

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Newsletter



2019 Annual Meeting

Volume 21, Issue 1

January 2020

Our 2019 Annual Meeting was held on Thursday, November 21. Throughout the day, over 95 members and guests joined us at the Quonset 'O' Club in North Kingstown. Paul Molesky, AFBF Young Farmer & Rancher Chair, opened the meeting by speaking to our morning attendees about Young Ag Professionals & the Future of Farming. We were pleased to have several of our RI FFA State Officers in Attendance. Ananda Fraser and Ken Ayars, both of RIDEM, then gave an update on Produce Safety before we broke for lunch & an ice cream social. Right after that, Chef Andy Teixeira of Newport Vineyards enticed us to eat once again with a delicious Rhody Coyote Braised Pork Shoulder using heritage pork from RIFB member farm Blackbird Farm of North Scituate. He accompanied the pork with Honey Sage Roasted Vegetables and an Apple Celeriac Mash, all served alongside some generous samples of Newport Vineyards Rhody Coyote Hard Cider. No one can ever say that Farm Bureau functions leave attendees hungry!

At our Business Meeting, elections were held. Incumbent directors Ann Marie Bouthillette, Brenda Frederickson, Timothy Gallagher, Jean Helger-Bento, Donald Hopkins, Edwin "Scooter" LaPrise and William Stamp III, were re-elected for the 2-year term of 2019-2021. Louis Vinagro III of Hill Farm in Foster was elected to the 2019-2021 term as well, filling a seat left vacant with the retirement of Bill Tabor. There were 23 resolutions proposed at the Business Meeting. Twenty-two were passed, one was tabled. There were several resolutions regarding solar, several on wetlands, and other resolutions covered depredation permits and deer fencing as well as FSMA, Right-to-Farm, milk and meat labeling. After the business meeting ended, members and guests enjoyed a social hour before the dinner meeting took place. President Henry B Wright III welcomed all to our 66th meeting, and Board Member Bill Stamp III gave the blessing before guests enjoyed a buffet dinner. As pies donated by Pippin Orchard were served, David Salmonsens, AFBF's Senior Director of Governmental Relations, spoke to the group on trade and a number of policy issues. Following David, Paul Molesky addressed the dinner crowd to expand on his morning address.

Awards were then given to a number of guests. Our Golden Tractor Award was given to Alex Caserta, Creator, Producer and Director of Harvesting Rhode Island, the PBS documentary series. Alex's devotion to the Harvesting Rhode Island series has introduced thousands of people to agriculture and farms that they might never have known existed in our small state. *(cont.)*

Board of Directors

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2019 Annual Meeting, cont.

Recipients of our **Navigator Award** for 2019 were Senator V. Susan Sosnowski and Senator Louis DiPalma. Always a staunch supporter of agriculture and farms in RI, in 2019 Senator Sosnowski introduced 2 bills on behalf of RIFB: S 764 and S 766, reducing and/or removing fees related to hemp licensing. In 2018 & 2019, Senator DiPalma attended numerous on-farm and town meetings to listen to farmers dealing with wetlands and FSMA issues. He is often seen sitting in on Senate Environment and Ag Committee meetings in support of farms and RI agriculture, and the legislation affecting our farms. This year RIFB also gave special legislative awards to Representative Sherry Roberts and Senator Elaine J. Morgan. These **Legislative Awards** were to honor their 2018 and 2019 legislative voting history on preserving individual and constitutional freedoms. As the evening wrapped up, our **2019 Scholarships** were awarded to Karalyn Lonngren- University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, Sydney Pezza-Luther- Stonehill College, and Todd Poulos- University of Rhode Island.

At the end of the evening, the prize winners were drawn for over 30 prizes donated for the penny social. We are so grateful to all the farms and friends who donated! Thank you to Shire Tree Farm, Young Family Farm, Salisbury Farm, Koczkodan Farm, Wright's Dairy Farm, Trail's End Farm, Martha Thurber & Dave's Marketplace. The winners of the **Grainger**-donated items were: Vinny Fiore- Coleman cooler, screwdriver set and flashlight; Jan Lonngren- snowbrush; Todd Poulos- Leatherman multi-tool; Bettie Weber- 5' stepladder; Tom Koczkodan- snow shovel; Kevin Breene- flashlight; Andrea Panciera- LED lantern. The final drawing of the night was for our **RIFB Farm Products Raffle**. Three prizes were drawn for \$1000 in farm product gift certificates. The \$500 winner was Meri B., \$300 winner was Marcie R. and the \$200 winner was Brenda F. Thank you to all who helped support this year's raffle which promoted a dozen RIFB member farms and funds the RIFB Scholarships. If you are interested in being a part of the 2020 raffle, please contact us at the RIFB office at 401-385-3339.

