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Strategic Plan for Growing West Virginia Agriculture Released

Charleston W.Va. -- Today, the West Virginia Agriculture Advisory Board released its five year-strategic plan for West Virginia agriculture. The final report includes input from over 850 participants who either took an online survey or attended one of 14 regional meetings over the last eight months. The agriculture advisory board is comprised of Governor Jim Justice, Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt and WVU Extension Service Dean Steven Bonanno.

“We have found there are a lot of folks doing great things to improve agriculture in West Virginia. What we were missing was a road map on how to work together,” said Commissioner Leonhardt. “The plan has helped identify and prioritize agricultural issues which will have the greatest impact on our agricultural economy over the next five years.”

Titled “A Shared Agenda for Growing West Virginia’s Agricultural Economy,” the plan focuses on several areas including: connecting producers to market opportunities, creating infrastructure needed to grow the agriculture economy, developing the next generation of agricultural industry leaders and enhancing access to land. Collectively, the aim of the plan is to ensure that all of West Virginia benefits economically from the efforts of its hard-working agricultural community.

“There is no doubt that agriculture plays a significant role in the future of West Virginia’s economic prosperity. This plan provides us with a roadmap to help us enhance agricultural opportunities, develop our future leaders and work to ensure we have the proper tools and resources in place to be successful,” said Bonanno.

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To facilitate the development of the strategic plan, the Board appointed a steering committee of stakeholders to lead the process on developing a long-term sustainable plan to maximize West Virginia’s agricultural sector.

The steering committee included representatives from the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, West Virginia Farm Bureau, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, West Virginia Conservation Agency, WVU Extension Service, WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design and West Virginia State University Extension Service.

The committee then hired Fourth Economy in 2018 to conduct a market analysis as well surveys, interviews and stakeholder meetings.

“What we do not want is another study to sit on a shelf and collect dust. We plan on implementing the findings of the strategic plan with our partners immediately,” Commissioner Leonhardt said. “The goal is simple, grow West Virginia agriculture as a team.”

The full report and strategic actions are available at www.wvagadvisory.com

For more information or questions, contact Crescent Gallagher at cgallagher@wvda.us or 304-558-3708

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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