Investing in Agriculture

As we start 2016 we know that the challenges ahead of us will be great as we continue to grow Agriculture in West Virginia. Prior to being elected as your Commissioner of Agriculture I served in the West Virginia Legislature for more than two decades. During that time I was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the experience gave me the opportunity to learn and gain an in-depth understanding of our state’s budgeting process.

We all know that finances in West Virginia have been tight and will continue to be that way for the next several years. Every Department of state government has felt the impact. Since taking office as Commissioner in 2013 the Department of Agriculture has endured nearly $3 million in budget cuts with the expectation of more to come.

That said, we must continue to invest in Agriculture because it is a real economic opportunity as we work in West Virginia to diversify our tax base and create good jobs with livable wages.

The Legislature will go into session this month to address many issues, the majority being those having fiscal implications. I find it imperative that our lawmakers take note of the REAL implications. I find it imperative that our lawmakers take note of the REAL implications. We have worked diligently during the last three years to develop more commercial farming opportunities, establish a system of Aggregation points and lay the groundwork to re-energize production of West Virginia grown food products.

that happen.”

A big part of that is the Winter Blues Farmers Market taking place on the first night of the conference, February 25 from 4 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Last year several dozen West Virginia farmers and producers set up shop in the grand hall of the Civic Center. Hundreds come out to see, smell, and sample what West Virginia growers have in season in the middle of winter.

“We want the farmers to be there to show off what they’re doing and make contacts. A lot of people that go to the Winter Blues Farmers Market are looking for a supplier,” says McConnell. “We want the public to come because you can’t beat it. We come to the Capitol City offering fresh produce, meats, and cheeses.”

Paul Mock, the owner of Mock’s Greenhouse in Berkeley Springs, attends the conference each year and puts his produce on display.

“It gives me a chance to network with the other growers and extension specialists. I’m a year-round hydroponics gardener. The Winter Blues Market turns out to be a great way to show my produce in another part of the state that normally I wouldn’t see,” stresses Mock. “New people have access to my food!”

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**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**
WVDA taking “measured approach” as hemp production takes root this Spring

Hemp is a hot topic these days. With changes earlier this year to West Virginia’s 2002 Industrial Hemp Development Act, there are a lot of questions about the future of hemp production in the Mountain State.

“I get calls weekly from people who are interested in growing hemp, at least four calls a week,” according to WVDA Plant Industries Director Eric Ewing.

Ewing and WVDA Chief of Staff Chris Ferro are the “point men” when it comes to agriculture and industrial hemp in West Virginia.

“If we’re going to have a legitimate program going forward, we’re going to have to take a measured approach to this,” stresses Ferro. “The Department has to vet the hemp, make sure it’s legitimate industrial hemp.

State and federal laws currently allow approved individuals to grow Cannabis sativa. The catch is that hemp can only contain .3 percent or less concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol, the principle psychoactive compound found in marijuana.

As of December, the department received 15 applications from those wanting to grow hemp. Three of those got provisional approval. Ewing says most folks who call his office inquiring about growing hemp don’t realize at this point it’s in the research phase.

“We want to make sure these are research projects. We think if they are, growers are covered by the Farm Bill and our state law,” explains Ewing.

Research projects vary from growing hemp to find out which seeds produce the best quality and quantity of the plant here in West Virginia to seeds that produce quality oils, which can be used in beauty products and foods.

“If the applications say, “I just want to grow hemp.” That’s not enough. We need to know their long-term plan, an end game,” says Ewing.

Walt’s View, cont. from page 1

There is still plenty of work to be done but in order for us to succeed we have to have funds to invest in Agriculture so that 10 years from now we are looked at like our neighboring states as a location where buyers can get quality and quantity crops and livestock with a competitive price.

It can and will be done with the support of our state leaders and their recognition of Agriculture as a business that won’t go away. We all must eat, that can’t be debated. West Virginians can and are growing fresh, healthy products on West Virginia land to feed West Virginians.

We have to take that to the next level.

Encouraging the next generation of Farmers

I have visited a number of schools lately to speak with FFA members about the opportunities for them to have a career in farming in West Virginia. Although a number of fine Ag careers have been touted for college graduates, there has not been much encouragement for students to pursue one rather obvious choice – farming.

It is one of the best options for West Virginia students to consider. Like the rest of the country, we have an aging farmer population. At the same time, we have consumers who want to buy local products, as we have demonstrated with our potato project. As I said earlier in this message, we also have a state that desperately needs to diversify its economy and a food market that consistently exports an enormous portion of its food dollars elsewhere.

