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AWARDS AND AGREEMENTS HIGHLIGHT AFBF ANNUAL CONVENTION

Back in January North Carolina Farm Bureau voting delegates, members, and staff traveled to Puerto Rico to participate in American Farm Bureau Federation's 104th Annual Convention. It's a time we always look forward to as we engage in the development of new Farm Bureau policies and initiatives, take part in important

discussions about the future of agriculture, and form valuable relationships with friends and colleagues from other states.

In his keynote address to members, AFBF President Zippy Duvall highlighted the organization's successes in the previous year, including grassroots advocacy efforts to send more than 38,000 messages to lawmakers and regulatory agencies. "We have a mighty force of Farm Bureau advocates. When we combine these advocates with our team of expert lobbyists, we are a force to be reckoned with," Duvall said.

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NCFB Wins Big

NCFB featured prominently from the very start, claiming several notable honors recognizing the achievements of our members and leaders. NCFB earned the Navigator Award for membership growth by adding an astounding 23,504 members in 2022, far outpacing the next largest gainer. That growth meant that NCFB President Shawn Harding had the honor of leading the Pledge of Allegiance during the opening session for the fourth time in a row.

But President Harding wouldn't have to wait long to return to the stage as NCFB won the Pinnacle Award, the highest honor a state Farm Bureau can be awarded for program and member achievement. "I'm just so proud of our people. It's a total Farm Bureau program that starts at the county level, from the mountains to the coast, everybody working together is what made this happen," said Harding. NCFB has previously won the Pinnacle Award in 2015 and 2019.

Another North Carolina leader would later grace the stage as former NCFB President Larry Wooten was given the AFBF Founders Award for exemplary leadership, service, and contributions to Farm Bureau. During his more than 50 years with Farm Bureau, Wooten showed a commitment to developing future agriculture leaders, promoted international trade as chair of AFBF's Trade Advisory Committee, and oversaw several legislative and policy successes, including the initiation of the Tobacco Buyout Program and the passage of state laws protecting farmers' right to farm. President Harding praised Wooten's team-oriented leadership style, saying, "he has the ability to make everyone feel a part of the team and a part of the vision of what we are doing."

We're also proud of our Young Farmers & Ranchers competitors Dustin and Olivia Haigler (Excellence in Ag), Sofia Lilly (Achievement Award), and Austin Rash (Discussion Meet); and Kamal Bell who participated in a panel discussion about how Farm Bureau can be a connecting force with those outside of agriculture.



AFBF Signs Right-to-Repair Agreement with John Deere

Duvall also shared the announcement that AFBF agreed on a memorandum of understanding with John Deere that ensures farmers' and ranchers' right to repair their own farm equipment. The MOU is the culmination of several years of discussions between AFBF and John Deere.

The agreement, which was signed during the opening press conference, ensures farmers' access to diagnostic and repair codes, as well as manuals (operator, parts, service) and product guides. It also ensures farmers will be able to purchase diagnostic tools directly from John Deere and receive assistance from the manufacturer when ordering parts and products.

"A piece of equipment is a major investment. Farmers must have the freedom to choose where equipment is repaired, or to repair it themselves, to help control costs. The MOU commits John Deere to ensuring farmers and independent repair facilities have access to many of the tools and software needed to grow the food, fuel and fiber America's families rely on," said Duvall.

David Gilmore, John Deere Senior Vice President, Ag & Turf Sales & Marketing said, "This agreement reaffirms the longstanding commitment Deere has made to ensure our customers have the diagnostic tools and information they need to make many repairs to their machines. We look forward to working alongside the American Farm Bureau and our customers in the months and years ahead to ensure farmers continue to have the tools and resources to diagnose, maintain and repair their equipment."

Other concerns that were not addressed in the MOU include: consolidation of the industry and the resulting lack of dealerships, lack of enough skilled technicians to

make repairs, and the inability of some dealers to work on other brands. The MOU is a voluntary approach to dealing with the RtR issue in lieu of federal or state legislative mandates.

AFBF noted that the agreement has the potential to serve as a model for other manufacturers and those conversations have already begun.

The MOU is a starting point which AFBF and John Deere will revisit at least twice annually to review and make adjustments as needed. NCFB and AFBF will continue to advance right-to-repair policy on behalf of farmers.

Policy Takes Center Stage

United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack provided information on several developments taking place at USDA during an address at the closing general session, including details on the next phases of the Emergency Relief Program and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program. Vilsack also discussed the importance of the 2023 farm bill.

"A farm bill isn't just about farms, and it isn't just about nutrition, and it isn't just about conservation. It's about preserving a fundamental aspect of our country, of being a food secure nation that empowers the rest of the nation to do all of what we do in America," Vilsack said.

"The future of our country is directly connected to your future," Vilsack told attendees.



The final day of AFBF Annual Convention was focused on policy discussions to guide the organization's work in 2023. Key topics ranged from expanding risk management programs and improving dairy pricing transparency to battling hunger.

Delegates to the American Farm Bureau business meeting voted to modernize the farm bill by expanding baseline funding, developing more flexible disaster relief programs and extending protection to more specialty crops.

They also voted to bring more transparency to the federal milk pricing system. Several changes to policy include support for more USDA audits of processing costs to ensure data remains accurate, and a Federal Milk Marketing Orders voting procedure that requires cooperatives to communicate more clearly with members regarding proposed changes. The results of an FMMO forum hosted by AFBF in October served as a guidepost for policy changes.

Recognizing growing food insecurity in the United States, delegates approved new policy to support access to nutrition programs including connecting farms directly with food banks, increasing the number of SNAP-approved food sales outlets, and other efforts to make produce available to families living in food deserts.

On trade, delegates added policy for USDA to continue working with the Mexican government to drop a proposed ban on imports of biotech corn. The new policy also encourages USDA to urge the Mexican government to accept established science on the safety of U.S. biotech products.

Voting delegates also formalized Farm Bureau's position opposing the 2022 Waters of the U.S. rule and a proposed Securities and Exchange Commission rule if it requires Scope 3 emissions reporting from farms.

"Delegates demonstrated the strength of Farm Bureau by coming together to represent hard-working farm families from all 50 states and Puerto Rico," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "There's a lot of work to do in 2023 as Congress drafts the next farm bill, and the policies set forth today will guide AFBF as we work to ensure farmers and ranchers can continue to meet the growing needs of families in America and around the world."

The 105th AFBF Annual Convention will take place January 19 – 24, 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah.