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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **WEST VIRGINIA AGRICULTURE-BASED BUSINESS TO COMPETE FOR NATIONAL PRIZE**

**Charleston, W.Va.** – A West Virginia agriculture-based company has been announced as a finalist for the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) 2018 Farm Bureau Rural Entrepreneurship Challenge. Hawk Knob Appalachian Hard Cider and Mead of Lewisburg, WV will compete against three other companies for the Farm Bureau Entrepreneur of the Year of Award. The winner will be chosen January 7, 2018 at the AFBF's 99th Annual Convention in Nashville, TN.

"We are extremely proud of these graduates from WVU's Davis College. They earned their education from an in-state institution, saw an opportunity through agriculture and started a thriving business in West Virginia. That should be the goal for every college student in our state," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

To be eligible for this competition, a business had to be food or agriculture based, be for profit and a current member of the Farm Bureau. Additionally, applications had to submit a pitch video. See Hawk Knob's submission [here](#). There were 471 applicants for the 2018 award.

"We're so excited to represent West Virginia on a national stage. The state often gets a bad rap nationally, so we're going to show people what we're capable of in Appalachia," said Joshua Bennet, co-owner and founder. "The money that we've already won is going back into our business to help with some equipment upgrades and marketing."

Hawk Knob is a locally-sourced distillery that produces hard cider and mead (a fermented honey and water alcoholic beverage). Owners and founders Josh Bennet and Will Lewis are both 2009 graduates of West Virginia University's Davis College of Natural Resources and Design. Hawk Knob has already been awarded \$15,000 for being selected as a finalist and will compete for this year's top prize, an additional \$15,000. If they are not selected as this year's winner, they can also be awarded an additional \$10,000 by winning the People's Choice award.

For more information about the competition, click [here](#).

For more information about Hawk Knob Appalachian Hard Cider and Mead, check out their website:  
<http://www.hawknob.com/contact/>

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