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**POLICY
REVIEW DAY
2023**

the
LEADER



**Policy
Review
Day**
July 27, 2023

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Every summer 20 North Carolina Farm Bureau advisory committees assemble on Policy Review Day to review the NC Farm Bureau Policy Book and to identify policies in need of revision and areas where new policy is needed. Policy Review Day is the kickoff of the grassroots policy development process that ultimately determines NC Farm Bureau policy for the following year. This year's meeting was held at the Raleigh Hilton where over 300 farmers and commodity leaders heard comments from invited speakers and discussed areas of concern.

Some of the topics for discussion in the committee meetings involved revenue protection for contract growers and crop insurance coverage for beekeepers when there is too much rainfall. Committee members talked about the need for composting for equine, cattle, and other livestock. Plant and animal diseases, labor, and various environmental issues were also discussed during the committee meetings. Areas of concern identified by committees will be sent to all 100 county farm bureaus to assist them when they consider policy development beginning at the local level.

In addition to reviewing and discussing policy, advisory committee members also completed a brief two-part survey on wildlife depredation and low hanging lines. Wildlife damage to crops costs farmers millions of dollars each year in lost income. Furthermore, the loss of farmland and increased development has decreased the habitat for North Carolina wildlife, thereby exacerbating the problem. Another issue causing concern for farmers is low hanging utility lines crossing or parallel to a road and blocking a field or farm entrance. The results of these surveys will be beneficial to two task forces that NC Farm Bureau is organizing to work on these important issues.

This year, attendees heard from NC Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler and speakers from Baptists on Mission, NC Agromedicine Institute, and the Animal Agriculture Alliance.

BEYOND THE \$100 BILLION MILESTONE

Commissioner Steve Troxler celebrated the recent announcement that the total economic impact of North Carolina agriculture exceeded \$103 billion – a goal he first set when coming into office as Commissioner. “[When] we announced that at the Got to be NC Festival the sign said ‘We Did It’. The ‘we’ is everybody involved in agriculture and agribusiness in North Carolina, but the main ‘we’ are the farmers and agribusiness people who, quite frankly, have endured a lot. It is the relationships

that we have among ourselves that make us successful and I thank Farm Bureau for the wonderful partnership that we have.”

But Commissioner Troxler also talked about challenges to agriculture including competition for land and water, overreaching environmental regulations, and the inability of the Department to retain workers. He closed by saying, “I am very optimistic about what we can do in ag in North Carolina and I’m optimistic about the state of North Carolina if we have some smart growth and if we put as a priority the natural resources that agriculture and agribusiness have to have to be successful.”

PARTNERING FOR DISASTER CLEANUP

Richard Brunson, Executive Director of Baptists on Mission, spoke about the disaster relief partnership with NC Farm Bureau in helping farms recover following disasters. This program will provide farmers and others who want to volunteer to help cleanout fields and pastures following a storm with an opportunity to do so. NC Farm Bureau is providing financial support to help with such efforts including the purchase of equipment necessary for the cleanups. “We’re looking forward to serving with you and helping meet the needs across our state after disasters in a greater way,” said Brunson.

“WHEN THE FAMILY IS HEALTHY, THE FARM IS HEALTHY”

Dr. Roberta Bellamy, a member of the NC Agromedicine Institute, talked about the importance of helping farmers and farm families get the help they need to deal with stress on the farm. “Stress in our culture tends to show up where farm and family intersect,” said Bellamy. NC Farm Bureau is helping fund this mental health wellness program through the NC Agromedicine Institute. “Farm families need information. We need education. We need to understand how to help ourselves, how to ease the stress around us so that our loved ones are not suffering

and we can continue to do what we want to do so badly. We need our communities to understand what we do so that they can support us, and we need to understand how to get that support from them.”

WATCHING FOR THE NEXT PROP 12

Founded in 1987, the Animal Agriculture Alliance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that brings together farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, animal feed companies, animal health companies, processors, allied associations and others involved in getting food from the farm to our forks. They safeguard the future of animal agriculture by bridging the communication gap between the farm and food communities, debunking myths about animal agriculture, and alerting the industry regarding potential threats by activist groups.

Casey Kinler, Director of Membership and Marketing for the Animal Agriculture Alliance, talked about the impact of Prop 12 and other ways activist groups are attacking animal agriculture including ballot initiatives, local ordinances, pressure on the restaurant industry, publicity stunts and criminal activity.

“So what can we do about all this?” asked Kinler. “The most important thing we can do is stay informed, not only [about] what’s happening in North Carolina but also in local towns and cities. Keep an eye on neighboring states – what’s being introduced there. Build proactive relationships with legislators. Don’t wait until you’re angry about something to go meet with them or talk to them. Invite them out to your farm. If there’s any speaking opportunities to get in front of them, take advantage of those. Build your trust bank. Always be depositing – going to local events, sponsoring local events – so that when something happens your local community members already know who you are, know about your farm, and they believe you and want to listen to you and your side of the story. Finally, build coalitions with other organizations. We’re all in this together.”