Along with the other things the WVDA is doing to redevelop commercial agricultural industries, we must also convince young people that becoming a farmer is a great thing they can do for their state and themselves. As I have traveled the state meeting these students, I try to impress on them that West Virginia was once a farming state that produced nearly everything it consumed. We still have the resources and the ability, we just need to develop the will of our young farmers.

Until next month I encourage you all to continue voicing your support for Agriculture in West Virginia.
“The most important thing my father taught me about farming was to make quick decisions. You have to make decisions on the job. You can’t wait until tomorrow. And you don’t worry about the decisions you’ve made. If you made a good one, fine. If it was a bad one, it happened yesterday. You move on.”

– Smith McCausland

Nine Decades of Life on the Farm

Smith McCausland knows the 650 acres of his family farm like the back of his hand. He’s spent his entire life working the land. At the age of 92, he has no regrets about his career choice.

“I couldn’t have liked anything better than farming,” the Mason County native said. “I loved growing up here. It was a great experience, one you’d never be able to get any place else.”

Born in 1923, McCausland was raised in an old stone house on the banks of the Kanawha River. He knew from the very beginning he had some big footsteps to fill. He is the grandson of Gen. John McCausland.

The general, orphaned at an early age, came to live in Henderson, WV with his aunt and uncle. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, McCausland joined the Confederate Army at the start of the Civil War and fought several key battles, including the burning of Chambersburg. After the war, the general and his wife settled down to a life of farming on 3,000 acres straddling the Mason/Putnam County line. They called their home Grape Hill.

More than 150 years later, McCausland can look out his living room window, across Route 35 and watch cattle roam in the same field his grandfather farmed.

“The farm back then was nothing like it is now,” explained McCausland. “They had a lot of forest they had to clear. They were able to put it into production only after they tilled it, to drain the water, in the late 1860’s,” explained McCausland.

Corn, wheat, and oats filled the fields while hundreds of head of cattle grazed the pastures. When the general died in 1927, he divided the farm between his children. McCausland’s father retained about 1,000 acres and continued the family tradition. When Smith was born, he fell into farm life as well, tagging along with his father on all sorts of adventures.

“They used to drive the cattle from here in Pliny down to Henderson, 18 miles, in the spring. They would pasture them and then bring them back in the fall. Route 35 was not there. There was a little country road that went behind the house. All you had to do was start the cattle down the road and they’d pretty much go.”

“I saw my dad sell cattle for five cents a pound. They were big, fat cattle that were finished out. Dad was glad to get that amount. There are a lot of expenses with farming. Sometimes it was a close profit.”

McCausland and his father used mules to plant the crops in the spring.

“We didn’t have any chemicals. We didn’t have any fertilizers. Your fertilizer was the manure that came out of the barn!”

Come harvest time, the workload increased.

“We used a wheat binder. It would cut the wheat, fall on a canvas, and roll up. It was tied up in a bundle. You had a carrier that would hold about 10 bundles. Then they tripped it and it would drop it off. You had men that had to shock it and let it stand in the field and cure until it was ready to be thrashed,” said McCausland. “That was another job! The hay was just the same.”

McCausland remembered as many as ten field hands working alongside him and his father during harvest.

In 1940, Smith left the farm to attend West Virginia University. However his stay was cut short. WWII broke out the next year and he was needed back at home.

“There were a lot of young men deferred to work on farms, to work the land and raise livestock. We had over 300 head of cattle,” says McCausland.

He said hard work was a given. He got up at the break of dawn and worked well into the evening. There were successful harvests and lean years. Along the way he learned what it took to run a business.

“The most important thing my father taught me about farming was to make quick decisions. You have to make decisions on the job. You can’t wait until tomorrow. And you don’t worry about the decisions you’ve made. If you made a good one, fine. If it was a bad one, it happened yesterday. You move on.”

Smith actively farmed his land until three years ago when an accident forced him to hand over the day to day operations. He hired a retired veteran to do the job. McCausland still plans and makes the big decisions about the farm. His employee carries out the job.

“I like farming because every day is different. You don’t know when you go to work what you’re going to do. You have an idea but you may have to switch and do what you have to do,” said McCausland. “That’s what makes it interesting, being able to adjust. If you don’t adjust, you don’t belong on a farm!”

