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Commissioner Leonhardt Applauds Signing of 2018 Farm Bill

Charleston W.Va. -- Following President Donald Trump's signing of the 2018 Farm Bill, Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt released the following statement:

"Farmers everywhere finally have certainty with the signing of the 2018 Farm Bill. We know vital programs will now remain funded and our farmers can continue to focus on feeding the world," Commissioner Leonhardt said. "I thank Congress and the President for finally getting this across the finish line."

The 2018 Farm Bill maintains funding for several vital initiatives, including conservation programs, Specialty Crop Block Grants, and food and agriculture research. The bill also included a provision to legalize the commercial cultivation of industrial hemp at the federal level by removing it from the list of federally controlled substances. Oversight to regulate this cultivation will continue to rest with individual state department of agricultures upon approval by United States Department of Agriculture.

"Senator Mitch McConnell has proven to be a true friend to farmers. Through his effort, our growers will have access to a new cash crop. We hope to see tremendous growth within our own industry now that the path for regulation of these products has been firmly established," Leonhardt said.

In 2018, West Virginia licensed 46 industrial hemp growers who grew roughly 155 acres of crop. For the 2019 season, WVDA has received applications for 199 permits thus far. The increased interest is largely due to a bill that was passed by the West Virginia Legislature in 2017 which allow cultivation of industrial hemp for commercial purposes.

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“Changes in the 2018 Farm Bill will allow the transport of raw industrial hemp products across state lines. We hope our farmers will take full advantage of this revision to the federal law,” Leonhardt said

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.

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