

The Governor's Commission on Family Farms
Second Annual Report

September 27, 2000
Frankfort, Kentucky

Introduction

The inevitable change facing Kentucky's farm families requires strong leaders not only from government, but also from farm families themselves. The Governor's Commission on Family Farms is made of these strong farm leaders. The Commission is also one of the most diverse and inclusive farm advisory groups ever assembled in the Commonwealth. They are dedicated individuals who are to be commended for their diligence, hard work, and their obvious commitment towards a brighter future for our farm families.

In their second year of work, the Commission on Family Farms focused its efforts on the priorities established during the previous year. Continuing the success of the Commission's marketing initiative that included the concept of a Center for Agricultural Entrepreneurship, they concentrated their efforts in establishing a framework for improving agricultural education and developing an urban and rural partnership.

The Commission had multiple accomplishments during the past year. Members observed its idea of a Center for Agricultural Entrepreneurship ushered through the 2000 Session of the General Assembly. House Bill 611 established the framework for investing fifty percent of Kentucky's portion of Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) funds earmarked for the revitalization of agriculture. This bill authorizes the Agricultural Development Board to establish a Center for Agricultural Entrepreneurship under the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Program, which is intended to support small farm agricultural diversification through technical assistance, business mentoring, and financial incentives.

Members of the Commission played an integral part in the development of this legislation to authorize funding of a Center for Agricultural Entrepreneurship. Representative Roger Thomas, sponsor of House Bill 611, was able to shepherd this legislation through both chambers of the General Assembly resulting in successful passage.

MEMBERSHIP

The members of this commission are providing the type of leadership referenced by Governor Patton as they seek to develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen our family farms. The Commission is comprised of 21 farm producers

from all sectors of Kentucky's farm economy and all parts of the state. Four agriculture support organization representatives and three ex-officio members join these producers, and this group has spent the past year examining the issues confronting Kentucky's family farms and the opportunities for growth and development in agriculture.

In addition to the ex officio members who include Department of Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith, Secretary of the Workforce Development Cabinet Allen Rose, and the Governor's Designee John-Mark Hack, Governor Patton reappointed James J. Naive of Spencer County as the Commission's chair. Mr. Naive is a cattle farmer, former President of the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, a member of the Louisville Agriculture Club and the Kentucky Farm Bureau. Naive brings a strong administrative background and a genuine concern for the well being of Kentucky's farm families to his role as Chair.

Joining Mr. Naive on the Commission were:

Bill Atkins, *Clark County*, a vegetable farmer and President of Melita Farms, a wholesale vegetable marketing business that distributes Kentucky grown produce to major super market chains.

Karen Armstrong-Cummings, *Franklin County*, who serves as Director of the Commodity Growers' Cooperative, a subsidiary of the Burley Growers Cooperative. Karen also serves as a member of the National Small Farms Commission.

Alice Baesler, *Fayette County*, runs the Baesler family farm in Athens and works for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

John Berry, Jr., *Henry County*, is an attorney and farmer, as well as former President of Burley Tobacco Grower Cooperative and the Commodity Growers Cooperative.

Ron Catchen, *Montgomery County*, is a County Extension Agent for the UK College of Agriculture, who has been involved in promoting agriculture in the community development plans of Montgomery County.

Sharon Furches, *Calloway County*, runs a large farm operation with her husband near Murray and serves on the Kentucky Agriculture Resource Development Authority.

Don Halcomb, *Simpson County*, is a farmer, Chair of the Wheat Promotion Council, a member of the Kentucky Small Grains Promotion Council, and the Kentucky Corn Growers Association.

Mark Haney, *Pulaski County*, is a fruit and vegetable producer, Second Vice-President of the Kentucky Farm Bureau state Board of Directors and a member of the Kentucky Horticulture Council.

Susan Harkins, *Bourbon County*, is an organic farmer, producer of freshwater shrimp and fish, a founder of Partners for Family Farms and Friends of the Lexington Farmers Market, Treasurer of the Kentucky Aquaculture Association, and a member of Bluegrass Tomorrow Executive Board.

Hampton “Hoppy” Henton, *Woodford County*, State Executive Director of USDA Farm Service Agency, raises tobacco, soybeans, wheat, hay and cattle on his farm.

