

# Rhode Island Farm Bureau Newsletter



## Washington County Fair 2018

The 51st Annual Washington County Fair was more humid than any of us could recall, and it kept attendance numbers down at first, but we were excited to debut our RI Ag in the Classroom booth featuring the My American Farm Dairy Display. This eye-catching display on loan from the American Farm Bureau got a lot of attention and allowed us to engage many fairgoers in conversations about agriculture, dairy farming, and how drinking whole milk helps the dairy industry. Before you say “**No! Whole milk?!**”, consider the fact that whole milk is 97% fat-free! Whole milk can be part of a balanced diet, tastes better and more whole milk sales help our dairy farmers sell more milk. Ask us how!

A number of educators took our Ag Mags and were directed to the new [www.rifb.org](http://www.rifb.org) website where they can connect with National Ag in the Classroom to find lesson plans and learning kits for teaching children of all ages about agriculture. We even managed to sneak in a few story hours with young fairgoers, reading some adorable accurate ag books.



The RIFB membership booth also engaged with a number of fairgoers, both longtime members and people interested in finding out more about us. If you are a RI Farm Bureau member, be sure to tell your friends about us. We welcome not only full-time farmers, but part-time and backyard farmers as members. Our Friend of Farmer membership is the perfect way for non-farmers to help us support RI farms and keep agriculture



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### Summer Markets

There are over 40 Summer Farmers Markets in Rhode Island!

Visit <https://www.farmfreshri.org/programs/farmers-markets/> and input your ZIP code for the markets nearest you.

OR

Visit <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/documents/rimarkets.pdf> for a printable list .

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## RIFB Attends Annual Convention in Nashville

Back when these hot days were not on our minds, 23 representatives of RIFB went to Nashville, TN to attend the 99th AFBF Annual Convention. Blizzard warnings changed travel plans for many, and the indoor gardens of the Gaylord Opryland Hotel were a welcome site when they arrived. On Saturday, Regional Women's caucuses were held, providing attendees from each of the four regions with activity updates for their neighboring states, and voting in the new WLC Regional Chairs. At the same time, the national YF&R Discussion Meet began, with the top 16 YF&R teams competing to see who would take the top prize of a new Ford pickup. Discussion Meet is evaluated on an exchange of ideas and information on a pre-determined topic. Participants build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems. Many attendees took advantage of Saturday's Tennessee Ag Tours which consisted of bus tours to locations such as The Hermitage, Thor Sport Walking Horse Farm, Jack Daniel's Distillery, Belle Meade Plantation and the Tennessee Farmers Co-op. These TN tours offered farmers the opportunity to view today's agriculture alongside historical agricultural locations. Saturday evening the RI delegation enjoyed the Opry at the Ryman show, with a stellar combination of both new and classic acts, including John Schneider, "Whispering" Bill Anderson and Connie Smith. Sunday attendees began the day with a sunrise service, and then Flapjacks with the Foundation where The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture announced its Book of the Year, John Deere, That's Who. At the noon Leadership Luncheon, members were treated to motivational speakers before attending Opening Session where AFBF President Zippy Duvall addressed the crowd.. Workshops on a variety of tracks including Membership Engagement, Business and Rural Development, Leadership, Consumer Engagement, Public Policy & Advocacy and Niche Agriculture & Marketing Opportunities were available to members over the course of the afternoon Sunday and into Monday.

On Monday of convention, Zippy Duvall and Keynote Speaker Reba McEntire sat down on the stage for a conversation at General Closing Session, followed by an address by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue. The highlight of the convention for many was the visit by President Donald J. Trump on Sunday. President Trump addressed a crowd of over 4,400 who waited for hours to pass through heavy security to watch the President first-hand. Monday ended with many FB members attending the Foundation Night Out at Opryland. Wynona Judd was the headliner at this wonderful, private show.



President Wright carries the RI flag across the Stage at Opening Session for the 2018 AFBF Convention.

The takeaway from the 2018 convention for everyone was a greater understanding of AFBF; who we are & what we do. Meeting other Farm Bureau members from all over the USA is an amazing thing. Our similarities are greater than our differences, and finding shared connections whether by workshops, tours, events or personal conversations is another way to make our world a bit smaller. Attending events such as AFBF National Convention leave us with something other than what we think we are going for. A deeper understanding of farming and AFBF was the takeaway for our RI delegation. In January, the 2019 AFBF convention will be held in New Orleans, LA where the 100th anniversary of AFBF will be celebrated.