McCausland isn’t sure about the future of his farm. He hopes one of his grandchildren will take an interest and carry on the family tradition, just like he and his father before him.
**Lightening it up in the New Year**

Happy New Year! It’s that time of year when many of us are thinking about healthy eating and getting a fresh start. We hope the recipes below, taken from Millie Snyder’s Lean and Luscious cookbook (3rd edition) will give you some great inspiration for healthy meals in 2016. There are more than 375 recipes in the cookbook that use readily available and affordable ingredients. Snyder is the area director for Weight Watchers and resides in Charleston, WV. This cookbook is available at amazon.com, and at the WV Marketplace at Capitol Market among other locations! Enjoy!

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**Italian Veggie Bake**

1 cup zucchini, unpeeled, cut into 1-inch cubes  
1 cup mushrooms, quartered  
1 cup broccoli, cut into florets  
½ cup yellow squash, unpeeled, cut into 1-inch cubes  
½ cup cauliflower, cut in florets  
½ cup chopped onion  
½ medium green bell pepper, sliced  
1 one-pound can salt-free (or regular) tomatoes, chopped, undrained  
1 teaspoon dried basil  
½ teaspoon dried oregano  
½ teaspoon garlic powder  
½ teaspoon pepper  
Salt to taste  
6 ounces shredded part-skim Mozzarella cheese (1½ cups)  
2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 375°F. Spray a 7x11-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray. Combine vegetables and spices in a large bowl and mix well. Spoon into prepared pan. Cover tightly and bake, uncovered, 10 minutes, or until cheese is melted and begins to brown.

Per serving: Calories, 125; Total Fat, 5g; Cholesterol, 10mg; Sodium, 38mg; Total Carbohydrates, 20g; Dietary Fiber 3.6g; Protein, 11g

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**Cranberry-Stuffed Chicken Breasts**

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
1 cup cranberries  
3 tablespoons sugar  
1 teaspoon grated fresh orange peel  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
4 slices whole wheat bread, cut into small cubes and toasted in a 350°F oven until dry  
2 tablespoons raisins  
2 tablespoons water  
Paprika  
Dried parsley flakes

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 10-inch pie pan with nonstick cooking spray. Place each chicken breast between 2 pieces of wax paper and flatten with a mallet until chicken is ¼-inch thick.

Combine cranberries, sugar, orange peel, salt and cinnamon in a blender or food processor. Process until cranberries are chopped. Spoon mixture into a bowl and add bread cubes, raisins and water, mixing well. Add a little more water if necessary to moisten stuffing.

Divide stuffing mixture evenly onto the center of each chicken breast. Pull corners together and fold up edges to enclose the stuffing. Turn the chicken over and place, smooth side up, in prepared pan. Sprinkle liberally with paprika and parsley flakes. Cover pan tightly with aluminum foil and bake 40 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: Calories, 262; Total Fat, 2.7g; Cholesterol, 65mg; Sodium, 341mg; Total Carbohydrates, 20.3g; Dietary Fiber 3.6g; Protein, 29.2g

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**Rosemary Turkey Cutlets**

1 pound turkey breast cutlets  
1 cup mushrooms  
¼ cup plain nonfat Greek yougurt  
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
¼ cup dry white wine  
teaspoons Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crumbled  
¼ teaspoon garlic powder  
Pepper to taste


Per serving: Calories, 166; Total Fat, 2g; Cholesterol, 69mg; Sodium, 167mg; Total Carbohydrates, 7.1g; Dietary Fiber 0.4g; Protein, 29.9g

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**Chocolate Ricotta Spread**

This spread makes a great appetizer when served with thin apple or pear slices. It can also be served as a light, refreshing dessert. Makes 4 servings (2 tablespoons each serving)

½ cup part-skim ricotta cheese  
1 tablespoon sugar  
2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa  
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract  
¼ teaspoon rum or almond extract

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl. Mix well. Serve right away or chill for later serving.

Per serving: Calories, 59; Total Fat, 2.5g; Cholesterol, 10mg; Sodium, 38mg; Total Carbohydrates, 5.3g; Dietary Fiber 0.3g; Protein, 3.7g

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**Asparagus Cheese Tart**

This elegant no-crust quiche-like pie serves 8 as a side dish or 6 as a light entree.

1 10-ounce package frozen asparagus spears  
½ cups low-fat (1%) cottage cheese  
½ cup nonfat dry milk  
⅛ cup water  
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons reduced-calorie margarine  
¼ cup liquid egg substitute  
2 teaspoons minced onion flakes  
1 packet low-sodium instant chicken or vegetable-flavored broth mix  
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese


Per serving: Calories, 241; Total Fat, 4.3g; Cholesterol, 6mg; Sodium, 443mg; Total Carbohydrates, 26.5g; Dietary Fiber 6.9g; Protein, 24.4g
Conservation Districts continues to build upon the long-standing partnership the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) recently provided $70,000 in federal funding to the Wood County FFA. They used this funding to construct a new barn at Parkersburg South High School.