Denise Hoffman, *Owsley County* raises tobacco, goats and other products and is an active leader in her community.

Paul Hornback, *Shelby County*, raises tobacco corns, soybeans and beef cattle and serves as a member of the Kentucky Farm Bureau state Board of Directors and President of the Council for Burley Tobacco.

Janet Johnson, *Allen County*, an Allen County Extension Agent, represents the UK College of Agriculture and provides a crucial link to many farm families through the Cooperative Extension Service.

David Kash, *Wolfe County*, is the Lee-Owsley County USDA Farm Service Agency Director, and a tobacco and cattle farmer.

Chris Kummer, *Simpson County*, is a farmer, a member of Kentucky Soybean Association State Board, the Kentucky Corn Growers, and the Kentucky Small Grain Growers.

Sylvia Lovely, *Fayette County*, is Executive Director/CEO for the Kentucky League of Cities and a founding member of Partners for Family Farms. Sylvia represents the crucial link to urban consumers and the general business community.

Mattie Mack, *Meade County*, is a tobacco farmer, and a leader of the Black Farmers Association.

Luther Mason, *Scott County*, farms and serves as President of the Scott County Farmers Market.

Ken Mattingly, Jr., *Barren County*, is a dairy farmer, cheese maker and a member of the Community Farm Alliance.

John Medley, *Washington County*, is a hog farmer, serves as President of Central Kentucky Hog Marketing Cooperative and Vice President of the Washington County Farm Bureau.

Al Pedigo, *Allen County*, is a farmer, serves on the Farm Bureau state Board of Directors, the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association Board, and Chairs the Kentucky Beef Council.

Steve Price, *Kenton County*, serves as President of Kentucky Aquaculture Association.

Brandon Reed, *Larue County*, represents the voice of future farmers as the 1999 President of the Kentucky Future Farmers of America.

Bob Sparks, *Nicholas County*, is a Dentist representing the health community, and is also a tobacco and cattle farmer.

The membership includes more women and greater minority representation than any other farm advisory body in Kentucky's history. The group also includes representatives from virtually every sector of Kentucky's farm economy.

Education

In 1998, the Governor's Commission on Family Farms established a set of priorities that they felt needed addressed in order to facilitate the development of rural communities and growth of Kentucky's farm economy. Based upon the priorities set at their first meeting, agricultural education ranked as the second highest priority.

The Education Committee, chaired by Ron Catchen, acknowledged the absence of quality agricultural education in the current primary, secondary, and continuing education curriculum. During the past year, the committee developed suggestions to address these needs that are most often found in Kentucky's rural areas. The following are recommendations produced by the Education Committee and approved by the full Commission at their April 19, 2000 meeting in Frankfort, Kentucky.

The Education Committee recommends a curriculum-based market, production, and farm family education program that will assist producers with financial planning and personal development skills through both county-based and farm-based programs.

The committee recommends that an advisory board be established for the purpose of identifying major areas of emphasis and deciding on a course of action for an agricultural education program. Advisory board members would represent but not limited to:

- Land Grant Universities
- Regional Universities

- Agricultural Advancement Councils (Extension Based)
- Kentucky Department of Agriculture
- Vocational Teacher's Association
- Cabinet for Workforce Development
- USDA agencies
- Industry
- Markets
- Active Farmers selected by the GCFF

The advisory board would oversee the selection of individuals to a Rapid Adjustment Team. Members of the Rapid Adjustment Team are educated and experienced in cross-disciplines to personally assist farmers in crisis situations with making changes in their farm operations, which would result in improved management and opportunity for success. A farmer would make a request to the board for assistance then the team would arrive on the farm and prescribe changes needed in the operation. The Advisory Board could utilize a variety of activities and methods to help promote the services offered by a Rapid Adjustment Team such as:

- Regional seminars
- Vocational agriculture
- Demonstration farms
- Regional field days

Although America's economy is the strongest it has been in ten years, farmers continue to face low commodity prices and an uncertain future. The Education Committee recognizes the need for farm families to develop a plan for their future, not just the next growing season. Toward that end, the committee recommends that a financial planning curriculum be developed to assist farmers in their planning for the future. Education areas include:

- Goal Setting
- Business Plan Development
- Record Keeping
- Vocational/ College Planning for Children
- Estate Planning
- Public Policy

Not only is there a need for financial planning, there is also a need for personal growth and development. For some farmers, the need to provide for their family means transition to off-farm careers. Other farmers may need to acquire negotiating and communication skills to build relationships with merchants and vendors. The Education Committee recommends the creation of a personal development skills training program that may include the following:

- Resume Preparation
- Job interview skills

- Self esteem building
- Communication skills
- Coping skills
- Leadership
- Community involvement
- Presentation skills

The Educations Committee also recommends that agriculture related vocational or college level degree programs be established to meet the needs of full-time farmers. Suggestions include:

- Secondary Agriculture Education
- Patten post-secondary curriculum after teacher education programs for easier access by farm families
- Provide better off-farm job preparation and training
- Entrepreneurship courses
- Value-added courses
- Business courses
- Winter short courses at the college level
 - One year – Certification
 - Two years – associate degree

A statewide effort to educated the citizenry of Kentucky about the dependence on agriculture goes hand in hand with the efforts that the Urban/Rural Partnership Committee recommends:

- Importance of agriculture to the Commonwealth economy
- Importance of agriculture to life style
- Importance of purchasing Kentucky products
- Creation and maintenance of green space
- Agriculture literacy

Urban/Rural Partnership

This committee's mission is to further urban/rural interaction resulting in a relationship between urban consumers and rural producers that will promote mutual appreciation of their respective roles in the 21st century economy. This relationship will also result in the creation of markets for farm and craft products and create more prosperous and healthy local economies while improving quality of life and sustainability in communities.

The committee is addressing some new challenges including the development of farmers markets and raising awareness of mutual dependence.

The committee is continuing to formulate a strategy to develop and/or improve farmers markets throughout the Commonwealth. The Urban/Rural Committee plans to:

- Develop an inventory of current farmers market activity.
- Identify the roles of various entities involved with market development
- Develop a “How To” kit to assist interested parties in creating a farmers market
- Work through current downtown revitalization efforts (Renaissance Kentucky and KLC Hometown Services) to find a “fit” for markets in cities small and large

Another major initiative includes the development of programs that are designed to educate urban/rural citizens about their mutual dependence. Potential projects include:

- A project that is currently underway to identify and inventory farm/city days/luncheons and other events held in local communities across the Commonwealth.
- The development of fact sheets for cities and farms discussion the urban/rural dependence using statistical information
- The creation of educational/informational seminars through various other organizations.

Members of the Urban/Rural Partnership Committee have also given their support to the organizers of the Farm to Table Connection Conference scheduled for October 5-6, 2000. This conference will reach an 18 county area and is being sponsored by the Kentucky League of Cities. This conference is an example of the kinds of efforts the Governor’s Commission on Family Farms supports. The Commission’s Janet Johnson and Sylvia Lovely have been instrumental in the development and organization of this conference.

Labor

For over two years, an ad hoc group of state, federal and private interests called the Kentucky Migrant Farm Labor Task Force has been working on issues related to migrant farm workers. This task force has been the only state-level conduit for gathering and disseminating information on migrant labor regulations and other related issues to employers and workers. This group has been coordinated by Jody Hughes in the Workforce Development Cabinet, and includes representatives from USDA, US Department of Labor, Kentucky Farm

Bureau, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, UK Cooperative Extension, Kentucky Farmworkers Program, Inc., and the Council for Burley Tobacco.

This group's mission is to build collaboration and coordination among governmental entities and other groups that have an interest in migrant labor, increase awareness of existing and proposed regulations affecting migrant labor, and to distribute information related to migrant labor. Currently, there are at least 20,000 migrant farm workers in Kentucky during the peak labor season.

On October 22, 1999, the Kentucky Farm Labor Task Force was officially established as a subsidiary of the Governor's Commission on Family Farms. Labor issues were among the Commission's top priorities and the two groups have complemented each other in their support of farm families.

Conclusion

As the Governor's Commission on Family Farms concludes its second year of work they hope that state policy makers will recognize that a firm, tangible commitment to the future of Kentucky's farm families is imperative for the preservation and sustainable development of the rural character and culture that make Kentucky unique.

We will continue to assess our priorities and we appreciate the opportunity to share this and future recommendations with Governor Patton.