

# NEWSLETTER

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## RI FOOD BANK NEEDS MORE FARMERS TO HELP

Rhode Island Farmers donated over 370,000 lbs of food to the RI Community Food Bank in 2013 up from 245,379 lbs in 2012.

In 2013 the RI Community Food Bank distributed nearly 10 million pounds of food including 2 million pounds of fresh produce. The Food Bank services 178 member agencies at 223 sites which served 68,000 people. The budget for the Food Bank was \$16.6 million in 2013 including \$9.4 million in donated food. Management and fundraising costs represent 11% of the budget. They are funded primarily by gifts from individuals, corporate donations and foundation grants with only 7% of their funds coming from the government.

Food sources for the Food Bank are as follows: Purchased at wholesale prices, 35%, donated by local food companies, 33%, Feeding America, the national network of food banks, 15%, food drives 8% and USDA 9%.

The breakdown of who the Food Bank serves is as follows: 33% are un-

der age 18, 6% are over 65, 32% of households have one or more employed adults, 43% report they have to choose between food or utilities (including heat). 41% report have to choose between paying for food or rent (or the mortgage).

The Food Bank would like to receive more food from farmers. They don't want to cut into your profits. Their motto is "If it is edible but non-saleable, donate it to us." In some cases if they need the type of produce you have they will pay a small fee for you to pack it and ship it to them. In some instances they may provide "gleaners" to you to pick the food and pack it or they will pick the food up at your farm.

Their phone number is 942-6325 and their website is: [www.rifoodbank.org](http://www.rifoodbank.org). Ask for Bruce Zarembka.



## SPINELLA ON THE GO

Lyn Spinella, chairperson of the RIFB Women's Committee, has been appointed by American Farm Bureau president, Bob Stallman, to the Grass-roots Outreach (GO) Team.

Congressional staff people will tell you that the best communications with

members of Congress is direct contact from constituents. GO Team members are asked to build and maintain, strong, positive relationships with their congressional delegation.

(see page 5 for more details)

# Crop Insurance

“Of all the insurances that I purchase, crop insurance is a good buy. Planting a crop means sticking a lot of money in the ground. But crop insurance takes all the worry out of growing and protects my investment.

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Bill #	Sponsor	Explanation	Committee	Status	RIFB Pos
7042	Canario	Label GMO Foods	HEW	Hearing 1/29/2014	Con
7093 2226	Hull...Handy Walaska	Label GMO Foods	HEW	Hearing 1/29/2014, 2/27	Con
2110	Hodgson	Farmer Brewery	Spec Legis Vet Affairs	Hearing 2/13/2014	Pro
7120 2137	Valencia Sosnowski	Reorganize DEM	Finance	Introduced	Pro
2112	Sosnowski	Allow sale of RI wine at Farmer's Markets. Also allows breweries	Spec Legis Vet Affairs	Hearing 2/13/2014	Pro
7043	Walsh	Recycle food	Environment	Introduced	Pro?
2016	Walaska	Regulate outdoor boilers	Environment	Introduced	???
2021	Kettle	Abolish Franchise Tax	Finance	Introduced	Pro
2065	Bates	Change threshold to exemption	Finance	Introduced	Pro
2069	Walaska	Franchise fee to \$250	Finance	Introduced	Pro
2073 2074 7064	Walaska O'Neil Craven	Increase exemption to \$2 million	Finance	Introduced	Pro
7034	Walsh	Credit on Fran tax < \$500	Finance	Introduced	Pro
7084	Ucci	Change Fran to \$50	Finance	Introduced	Pro
7140	Ruggerio	Increase exemption to \$1.5million	Finance	Introduced	Pro
7344 2266	Walsh Sosnowski	Farmers can shoot deer without a permit	Environment & Ag	Introduced	Pro Our Bill
	DiPlama Carnevale	Wind Turbines on farms		Being drafted	Pro Our Bill
	???	Stealing from farm a felony		Attorney General is drafting	Pro Our Bill
2224	Kettle	Raw milk	Health	Introduced	Con?
2186 7388	DiPalma Edwards	Composting	Environment & Ag Municipal	Introduced	???
2193 7234	Miller Naughton	Allow Ancillary Activities to be protected by Right to Farm.	Finance Environment & Ag	Introduced	Pro
7133	Melo	Budget	Finance	Introduced	???
2139	Walaska	Battery Cages	Environment	Introduced	Con

## NUMBER OF FARMS IN RI INCREASES AGAIN

According to a preliminary report of the Agricultural Census the number of farms in RI has increased by 2 %. There are now 1,243 farms in RI according to the 2012 Census up from 1,219. in 2007. We now have 69,689 acres being farmed compared to 67,819 acres in 2007. But income on farms is down 9 %. The primary agricultural industry in RI is nursery. The nursery industry has been depressed because of the lack of construction projects.