Below: RI State FFA Co-Vice Presidents, Hannah Foster and Alexander Day; State President Abby Foster.



Continue to Receive the Printed Newsletter.

RIFB will no longer be sending the printed version to our **Friend of Farmer** members as of this fall. We want to be conscious of waste and costs, but we are happy to continue to mail a printed copy to any of our members that request it. Please call the office and speak to Rebecca to be placed on the **Printed Newsletter list** to receive your free newsletter by mail. Current **Full-Time** and **Part-Time Farmer** members will continue to receive a mailed copy unless you request digital only.

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President's Corner

2019 was a challenging year with the changing face of agriculture, especially in urban and suburban RI, as it is across the country.

Rhode Island is a microstudy of what is happening across the U.S. Every state has an example of agriculture similar to that of Rhode Island, and our ag is replicated in counties within many big ag states. For us, however, we recognize that this is our entire state's agriculture, not just a single county. Many states look to Rhode Island for what may be coming to their state.

Over the course of 2019, I had the opportunity to attend AFBF's meeting on the proposed Milk Marketing Order along with meeting twice with Agri-Mark's Washington lobbyist. I spoke at NJFB's fisheries roundtable about the importance of protecting RI's largest natural resource and the loss of the fishing industry from Cape May, NJ to Cape Cod due to threats from offshore windmills. RIFB continued to work on FSMA and having the jurisdiction transferred from the FDA to the RI Division of Agriculture. After the gypsy moth caterpillar devastation of the last 2 years, I took part in a number of meetings, including one with the Lt. Governor, to address this natural resource disaster.

I have been speaking on the importance of allowing solar and windmills on farmland, and the importance of allowing agrarian practices to continue within the boundaries of these renewables projects. These projects return farms into the energy business as they have been so often in the past and helps position them to continue farming long into future.

I recently returned from a December trip to Washington, DC. I visited with our Congressional offices, urging them to vote affirmative in the passage of the USMCA. We also discussed new language placed in the budget to strengthen truth-in-labeling of meat and milk. These issues are important to RI, and I received positive feedback from both offices on these topics. By week's end, both our Congressmen had voted in the affirmative on these bills. I also had a good meeting with Senator Reed where we also discussed truth-in-labeling. We then discussed the possibility of funds to investigate added-value food production in the Northeast region. At Senator Whitehouse's office we discussed dual-use solar and the importance of allowing agriculture in solar fields. We discussed our joint concern of getting whole milk back into schools and continuing to promote natural, wholesome foods into the school lunch program. While in DC, I met with the other 3 members of the AFBF Rules Committee (GA, MN & CA) to set the rules for the 2020 Convention to be held this month in Austin, TX. All the state presidents then spent 2 days reviewing and discussing proposed resolutions that began at the grassroots level at Farm Bureaus all over the US and Puerto Rico. We then voted on the resolutions, choosing those worthy of being forwarded to the voting delegates at the convention for a final vote on whether or not they will become AFBF policy.

The 2020 picture looks bright for Ag due to passage of the USMCA, the Trade Pact with Japan, and Phase One of the China Trade Deal which is set to be signed on January 15 and is heavy on agriculture. The USMCA has triggered other countries to make deals, resulting in the removal of many tariffs already. It is always darkest before the dawn, and it looks like Ag may be at a threshold of brighter times for 2020.



Update your Farm's Commodities

We are happy to have fully transitioned to our new membership database supported by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. One item that came to our attention as we transitioned, was that most farms have outdated commodities listed.

Please take a moment to send us an email at rifarm@rifb.org or call the office at 401-385-3339 to update your commodity listing with us. This will help us to identify specific farms and growers when the need arises.

Thanks in advance!



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.

ACT NOW to assure you are approved for this special offer before all slots are filled.

Get a \$950 valued plan for only \$100, under special project funds!

For more information, contact your local Conservation District:

Northern RI Conservation District
Serving Providence County
(401) 934-0840



Southern RI Conservation District
Serving Kent and Washington Counties
(401) 500-0422

Eastern RI Conservation District
Serving Bristol and Newport Counties
(401) 934-0840



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIIP

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

American National Insurance

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Updating Your Email Address

RIFB wants to provide you with timely updates on legislation, meetings and other important information. We have worked hard 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.