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## RIFB Hires New Office Administrator

On May 21, Rebecca Whitford of Greene was hired as our new Office Administrator. Rebecca grew up showing dairy cattle raised on her family's farm in Exeter. She was previously employed by Centreville Bank. Rebecca enjoys gardening and promoting local agriculture. Rebecca replaces Doreen Pagliarini, our former Administrative Assistant. We look forward to having Rebecca welcoming people to our office for a long time.

After 13 years with RI Farm Bureau, Doreen Pagliarini retired on May 30, after spending a long day at the State House supporting RI farms at our RIFB table. Doreen's enthusiasm and smiling face were the perfect addition to any event RIFB attended or hosted, and she will be missed. It is our hope that Doreen will once again put on her delicious cooking demonstration at our Annual Meeting, and we hope to have her present at other RIFB events as well. We wish her well with her new ventures.



**Women's Fly-In**— In March, Women's Leadership Chair Brenda Frederickson and Exec. Director Heidi Quinn joined over 50 other Farm Bureau women from 17 states in Washington, D.C. Attendees received advocacy training and issue briefings to share their story with congressional leaders and staff on Capitol Hill. Federal offices were shut down on the day of the meeting due to a predicted blizzard, but the heavy snow didn't stop Senator Jack Reed from keeping his meeting with them both. The women discussed the difficulties plaguing dairy farmers in RI and across the Northeast, and what opportunities there are to increase consumption of milk and to support legislation to improve pricing for dairy farmers. They also met with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse's staffer, where they discussed nutrition, specifically the role of 2% and whole milk in school lunches.

(right: RIFB Exec. Director, Heidi Quinn; RIFB WLC Chair, Brenda Frederickson; AFBF WLC Chair, Sherry Saylor; CTFB WLC Chair, Debi Tanner; CTFB WLC members Rebecca Desjardins and Courtney Lawrence.)



**Henry Silver Eagle Rifle Raffle Tickets are available at the RIFB Office!** Just \$5 per ticket, all proceeds go to our Scholarship Program. Winner will be drawn at the Annual Meeting on November 15 at the Quonset O' Club.  
**Stop by the office for tickets or call 401-385-3339 for more information**

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 2018 RI Legislative Session ended on June 23. A full list of legislative bills of interest to RI Farm Bureau can be found under the Legislative Tab on our website: [www.rifb.org](http://www.rifb.org).

The biggest item to note: after 7 years of being able to hold off passage of the “Chicken Bill”, it finally passed both the House and Senate and went into effect. The increase in cage size to 1.5 sq. feet per bird goes into effect on July 1, 2026, and while this law does not expressly ban cages, it makes the spatial requirements so large that cages are now impractical.

In addition, H8141, The RI Forest Conservation Act was stopped. It would prohibit any state economic and other incentives to develop or convert forest land for renewable energy uses. This would ban the cutting of any trees that were part of a contiguous forest, not only that of the land owner. As RI is nearly 60% forested, this could easily affect many potential renewable energy systems, even those with small properties.

H8090, the shooting preserves bill, was also stopped for now. The reason behind this bill is to facilitate importation of wild boar and elk to Rhode Island for the purposes of sport hunting. Feral swine are one of the United States' most destructive and ravenous invasive creatures, and are being eradicated in numerous states. Elk bring the risk of chronic wasting disease, something that is currently not in RI.

## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

Don't forget your membership benefits! You can easily save the cost of your dues by taking advantage of these discounts. Go to [www.rifb.org](http://www.rifb.org) for more info on:

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### Did you know that you need a conservation plan?



The RI Conservation Districts are working with NRCS, under a special program, to write Farm Conservation Plans for the Farm Forest and Open Space (FFOS) Program of Rhode Island.

A conservation plan is a tool designed to help you better manage the natural resources on your farm and in turn may help save you money.

If you are in the farm program or are thinking about applying, this is a great opportunity for you!

Funding has been secured for a limited # of plans.

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For more information, contact your local Conservation District:

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Serving Bristol and Newport Counties  
(401) 934-0840



## The Zipline : A Message from AFBF President Zippy Duvall



In our Farm Bureau family, when one member is hurting, it touches all of us and we band together to lift each other back up. That's what families do. Right now, some members of our family are facing a time when their very livelihoods are under attack. I'm sad to say that's the situation facing hog farmers in North Carolina, where money-hungry big-trial lawyers have swooped in pitting neighbor against neighbor with overblown lawsuits. It's times like these that call for us to speak up for our neighbors and rally together as the nearly 6-million strong family that we are. If we don't stand together, these trial lawyers will be coming for the rest of American agriculture soon.

For these big-trial lawyers, lawsuit abuse is their bread and butter. Their charge this time: that hog farming as a business is a nuisance to the very communities the industry supports. On top of that, judges have allowed these lawyers to roll right over the state's strong Right-to-Farm law and shutout jurors with any farm background or understanding of ag. If these lawyers cash their next big paycheck at the expense of North Carolina hog farmers, there's nothing standing in the way of them crossing state lines to head straight for each of our farms next.

This all started in 2014, when 26 lawsuits were filed on behalf of 541 plaintiffs who claimed that hog farms in their areas were creating a "nuisance" to neighbors' quality of life with farm odor and truck noise. At the end of 2017, a North Carolina judge ruled that the state's Right-to-Farm law was no defense against these "nuisance" claims. The first set of trials has wrapped up, and all three juries have returned massive multi-million-dollar verdicts for the plaintiffs. These jurors, by the way, live nowhere near the farms under trial, and the judge refused to let them visit. Although these cases have been brought against Murphy-Brown, a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods, it's the individual farmers who are being driven out of business now.

Is it true that life in farm country comes with its own set of sights and smells? Of course, it does, but so does city-living. I can give you a whole list of the nuisances I face in Washington, D.C. Between the buses and the sirens and the traffic, it's a wonder that anyone gets any sleep in this city. Give me fresh, country air and open spaces any day. Of course, I don't have to sell you all on the benefits of farm life! Most of you choose to live right there on your farms because you know there's no better place to raise a family.

Farmers care deeply about our neighbors, and the folks we have had the privilege to share our property lines with for years, even decades. In fact, I wish more folks had the opportunity to live close to a farm because it's a shame that our country is losing sight of what it takes to produce the fresh, wholesome food we all enjoy. I'm proud of how far we have come in making our farms and ranches sustainable. As farmers, we don't settle for good enough: We're always looking to do better. Consumers need to understand what's at risk with these kind of lawsuits, and they need to know that an attack on agriculture hurts all Americans. If we as a country are going to stand for treating agriculture as a "nuisance," we can say goodbye to locally grown food. We'll be handing over our food security to become dependent on other nations for our food—nations with different standards of safety by the way.

We cannot and will not stand for what big-trial lawyers are looking to get away with in North Carolina. There's a verse in Ecclesiastes that says, "though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken." As a Farm Bureau family, we will stand together, and we will come through this stronger. It's time for us to face this real threat head on. Let's raise the alarm on this issue so our communities know what is at stake, and let's work with our state and national lawmakers to ensure our right to farm is protected. Let's show these big-trial lawyers they can't line their pockets at the expense of our strong rural communities.

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Your current Rhode Island Farm Bureau membership entitles you to the following Farm Family insurance discounts:

- 5% discount for personal auto
- 3% discount for the SFP, including Country Estate Insurance
- 3% BOP discount up to \$100. (Certain classes not eligible for the discount, ask your agent.)

Contact your Farm Family agent to make sure you are getting the best discount.

**Not a Farm Family Insurance customer?** To find out more about Farm Family Insurance, click the following link to find an agent near you.

[www.americannational.com](http://www.americannational.com)

## Produce Safety Rule (PSR) Portion of Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA):

### Produce Safety On-Farm Readiness Reviews to assist growers:

The RI Division of Agriculture joins 46 other states in beginning their On-Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRR) to help producers prepare for the Produce Safety Rule (PSR) portion of the Federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). FSMA was signed into law in 2011, and went into effect January 26, 2018. A one-year grace period was granted by FDA for compliance inspections; with inspections on large farms starting Spring 2019 and smaller farms in subsequent years.

Before RI begins their compliance inspections, they are offering producers several opportunities to ensure they are prepared. The OFRRs are a component of a concerted educational and awareness effort by the Division of Agriculture that builds upon the principles of the long standing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Program in RI.

**Is your farm exempt?** This is a **no-cost** opportunity to determine if your farm qualifies for an exemption. The Division of Agriculture's Produce Safety Team will arrange a visit to your farm where they can review the FSMA regulations and make suggestions for your specific operation. OFRR visits must be made during the growing season. Upon request, the Produce Safety Team will schedule a face-to-face meeting to go over PSR requirements prior to a walk-around. These can be scheduled year-round. No records will be kept of these non-regulatory, voluntary visits. Any recommendations and/or notes taken will be left on-site to offer guidance in potential PSR improvements to the operation.

### Regional update:

-RI and NH have just joined all other New England States in having the Produce Safety Rule program within respective Departments of Agriculture.

-Connecticut and Massachusetts have already adopted the Federal Produce Safety Rule into State regulation:

-MA expanded the basic rule to cover farms of all income levels. Applying this uniform standard allows all MA farms an equal opportunity for market access; this was based on buyer demand.

-CT chose to offer inspections to all farms, regardless of PSR coverage. This allows those farms who don't fall under PSR to request an inspection, again enhancing market access opportunity.

- RI plans to adopt an approach similar to CT, to ensure equal market opportunities to all RI farms.

To find out more about PSR, FSMA, or to schedule a meeting or On-Farm Readiness Review, **please visit:** [www.dem.ri.gov/producesafety](http://www.dem.ri.gov/producesafety)

**Or contact:** Ananda Fraser by email: [Ananda.fraser@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Ananda.fraser@dem.ri.gov) or phone: (401) 222-2781 x2411

**RIFB Annual Meeting 2018**  
**November 15, 2018**  
**Quonset 'O' Club**

We are in the process of planning the Annual Meeting, please check the RIFB website for updates. Our dinner speaker will be Mace Thornton, Executive Director of Communications for the American Farm Bureau Federation. He has held that position since March 2013.

Thornton manages the AFBF Communications Department, where he oversees the team that carries out all aspects of strategic and tactical communications for the nation's largest farm organization. He is a member of AFBF's Strategic Action Team, and helps lead AFBF as a member of its management team.

He joined the AFBF staff in 1990. A native of Kansas, Thornton began his Farm Bureau career in 1985 as a member of the Kansas Farm Bureau staff. Thornton serves as vice chair of the communications committee for the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance (USFRA) and is a board member of the Center for Food Integrity (CFI). His writing and strategic communications work has been nationally published and recognized.

Mace is a member of the Stafford County (Va.) Farm Bureau.

**President Wright Travels to D.C. and Northeast Meetings:**

In April, President Wright attended the Agri-Mark Annual Meeting in Burlington, Vermont. The current state of dairy in the Northeast and the U.S. was covered in depth. One very innovative achievement is the opening of a whole-milk powder plant in W. Springfield, MA in September. This should allow for all milk produced by Agri-Mark members to be utilized, with no dumping of milk necessary.

In late April, President Wright and Executive Director Heidi Quinn attended the American National Advisory Board meeting in Albany. Five Northeast states are affiliated with American National/Farm Family Insurance, and all attended this meeting to discuss current offerings and future plans.

In late June, President Wright and RIFB Secretary Joe Polseno went to the Joint Commodity Conference in Grand Rapids, MI. In addition to a general commodity session and AFBF business, President Wright participated in the Dairy breakout session and Joe Polseno attended the Fruit & Vegetables/Specialty Crops breakout. The conference also included a tour of a number of innovative farms.

President Wright spent much of the week of July 9 in Washington for the Public Policy conference as well as the biannual Council of Presidents meeting. The meeting was quite intense as numerous state presidents expressed concerns over tariffs that would affect their state's growers. Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas, chair of the Senate Ag committee addressed the Presidents. During the week, President Wright also met with all four of the Rhode Island Congressional delegates, as well as Bob Gray, lobbyist for Agri-Mark.