There’s a barn raising in progress at Parkersburg South High School. The Wood County FFA put up the money. The Building Construction class at the school handled the construction. “This will be a working barn once it’s complete,” stressed Kari Brown, the Wood County Technical Center Agricultural Sciences Instructor.

Work started last spring when the two classes teamed up to tear down an old greenhouse behind the high school. The concrete pad was left in place and a much smaller greenhouse was built on the back end. When school began in August, Building Sciences Instructor Mike Kimble and four seniors measured, hammered, and sided the barn from the bottom up on the front end of the existing concrete pad. “It’s a collaborative project,” explained Kimble. “We get input from the ag science students. If we need an extra hand, they come out and help.”

By Christmas break, phase one of the project was complete. The 26 x 40 barn was ready to be put into use come second semester. It couldn’t come at a better time. With a growing FFA membership in Wood County, the barn will be used for multiple purposes. “Now we’ll have holding pens for our animals. When we do castration, we’ll have a space for that and an area for tractor restoration,” says PSHS senior and FFA member Emmalee Alatorre, who’s helped work on the barn.

The Market Bulletin

NRCS provides $70K toward community garden projects, partners with local Conservation Districts

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently provided $70,000 in federal funding to the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts to develop community garden projects. The agreement continues to build upon the long-standing partnership between NRCS and the West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts.

“NRCS provides $70K toward community garden projects, partners with local Conservation Districts. The intent of the agreement is to provide conservation education opportunities to local schools through the establishment of community gardens,” said Louis Aspey, State Conservationist. “Conservation education is a collective effort. This funding allows the NRCS to support our valued partners and give communities an opportunity for new growth through educating students on agriculture production.”

As part of the agreement, each of the 14 local Conservation Districts will have up to $5,000 for supplies, outreach, education and other miscellaneous expenses. The goal is to educate students and create a community garden within the district. The local Conservation Districts can work with one or more schools to build one or more community gardens.

The idea to contribute in the form of community gardens came from a dinner hosted in Tucker County as part of the Northeast National Association of Conservation Districts meeting. The students raised all the food that was served as part of a banquet dinner to attendees. For Aspey, the meal triggered an idea to bring a similar experience to other locations in West Virginia. “The students worked hard through various agriculture programs and organizations to make the dinner possible,” Aspey said. “It was a creative way to educate students on agriculture production and something I hoped could be given to more students. With our partners, NRCS can be proactive in showing the links between agriculture and conservation.”

One option for a community garden is a high tunnel system, an NRCS conservation practice used as a season “extender” allowing farmers to grow crops a little bit earlier or later than the season will permit. In high tunnels, plants are grown directly in the ground, and the temperature is regulated by opening or closing the plastic curtain sides and doors on the ends. High tunnel systems have proven to extend the growing season up to six months thereby providing fresh farm-to-table produce to the school for a longer period of time.

“The idea is that this is a great opportunity for us to receive financial support for our conservation education efforts,” James Moore, WVACD Director said. “We appreciate NRCS funding to assist our local Conservation Districts in contributing even more to those most eager to learn. I’m looking forward to seeing the results of their efforts and know it will be a great success.”

Aspey officially announced the agreement at the quarterly WVACD meeting in October 2015. The success of the agreement will determine the direction of future projects with the WVACD and other partners.
Arapyis

Annual Beef and Dairy Cattle Sale

March 23

Arapahoe Mts.:

Pony Sale

March 25

For more information, contact Jayme Zirkle at jzirkle@wdvsu.edu or 304-444-7361. For information on a Premise ID Number (PIN) contact Shelly Lantzi at 304-558-2224.

The Market Bulletin
**Poultry Wants**

White Holland pullet hens or pul. Rodney Riddle, 3 Bragg Run Rd., Cowen, 26206; 226-5009.

**Sheep Sales**

Hamp, 11-mo. ram, proven breeder, halter broke, club lamb blood, $400. Justin McClain, 2835 Dry Fork Rd., Salem, 26426; 782-3987.

Pure Suffolk ram, proven breeder, $250. James Williams, P.O. Box 1, Clear Creek, 25508; 226-5009.

**Miscellaneous Sales**

No riding habits or other clothes; appliances or equipment; general wood working tools; firewood. Only dogs recognized by the AKC as herding or working can be accepted.