The #1 Reason People Don't Join Farm Bureau?

No one asked.

Not a member of RIFB?

Know someone who *should* be a member?

Full-time farmers, part-time and hobby farmers, landowners, gardeners, foodies and anyone who enjoys local food and farms in Rhode Island– you can join RI Farm Bureau and help us to support the future of agriculture in RI and beyond.

You can stop by the office to join or renew, or join or renew online at rifb.org.



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Farm Groups Partner to Help Farmers Manage Stress

Recognizing the high levels of stress affecting America's farmers and ranchers, Farm Credit, American Farm Bureau Federation and National Farmers Union have partnered on a program to train individuals who interact with farmers and ranchers to recognize signs of stress and offer help.

Based on the farm stress program Michigan State University Extension developed for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency, this combination of online and in-person trainings is designed specifically for individuals who interact with farmers and ranchers. It provides participants the skills to understand the sources of stress, learn the warning signs of stress and suicide, identify effective communication strategies, reduce stigma related to mental health concerns and connect farmers and ranchers with appropriate mental health and other resources.

"Farm Credit loan officers are on farms working with producers every day, and they see firsthand how this difficult farm economy is causing emotional stress for farmers and their families. We hope this training initiative will help our lenders recognize the signs of severe stress and get farm families the support they need," said Farm Credit Council CEO Todd Van Hoose. "We are very excited to partner with Farm Bureau and Farmers Union to make this training available throughout our rural communities."

AFBF President Zippy Duvall said, "Farm Bureau is a family, and when a member is hurting, we all feel it and are eager to help. But we may not always know how to spot the warning signs that someone is overwhelmed. This training program will help our members recognize the warning signs and empower them to get help for their friends, family, neighbors or even themselves. We're honored to partner with Farm Credit and Farmers Union to strengthen rural resilience in farm communities."

In a national Morning Consult poll commissioned by AFBF in April 2019, a strong majority of farmers and farmworkers said financial issues (91%), farm or business problems (88%) and fear of losing the farm (87%) impact the mental health of farmers and ranchers, and nearly half of rural adults (48%) said they are personally experiencing more mental health challenges than they were a year ago.

"Many of us think of farms as idyllic," said Jeff Dwyer, director of MSU Extension. "And what is portrayed is ideal, but what is not often shown is how hard farming is on both the body and the mind."

Research also shows that while farmers experience higher levels of psychological distress and depression than the general population, they are less likely to seek help for mental health issues. Even for those who do seek help, resources may not be readily available, as 60% of rural Americans live in areas with mental health professional shortages.

Early feedback from the FSA trainings showed strong results. Ninety-one percent of participants indicated that the training improved their ability to serve customers experiencing stress, and 80% said it improved their ability to manage their own stress.

"Things have been really tough for farmers for several years now, and it's taking a significant toll on their mental well-being," said NFU President Roger Johnson. "But between stigma, a lack of mental health care in rural communities and poor broadband access, there are so many barriers to getting help. By training trusted neighbors and friends to recognize and address stress, this program will bring help closer and make it more accessible when farmers really need it."

In response to the many economic and environmental challenges confronting farmers, National Farmers Union compiled financial, legal and mental health resources at its online Farm Crisis Center. The organization's partnership with Farm Bureau and Farm Credit will build on that project by further increasing farmers' access to the information and services they need to get through financial and personal emergencies. Resources may also be accessed on MSU Extension's "Managing Farm Stress" website.

The trainings, which will begin in the coming weeks, are funded by a grant from Farm Credit.



Cornell Small Farms Program 'Baskets to Pallets' curriculum. Are you in search of new markets? Have you considered wholesale channels like colleges, hospitals, schools, food hubs, grocery stores, and cooperatives? The demand for local food continues to grow... Is your farm or food business ready for the opportunities? Ensure your success by joining us for 'Baskets to Pallets', a comprehensive one-day introduction to selling wholesale.

**February 25th
9:00am - 4:00pm
RI DEM
Meeting Room 300
235 Promenade Street**

COURSE TRACK INCLUDES:

- Understanding Consumer Demand for Local
- Choosing & Evaluating Market Channels
 - Building Relationships with Buyers
- 'Voices of Experience' Food Buyer Panel

COST:

This workshop is free for the entire training. It includes breakfast refreshments and a delicious locally sourced lunch. Bringing two representatives from your farm or food business is recommended if possible.