## FREE MEMBERSHIP BARN SIGNS AND LICENSE PLATES

Farmer Members of RI Farm Bureau may obtain "Farm Bureau Member" barn signs and license plates free of charge. Associate Members can get membership barn signs free of charge. Call the RI Farm Bureau office.



## FSA UPDATE— WOMEN IN AG CONF

The Rhode Island County Office staff is currently working on our third Women in Ag conference scheduled for March 11th in the CBLS building at URI. This conference will discuss Food Safety, Marketing, Beginning Farmer and more. If you are interested in attending please register at <https://www.regonline.com/riwomeninagconference>.

County Committee Elections  
County committee elections are over, the ballots are counted and the results are in...

- ☐ Joseph Silveira was elected to represent LAA # 5 Bristol County
- ☐ Gilbert Rathbun Jr was elected to represent LAA # 2 Kent County
- ☐ Victor Hoogendoorn was elected to represent LAA # 4 Newport County

No alternates were elected in this years County Committee Election.

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues.

County committee members are a valuable asset because they are comprised of local producers who participate in FSA programs themselves and have a direct connection to farmers and ranchers in the community. All recently elected county committee members and alternates will take office on February 18, 2014, and join the existing committee.

For more information about county committees and the election process, please contact your local FSA Office or visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

### Specialty Crop Grants

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management /Division of Agriculture announces the availability Viability grant funds for the purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops grown in Rhode Island.

Total available grant funds for this program are approximately \$150,000, individual grant awards of less than \$10,000 are not eligible and requests may not exceed \$50,000. Specialty crops are basically plants. Deadline is March 31.

### Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) Grants Program

This new grants program is made possible by \$100,000 in state funding that Governor Chafee and the General Assembly included in the DEM budget, and an additional \$110,000 in matching funds from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation. The goal of the program is to support the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island. Deadline is April 1.

## 2014 PULSE OF AGRICULTURE SURVEY: WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Northeast farmers, fisherman and forest product producers encouraged to share your input!

Farm Credit East is conducting a brief survey to learn more about Northeast producers' 2013 results and expectations for the year ahead. Anyone engaged in the business of agriculture, commercial fishing or forest products within the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York or Rhode Island is invited to participate. Survey participants will be entered into a drawing to win one of four \$250 Visa gift cards.

The survey will take no more than 15 minutes to complete and the re-

sponses are mostly multiple choice – no long essay answers required. Responses will be kept confidential and be used only for statistical purposes. At the completion of the survey, statistical results will be compiled and made available on FarmCreditEast.com.

To be entered into the drawing for a chance to win a \$250 Visa gift, Northeast farmers, fisherman and forest product producers must participate by February 15, 2014. To provide your input to this survey, [click here](#).

For more information:  
Contact: Robert A. Smith  
Telephone: 518.296.8188  
Email: [Robert.Smith@FarmCreditEast.com](mailto:Robert.Smith@FarmCreditEast.com)

## RI FARM BUREAU MOVING

RI Farm Bureau is moving its office to West Greenwich. We hope to be in the office by the middle to the end of March. The new address is

16-B Nooseneck Hill Rd  
West Greenwich, RI  
02817

Nooseneck Hill Rd is  
Route 3.

This office may be temporary as we are still planning on building an office building on our land between route 2 and route 4.

## GO TEAM DETAILS

GO Team members (see page one) will receive information and updates targeted for them from AFBF. As members of an elite team they will be kept ahead of the curve on issues, news and resources available to make them successful advocates for agriculture. AFBF will create opportunities for members to engage in advocacy through one-on-one media interviews and meetings with

policymakers, larger group activities such as social media campaigns, and other endeavors. Through their advocacy work, GO Team members will build a personal record of Farm Bureau leadership. GO Team members will respond to Action Alert requests, which may consist of writing an email or calling a legislator or participating in social media or the news media.

## YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS

RI YFR has been busy through these cold winter months! Valerie Wright competed through the first two rounds of the National Discussion Meet competition as the first RI competitor in nearly 20 years. We also sent a delegation consisting of the state chairperson, Bryan Salisbury and two YFR committee members (Bethany Wright / Phil Pucino) to the Annual Young Farmer & Rancher Leadership Conference which was held in Virginia Beach, Virginia. At the conference we attended breakout sessions designed to assist with social media marketing efforts, provide an introduction to policy drafting, recruiting concepts; and, built relationships with other YFR programs across the country in order to help grow ours here at home.