Saddle, Simco willow memory foam seat, excel, $365.00. Glen Adkins, 48 Wheatley Branch Rd., Chapmanville, 25508; 855-5270.

Eggs, $2.45. Janingham46@yahoo.com.


**LOCAL FOODS DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE**

Jan. 26, Speak to your Legislators 7:30 a.m.-11:30 p.m. State Capitol, Charleston, WV. Cost: $20 if pre-registered by Jan. 13 or $25 at the door. Keynote Speaker: Speaker Stephen Repasky Contact MOVBA, 372-1883.
USDA Announces Funding Available for Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Programs

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced the availability of $17.6 million in funding to support research and outreach activities that will help growers, producers, and processors find innovative ways to improve organic agriculture. The grants are being funded through the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), a program that is administered by USDA’s National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill.

“Over the past six years, USDA has strengthened programs that support organic producers as they grow, thrive and respond to increasing consumer demand for organic products,” said Secretary Vilsack. “The projects funded through the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative will help identify innovative solutions to critical challenges facing organic agriculture, ultimately strengthening local markets, improving rural economies and expanding access to healthy food for Americans.”

OREI has eight legislatively-defined goals:
• Facilitating the development and improvement of organic agriculture production, breeding, and processing methods
• Evaluating the potential economic benefits of organic agricultural production and methods to producers, processors and rural communities
• Exploring international trade opportunities for organically grown and processed agricultural commodities
• Determining desirable traits for organic commodities
• Identifying marketing and policy constraints on the expansion of organic agriculture.
• Conducting advanced on-farm research and development that emphasizes observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for working organic farms, including research relating to production, marketing, food safety, socioeconomic conditions, and farm business management
• Examining optimal conservation and environmental outcomes relating to organically produced agricultural products
• Developing new and improved seed varieties that are particularly suited for organic agriculture

Applications are due March 10, 2016. Please see the request for applications for specific program requirements.

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2016 WV Equine Events Calendar

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture publishes a statewide Equine Events Calendar during the show season. To list your club or organization’s event(s), please fill out the listing form and return it by February 10, 2016. Any entries received after the deadline will not appear in the Equine Events Calendar. This deadline will ensure calendar availability by April 1.

Only one event listing per form. If additional forms are necessary, please duplicate. Fill listing form out completely (we must have a complete and accurate address and telephone number). Only the name of the contact person and phone number will be published. All event listings must be held in WV, unless the event is sponsored by a WV Equine Organization. (PLEASE PRINT)

Date: __________________________ Time: __________________________

Event: __________________________
Sponsor: __________________________

Place/Location: __________________________

Contact Name: __________________________

Address: __________________________

Telephone: __________________________ Email: __________________________

Note: If your event date or location changes please notify us at 304.558.2210 at least 60 days in advance, so the correct information will appear in the appropriate issue of the Market Bulletin.

Return by February 10, 2016 to:
West Virginia Dep. of Agriculture, Tracy Fitzsimmons, Livestock Marketing Specialist
Marketing & Development Division, 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East, Charleston, WV 25305-0178
www.agriculture.wv.gov/divisions/marketinganddevelopment/Documents/Equine_Form_Fields_Save.pdf
304.558.2210; Fax: 304.558.2270; tfitzsimmons@wvda.us

USDA Begins 49th Enrollment Period for the Conservation Reserve Program

The next general enrollment period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began Dec. 1, 2015, and ends on Feb. 26, 2016. December 2015 also marks the 30th anniversary of CRP, a federally funded program that allows agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

As of September 2015, 24.2 million acres were enrolled in CRP. CRP also is protecting more than 170,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world 7 times. For an interactive tour of CRP success stories from across the U.S., visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRPs30, or follow on Twitter at #CRPs30.

Participants in CRP establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. At times when commodity prices are low, enrolling sensitive lands in CRP can be especially attractive to farmers and ranchers, as it softens the economic hardship for landowners at the same time that it provides ecological benefits.

Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish native plant species on marginal agricultural lands for the primary purpose of preventing soil erosion and improving water quality and related benefits of reducing loss of wildlife habitat.

Contracts on 1.64 million acres of CRP are set to expire on Sept. 30, 2016. Producers with expiring contracts or producers with environmentally sensitive land are encouraged to evaluate their options under CRP.

Since it was established on Dec. 23, 1985, CRP has:

• Prevented more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks;
• Reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively;
• Sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road.

Since 1996, CRP has created nearly 2.7 million acres of restored wetlands. For more information on CRP, conservation programs, visit a local FSA office or www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

To find your local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.