To Register: Please call the RIFB office for assistance or go to : <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/55GZSXJ>



Winter Workshops on Funding Opportunities

RI Farm Energy Program

RI Resource Conservation & Development

Learn about **ALL** the funding opportunities and incentives available for farm energy projects!

January 22nd from 5:30 to 7:30 PM

Portsmouth Free Public Library, 2658 East Main Road, Portsmouth, RI

January 29th from 5:30 to 7:30 PM

RI Farm Bureau, 16 Nooseneck Hill Road, Suite B, West Greenwich, RI

February 4th from 5:30 to 7:30 PM

North Scituate Library, 606 W. Greenville Rd, N. Scituate, RI

Questions or to **REGISTER** for these workshops: **CALL:** 401-500-0399 or **EMAIL:** info@rifarmenergy.org

NOTE: No snow dates. Call or email for cancellation notice.

Meet the RIFB Board

Wayne Salisbury of Salisbury Farm in Johnston, Rhode Island has been farming since he was a young teen. Salisbury Farm was established in the 1850's by Wayne's great-great grandfather as a dairy farm. It continued as a dairy farm until Wayne's father retired in the late 1960's. At that time Wayne and his wife Lois began operating the farm. Wayne was a full-time Business teacher at Scituate High School making it difficult for him to continue the dairy farm. He and Lois converted it into a hay farm, gradually expanding their vegetable production and even planting a few strawberry plants to fulfill the requirements of their son's high school project. Today Salisbury Farm continues to plant between 10 and 15 thousand strawberry plants each year, having started as a small project!

Retiring after 30 years of teaching, Wayne made additional changes to the farm operation. Vegetable production was enhanced and a pick-your-own pumpkin program was established in the early nineties. Starting with just 1 acre of pumpkins 23 years ago, they now grow 6-7 acres. The farm currently produces strawberries, raspberries, pumpkins and a variety of vegetables. In 1998 Wayne, Lois and their two sons opened the first corn maze in New England. This 5-acre corn maze remains the longest operating in New England, with new a design annually.

Before retiring and becoming a fulltime farmer, Wayne was a Rhode Island State Representative for 14 years, and a Scituate Town Council member for 10 years. Wayne became a Rhode Island Farm Bureau Board Member in 2004, and was elected Vice President in 2014, where he has been at the forefront of supporting legislation that enhances and protects agriculture for future generations. Today Wayne serves on the executive committee of the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association, which, like Farm Bureau, advocates for programs enhancing agriculture in the region. Wayne is also on the RI DEM Division of Ag's Produce Safety Grower Committee.

Joe Polseno operates Pippin Orchards in Cranston. Joe's father bought Pippin Orchards in the 60's, after leasing it for a number of years. The orchard has been around since colonial times. Joe began working at the orchard around the age of 8, when they moved to the farm in 1979. About 10 years ago, Joe started running the farm. One of the first things he did was to purchase a machine to create apple cider doughnuts, the first location in RI to make this delicious treat. Last year he purchased a slushie machine and began making apple cider slushies. Since the '80's Pippin Orchard has made and baked fruit pies on site, using apples, peaches and blueberries from the orchard. They also make breads, cookies and homemade ice cream sandwiches to satisfy sweet teeth and provide holiday desserts.

Joe plants more & different varieties of trees every year, with a total of about 12-18 varieties of apples across the season. Pippin Orchards grows not only apples, but also peaches, pears, plums, nectarines & blueberries. They also grow a wide variety of vegetables to sell at the stand. In late winter they typically start thousands of hanging baskets for both wholesale and direct market. Joe was elected to the RIFB Board of Directors in 2014. He also serves on the FSA County Committee and the New England Greenhouse Growers committee.

Jean Helger-Bento was brought up on Patchet Brook Farm, originally a dairy farm, where she still lives. Her grandmother bought it in 1905 and ran the dairy farm, which Jean's father took over in later years. Jean was always involved and helped her dad from the age of 12-14 on the farm. He passed away when Jean was still in high school and her mother converted it to a market garden. Jean always loved Christmas, and when her children were little she would take them to pick out their Christmas tree, each year talking to the owner about starting her own tree farm. In 1973 Jean bought 1000 trees, but soon realized it was a huge undertaking with 4 young children and lots of trees, each requiring a lot of care. Jean sold a few trees that made it, and in 1980, she went back to Leo Clark and his wife Janice, of Clark's Tree Farm. The Clarks gave her lots of great advice and help, and that same year Jean went to her first field meeting as a new member of the RI Christmas Tree Growers Association. She served on the RICTGA board from 1982-2000 and was the first woman president of that group for 4 years, a rarity across the country. In 1993 Jean was elected to the RIFB Board of Directors where she served as treasurer for 20 years. Jean also served on the Tiverton Land Trust for 10 years, and is also a member of RINLA.

