had this message for farmers: "It's important that you know them. It's more important that they know you."

Highlights of the day included Sen. Brent Jackson's news conference to introduce SB 315, the North Carolina Farm Act of 2019,

and a rally on Bicentennial Plaza. Gov. Roy Cooper, Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, several House and Senate members, NC State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean Richard Linton, and President Wooten all shared their support for farmers as they recover from last fall's hurricanes; their appreciation of the farm contribution to North Carolina's economy and way of life; and their dedication to standing with farmers against legal attacks, like the hog nuisance lawsuits driven by out-of-state trial lawyers.

BRAZIL'S RAW POTENTIAL



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Last month, 48 North Carolina farmers traveled to Brazil to learn how their South American counterparts are building one of the world's fastest-growing agriculture superpowers. It might be summertime in the southern hemisphere, but this was no vacation – this was a business trip. Over the course of one week, those NC farmers flew nearly 10,000 miles, stayed in seven different hotels, traveled hundreds of miles on bumpy, sometimes unpaved roads (more on that later), and spent countless hours learning from their Brazilian counterparts.

First of all, let's talk about why these farmers went to Brazil. As mentioned above, Brazil is one of the world's most productive agricultural nations – it's the largest producer of coffee, oranges, and sugar in the world – and is the second-largest agricultural exporter in the world. In addition to those crops, Brazilian farmers are major producers of soybeans, beef, poultry, rice, tobacco, and cotton, just to name a few.

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There's no question Brazil has a lot going for it agriculturally – namely land, climate, and soil – and their farmers are making the most of it. “The acreage here is just mind-boggling. It's comparable to the American Midwest, and probably bigger. We rode for miles and miles and it's just open expanses,” said Pamlico County farmer and NCFB Vice President Scott Whitford. “What surprised me is they have the same technology, a terrific climate and soils, they have access to the same products we do, and their yields are great. They're getting a longer season because of the climate and can farm virtually all year. Some farms have three crops in a year – they're planting soybeans, following it up with a crop of corn, and then edible soybeans. So that's very productive. They are doing in one year what it takes us one and a half or two years,” he added.

But even with this incredibly robust agriculture sector, there is still huge potential for growth and efficiency. Many of these farms are relatively new operations compared to American farms, so the rise of production agriculture in Brazil has been rapid. “I've come to Brazil five times over the course of 30 years and every time I come, even now, I'm always struck by the raw potential for growth here,” said NCFB President Larry Wooten. “To me, this trip is most impressive because of the growth

in the agriculture industry here in just 30 years. The town we're in today, Campo Verde, wasn't even here 26 years ago. But the thing that I think is most impressive to a lot of our farmers here for the first time is the integration of young people into the agriculture industry. Young people in this country are excited about agriculture, and so is the state government here in Moto Grasso.”

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That governmental support has been another asset that has contributed to the success of Brazilian agriculture, but challenges to that support are on the horizon. “As their industry and society grow, they're beginning to have some of the same issues with government intervention – taxes, labor regulations, environmental regulations – and pressure from non-governmental organizations as we do in North Carolina,” said President Wooten.

Due at least in part to the rapid growth of agriculture in the country, another critical area where Brazil lags behind is transportation infrastructure. These major farming operations can be thousands of miles from the nearest

port but have little or no access to rail systems. “The one real advantage we have in the U.S. is transportation. In Mato Grasso, we're 1,400 miles from the port and every bit of this crop has to go by truck on some not very good roads. We were on a two-lane road all the way in here and it wasn't the smoothest road I'd ever been on. There's also no rail service here – the cost of freighting their commodities to the shipping points is very large. So that's a real advantage for farmers in the U.S.,” said Whitford.

“ We know as American farmers that Brazilian agriculture is very keen competition, but you always learn something from your competition. ”

Despite its current limitations, it's safe to say that Brazil is one of America's biggest competitors in global agricultural markets. But they are also our partners: they share many of the same experiences and face many of the same challenges as North Carolina farmers. “Certainly, we know as American farmers that Brazilian agriculture is very keen competition, but you always learn something from your competition,” said President Wooten.