At the end of July, President Wright and Director Quinn attended the Northeast Presidents and Administrators meeting in Albany. This meeting provides a much-needed opportunity for the 12 Northeast region states to discuss our current positions and concerns, as well as discuss opportunities to work together to maximize our resources. In early August, Wright traveled returned to Albany for an Agri-Mark Dairy Summit which included participants from as far away as California discussing **Increasing Farm Milk Prices & Net Farm Income: The Impact of Farm Milk Production Decisions.** Numerous proposals were presented and discussed before the group of over 400 attendees.

**RIFB Member Benefits** Have you used your **RIFB Member Benefits and Discounts** lately? Head to [www.rifb.org](http://www.rifb.org) and click on the **Member Benefits** tab to start saving today! Check out our newest discount, [Dungarees.com](http://Dungarees.com), and save up to 15% off on workwear and accessories. Dungarees always offers free shipping on orders over \$55! Don't forget about our Avis and Budget discounts, as well as Choice Hotels and, also new to RIFB: Wyndham Hotels! Both chains offer **savings of up to 20%** off of their Best Available Rate! Check back often to see what discounts we may be offering to our members! **Please remember that your Farm Family Insurance discount is only in effect if you are a current member of RI Farm Bureau. Please renew on time to maintain your discount.**



**No Farmers No Food**

### RIFB has a New Website!

Over the last month, RIFB has rolled out our new website, with some help from our friends at the [Pennsylvania Farm Bureau](http://Pennsylvania Farm Bureau). We now have the ability to make updates quickly, and as frequently as we need to. The goal is for our members to be able to find up-to-date articles, and links to AFBF issues. Take a moment to visit us at [rifb.org](http://rifb.org) and see our new design. You can conveniently renew your RIFB membership on the website, although you **will** need your 8-digit member number to do that.

**Coming Soon**— A Classified Section for members to post **For Sale-Wanted-Free-Help Wanted**. Would you have anything to post?

**Paper Free Newsletter**— We know that many of you enjoy the paper copy of our newsletter. However, if you would prefer to only receive the emailed newsletter link and .pdf, please contact us at [rifarm@rifb.org](mailto:rifarm@rifb.org) or call 401-385-3339 and we can update your preferences.

## Farm Bill Update

With passage of the Senate farm bill, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (S. 3042), on June 28, congressional lawmakers have now headed to conference to iron out the differences between the House and Senate legislation. The House passed its version of the bill, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), on June 21.

Noting the tough circumstances farmers and ranchers are up against, American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said progress on the farm bill is very timely. “The Senate pushed the farm bill one big step closer to the finish line and it could not have come at a better time. America’s farmers and ranchers continue to face a challenging agricultural economy, a shaky outlook for our export markets and a dire ag labor shortage. It was time for some good news and the Senate delivered it in bipartisan fashion,” Duvall said in a statement. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 provides a solid framework for moving forward, Duvall continued. “We do have concerns about some of the provisions that were added to the bill that make it harder for farmers to manage risk, but we are confident that those issues can be satisfactorily addressed by the House/Senate conference committee. We look forward to working with conferees from both houses to get the best possible farm bill done for rural America,” he said.

The Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees will be holding a public meeting of the 2018 Farm Bill Conference Committee on Wednesday, September 5th. Once a final measure is approved by both chambers, the farm bill will be sent to President Trump for his signature.

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## Updating Your Email Address

RIFB wants to provide you with timely updates on legislation, meetings and other important information. Our intern has been working diligently to ensure that all member emails are correctly categorized to ensure that you receive our emails. If you do not currently receive emails from **RI Farm (rifarm@rifb.org)**, please email us (**using your preferred email**) or use the Contact Form on our website to provide us with the best email to use.

**Access Benefits emails:** You may be receiving occasional emails from Access Development, the vendor that provides you with your Access Discount Membership Card. When registering your card, you provided your email to Access Development. They send weekly emails about discounts you can receive as a RI Farm Bureau member. This is not our office email. At the bottom of each of the Access Development emails (the sender is **Rhode Island Farm Bureau**) is a box where you can easily Opt– Out if you prefer to get no Access Benefits emails. Opting-Out will NOT prevent you from receiving our emails provided we have your current email address.



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