Today Patchet Brook Tree Farm's primary crop is Christmas trees. There are currently 20 acres in choose & cut trees, and about 10-15 acres in larger stock. They no longer wholesale, as they did when there were 40 acres in trees. Today, the farm only sells direct-to-customer. The farm also grows a few pumpkins, down from a large supply in the past, and buys the rest in due to a large deer problem. Because of the deer, Jean fences in the Christmas tree fields and the pumpkins she does grow. Patchet Brook Tree Farm also grows arborvitae and cut flowers. Besides selling Christmas trees, Jean sells a family experience for selecting a Christmas tree. Families are treated to hayrides, sometimes with Santa, and can enjoy hot cider or hot chocolate with chocolate chip cookies. There is a shop with craft items, local honey, beeswax candles, maple syrup and jam. Jean's children want to see Patchet Brook Farm continue, but have no definite plans to take over. She hopes that perhaps her grand-children or great-grandchildren will continue in the business in the future. In addition to Patchet Brook Farm, Jean also runs a small daycare.

The Zipline : A Message from AFBF President Zippy Duvall



Carrying our Farm Values Into the Future

We are closing out this year of celebrating our centennial at the American Farm Bureau. We stand at the start of a new decade, and a new century of Farm Bureau. Many of us are ready for a new year and a new season. Farming is always about looking to the future with the hope the next season will be better than the last.

I am amazed and humbled by how much has been accomplished through generations of farmers and ranchers working together. Some years—or decades—are tougher than others, but we have always pressed on with diligence and faith. Here are a few things in farming that I hope never change with the passing years and decades.

Our Commitment to Our Communities

Farmers and ranchers are the lifeblood of our communities. For many of us, our families have been in our communities for generations. Our neighbors are family, and we come together to celebrate the good times and to lift each other up in the hard times. Our commitment to strengthen our communities is another reason we're a part of Farm Bureau. We want to advocate for policies and programs that will keep rural America going strong for our children and our grandchildren.

Our Commitment to Future Generations

Farming gives us the opportunity to work out in God's creation, which reminds us every day that we are not the beginning and the end of the story of our land. We always remember that we are caretakers, and if we take care of the land, it will take care of us. I am so grateful every day to farm the land that my father and grandfather farmed before me, and I can tell you the soil on my farm is healthier than ever, thanks to modern practices and new technology. The land I farm today will be productive for generations to come, and I know that same story is told on each of your farms and ranches across this great land.

Our Commitment to Our Families

Farming is a family business. It's no wonder that 98% of U.S. farms and ranches are run by families. Working with my family—first with my parents and brother, then my wife and our children, and now even my grandchildren—is the greatest gift I have known in farming. We have all faced our share of tough days on the farm whether that be rain that won't come or storms that won't let up, a truck that won't start or low prices when loan payments are due. But along with the hardship, farm families also get to share in the joys of working together, bringing in a good harvest and seeing new life come into this world. Even if the kids don't all come back to the farm, there's a life-long work ethic and love for the land that'll always be a part of who they are.

I am proud of the work we've done together across Farm Bureau this year and this decade, from regulatory reform to new trade deals, from greater access to precision technology to expanding infrastructure for rural broadband. This important work will preserve America's agriculture and food security. But no matter what new technology we use, our core values, our faith and family, will continue to be the foundation for the next year, the next decade, and the next century.

Zippy Duvall

RI Farm Bureau

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West Greenwich, RI 02817

Phone: 401-385-3339
Fax: 401-385-3394
E-mail: rifarm@rifb.org
Web: www.rifb.org



Thank a farmer 3 times a day!

CALLING ALL FFA AND 4-H MEMBERS!



JOIN RI FARM BUREAU FOR FREE

Just a reminder that all 4-H and FFA Members can join RI Farm Bureau for free, and receive all the benefits our other members receive including discounts at thousands of businesses nationwide.



SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

RI Farm Bureau offers \$500 scholarships to qualifying Farm Bureau Members. Applicants must be enrolled or enrolling in an agricultural related course of study. Scholarship monies will be awarded upon presentation of the first semester's transcript, showing success in their ag-related major. For more information, and to apply, contact us at 401-385-3339 or follow the **Scholarship** link on our website. Look for an updated Scholarship Application in the summer.