Anyone interested in joining the program should contact Bryan Salisbury through the RIFB website, or find our Facebook page by searching "Rhode Island Young Farmers and Ranchers".



# Benefits Benefits Benefits



We continue to be baffled at how little the benefits we provide to members are used. You can easily save the cost of your dues by taking advantage of our discount programs.

For instance go to [www.rifarmbureau.foryourpeople.com](http://www.rifarmbureau.foryourpeople.com) and you can save money and get cash back from making purchases at hundreds of companies like: Macy's, J C Penny, Walmart, Crate & Barrel, Home Depot, Target and the list goes on and on.

Go to our web site and click on the Access link. This will bring you to a web site where you can save \$\$ at over 300,000 companies nationwide like Disney World or major Cruise Lines.

You can save thousands on your taxes by using Agri-Plan Now.

Get a \$500 Discount on GM vehicles.

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*And start saving!!*



# Proud To Be In Your Company

Our relationship with the Rhode Island Farm Bureau has evolved since 1954, when a farsighted group of farmers decided to form an insurance company by farmers, for farmers. Our leaders continue to work together to address the needs of farmers in the state. Locally, our agents support Farm Bureau members, learning the issues in their farming communities first-hand.

**Thank you for making Farm Family your insurer of choice.** Together, we will work to protect your farms, business, family and homes. For more information, visit our website at [www.farmfamily.com](http://www.farmfamily.com) or contact your local Farm Family office today!

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## WOMEN'S COMMITTEE NEWS

The newly formed Rhode Island Women's Leadership Committee had an exciting first year! Lyn Spinella, Chair of the Women's Leadership Committee, attended the AFB Women's Committee "Boot Camp" in Washington, DC in July of 2013. This intensive four-day annual seminar provides the skills necessary to be confident when speaking in public or engaging in radio and television interviews. Applications are accepted from all fifty states and only fifteen women are selected to attend this workshop. The experience was unrivaled and Lyn came back to Rhode Island energized and poised to see our mission accomplished. We are hopeful that other members of the WLC will be selected to attend Boot Camp.

The prime directive of this group is to get the message of Farm Bureau into the forefront and educate our citizens, young and old, on the importance of preserving farms and farming for our future and our children's futures. In our effort to accomplish this goal, we asked Rhode Islanders, "How Has Agriculture Touched Your Life Today?" Those in South County may have seen this question on a banner along Route 4 during the commute into Providence. This question got people thinking about just how vital farming is to our very existence. Farming is so much more than the food we eat. Cotton growers and livestock producers are responsible for the clothing we wear, tree farms provide the lumber for the houses we live in and the wood pulp for the books we read. You can find farming just about everywhere in our lives. The list is almost endless! The WLC is striving to bring awareness to the fact that agriculture touches every man, woman and child in the world! If tomorrow all the farms disappeared, would we be able to survive?

The WLC began its campaign to ensure the continued existence of farming in Rhode Island by commemorating Rhode Island Farm Bureau's 60th Anniversary as the Voice of Agriculture in Rhode Island. Our Annual Meeting, held at the West Valley Inn in Warwick, Rhode Island on November 21, was attended by the largest number of farmers ever! The Women's Leadership Committee canvassed many Rhode Island businesses that were most generous in donating gift certificates and other valuable items for inclusion in our raffle to benefit the Rhode Island Land Trust. However, the highlight of the evening was a visit from Bob Stallman, the President of the American Farm Bureau. President Stallman addressed the group, congratulated Rhode Island on 60 successful years, and brought the audience up to date on the work being done on the national level to help keep farming alive and thriving in our country.

The WLC goals for 2014 include a visit to Kentucky Farm Bureau to observe their very successful annual farm equipment auction. We are hoping this fund raising effort can be duplicated in Rhode Island. If so, New England farmers would be able to either find a market for their unwanted equipment or be able to pick up used equipment for their businesses. The RI WLC is also investigating a potential alliance with the Rhode Island Food Bank to benefit charities such as the Ronald McDonald House and our state's veterans. Another project under consideration is the AFB Ag in the Classroom incentive where we bring farming education to the elementary school classroom with hands-on experiences.

Lyn Spinella, Chair and Brenda Frederickson, Co-Chair of the WLC will be attending the WLC State Chair Committee Meeting in Washington, DC in March during which time they will be meeting with our Washington legislative contingent to discuss farming issues of concern to Rhode Island farmers as well as networking with other WLC chairs to share ideas and programs. RI WLC welcomes any farming women to join our committee or bring any ideas on promoting agriculture in Rhode Island.